

# THE LESSON OF THE ALMOND TREE

## NO. 2678

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 10, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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*“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? And I said, I see a branch of an almond tree. Then said the LORD unto me, You have seen well: for I am ready to perform My word.”  
Jeremiah 1:11, 12.*

OBSERVE, first, dear Friends, that before Jeremiah becomes a speaker for God, he must be a seer. The name for a Prophet, in the olden time, was a “seer”—a man who could see—one who could see with his mind’s eye, one who could also see with spiritual insight, so as vividly to realize the Truth of God which he had to deliver in the name of the Lord. Learn that simple lesson well, O you who try to speak for God! You must be seers before you can be speakers.

The question with which God usually begins His conversation with each of His true servants is the one He addressed to Jeremiah, “What do you see?” I am afraid that there are some ministers, nowadays, who do not see much. Judging by what they preach, their vision must be all in cloudland, where all they see is smoke, mist and fog. I often meet with persons who have attended the same ministry for years—and when I have asked them even very simple questions about the things of God, I have found that they do not know anything. It was not because they were not able to comprehend quickly when the Truth was set forth plainly before them, but I fear that it was, in most cases, because there was nothing that they could learn from the minister to whom they had been accustomed to listen. The preacher had seen nothing and, therefore, when he described what he saw, of course it all amounted to nothing. No, my Brother, before you can make an impression upon another person’s *heart*, you must have an impression made upon your own soul. You must be able to say, concerning the Truth of God, “I see it,” before you can speak it so that your hearers shall also see it. It must be clear to your own mind, by the spiritual perception which accompanies true faith, or else you will not be able to say with the Psalmist, “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” Let me say again that sentence which I uttered a minute ago—the speaker for God must first be a seer in the Light of God.

And, next, the true speaker for God must see what God sets before him. In this case, the Lord had set before Jeremiah’s eye “a branch of an

almond tree.” We might have thought that as a preparation for his prophetic work, he would have seen mysterious wheels full of eyes, or flaming seraphs and cherubs, or the wonderful creatures that were caused to appear in the dreams of Ezekiel and the Revelation to John. Instead of this, Jeremiah simply sees “a branch of an almond tree” and, beloved Friends, when you look into the Bible, you will see some very simple things there—such things as save little children’s souls—such things as men with no education can understand and believe! Be not anxious to be numbered among those who are so “eclectic” and “cultured” that if God sets before them the branch of an almond tree, they cannot condescend to notice it.

That is something which everybody can see, so why should such remarkable eyes as theirs behold the plain things which ordinary individuals can perceive? They want to see—I scarcely know what they want to see, except their own foolish dreams—and even those are hidden from them. God give us Grace to see branches of almond trees when He sets them before us—I mean may He give us Grace to see such simple Truths as these—“You must be born again.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” What do you see, my Friend? Do you see what God would have you see, what He has put before you in His Word? If so, I may say to you what the Lord said to Jeremiah, “You have seen well.” But if not, however gorgeous the panorama or pageant which you have invented for yourself to behold, you might as well be blind, for you will only be following some will-o’-the-wisp that may amuse for a while, but will ultimately destroy the souls of men!

Further, those who would speak aright for God must also take care to see with all their eyes. I do not suppose that everybody here who had seen the vision of a branch, would have known it to be “a branch of an almond tree.” I do not imagine that I would, though I think I could, after close examination, identify a branch if it were from an olive tree, or orange tree, having become familiar with them during my visits to the South of France. But I do not know that I would, in a moment, be able to say of a certain branch, “That is the branch of an almond tree.” But Jeremiah understood these things and, therefore, as soon as he saw what was set before him, he did not merely say, “I see a branch,” but, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” He distinguished at once the kind of branch that was revealed to him in vision, for he was a man who had those powers of discernment and discrimination which are most necessary in the Lord’s servants. And if you, dear Friend, are called to teach the children in the Sunday school, or if you try to win souls by private conversation, or if you are a preacher of the Word, blessed are you if you can see below the surface of the Truth of God and can peer into its hidden depths of meaning and get a spiritual insight into the Word of God so that you do not merely see a small portion of the Scriptures, but you perceive a far larger part than most people do! You should, if you can, see it all.

I think that many years of spiritual education and Divine training would be required for you to attain to that position—at any rate, to see all that is necessary for the due discharge of your ministry, all that may help you to know the meaning of the Truth and to bring it out for real, practical use among those to whom you seek to be made a blessing. O seer, ask to have clear eyes! Speaker, remember that your speaking must begin with your eyes and—though it may seem a strange thing to say—the first education for the true servant of God does not concern his tongue so much as his eyes! “What do you see?” Seek to be able to see all that you can see! And take care that you do not miss anything through inadvertence or neglect. “Search the Scriptures.” Be you one of those who gazes into the Truth, as the angels desire to look into it, so that when you see the vision, you shall be able to say, with Jeremiah, “I see a branch of an almond tree.”

Next, the servant of the Lord must seek to win the approval of his Master as Jeremiah did. It will be a grand thing for you, dear Brothers and Sisters who try to speak to others, if you would receive such praise as God so freely gave to Jeremiah, at the very first moment of his ministry, when He said to him, “You have seen well.” You shall speak well if you have seen well. O my dear young Brothers in the College, you who are here tonight, I hope that it will be true of you, whenever you think of the Doctrine of Human Depravity, that you have looked into your own hearts and seen the evil of your own nature till you have wept over it! So shall it be said to each one of you, “You have seen that well.” I hope that you will so clearly see the truth of the Fall that you will recognize the evil that comes of it and the evil that abides in the corrupt nature of man.

And then may you get such a sight of the Cross—such a clear view of the atoning blood and understand so fully the great Doctrine of Substitution and the Divine plan of reconciliation, that God may be able to say to you, “You have seen well.” A lack of distinctness in our understanding of the Truth of God will lead to a lack of distinctness in our utterance of it. Oh, to have eyes like those of the Heavenly Bridegroom, of whom His spouse said, “His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set,” for, in His turn, He says to His bride, “Behold, you are fair, My love; behold, you are fair; you have doves’ eyes.” The ministers of the Church of Christ, who have, to a great extent, to be her seers, need to have clear, far-seeing, and pure-seeing eyes! May God grant us the power to distinctly trace His wondrous Grace from the eternal Fountain of electing love, along the streams of never-ceasing mercy which bring final perseverance to the saints, right onward to the coming of our Lord and the blessed rising of all His Church to be with Him in His Glory forever and ever! Before you venture to tell anything of the Gospel message to others, you need to hear the Lord say to you, as He said to Jeremiah, “You have seen well.”

For this purpose it will be necessary that your eyes should be enlightened. What an appropriate prayer is that for you Sunday school teachers and Christian ministers to offer, “Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law”! I think that if I had, as a preacher, to

make only one request to my Master, and He asked me, "What will you that I should do unto you?"—I should reply, "Lord, that I may receive my sight more fully than ever, and see Your Truth more clearly than ever," because there is no fear about our speaking for God if our seeing is what it should be. That is the main matter and, therefore, the Lord asks each one of us, "What do you see?" If our answer proves that we have seen well, it is because the Spirit of God has enlightened us and, enlightenment from God having been once received, we shall proclaim to others right gladly what God has revealed to us.

Yet once more, those who see what they can see and take care to see it well, are the people who shall receive further instruction, for it was when Jeremiah said, "I see a branch of an almond tree," that the Lord went on to explain the vision to him, saying, "You have seen well: for I will hasten My word to perform it." Those who do not see what they can see shall not be allowed to see any more. If you will not use, in diligently studying the Scriptures, the judgment and perception which you already have, God will not give you further light since you neglect the gift that is in you. He will leave your fire to burn low because you do not stir it up—and it shall get to be more dim than it is now, for he who will not learn more when God is willing to teach him shall forget what he already knows. I charge you, who are called to teach others in any way whatever, to submit yourselves fully to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. A disciple is the only person who can become an Apostle. A scholar in the school of Christ is the only one who can be sent out to tell others what his Master wishes to have made known to the sons of men.

I have spoken thus with the view of helping those who are working for Christ. But now I must try to explain the vision mentioned in our text. "Jeremiah, what do you see? I see a branch of an almond tree."

**I.** Observe, first, that **THE ALMOND IS A WAKEFUL TREE.** The Hebrew word which is rendered, "almond," comes from a root signifying to be wakeful, so this passage might be read thus, "I see the wakeful branch. Then said the Lord unto me, You have seen well: for I will be wakeful concerning My word to perform it."

When the other trees are asleep, before the warmth of the springtime has awakened them from their winter slumbers, the almond tree awakes and opens the lovely eyes of its abundant blossoms. In Jeremiah's country it begins to bloom in early January and it is in such haste to produce its fruit that it is often ripe before the end of March. You know how, even in our suburban gardens, one of the first signs of the approach of spring is that the almond tree begins to blossom. The East wind often keeps it back, yet it struggles to its utmost to come out while other trees are asleep. Even before the chestnut, which is generally up as early as almost any of our trees, has been able to cast off the blankets in which it slept during the winter, the almond tree has opened its eyes and looked out as if it were asking whether springtime is not coming. The almond is a wakeful tree, and so says the Lord, "I will be wakeful concerning My word to perform it."

Note, first, that *God never forgets a promise*. Alas, you and I do not remember all our promises! How often are they made only to be broken! But God never forgets one that He has given. We even forget God's promises and, often, when we are in trouble, we can hardly recollect one that we can plead before Him. But God never yet forgot a promise—all these centuries in which He has been dealing with men, He has never yet failed to keep His word. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?"

What is equally wonderful, *God has never forgotten a single person to whom a promise belonged*—not even the least. Even if they have only *desired* to seek Him, or if they have only commenced to seek Him, He has been gracious to them—He has heard their cry and has delivered them. This is a big world and there are many millions of people in it, yet not one of them has ever been able to say that God has failed to keep one of His promises. More than that, in the whole universe, throughout all the ages, there has never been a forgotten soul! He who counts the brilliant stars, counts such dim things as our understanding—and He who numbers the very hairs of our head never fails to reckon the cries of our hearts.

Further, *there has never been a single occasion of a promise which God has allowed to slip*. When the promise has become due, He has discharged it to the tick of the clock! There are no dishonored bills recorded against God in the archives of men or of angels! No one can look up to the heavens and say to Him, "You have deceived me and I was deceived." But we *can* say, "Faithful and true are You, O Jehovah; this is part of Your Son's title, for He is the faithful and true Witness, and You are the faithful Promiser who always performs what He has promised." "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness."

Let me also add that *there is not a threat in God's Word which has not been fulfilled*, or which will not yet be executed. He has been a wakeful God in that respect. When men have persisted in their iniquity, He has not allowed them to escape the just punishment of their evil deeds. Happily for us, we cannot hear the sighs and cries of the spirits shut up in Hell, but they are there. In His mercy God has made a great gulf between us and those who are tormented in that flame—but they are there, though we cannot see or hear them. As surely as God lives, their iniquity and transgression are already receiving their just recompense of reward—and there is a worse doom to follow. As God watches over His people to do them good, so does He watch over the transgressor who is finally impenitent—and makes him to know the terrors of His wrath. That is the black side of this Truth of God and it must not be ignored. You may rest assured that a judge who does not punish the guilty is as unjust as the one who does not acquit the innocent. There must be with every king who is worthy of the name, an execution of the sentence of the law upon evildoers, as well as the award of praise for them that do well. Paul says, concerning the earthly representative of authority, "He bears not the sword in vain." And that sentence is certainly true concerning the King of Kings. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Look, then, dear Friends, at this branch of an almond tree and believe in a wakeful God who will surely deal with men according to His Word, whether in promise or in threat.

**II.** But the more obvious sense of the text is that which I give under the second head. THE ALMOND IS IN HASTE TO BLOSSOM AND BEAR FRUIT. Hence our translators have rendered the passage, "I will hasten My word to perform it." The almond tree is not slow to bloom—it is one of the very first trees to tell us that springtime is near. And the Lord is quick to fulfill His Word.

Very briefly, let me remind you of *the quickness of God to fulfill His threats*. Do you realize, dear Hearers, you who are now hearing the Gospel, but have not received it, that God's threats take effect at once? "No," you say, "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." That is most true, yet there is a sense in which His sentence takes effect at once. For instance, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." If you have heard the Gospel—and some of you have heard it many, many years—and yet have not heeded it, you will not be condemned for the first time at the Last Great Day, you are condemned even now! Some people say to us, "Why do you ministers, in your preaching, so constantly deal with another life, instead of dealing with this one?" Our answer is that we do deal with this life—we deal with it continually, for we believe that both sides of that text are true at this very minute, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." Even now, at this moment, while you are in this building, if you are not a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the wrath of God is abiding on you!

Listen again. There is another immediate effect of the Word of the Lord which follows as quickly as the blossom appears upon the almond tree. Upon some hearers, it produces an instant hardening. You remember how Paul wrote, "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life"? You, dear Friends, are deriving, from every Gospel sermon that you hear, either life unto life, or else death unto death. If you get no good from it, you will assuredly get harm. An unbelieving hearing of the Gospel is a multiplication of curses to your soul—another sermon for which you have to give account, another rejected exhortation recorded against you, another earnest invitation which you have refused—and for which you will be held responsible. You are heaping up to yourselves wrath against the Day of Wrath even while you hear the Word of the Lord. I am not now talking about what will happen to you when you die, or when you rise for the final judgment—I am speaking about what is happening NOW! The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. And the same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sins. Take heed that you do not soon see the almond tree blossom in this terrible sense.

There is also another sense in which a definite result is speedily coming, for you must soon die unless Christ comes shortly. In any case, it

cannot be long before some here will be gone. We who have reached middle life must not reckon on continuing to live for many years—and others are already bald with age, or their hair is gray—so they must soon die. Suppose, however, that you young people should live to be ninety—yet how soon that period will be ended! Years seem to spin round, especially as we grow older. I thought, when I was a boy, that a year was a very long time. But, now, one scarcely seems to have time to kiss his hand before it is Christmas again! People say, “Christmas is coming,” as if it were a long way off, but the next one is coming as soon as the last one has gone! Time flies very rapidly as years advance upon us—it even appears to quicken its pace, though it does not really go any faster than it used to do. It will be but a short while and you, my dear Hearer, if you die without Christ, will find that God is not slack concerning His threat—that though He seems to tarry in long-suffering, yet He comes in due season after all. And when He comes—ah, when the last trumpet rings out and the Great White Throne is set and the angels gather in solemn pomp to the tremendous judgment of the grand assize—you will find that the time which seemed long enough, proved all too short, while the eternity, which you despised, you will dread with such despair as we cannot even now imagine!

Forever, forever, forever, forever lost! I see “a branch of an almond tree” for some of you, for it may be that I am addressing some who will never enter any place of worship again. I may be speaking to some out of these many hundreds who will not be alive this day next week. Out of our great congregation, there never is a gathering of the same people twice in this place week by week. Even among our membership, there are now, on the average, two a week who are taken Home, and I know not how many more out of the congregation. Who will be next? I see, for that next one, “a branch of an almond tree,” for God will hasten His Word to perform it.

While I have felt compelled to speak of these solemn Truths, I am glad to turn to the other part of the subject which is this—that *God is quick in performing His promises*. They are like the almond tree—they blossom and bear fruit very quickly. “What sort of promises,” you ask, “are thus speedily fulfilled?”

Well, first, the promise to give salvation to all these who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen—

**“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Redemption in full thro’ His blood.”**

I see “a branch of an almond tree” here. The Psalmist says, “His word runs very swiftly,” and I am a witness that it does. Many years ago, I, a poor sinner, went into a place of worship to hear the Gospel preached. The preacher repeated the Lord’s command, “Look unto Me, and be you saved.” I looked to Christ and I was saved that very instant. It takes no longer to tell the story than it did to work the miracle of mercy. Swift as a lightning flash I looked to Christ, and the great deed was done! I was a pardoned and justified soul—in a word, I was saved! Why should not the

same thing happen to you who are here? It will happen to everyone who shall now be led to believe in Jesus Christ.

“Oh, but,” says one, “there are often long delays before peace is enjoyed.” Then it is because you make them, for God does not. “But sometimes we have to wait,” says one. Yes, yes. I know all about that waiting. Do you remember, in the parable of the prodigal son, where he waited? Why, with the harlots and others with whom he wasted his substance in riotous living, or with the swine when he was feeding them with the husks with which he would gladly have filled his own empty belly! That is where he waited! But when did he end his waiting? When he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” He did not wait any longer, for we read, “And he arose and came to his father.” And then it is written, “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and”—“and”—“and”—“and stood still, and waited for him to come”? No, no! I know that God waits to be gracious, but, according to the teaching of that parable, “when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran.”

Do you know how fast *God* can run? Come, now, there is a task for you! We know, sometimes, how fast fleet runners can go. What a rate they go! As we hear about them, we seem to realize the force of David’s description of Saul and Jonathan, “They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.” But again I ask, can you tell me how fast *God* can run? No, you do not know, you cannot tell. But you do know that He is all on fire with love to embrace a poor penitent sinner—and He speeds towards him at an amazing rate! Remember that hymn with which we commenced this service—

**“On cherub and on cherubim,  
Full royally He rode,  
And on the wings of mighty winds,  
Came flying all abroad.  
‘And so delivered He my soul.’”**

Swift as the lightning’s flash is the glance of Divine compassion that brings life to a penitent soul! Believe, then, in Jesus and “the great transaction’s done!” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “Why, Sir, he only believed a minute ago! Has he already received eternal life?” Yes, he has everlasting life just as surely as if he had been believing in Jesus for 50 years! If you do but believe, this blessing is at once yours! “I see a branch of an almond tree.” Oh, that you also may see it blossom before your very eyes, although, when you came into this House of Prayer, it seemed as bare as the rest of the trees that have been nipped by the wintry winds!

This part of our subject is just as true about prayer. The man who knows how to pray remembers God’s promises concerning prayer and its answer. Think of that remarkable passage in Isaiah 65:24—“It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” That is quicker than the telegraph! “Before they call, I will answer.” God knows what petition is in your heart! He foresees what will be the utterance of your tongue and He has the answers all ready for them. I have found many of my prayers answered years before I prayed them. “No,” you say, “that could not be.” Well, there was one of them that



was answered more than 1,800 years before I prayed it. That was when I cried to God for a Savior and He gave me One all those centuries before I was born, even the Savior who worked out for me a complete salvation on Calvary's accursed tree! O you praying souls, "I see a branch of an almond tree!" When men begin to pray in faith, they are speedily heard!

So is it when God's people want to have their spiritual life revived. When we get into a dull doleful state, as we sometimes do, if we cry to God, He is able to quickly revive our drooping spirits. You remember that verse in the Song of Solomon, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib"?—Which were, I suppose, noted for their swiftness—"I was dull, motionless, lifeless; but before I could tell where I was, I found myself almost flying along like the chariots of Amminadib." So may it be with you, dear Friend! Though you are like Laodicea, neither cold nor hot, yet remember what the Lord said to the angel of that Church. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Renewed communion with Christ may be enjoyed at once, even by you who have fallen into a lukewarm state!

Our subject also applies to deliverance from trouble. "The righteous cry, and the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles." God may not take away your trouble, but yet, in a moment, He may give you Grace to bear it and turn the trouble, itself, into a source of joy. "I see a branch of an almond tree" full often. In times of deep depression, God can lift up the heart very speedily.

So can He bless His Word. As neither snow nor rain returns to Him void, so is it with His Word—it shall prosper in the thing to where He sent it, and it shall prosper at once. O you who want to win souls, go about your work very boldly, believing that God will bless you! "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," said Christ. When Peter preached, the Apostles and disciples did not wait for several years to find out the result of his sermon—though I daresay there were further results after a long time—but they picked up 3,000 birds which had been brought down by that one discharge of the great Gospel gun! Oh, that you and I would so work for God as to expect immediate results—and go and look for them! "I see a branch of an almond tree." I believe that there are some here who will, tonight, lay hold on Christ. It was a great joy to me to have a Sister come in, just before service, to tell me that, years ago, she found the Lord when I was preaching at the Agricultural Hall. She said, "That will comfort you." I said, "Yes, it does. It shows me that I was useful once, but," I added, "I want to be useful now. I want to see souls brought to Christ *now*." And so they will be! Let us believe it and see this branch of an almond tree blossom tonight!

**III.** Now, to close, I can only briefly remind you that THE ALMOND TREE SETS AN EXAMPLE TO ALL WHO WOULD BE LIKE GOD. He hastens His Word to perform it. Oh, that you and I would be in haste to perform our word!

Is there one here who *wishes to seek the Lord*? "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near." There will

be a friend or two, on the lower platform, after the service, to talk with any of you who wish to say anything to them about your own souls and to hear from them some good words about the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not go away, even from this service, till you have sought and found the Savior! Seek Him now, you young people! Recollect that precious promise, "Those that seek Me early shall find Me." Others shall find the Lord if they seek Him, but, certainly, the young shall do so even if others do not. Be up early, then, while yet you are in your teens, before you get to be a young man or woman—seek the Lord now, for you shall surely find Him if you search for Him with all your heart. God help you to do it!

Then, you who have found Him, be *prompt in obeying Him*. Do you know what David said? "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your commandments." If you have found the Savior by faith, be baptized according to His command and His example. Unite yourself with His people and begin at once to serve Him.

And then, you who have been serving the Savior, if you have *any good desire in your heart to do anything for Christ, do it*. You may be dead tomorrow morning, therefore I would advise you to do something for Christ tonight. Are you going to leave something in your will for the Master's cause? Be your own executor if you can—and whatever you think of doing, do it speedily. Do not leave anything till tomorrow that can be done today. "I see a branch of an almond tree." There are some men who must act now, or they never will do anything, for it is pretty nearly the end of the day with them. Up, Brother, up! "I see a branch of an almond tree." Do what you can tonight. Speak to your children about Christ tonight. Wake them up if they are in bed. Speak to that friend to whom you have often intended to speak. I know of one who resolved to speak to a man who used to come to his counter twice a week to buy some goods. He thought, "The next time he comes in, I will speak to him about his soul." He never came again! On the morning when he should have come, there came a messenger to say that he was dead. Therefore, take advantage of every opportunity while it lasts. "In the morning sow your seed," but do not wait for the morning! "In the evening withhold not your hand" and, "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."

And, lastly, be *ready for your immediate departure*. Be prepared to go Home to Heaven tonight. Come, now, are all things ready for your journey? If not, pack up all the luggage, label it, and have everything ready for the start at any moment. Blessed is that man who is ready to blossom in Heaven any instant. "Oh," says one, "I should not like to die tonight. I believe that I am a Christian and that I am saved, but I do not feel ready to go." Set your house in order, then, for your house cannot be right if it is not in order! If your house is in order, why, then you are ready to die! There is no right living except living as you would wish to live if you knew that this was to be your last day. The right way to spend the next hour is so to spend it as if it were your last hour. The Lord bring us into that happy condition that it shall not matter to us one single farthing whether we live or whether we die—and may He keep us in that blessed state, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 18:1-19.**

**Verse 1.** *I will love You, O Lord, my strength.* “I do love You, and I will love You yet more and more. I bind myself to You for the future as well as the present.”

**2.** *The LORD is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* Note how David delights to heap up poetic imagery to describe his God. They who glory in the Lord would gladly speak worthily of Him and because there is no one object in Nature that can fully set Him forth, they mention many, as David does here. Like he, if we would convey even a faint idea of what God is to us, we must think of all things that are strong and worthy of our confidence—and putting them all together, we must say that our God, our strength, in whom we trust, is all this and much more,

**3.** *I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies.* Prayer brings salvation. Prayer must, however, be mingled with praise, for prayer and praise make up the breath of the Christian life. Have I not often reminded you that we breathe in the air of Heaven by prayer, and then breathe it out again in grateful praise?

**4, 5.** *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.* “They were before me, behind me, all around my path whichever way I turned.”

**6.** *In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears.* What a difference there is between this living God of David—our living God—and that impersonal nonentity which, nowadays, is regarded by many as God. The god of the pantheist—what is he? A nobody and a nothing! But our God made the heaven; and our God hears the prayer of all who truly cry unto Him.

**7.** *Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was angry.* The cry of one of His oppressed children stirred Him to anger! Nothing moves the heart of God like an injury done to His people. You remember how the Prophet Zechariah wrote to the captive Jews in Babylon, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts, He that touches you touches the apple of His eye.”

**8, 9.** *There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under His feet.* In this wonderful poetic description, Jehovah is represented as descending from His Throne at the cry of one of His children in distress.

**10.** *And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.* So swift is prayer to reach the ears of God, and so swift is God to come and answer His people’s prayers!

**11.** *He made darkness His secret place; His pavilions round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.* Like an Oriental king who travels beneath his royal canopy, the Lord is pictured as coming to earth with the bursting clouds and opening heavens as the pavilion of the Deity.

**12.** *At the brightness that was before Him, His thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.* These are some of the weapons with which He assails the adversaries of His people. With this dread artillery, He smote Pharaoh of old when He rained hail upon the land of Egypt, and fire mingled with the hail, and the fire ran along the ground.

**13, 14.** *The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning, and discomfited them.* God Himself came forth on His people's behalf, and fought for them from Heaven. As we read that "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera," so did God make the very tempests in the skies to be like an invincible legion, sweeping before it the enemies of His anointed servant.

**15-18.** *Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. They prevented me in the day of my calamity. They went before him, they blocked his way.*

**18, 19.** *But the LORD was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me because He delighted in me.* Oh, how sweetly this record continues! Never was there a poem more lofty in its diction. Even Milton cannot equal the language of this Psalm! This Inspired writing rises superior to all human compositions, even if regarded only from the poetic point of view. Oh, what must have been the Psalmist's experience when he was delivered after this wonderful fashion! And if God has delivered you and me in a quieter and gentler way, yet He has quite as surely delivered us! And blessed be His name from this time forth, and even forevermore!

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—18 (Version 1), 900, 196.**

—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.**

# “YOUR FIRST LOVE”

## NO. 2399

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1895.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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**“Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the LORD,  
‘I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your  
espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a  
land that was not sown.’”  
Jeremiah 2:2.**

THIS was the Word of Jehovah to His ancient people. He remembered the faithfulness and earnestness of Israel when the nation was first born and came out of Egypt under Moses—and went after God into “the waste howling wilderness.” Alas, in later years, they would not obey, or trust, or rejoice in God! He therefore tells the Prophet Jeremiah to say to them that He remembers their better days—they seemed to have forgotten, “but,” says the Lord—“I have not forgotten. ‘I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals.’”

**I.** Using the text practically for our own profit, I make this first observation, that GOD REMEMBERS WITH GRACE THE BEST THINGS OF HIS PEOPLE’S EARLY DAYS.

Some of us were converted to God when we were very young and we look back with pleasure upon our early days. But, whether we look back upon them with pleasure or not, God does, and He says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals.” Why does God remember and prize so highly the early piety of His people, their first faith, their first love, their first zeal?

I think that it is, first, because *all these were His own work*. If there was anything good in us, in the early days after our conversion, the Lord worked it all! Remember Paul’s questions to the Corinthians—“Who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive?” If there was in you any light, or life, or love, it was the gift of the Spirit of God. If there was any repentance, if there was any faith, it was the work of the Holy Spirit! A man remembers his own work and God, the Holy Spirit, never forgets any of His work upon the spirits of men whom He forms anew.

God also remembers with pleasure those best things in His people’s early days because *they gave Him great delight at the time*. It seems a strange thing to say, but it is strangely, yet blessedly true, that it gave God great pleasure to see us repent. Those first tears which we tried to secretly brush away were so precious to the Lord that He stored them away in His bottle! That first faith of ours, though it was but the feeble

tottering of a babe in Grace, was very lovely in God’s sight. You know how mothers love to recollect the first words their children began to speak and the broken notes and strange tones in which they lisped their first childish sentences? Well, even so does God remember His children’s early utterances which gave Him such pleasure when He first heard them. Let not any of you imagine that God is indifferent to your first prayers, your first praises, your first reformations and purging away of sin! No, He takes infinite delight in them all, for, “like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Therefore, you can be sure that the things which gave Him such joy in your early Christian experience have not faded from His gracious memory!

It is very sweet, however, to reflect that when God says that He remembers the love of our espousals, and the kindness of our youth, *He does not mention the faults connected with our early days*. Our gracious God has a very generous memory—we have often noticed this in the Scriptures. When the Lord and His angels came to Abraham’s tent in the plains of Mamre, to give the Patriarch the promise that a son and heir should be born to him, Sarah turned eavesdropper behind the tent doors. It was bad manners on her part and when she had overheard what the Lord said, she disbelieved Him and laughed within herself. This was worse manners, still, on her part, to laugh at the Divine Prophecy, and when she was brought to book for it, she denied that she had laughed, which was still worse! When she laughed within herself, she said, “After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old, also?” And the Holy Spirit, writing in the New Testament about her, does not say anything concerning her lie, or her unbelief, but He mentions the only good thing about her speech, which was that she called her husband, “lord”—“For after this manner in the old time the holy women, also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling Him lord.”

Oh, the gracious goodness that spies out the diamond on the dunghill! There was but one bright star in all that murky sky, yet the Spirit of God saw it and moved Peter to write concerning it! That which was to Sarah’s credit is recorded, while that which was to her *discredit* is blotted out. “You have heard of the patience of Job,” have you not? The Holy Spirit is very careful to remind us, in the New Testament, of the patience of Job, but He does not say anything about Job’s impatience! Yet the Patriarch cursed the day of his birth in a very bitter and wicked fashion and this might have been remembered to his shame, but it was not. Ah, our blessed Lord, when He forgives our sin, forgets it, too! But He remembers all the excellencies and all the Graces which His Spirit works in the hearts and lives of His people.

Besides this, *the Lord so remembers the best things of our early days that He recounts them*. In looking back upon my first days with God, I can see much to deplore, much in which, as a young man, I fell very short of what I ought to have been. But God says to me, and to each one of you who are His children, “I remember you; and I do not remember your shortcomings, your blunders, your headstrong hastiness, your

faultiness; but, 'I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of these espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.'" To my mind, it is very sweet that the Lord should so recollect all that was good in His people, in the days gone by, that He recounted it, and recorded it in His Word.

Now, to show how strong is the Lord's memory of all that was good in His people at their beginnings, *He gives a detailed account of it*. He says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth." Let us try whether we can remember how we showed our kindness to our God in our early days. We resolved, when first we knew the Lord, that we would live wholly to His praise and we tried to begin, almost as soon as we were converted, to do a little something for our Master. We did all that we could do with the little strength that we then had. It was not much that we could do, but, in looking back upon it, we remember that it seemed a great deal to us, then. We prayed very earnestly over it. We went to our work with much trembling—we were very diffident in ourselves, but we had a firm confidence in the Gospel—and we had a sweet hope in God that even *we* might do something for His praise!

Now, perhaps, we go to our Sunday school class and forget to pray! We sit down, open the book and feel quite competent to teach. Possibly now we go into the pulpit and begin to preach. It is quite a matter of course with us—we have delivered so many sermons that we feel quite easy about our power to instruct the people—but it was not so at first. I can remember how my knees knocked together when I first preached the Gospel, for fear that I should not preach it all, and should not deliver my soul so as to be clear of the blood of all men! What sighs my sermons cost me—and what tears! And, surely, God remembers all this, for He says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth. You were but a youth, but then your heart was all aglow with sacred fervor, your spirit was firmly confiding in your God, your zeal was burning for My Glory."

Then the Lord adds, "I remember you...*the love of your espousals*." Oh, some of us did love God very fervently in our early days! I can recollect the day of my Baptism very well. At this moment it comes back to my memory—I cannot help remembering it because the text suggests that we should, each one, think of our first days with God. It was a summer's morning, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, 1850, and quite early, at the very rising of the sun, I was up, that I might have a quiet hour or two of prayer to God, as thus commenced my public life as a Christian avowing my faith in my Lord Jesus. Then there came a long walk of some eight miles or so to get to the place of Baptism at Isleham Ferry. As I walked along the country road, that week-day morning, with the birds all about me singing, oh, I did feel that I loved my Lord! My soul seemed to dance within me for very joy!

My friends were not believers in Baptism as it is taught in the Word of God and, therefore, I was about to do a strange thing, for none of my family had thus confessed Christ publicly by being immersed in the name of the Sacred Trinity! I remember standing by the river's bank with a great crowd of people all around in barges and boats, looking on. And

when I had walked some considerable distance into the stream to be immersed, and when I rose from the liquid grave, I remember how I felt that, if all the angels in Heaven and all the devils in Hell were gathered there, it mattered not one jot to me! I was Christ’s and I had given myself up to be buried with Him, to rise with Him and to live and labor for Him as long as the Lord should spare me! That day my love to my God was bright, and warm, and burning—and that evening, at the little prayer meeting in the vestry, I, who had been the most timid lad, perhaps, in all the world, and never opened my mouth for my Master in public, before, ventured to praise and bless God vocally in the midst of His people and, blessed be His holy name, I have never left off doing so from that day to this!

Many of you might tell a story of your early days which would be much more remarkable than mine. But whether there is anything in them to interest others, or not, God says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness.” Those were good days, blessed days, days of Heaven upon the earth!—

**“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!”**

And they also seemed to be as sweet to God as they were to us!

You observe that the Lord speaks in our text of Israel’s going after Him in the wilderness—“I remember you...*when you went after Me in the wilderness.*” That was a grand Exodus when all the hosts of Israel that were in Egypt, without exception, took away all that they had and marched out into the desert! It was nothing but a wilderness; yet, when Moses bade them quit the flesh pots of Egypt, they all did so—“and the children of Israel went up harnessed (or, as the margin has it, “by five in a rank”) out of the land of Egypt.” Doubling up their unleavened dough and carrying their kneading-troughs in their clothes upon their shoulders, they went right away into the wilderness of the Red Sea, “in a land that was not sown,” where they could never reap a harvest, and where it was only natural to fear that they might die of famine. It was bravely done of Israel, thus, to face the howling wilderness as Jehovah led the way in the cloudy-fiery pillar!

Perhaps I speak to some of you who, when you became Christians, had to give up your employment, or to quit some evil trade. Perhaps you had to run the gauntlet of a workshop where everybody pointed the finger at you and laughed you to scorn. Some of you had hard times in those days, yet I will not call them hard, for you never had, in all your life, such joy as you had then! When everybody gave you an ill word, then Christ was most precious to you and your love to Him burned with a steady flame! I think that the happiest days the Church of Christ has ever had, have been her days of persecution! What joy the Methodists had when everybody mobbed them! What bliss the Covenanters experienced when the dragoons of Claverhouse hunted them like partridges upon the mountains! God gives an extraordinary measure of joy to His



people when, in their first days, they, for His sake, can endure anything and everything that they may glorify His holy name!

Now, whatever you may have suffered in the days gone by, the Lord says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." God has a very lively recollection of the simple trust of His people when they began their Christian career, of their child-like confidence in Him, of their intensely earnest prayers, of their delight in His worship and of their readiness for His service! It is a thousand pities that this bright experience should ever fade, but whether it fades or not, God says, "I remember it."

**II.** So now, secondly, I want to show you that GOD REMEMBERS, WITH A GRACIOUS PURPOSE, THE BEST THINGS OF OUR EARLY DAYS.

He remembers them that He may *make use of and honor us in our later days*. There is many a man, now honored and beloved in the service of God, who would not have been where he is if he had not been faithful to God as a youth. And I believe that there is many a man who has missed his opportunity of serving God through not beginning well. Young man, I charge you, when you become a Christian, be out and out for Christ! Be true to your convictions through and through! Do not neglect the least thing that you see to be in the Scriptures, but determine to follow the Lord fully. If you do that, you will be the kind of man that God will use! There are plenty of young men who are pliant as the willow, they will bend to anything and anyone—and God says, "I can never make anything of them" and, though He saves them, He puts them in the background as far as His service is concerned.

But if there is a young fellow who, from his very youth, is straight as an arrow, one who cannot be bribed, who must do the right and will carry out his convictions at all costs, yes, to the devil's face if necessary, God will say, "That man will do for My service, I will make use of him. He shall be a pillar in the Church in years to come." "I remember you," says the Lord, "the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals and, therefore, I intend to use you greatly to My honor and praise, and to your own joy and honor, too."

And, depend upon it, God remembers these early faithful ones for another reason, namely, *to instruct them and to reveal Himself to them*. "There," He says, "I would have taught that young man something, but he would not learn it, so he shall never know much—he will be only a poor fool all his life. I set a light before him, but he preferred the darkness. Consequently, he shall go on with just glimmer enough to get into Heaven, but a clear perception of My Truth, a deep joy in that Truth, he shall never know as he might have known it if he had, in his youth been faithful and obedient to his God."

I believe that the Lord also remembers what we do in our youthful love and kindness, *that He may sustain us in the time of trouble*. Some poor child of God is in great distress and he cries to his heavenly Father. He does not dare to plead anything that he has *done*—that would be quite

out of character for a child of God—but, for all that, God says, "I remember you; though you have very properly forgotten what you did long ago, and have wept over your many defects since your early days, yet I remember the kindness of your youth, and I will help you. I will be with you in the hour of your need, and I will deliver you."

Especially do I think that this must be true *in the time of old age*. That is a sweet prayer of David, in the 71<sup>st</sup> Psalm, "O God, You have taught me 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." I know what many firms do, especially in these days when business is so bad and competition is so keen—they begin to weed out the men who must go. The head of the firm says, "There is old John, you see, he is between 60 and seventy—he must go." "But, Sir, he carried you on his back when you were a boy. He was with your father." "I cant help it, he must go. He is getting too old and we can get a boy to do his work." That is how men do, do they not? But that is *not* the way God does! He lets us remain in His employment when there is very little that we can do. We pray to Him—

**"Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord,"**

and He says, "I will never cast you off."

Once His servants, we are engaged for life! Once enlisted in His army, He will never drum us out of the ranks of the soldiers of salvation! We shall be His, forever, for He says, "I remember you." "I remember what you used to do when you could do it. I remember how you worked for Me when you could work for Me, and now that you are getting gray and old, and can do but little in your last days, I will uphold you and bear you safely through." There is nothing in our service that we care to remember, on which we can build any claim upon God—but yet, in the fatherly discipline of His great house, He remembers all that His servants have done and, oftentimes, He sends them cheer, comfort, strength and honor which He might have denied them had they been unfaithful to Him!

Therefore I would encourage you who are beginning the Christian life to walk closely with God. Beware of little slips while you are young men and young women. A little awry with you when you are single may make much awry with you when you are married and when your children are about you. He who begins amiss in the morning of life will probably go the *more* amiss before that life comes to its nightfall. I would charge everyone whom my voice can reach to be quite clear about what his duty is towards God as a Christian and, once clear as to what it is, to go straight ahead in the performance of it.

I am obliged to refer to myself because we must, each one, tell his own experience. Well now, upon that matter of Baptism which I have already mentioned—reading in the Scriptures, I found that *Believers* were baptized. I had never heard anybody preach about Believers' Baptism. When I read about it in the New Testament, I did not know another person in the world who thought as I did and I came to the conclusion that it did not matter to me whether anybody agreed with me or not—my duty was plain! If I was the only person who had found out the will of God, I was

bound to obey it, for I believed it to be God's will that Believers should be baptized on profession of their faith—and I fancied that I should be the first person in modern days to make such a confession! That idea made no difference to me, nor does it now—if there was *anything* that was taught in the Scriptures which had not occurred to anybody else before, I should not ask whether any other person had or had not seen it!

If God commands it, it is not for us to ask whether it is fashionable, or according to the order of other people, but to obey it straightway without a question! I have found, through life, that the habit of going by God's Word as far as I understand it, honestly and rigidly, and giving way to nobody, has kept my road pretty clear. At first, people used to get in my way. Then I drove along the right side of the road and if they did not move, I was obliged to run into them, or, if they ran into me, I could not help it. Now I find that they just let me take the right side of the road and go straight ahead! I should do that whether they let me or not—therefore I have got to be "a chartered libertine" in these matters—permitted to do what I conceive to be right according to the Word of God!

If a soldier, in any of our barracks, does not dare to kneel down to pray before his comrades, he will have a hard time of it. But let him once do it boldly and he can do it, again, after that! If there is any young man here who is in a house of business, and he says, "I will be a religious man, but I will be very moderate about it," he will have a hard fight of it, I know he will! But if you come straight out and say, "I am beholden to no mortal man as to what I shall do. I am only God's servant and if He bids me do anything, I raise no question about what others may say of it—the thing has to be done and I am going to do it," why, you will get respect before long! It is, after all, the easiest way to take the hardest way when that way is right! Up with your flag, man! There, let it brave the battle and the breeze, and all that may come to it—you will win the victory so!

But to pop your flag up when everybody is out of the way, and then to stand and look through your telescope, and presently to say, "There is somebody coming, I must pull the flag down," and then, after a while, say, "It ought to be up, the gentleman has gone. He will not look at it—haul it up again! Am I not brave? Oh, but here comes somebody else, pull it down, John, fold it up and put it away till there is nobody about—fly it at nights when no eye can see it!" That is a dastardly, cowardly way of pretending to be religious which I hope none of you will wish to follow! Oh, that in early life you may bravely follow your God! He will remember it to your credit and honor in the days to come!

**III.** Now, lastly, and this ought to have been the major part of my discourse, GOD WOULD HAVE US REMEMBER THE BEST THINGS OF OUR EARLY DAYS FOR OUR REBUKE.

Ah, you are not what you used to be—not so decided, not so joyous, not so faithful! What have you been doing? Ask yourselves a few questions. *Were you not happier, then, than you are now?* If it was so, then go back on the old track! If it was better with you in your early days than it is now, get back to the old quarters! Pray the Lord to restore to you the

joy of His salvation! Why, Pilgrim, by this time, if you had held on your way, you might have been very much nearer the gates of the Celestial City! What a deal of time you have lost—and now you have to go back to that arbor where you fell asleep and lost your roll! You have to go over the ground *three times*—first an advance, then a going back, and then a going forward, again—yet once might have been enough! You have been very foolish and you have lost a good deal, but now, by God's Grace, since He says, "I remember you in better times," answer to Him, "Lord, I remember those better times, too, and, by Your gracious help, I am going back that I may have them again."

For listen. *Do you think you were a fool then?* Why, you were up early in the morning that you might get to hear the Gospel! You used to get into a crowded place and stand in the aisle! Somehow you were not half as tired when you used to stand all the while as you now are when you sit! And the preaching—what wonderful preaching it used to be! I do not suppose that it was any better than what you hear, now, but still, it did *seem* all on fire, did it not? And those Prayer Meetings! And your own private devotions—what hallowed seasons they were! And the Bible, when you read it—how it used to shine out in letters of fire before your eyes! Were you a fool then? Were you deceived, do you think? If so, I do not wonder at your turning back! But if you were no fool, then, but a wise man, what are you, now, that you have gone away from all this blessedness? Oh, come back! I charge you, by the living God, return to the place from which you have gone astray! Do you not owe more to God, now, than you did then? You have come a good way on the road since then—ought you to love Him *less*? He has blessed you. He has preserved you. He has forgiven you. He has manifested Himself to you. You have had some grand times when your heart has burned within you—you have sometimes had a taste of Heaven upon earth! Should you not, therefore, love Him much more than at the first? Oh, come back! Come back with tears of deep regret and give yourself, again, to God!

For, look, *you have already slipped a long way down.* Why, looking up, I can hardly see how high you used to be! You were so near Heaven's gate, but you have come down, oh, so far! In the course of a year or two, more, if you keep on going down, you will be still lower! "The Down-Grade" is awfully easy—where will *you* soon be? I hope that it will not come to pass that you will be drinking the cup of the drunkard, or singing the song of the profane. "Oh, no!" you say, "I will never do *that*." I do not know. I am not sure. If a man were to fall off the Monument, when he had fallen some 20 feet, I do not see what is to prevent him from falling to the ground. Once begin to fall and who knows how low you may go? Oh, for a miracle of mercy to stop you in your dread descent! May God work that miracle and save you by His Grace!

Do you not think, dear Friends, any of you who are losing your first love and turning from your first kindness to God, *that you are sowing some ugly thorns for your deathbed?* You may lie a long time, perhaps in sickness and weakness, and then it will be a wretched thing to turn on that uneasy pillow and say, "Ah, I did not serve God as I ought to have

done! I did not live to God as I should have done." It is amazing how some truly good men will, at the last, trouble themselves about very little things. I knew a dear friend who used to have a church in his house. A number of Christian people met for worship and when he grew ill, the singing was too much for him. I think that it really *was* too much for him to bear and the doctor said that his friends had better go somewhere else on the Sabbath—and they did—and I think very properly so. Yet, when my friend lay dying, I had hard work to comfort him, "because," he said, "I turned the people of God out of my house." I said, "No, you did not! You were ill and it was not fit that they should disturb you when you were so weak. I think that you were quite right, my Brother." "Oh, no!" he said, "Oh, no! I shall never forgive myself for that."

And he was whipping himself for it most cruelly. And I thought, "Oh, dear me! The many that I know who have not such a tender conscience as this dear man of God has!" Still, let none of us do anything for which we shall have to flog ourselves when we come to die. Child of God, act so that when you have to look back upon it all, though you know that all your sin is forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus, you may also be able to feel, "In this thing God helped me to do righteously and to serve Him with all my heart, and so now, when I have come to the close of the chapter, it is with devout gratitude for having been preserved in integrity and not with bitter regrets for having been unfaithful."

Have you ever seen a waterlogged ship towed into harbor? She has encountered a storm and all her masts are gone. She has sprung a leak and is terribly disabled. But a tug has got hold of her and is drawing her in—a poor miserable wreck, just rescued from the rocks. I do not want to enter Heaven that way, "scarcely saved." But now look at the other picture. There is a fair wind, the sails are full, there is a man at the helm, every sailor is in his place and the ship comes in with a swing! She stops at her proper place in the harbor and down goes the anchor with cheery shouts of joy from the mariners who have reached their desired haven!

That is the way to go to Heaven—in full sail, rejoicing in the blessed Spirit of God who has given us an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! May you so live, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that you shall go into Heaven that way, with an abundant entrance! And may none of us be found among those who have so lived on earth that they will not be missed when they are gone—and who will only be welcomed into Heaven as those who are "saved, yet so as by fire"!

So I commend these thoughts to you. Let our days be such that we may look back upon them with pleasure! And if they are not so, now, let us begin to look back upon them with *repentance*—and turn to God with full purpose of heart, for His dear Son's sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 2:1-25.**

**Verses 1-3.** *Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem saying, Thus says the LORD, 'I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first-fruits of His increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, says the LORD.'* God reminds His people of what they used to be in their first days, when they came out of Egypt. They had very sadly declined from what they then were. They were none too faithful to the Lord, then, but they had fallen back, even, from that condition! Does not this passage come home to some of you who are not, now, what you once were? May the Lord graciously speak through these words to your ears and to your heart, if you have backslidden from Him in any degree!

**4, 5.** *Hear you the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus says the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? What faults have you to find with God, that you have left Him? What fault have you seen in the ever-blessed Christ, that your love to Him should have grown cold?*

**6, 7.** *Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when you entered, you defiled My land, and made My heritage an abomination.* It is a sad charge against anybody that he forgets the care that God has taken of him in the days of his poverty and affliction. When a man becomes rich and is surrounded by earthly comforts, it is a terrible thing that he should then forget God, or that, the more God does for him, the less he thinks of God! This is strangely ungrateful conduct, yet the children of Israel acted thus. They were better in the wilderness—though they were bad enough there—they were better in the wilderness than they were in Canaan, better on the desert sand than they were in the land that flowed with milk and honey! And there are some, nowadays, who were better in their poverty than they are in their prosperity—and some who were better by a long way in their times of sickness than they now are in their palmy days of health! Alas, that it should be so!

**8.** *The priests said not, Where is the LORD? And they that handle the Law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.* It is always ill with the people when the ministers go wrong. If the dogs do not protect the flock, but are dumb dogs that cannot bark, what is to become of the sheep?

**9-11.** *Therefore I will yet plead with you, says the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Cyprus and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there is such a thing. Have nations changed their gods, which are yet not gods? But My*

*people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.* God bids them go to the West, across the Mediterranean, to Cyprus, that is, *probably* Cyprus, or to go to the East, to Kedar, or Arabia, and see whether any Gentile nation ever changed its gods, which really were not gods. "And yet," says the Lord, "here is a people that knew the one living and true God, but they have turned aside to idols—'My people has changed their glory for that which does not profit.'" O Friend, if there is no truth in religion, I do not wonder that you give it up! But if you ever knew its blessed sweetness. If Christ was ever precious to you—if you did once enjoy the Gospel of His Grace—how is it that you have grown cold towards it and declined from its ways?

**12, 13.** *Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, says the LORD. For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* To go away from the flowing fountain to the stagnant waters of a cistern is great folly! But to go and hew out broken cisterns that can hold no water, but merely mock your thirst, is madness of the worst kind!

**14.** *Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave? Why is he spoiled?* God made him to be His son, not His slave, but Israel went aside from God and so became a slave, being carried away into captivity by the very nation whose gods the chosen people worshipped!

**15, 16.** *The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitants. Also the children of Noph and Tahaphanes have broken the crown of your head.* The Israelites went and worshipped idols and then the very nations whose gods they worshipped invaded the land and broke the crown of their head, or made them bald, which was, to the Jews, a mark of mourning or of disgrace.

**17.** *Have you not procured this unto yourself, in that you have forsaken the LORD your God, when He led you by the way?* You who are depressed in soul. You who have grown spiritually poor. You who are in great trouble of heart, listen—"Have you not procured this unto yourself?" Did you not make the rod for your own back by going away from your God? It was well enough with you when you trusted in Him, but now that you have turned aside from Him, all these evils have come upon you! "Have you not procured this unto yourself, in that you have forsaken Jehovah, your God, when He led you by the way?"

**18.** *And now what have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?* "The waters of the Nile," or, as it may be read, "the waters of that muddy river." The Israelites had suffered so much during their long captivity in Egypt that one would have thought they would never have wanted to go near the house of bondage again—"What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?"

**18.** *Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?* You are trying to find pleasure in the world. You are going to the resorts of sin, to seek amusement there. If you are a child of God, "What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?"

Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?” What are you doing there, Elijah? You have lost the comforts of religion by your backsliding—and are you now trying to make up for them by going into the world’s gaiety? It will never do! You can never fill your belly with the husks that the swine eat. If you were one of the swine, you might do so—but if you are your Father’s son, it is only the bread in His house that will satisfy your hungry soul!

**19-25.** *Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backsliding shall reprove you: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken the LORD, your God, and that My fear is not in you, says the Lord GOD of hosts. For of old time I have broken your yoke, and burst your bands; and you said, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree you wander, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted you a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how, then, are you turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me? For though you wash yourself with niter, and take you much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord God. How can you say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See your way in the valley, know what you have done: you are a swift dromedary traversing her ways; a wild donkey used to the wilderness, that snuffs up the wind at her pleasure: in her occasion who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves. In her month they shall find her. Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst, but you said, There is no hope—no—for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.* God compares His erring people, in the delirium of their sin, to these wild creatures that cannot be tamed, but are driven by their ungovernable passions wherever they will. Alas, that men should be so sinful that God can only find a parallel to them in the wild donkeys of the wilderness!

See, also, what despair will do for its victims. When a man says, “There is no hope,” then he feels that for him there is no repentance. When he believes that God will not forgive him, then he will not turn from his evil ways. “You said, There is no hope, no, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.” God save any here present who are getting into the clutches of Giant Despair! May they know the true goodness of God and may that goodness lead them to repentance! Amen.

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



# THE LOVE OF OUR ESPOUSALS

## NO. 2926

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 30, 1876.

*“Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the Lord:  
I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your  
espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in  
a land that was not sown.”  
Jeremiah 2:2.*

BRETHREN, we may forget the past, but God does not. He says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth.” God’s mercies come to us in such a constant stream—they are so many and so varied that we are very apt to have a feeble memory towards them. But the Lord remembers what He has done for us and He expects a return. He remembers the kindness which He showed to us in our youth—for so some interpreters read this passage—and He remembers the love which He manifested towards us in the days of our espousals. As the husbandman remembers how he plowed the land—how he dug about the tree and fed it and, therefore, looks for a better harvest, or a larger crop of fruit, so does God remember what He did for us in our youth—how some of us were trained in godly households—sent to schools where the main part of our education was the fear of God—tenderly kept out of the way of temptation—fostered and nurtured in every good word and work. God remembers this.

If some now present are making no worthy return—when the Lord looks upon them for fruit He sees that they are bringing forth but wild grapes, though they may forget their indebtedness and their responsibility—let them remember that God remembers all of it and expects some response from them. Think, too, that there shall come a day when the Divine memory will touch our sleeping memory into activity—God will say to us, as Abraham said to Dives, “Son, remember”—and that remembrance may be the worm that never dies within the conscience and fuel for the fire that never shall be quenched! If men and women would but remember now what God did for them in years gone by, and remember what manner of people they ought to be in consequence of the mercy which has been lavished upon them, it would save them many regrets. It might, indeed, save them endless remorse!

I do not, however, think that that is exactly the meaning of the passage in the Hebrew. Our translators have, I believe, hit upon its real meaning which is that *God remembers* what we have done towards Him. He remembers our kindness and love to Him in the days of our espousals. He here alluded to the early history of the nation of Israel, when, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, they came out of Egypt,

passed through the Red Sea and traveled the great and howling wilderness wherein were pits and all manner of dangers. Led by the fiery cloudy pillar, they faithfully traversed the roads which God marked out for them until they came to be settled in the land which He had given them by a Covenant of salt.

Those first days of the Israelite nation were heroic times. Most nations have a grandeur about their early history. Indeed, it is often so grand that our modern doubters consign the whole of it to the region of myth and suppose that it is a mass of exaggeration! The early history of Switzerland and its William Tell, for instance, has been disputed, though I no more doubt the existence of William Tell than I do my own. Even the early history of England has come under many clouds and questions—and all because there was something heroic about it.

The early history of every Christian denomination is also exceedingly bright. If you take up, for instance, one of modern times, the Methodists, there is no page of Methodist history that can compare with the first, when they suffered and yet as boldly proclaimed the Gospel everywhere with a self-denying zeal worthy of Apostolic times! I think I might say that it is generally so with almost every church. “You did run well: who did hinder you?” Under the leadership of some one man whom the Lord clothes with power, as He did the Judges, one after the other, in the history of Israel, great things are done and marvels are worked. But soon there comes lukewarmness—a gradual slipping back into the ordinary and the commonplace—alas, I might almost say into declension and backsliding!

Now, as it has been with nations, that they have a great and heroic history at first and as it has generally been with churches that the primitive glory is the brightest, so is it often with individual Christians. “They begin—oh, with what zeal!—with what energy!—with what prayerfulness!—with what consecration! If they do not begin so, the more is the pity, for they do not often improve upon their beginnings. But many do begin so and, after a while, the runner runs into a wall and the walker sits down, at last, in the Arbor of Ease and no longer runs with diligence the race that is set before him.

The point I want to call your attention to is this—that the Lord sees His people when they are in that good state, notes it down and remembers it, makes a record of it and says, “I remember you as you were years ago. I remember you, young man, when you were young. I remember you, woman, when you were yet a girl. I remember you—the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals—when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” God remembers those zealous times, those happy seasons, those enthusiastic hours! And if we have come to an ebb, if we are now cold and almost dead and have forgotten the better days—God has not forgotten them! He keeps a record of them for divers uses, some of which us we will try to think of now as God may help us.

**I.** Our first head, then, is THE LORD’S COMMENDATION OF THE YOUTH OF HIS PEOPLE. He commends Israel for what she used to be and He commends each Believer for what he used to be if he used to be as Israel once was.

*God is never slow to commend His children when He can commend them.* It is marvelous how the Lord sometimes seems to shut His eyes to the *faults* of His children when He would give them praise. You recollect Sarah, when she laughed and said, "Shall I have pleasure, my lord being old, also?" It was an unbelieving, wicked laugh, and yet the Holy Spirit commends Sarah and says of her that she called her husband "lord." He puts down that which was the only good point about it and seems almost to wink at her mocking doubt because she called her husband, "lord." Sometimes the Lord puts His eyes on what is good in His children and speaks of only that. As to what is wrong in them, there are other times when He will bring those wrongs to remembrance and chasten them in order to put their sin away. But when He is commending, He will fix His eyes on the pearl and not touch the oyster shell—He will see the star and say nothing about the black sky in which it shines!

Well, Beloved, when the Israelites came out of Egypt they were a long, long way from being what they ought to be. It was difficult to make them believe in Moses. They were ready enough to quarrel with him when the count of the bricks was increased and, even after all the miracles, no sooner did they get out of Egypt than they began to be afraid as they heard Pharaoh's rattling chariots approaching! Then they were not far in the wilderness before they began to murmur because they had no water—and in a short time they murmured again because they wanted flesh to eat instead of the manna which God had given them. But now, the Lord seeing them altogether wandering away, looks back even upon that imperfect condition with something of satisfaction and wishes that, notwithstanding the faults of that early period, they were still as they were then. "I remember," He says, "the kindness of your youth." But has He forgotten their unkindness? Yes—that was His own promise. "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." He has forgotten them. Does He not remember when, instead of coming after Him in the wilderness, they said, "Make us gods which shall go before us"? Yes, but He does not mention that, for He says, "I will cast all their sins behind My back." He remembers now only the excellence of their former state and so, Beloved, He will remember whatever excellence there was in our first estate when we first came to Christ—in spite of all its failure and imperfection.

Now what can there be in our early life for God to remember?

Well, I trust there is to be remembered at this present moment *the love of our espousals*. Let me call it to your mind. Do you recollect your first love? Oh, how clear it was—how warm! How undivided! How wholly given up to Christ! Did you love the Savior? You had been much forgiven and, oh, you did love Him! You could not be enough with Him, or think too much of Him, or even say too much about Him. Did you love Him? Why, if any scoffed at you for His sake, you were pleased beyond measure! You would have been willing to go to prison for Him! Yes, to have died for Him. Did you love Him in your first days? Why, you know how you shared of your substance with great delight for His cause. You sometimes wished you had a thousand times as much and then you would have thought it a mere trifle to lay it all at His feet. There was a

great breaking of alabaster boxes in those early days and often was the house filled with the perfume of the ointment!

You even grew angry if you heard anybody speak a word against Him and His cause! Sometimes you had a zeal that went far beyond your knowledge and you did some things in the earnestness of your soul which were not altogether wise. But you did love Him. Oh, how you loved Him! The zeal of His House did eat you up—every passion and power that you possessed seemed to be altogether consecrated to Him! Did you love Him? Why, you loved the meanest of His people—there was not a lamb in all the flock you would have disdained to feed. You loved His Book—the smallest promise charmed you. You loved His House—you used to wish that all the week were Sundays and that every Sunday lasted a month. You wished to be in the land—

***“Where congregations never break up  
And Sabbaths have no end,”***

because you could not take your fill of His sweet love. You wanted more and still more. That was the love of your espousals. God remembers it and looks back upon it and commends it. And I want you, with whom it may have been 25 years ago, as well as you with whom it is only lately, to look back upon it and remember it, too. I hope there are some who are in the middle of this spiritual honeymoon even now. May it last forever with you! May you never grow cold. May you never wander from your Lord. But where it is a thing of the past, remember it and think of it now with pleasure. Perhaps I might add that some of you should also think of it with regret and shame.

The Lord commends His people because, in addition to that love, there seems to have been much exultation and delight and many acts corresponding to the love. He remembers *the kindness of our youth*. “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals.” I think it means not only that these people of old loved Him, but that they *showed* that love. Just see them when they have passed through the Red Sea and, for the first time, set their foot upon the desert sand of the other side. Miriam takes her timbrel and all the daughters of Israel go forth in dancing! And they sing, with shouts, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He cast into the sea.” “He is my God and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” Those were high days! How they exulted in that dear and glorious name! Why, there was not, throughout all their camp, a dog that dared move his tongue against Jehovah that day! Even those who worshipped the star of their god Remphan remained silent. Even the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt who knew not the Lord kept very quiet. The whole host seemed to be exulting in the Lord. There was not merely love, but it was love that overflowed. Their cup ran over. It was love that set the joy-bells ringing and brought out the timbrel and the harp again and again and again, that they might praise the Lord who had destroyed their enemies!

Do you remember the experience in your own life that answered to this? I do, well. I go back in thought to the time when I felt as light as a feather—when my very soul felt like the dancing snowflakes that fell around me on that morning when first I was washed in the blood of the

Lamb. Oh, the exultation I had in His salvation! Then did I wish that rocks and hills would break their everlasting silence to extol Him. No music then was like His charming name, nor half so sweet to me, nor is there now, blessed be His Grace! There are some, alas, who have gone back from that point who must, nevertheless, recollect those times of ecstatic joy when first they knew the Lord. The Lord remembers it too. "I remember it," He says, "I remember it." As the husband remembers the first love of his wife and, perhaps, tells her of it to bring back the sweet, young, fresh feeling again, so does the Lord remind any of you who have become cold about those blessed days, in the hope of compelling you to similar kindness towards Him now.

Then, observe, He goes on to speak about how closely His people followed Him. He remembers *the reality of our fellowship*. "When you went after Me." In those days we said and not only said it, but actually carried it out into action—

***"In all my Lord's appointed ways  
My journey I'll pursue."***

"Where He goes, I go," we said. "Where He bids me go, I go. Only let me be able by Grace to follow the example of Jesus Christ and it shall be my delight to put my foot down where He puts His and to tread in His footsteps with sedulous and anxious care." Do you remember when you used to feel afraid to put one foot before another lest you should go aside? And whenever you did anything you always sought His guidance? How you often took the words out of your mouth and looked at them before you spoke them, lest you should say anything but what He allowed. Oh, that was a blessed time! I wish that carefulness, that watching of your soul, that intense desire to be right before the Lord even in little things and in nothing to offend the jealous heart of the Lover of your soul would always continue. We are never healthier than when we have a conscience quick as the apple of an eye, when our whole nature is delicately sensitive even to the thought of sin. Just as the sensitive plant begins to curl up its leaves the moment it is touched, as at those times our soul is wary, and coy, and tender at the faintest approach of sin. It was so at first and God commends us for it, for He says that we followed Him closely. He still commends us for it, where He finds such Grace abiding.

He commends the people, in fact, because they came out in order to follow Him. He remembers *the steadfastness of our purpose*. "When you went after Me in the wilderness," He says, which signifies that the ancient people came out from Egypt in order to follow God. Was it not a grand thing when every Israelite—for there was not one left behind—left his house and his home for God? It may not have been a very comfortable home, perhaps, for they had been dwelling among the pots and among the brick kilns, but everyone left his home. You would have thought that somebody would have said, "Poor as it is, it is where my children were born and I do not want to leave it." But they all went out! Some of them turned all their little property into jewels so as to make it portable—and came away with the little dough that they had made up in what our version calls their kneading troughs. "Not a hoof was left behind," it is said. That is to say, no man left so much as a lamb, or a

sheep, or an ox—they came out, all of them, with all that they had. It was a wonderful thing that God's power over them led them to make such a famous and perfect exodus!

But it was also so with us in our first days. We came right out from the world. Perhaps we were rather noted in worldly circles—we had gone deep into its pleasures. There were a great many who thought us jolly good fellows and reckoned that we should never turn Methodist—*never*. But we snapped every tie, cut every connection, broke every link and out we came! You recollect what it cost some of you in those days? Perhaps you were in a workshop and you had to run the gauntlet of the sneers of all the men. Everybody knew about it, but you did not care a button whether all the devils in Hell knew about it! You defied them all. You gloried in the change. Perhaps you were a man walking in another rank of society. You thought it rather hard at first, but, by-and-by, you said, "If this is to be vile, I will be still viler," and you came right out. Perhaps you lost friends by your conversion, or lost prestige—got on the wrong side of the door of society, as they call it, and found yourself dead to it—no longer one of its world. But that did not fret you a bit, you would have given up fifty thousands of such poor wretched worlds as this world to have Christ! You felt sorry you could not surrender so much as the martyrs did when they went to prison and to death—you almost wished you could do so, for it seemed such a blessed thing to come boldly out for Christ. You did not think, then, about the leeks and the garlic and the onions. Some of your older brethren have got that flavor in their noses a little and they have begun to think about the delicacies of Egypt. But in your early days, in the time of the love of your espousals, what cared you for leeks and garlic and onions? You were looking after that Heavenly manna! You were drawing from the eternal fountain, water that flowed from the Rock which God had smitten for you. You were satisfied, then, with the unseen things that faith grasped—and you were glad in the prospect of the good land towards which you had steadfastly set your face. Alas, if it is not so now!

But still the Lord remembers *the reality of our early faith*. The Israelites came out with great truthfulness and self-denial. Whatever they had, whether little or much, they had to leave it all—for what? Well, for an inheritance, but then the inheritance was all in the clouds. What did they get? As far as they could see, they were only to go into a wilderness, into a land that was not sown. Carnal reason would have met them and said, "Now, you are never going to do it! What? Going into the wilderness of Zin? It is full of fiery serpents! It is said to be a land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death, a land that no man ever passed through and where no man dwells! Are you going after God there? Why, the experience of God's people is full of troubles and trials and conflicts. You do not mean to say you are going after God *there*?"

Old Atheist, too, perhaps came and met you when you started and said that there was no Heaven, that there was no brave country such as you had read of. And those twin brothers, Timorous and Mistrust, said that there were lions and giants on the way and that you had better go back. Then came another and he said that it was a rough road and there

were dragons to be encountered, and Apollyon, the arch-enemy, to be fought. Nobody knew what of evil there was not—everything that was dreadful was there! “If you want to save your skin, you had better go back. Do not go forward,” they said. “Why, you ought to hear some of those who have been pilgrims, talk—they tell dreadful tales. There are some of them with very long faces and they know, you know. And if they have to confess such things, well, you had better mind what you are doing.” But the children of Israel, every one of them, followed the Lord into the wilderness wherein there was no water and plunged right in—a land of which they knew nothing. They went out boldly because of their faith in Jehovah that led the way.

Was not that what we did, too, in the days of our espousals? Yes, blessed be God! We counted the cost and then we said that we would follow our Lord whatever it might mean. We would watch with Him one hour, or all hours, and would drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism, or do anything and everything if but He would let us be numbered with His disciples and partake of His Glory at the last! Yes, we said it deliberately, some of us. We looked over all our prospects and it did seem like ruin if we followed Him. We saw that many of our comforts must go and they have gone. We knew that there would be conflicts and we find that there have been. We knew all that, but we loved Christ so much that we were something of the mind of holy Mr. Rutherford who says, in one of his loving letters to his Lord, “If there were seven Hells to go through to get to You, my Lord, give me but the word and I will wade through them.” That was just how you felt in those days, was it not? It is how some of us feel now. There are those who do not feel quite so earnest as they did, but the Lord remembers the love of their espousals when they went after Him into the wilderness.

And then He remembers *the bloom of our early holiness*. “Israel was holiness to the Lord,” and we, too, sought to give to the Lord the first fruits of our increase. We strove to live near to God and forsake every false way. Even some professors thought we were too nice and too precise, but we have learned since that it is not very probable that any of us shall err in that direction! We made a conscience of our thoughts, a conscience of our words—and we were always asking this man and the other, who, we thought, knew better than we did, whether such a thing might be right or not, for fear we should be mistaken. We desired in everything to reflect the image of Christ and to be obedient to His will. Well, now, this is how it was and this is what God remembers with pleasure and would have us remember, too!

God delights in the thought of the fervent love we gave Him when we knew first Him, our thoughtful and practical kindness towards His name, our steadfast resolve to follow Him at all lengths, our faith which took His least word as a warrant for action and our holiness which shrank even from the approach of sin. Happy are we if these things still abide with us. But if we have lost them, the Lord, like some fond mother recalling the infant days of her children, remembers them and beckons us back to our first love and our first works.

**II.** Now, WHY SHOULD WE ALSO REMEMBER OUR EARLY DAYS? That shall make our second point upon which, however, we will not prolong our discourse.

Let us hope that to some of us the text may be *a word of rebuke*. The Lord remembers what you were. He contrasts it with what you *are* and He asks you the reason for this falling off. I hope you noticed the words while I was reading the chapter. He says, "What iniquity have you found in Me that you have gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity and have become vain?" Remember how He rebukes you and says, "My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that hold no water." Now, if you have declined like this, Brothers and Sisters, though you have not given up religion, blessed be God—though you still dare make a profession and can do it honestly—yet if you are not as earnest, nor as holy, nor as loving, nor as prayerful as you used to be, God would chide you! Have you good reason for this? I am sure you have not and it has a very ugly look, for other people who do not know, will say, "Ah, you see, the thing is very fine when there is a novelty about it, and it is very pretty when you do not know much about it. But these old Christians have gone farther and they have fared worse! They have got more into the heart of the thing and they have found that it was not what they thought it was."

Oh, you are like the bad spies—you bring up an evil report of the land! Your gradual cooling down says to the outside world that Christ is not what we say He is and so we, poor ministers, suffer very much because of you! For we may preach hardest, but they do not believe our exhortations as they believe your lies! I tell you that one backsliding Christian does more harm to the Church of God than one minister can ever undo! And the dear children who are living near to God are often exposed to scorn through those of you that are settled upon your lees. You are never seen at Prayer Meetings anymore. You do not care much about an extra service in the week. You are so busy now, although you are not busier than you used to be—you never speak of Jesus Christ to others as you once used to do. Is Christ worse than He was? Does He deserve less at your hands? Do you owe Him less? Are you not, indeed, more in debt than you ever were to His rich mercy and free Grace? The more He does for you, are you going to do the less for Him? Because you are getting older, or have received more mercies, are you going to be less grateful? Is it to be true that the young people are to outshine you? The more you know and the more you grow, are you to love the less? Oh, I beseech you by the love of Jesus Christ and by His heart of mercy, do not allow it to be so, my Beloved, but pray that, by the Holy Spirit, you may be brought back to where you were—no, that you may be carried forward to something far beyond what you used to be when first you knew the Lord! So our text should come home as a word of rebuke.

Then, this Word of God should be used as *a word of warning*. Dear young Christian people, you who have just joined the Church, I think I hear you say, "Oh, it is dreadful that anybody should have less love to Christ than they used to have." It is dreadful and I mourn over it. But I stand in doubt when I hear you say, "It shall never be so with me. If I



forget my Lord and love Him less than I do now, let my right hand forget its cunning. It cannot be! Why, I shall go from strength to strength, and I shall love Him more and more! I know I shall, and I shall do more as my circumstances improve, as my opportunities increase and as my gifts are multiplied.” That is what you say and it is what you ought to say—but unless you are very careful, it is not what you will do! Oh, how deceived I have been in some members of this Church. Not that they have gone into sin. Not that they are any discredit to the Christian name as far as outward acts are concerned. But there is not that bottom of deep spiritual life and there is not that growth of fruitfulness, and there is not that zeal for God that I really thought I would see in them, especially in those that were great sinners and in those that have had marvelous joy and deep experience. They ought to be—ah, well I will not say, “they”—we *all* ought to be very different from what we are—so do not let us depend upon the strength of resolution, or on our present emotion, but let us commit ourselves unto the Lord who alone is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy!

Rejoice not, O young man, in your spiritual youth. Exult not, O new convert, in the strength of your love. Ask the Lord to keep these as strong as they are and to make them infinitely stronger—that you may really go from strength to strength! But if you at any time trust your own heart, you will be a fool! I would to God that we might realize what Christian experience always ought to be, namely, ascending and yet ascending, and yet still ascending—loving, and then loving so much that the first love seems to be eclipsed and then loving more till that better love seems but second-rate! And then loving yet more till all that went before, when heaped together, seems as nothing compared to what we have reached! Doing and daring—yielding up and resigning—exactly as God may call us, each time with greater joy and greater zest. Having life and having it yet more abundantly. I wish that Darwin’s theory might be carried out in us as Christians until, as he talks of an oyster developing into an Archbishop of Canterbury, we who at our conversion were little better than the oyster, should go on developing, developing and developing in spiritual things until we should know what John meant, who said, “It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” God grant you such development as that and preserve you from backsliding, and to His name shall be the praise!

I only hope that some of the words I have spoken, if not directly uttered to the unconverted, may glance in their hearts and lead them to seek a Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 2:1-19.**

**Verses 1-3.** *Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the LORD, I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals when you went*

*after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first fruits of His increase: all that devour him shall offend; all shall come upon them, says the LORD.* God remembered what Israel used to be in those good days when the Lord alone did lead them and there was no strange god among them. Now He bids them remember from whence they had fallen and repent and do their first works lest He come unto them in wrath. Oh, Beloved, if you ever lived near to God—if you ever rested your head on Christ’s bosom and have now wandered away from Him and are spiritually cold and dead, begin to chide yourself, for the Lord Himself, in the word before us, does chide you. He calls you to a sorrowful remembrance of the position from which you have descended—the heights of Grace from which you have come down! Breathe the prayer that He would restore you again. “Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?”

**4, 5.** *Hear you the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus says the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain?* He asks them whether there was any fault in Him—any failure in keeping His promise—whether He had dealt unjustly or unmercifully with them that they had thus gone away from Him and walked after vanity.

**6.** *Neither said they; Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?* Ought they not always to have remembered the wonderful wilderness journey where God seemed to multiply His miracles in the midst of their great necessities? Some of you have passed through a wilderness, too, yet you have been richly supplied. You have had to admire the constancy of the Divine Goodness. God has not ever failed you, even in your worst circumstances. Do not let it be said of you that you never say, “Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt.” On the contrary, always fly to Him when you are in time of trouble. Remember that this is the way to glorify God. “He shall call upon Me and I will answer him” is one of God’s own promises. And then He adds—“and he shall glorify Me.”

**7, 8.** *And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof but when you entered, you defiled the land, and made My heritage an abomination. The priests said not, Where is the LORD? And they that handle the law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.* Was not this very shameful that in Canaan, which God had chosen beyond all countries for its fertility that He might give it to His own people forever, there they began to set up idols and altars to other gods? And the priests, whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, and the prophets who above all men were bound to have spoken in the name of the Lord joined the people in their sin. They even urged them to worship Baal—that dummy deity, unworthy of a moment’s respect who should not have been so much as thought of by God’s people. They ought not even to have taken the name of Baal into their lips. Do you not see yourselves here, O backsliders? If you ever knew the

Lord and have gone back to the world. If you have submitted yourselves again to the powers thereof and sinned with a high hand, have you not acted most shamefully towards your God? And ought you not, with a blushing countenance and weeping eyes to return to Him and ask mercy at His hands?

**9-11.** *But I will yet plead with you, says the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the Isles of Chittim and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there is such a thing. Has a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.* How powerfully this is put! No other nation gave up its gods. Though they were not gods, but mere images of clay or gold, they would not change them. They stuck to their idolatries with wonderful pertinacity—but God's people gave up the true God to worship the demons of the nations round about! And is it not an unhappy thing that there are now some who at least call themselves God's people who go back to the world and seem to be more in love with it than ever they were? It is a horrible thing that is done! I have heard of a chieftain of an Indian tribe whose nephew was converted to the faith but who, after a short time, fell into sin and renounced his profession—the old chief used to always answer all the teaching of the missionary with this argument—“My nephew tried it and gave it up. He ought to know.” Well, when this was told to the young man, it broke his heart and happily brought him back to the God he had forsaken! Perhaps there are some in the world who are gathering excuses for continuing in sin from the unhappy conduct of such as backslide. “Look at him,” they say, “how hot and zealous he was—and look what he is now.” Can you bear the thought, backslider? If there remains a spark of love to Christ in your soul, you will feel bitterly the sorrow that others should make an excuse for blasphemy and for rebellion against Christ out of your evil conduct. Oh, pray tonight—“Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free Spirit.”

**12, 13.** *Be astonished O you Heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, says the LORD. For My people have committed two evils—they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* If a man should change for the better, his selfishness might be a little excuse for leaving his old love. But when he changes for the worse—leaves a fountain for a cistern—a flowing fountain for a broken cistern that holds nothing—why, there is madness in his sin! “Be astonished, O you Heavens and be horribly afraid.”

**14-17.** *Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave? Why is he spoiled? The young lions roared upon him and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitants. Also the children of Noah and Tahapanes have broken the crown of your head. Have you not procured this unto yourself in that you have forsaken the LORD your God, when He led you by the way?* The people of Israel had got into a dreadful state of poverty and famine and oppression. Their enemies had so destroyed the land that it was full of lions that even roared in the very streets where once men and women and children abounded. And God

says to them, “Is not this the result of your own sin? Was it so when you lived near to Me? Have you not brought this upon yourself by your sin?” So, child of God, if you are unhappy tonight—if you are mourning—if you cannot find comfort in the world—no comfort in God, either, “have you not procured this unto yourself? When you did live near to God, when prayer was continual, when you did watch your conduct, when you did go softly asking God to guide you from day to day, was it not better with you then than now? Then your peace was like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. If it is not so now, have you not procured this unto yourself in that you have forsaken the Lord your God when He led you by the way?”

**18.** *And now what have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?* For instead of going to the fountain of living waters, they were hoping to be helped by the Egyptians or helped by the Assyrians. Just as there are some Christians who try to drink the muddy waters of sinful pleasure and of carnal lust, they are beginning to think the muddy river very sweet and to like the taste of it. It is a deadly evil when professing Christians begin to do as others do and to mix with the world and feel pleasure in it. There will be a blight upon you if you turn from God! Misery will dog your steps before long if you are, indeed, a child of God.

**19.** *Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backsliding shall reprove you: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken the LORD your God, and that My fear is not in you, says the Lord GOD of Hosts.* A very solemn passage. May we lay it to heart. Not only is there guilt in our sin for which we shall have to answer at God’s Judgment Seat, but there is evil in it which will come swiftly upon our own heads even here, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” The thing you think will be your strength will be your scourge. What you dream of as pleasure will prove to be your plague. If you have ever known the joy of God’s service, all this shall be doubly true of you—you shall never again be able to find satisfaction in the world and God, the God whom you did once delight in—will let your own wickedness correct you and your backslidings reprove you because He wishes you to come back to His side, and to drink again of the living waters which you have so foolishly forsaken.

—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.**

# WORDS OF EXPOSTULATION

## NO. 356

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 20, 1861,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“And now what have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the  
restore of Sihor? Or what have you to do in the way of  
Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?”  
Jeremiah 2:18.***

THE Jews had been chosen by God to be a special people separated to Himself forever. By sundry miracles, by many mercies, by strange deliverances, He had proved Himself to be to them a God worthy of their trust. Yet, strange to say—and yet not strange when we know that they were fallen men like ourselves—the Jews were constantly desirous to mix with the nations. They broke down the hedges with which God had enclosed them as a sacred garden. They desired to be laid like common lands and to be joined with other peoples.

No, more than this—they forsook their one and true and loving God who had never deserted them and they adopted sometimes the deities of Egypt and at other times the false gods of Assyria. They seemed never to be content with even the gorgeous ceremonials of their own temple. They must build altars after the fashion of Damascus. They must have Sitals on every high place, according to the custom of the accursed nations whom the Lord their God had driven out before them. And they seemed as if they had never reached the full desire of their hearts till they had mingled with the rites of God all the filth and the abominations with which heathens adored their gods.

Constantly did the Lord reprove them for this—for this infatuation of theirs which made them turn aside from Him, the Living Water, to hew out to themselves broken cisterns which could hold no water. They were “often reproved,” but they often “hardened their necks.” Often were they chastened and they were smitten so often that “the whole head was sick and the whole heart was faint.” They had been chastened so sorely that from the sole of their foot even to their head they were full of wounds and bruises and petrifying sores.

Yet they still went after evil. Still they turned aside from the righteous and true God. Our text contains one instance of God’s expostulating with His people. He says to them, “What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river!”—for so it may be translated—and of course that term is applied to the Nile by way of contempt. “Why need you go to drink of that muddy river? What have you to do with Assyria to

drink the water of Euphrates? Why do you turn aside and leave your own cool streams of Lebanon? Why do you forsake Jerusalem to turn aside to Noph and to Tahapanes? Why are you so strangely set on mischief that you cannot be content with the good and healthful, but would even follow after that which is evil and deceitful?”

Taking the text just as it stands, I intend, by God’s help, to make a question of it to you. To myself and to you may God the Holy Spirit apply it and may this be a time for all God’s people, to every convinced soul, yes, and to the careless, too—a time of searching of heart. May God question us and may we be prepared honestly to answer. May the Holy Spirit push home the solemn enquiries and may we with truthful hearts search and look and give earnest heed.

I shall apply the text to three characters. First to the *Christian*. Secondly, to the *awakened conscience*. Thirdly, to the *careless sinner*. My sermon is not intended to instruct your minds, but to stir up your hearts.

**I.** Addressing myself to the CHRISTIAN, I shall use the text in three senses while I expostulate with you in regard to sin, to worldly pleasure and to carnal trust.

**1.** And first, O true Believer, called by grace and washed in the precious blood of Christ, “What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?” What have you to do with the sins which once delighted you and which now find happy pastime for the world? What have you to do with your deceitful lusts, with the indulgence of your old passions? What have you to do to follow the multitude which do evil?

Believer, answer these questions especially if you have lately fallen into sin, if you have backslidden in heart and if you have been led to backslide in your ways. Answer me, what have you to do—what excuse have you for what you have done? Do you see yonder a gang of men, dragging, like so many beasts of burden, a tremendous load? Hark to the cracking of the whip of the overseer! Do you see how they pull and strain till it seems as if their every sinew would snap? Do you observe them as the hot sweat stands upon their brow?

Look at them! Let the gang stay awhile, while we examine. I can understand why all these are oppressed with sore labor, for I can see the brand of the slave owner upon their backs. Their flesh is scarred. But what does this mean? There is one among them who is not a slave—a man who is free! What does this mean? How is it that he does the slaves’ work—that he bends his back to the task master’s yoke, when he is a free man? Can you answer the question? Let me ask it in your own case. I see the sinner burdened in the ways of evil. I see him pulling iniquity as though it were with a cart rope, laying hold with both his hands on everything that is full of iniquity.

But what have *you* to do there? The slaves of Satan are but acting out their condition. But what have you to do to be his slave since you have

been redeemed with blood and set free by power? Why, Man, you are no slave now. You are a son of God. You are an heir of all things. You are joint-heir with Christ. What have you to do, then, in the service of sin and of Satan? Why do you follow these menial tasks? You will become a man who is to wear a crown in Heaven and who, even now, can read his title to it. Answer, Christian and be ashamed and be confounded, because you are demeaning yourself in thus sinning against your own soul.

A vision flits before my eye. The Lord God has made a great feast. Armies have met together. Terrible slaughter has been the consequence. Men's arms have been red up to the very elbow in blood. They have fought with each other and there they lay strewn upon the plain—thousands of carcasses bleeding. The vultures sniff the prey from far-off desert wilds—they fly, keen of scent. God has made a great feast for the fowls of Heaven and for the ravenous beasts of the earth. Hark to the whirring of their wings as they come in multitudes, for where the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.

But what is that I see? I see a dove flying with the same speed as the vulture towards the carrion. O dove, what has brought you there in dangerous connection with your fierce enemies? Where are you going? Is there anything in that bloody feast that can content *you*? Shall your meek eyes glare with the fires of anger? Shall your fair white plumage be stained with gore and will you go back to your dove-cot with your pinions bloody red? I appeal to you, my Hearers. Can you answer the question? Can you explain the strange vision? How is it, then, that I see you, Christian, going with sinners after evil? Is it your food? If you are a child of God, sin is no more food for you than blood is for doves.

If you have been “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” your peaceful soul will be as much out of element as a dove upon a battlefield. And the sight—the sight of sin will be as horrible to you as the sight of slaughter to that timid dove which even now tries itself with rapid wings to the cleft of the rock. Christian, I say, if you do as the worldling does, you go against your nature—against your newborn nature. To him it is not strange—should not the swine eat husks? Is it not his proper food? Should not the sinner love to sin? Is it not his very element? But what have *you* to do? What have you to do, quickened of the Spirit and renewed in the image of Christ—what have you to do?

You have seen in Scripture a dreadful picture of a madman, where Nebuchadnezzar the king runs with oxen and eats grass till his hair has grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. Is he not the pitiful picture of a backslider? For what is a Christian when he plunges into sin but as one who makes himself like the beasts that perish and who herds with the common—yes—and the unclean beasts of the earth? O Be-

liever! If it is a pitiful thing to see a man make himself a beast, how much more lamentable to see a Christian make himself a worldling!

“Come you out from among them; touch not the unclean thing.” Why should the soul of my turtle dove be given up to its enemies? Why should the lamb flock with the wolves? Come out, I pray you—leave this stygian filth and be clean you vessel-bearer of the Lord. Come forth from the midst of that plague land, where you can get nothing but the ashy hue of leprosy and be clean! Today the Lord invites you. Refuse not His invitation, but return, you backsliding children of men.

The question, then, cannot be answered—because when a Christian goes into sin he commits an inconsistent act—inconsistent with the freedom which Christ has bought for him and inconsistent with the nature which the Holy Spirit has implanted in him.

Let us press forward. Christian, what have you to do with sin? Has it not cost you enough already? What? Man, have you forgotten the times of your conviction? If you have, my Brother, *I have not*. At the very mention of that word I think I hear my chains rattling anew. Was there ever a bond-slave who had more bitterness of soul than I? Five years a captive in the dungeons of the Law, till my youth seemed as if it would turn into premature old age and all the buoyancy of my spirit had been removed! O God of the spirits of all men! Most of all ought *I* to hate sin, for surely most of all have I smarted beneath the lash of Your Law.

And as I look round, knowing the experience of some of you, I can recall to my mind the stories you have told me. How when you had first felt your need of a Savior you could not endure yourselves. Ah, there are those among you who when you were under strong convictions of sin were ready to commit self-destruction. You prayed, but found no answer. You sought, but obtained no mercy. There were not creatures out of Hell more wretched than you were then. What? And will you go back to the old curse? Burnt child, will you play with the fire?

What? Man, when you have already been rent in pieces by the lion, will you step a second time into his den? Have you not had enough of the old serpent? Did he not poison all your veins once and will you play upon the hole of the asp and put your hand upon the cockatrice den? Have you not seen enough of the leopards and of the dragons and will you step a second time into their dens? Oh, be not so mad! Be not so foolish! Did sin ever give you pleasure? Did you ever find any solid satisfaction in it? If so, go back to your old drudgery. Go back, I say and wear the chain again if it delights you.

But inasmuch as I know and you know that sin did never give you what it promised to bestow—inasmuch as it did delude you with lies and flatter you with promises which were all to be broken—I pray you be not beguiled a second time. Be not a second time led into captivity—be free and let the remembrance of your ancient bondage forbid you to wear the chain again!



There is yet another light in which to put the sin of the Believer. Let me repeat the question once again—"What have you to do in the way of Egypt to drink the waters of the muddy river?" There is a crowd yonder. They have evidently assembled for some riotous purpose. They are attacking one man. There are very many of them. Oh, how they howl!—oh, how they scream! They give Him no space to take His breath, no time to rest. Let me press through the throng and look at the Man. I know Him at once. He has a visage more marred than that of any other man. 'Tis He. It is the Crucified One, it is none other than Jesus, the Son of Man, the Savior of the world.

Hark to the blasphemies which are poured into His ears! See how they spit in His face and put Him to an open shame. Onward they bring Him and you hear them cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" "They are doing it—they have nailed Him to the tree—yonder is a man with the hammer in his hand who has just now driven in the nail. Look round upon the mob. I can well comprehend why yonder drunkard, why yonder swearer, why the whoremonger and the like of infamous notoriety should have joined in this treacherous murder.

But there is one man there—methinks I know his face. Yes, I have seen him at the sacramental table, eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ. I have seen him in the pulpit saying, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." I have seen him on his knees in prayer, pleading what he called, "The precious blood." What have you to do in this counsel of the ungodly, this scene of sin without a parallel? "What are you doing here, Elijah?" In the name of love's own self and of every holy thing that can ever pertain to a human heart—what are you doing here?

Are you sickened at heart at such a spectacle—a Christian crucifying Christ? That spectacle is one in which you have had a share. You, too, when you have backslidden and have sinned—you have "Crucified the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame." Is there any other picture needed to set my text in the very strongest light? "What have you to do, O Christian, in the way of Egypt to drink the water of the muddy river?" Cry revenge against yourself, because you have murdered your Lord and opened His wounds anew!

Have patience with me a moment while I turn my question over and revolve it yet again. Believer, you have rebelled against your God. You have done despite unto His Spirit. How will you answer for this? What will you say to a scoffing world when the quick eye of the sinner shall detect you? What will you say when he hisses out, "There's your religion?" How will you answer him? You may pretend to do so, but do you not feel that he will get the best of the argument?

If he goes his way and says the religion of Christ is a lie and an hypocrisy, what will you have to say? Surely you will have to hide your face in

confusion and bemoan yourself because by this act you have given the enemy cause to blaspheme. And what will you say to Christ's Church when the Church shall say to you, "What are you doing here?" How will you excuse yourself for dishonest acts in business, or for any lust into which you have fallen? Will you tell the Church it was your old nature? But how will you answer when the Church shall say, "They that are in Christ have crucified the flesh and its affections and lusts"?

More than this, how will you answer your own conscience? Will you use some Antinomian quibble and apply that as a plaster to your wounds? No. If you are a child of God you will have to smart for it. The waters of the muddy river may be sweet to the Egyptians but they will be bitter to you. You shall have, as it were, a cauldron in your heart, if you do drink thereof. Christians can never sin cheaply—they pay a heavy price for all the pleasures that they ever find in evil. And what will you say to your Lord and Master next time you are at the sacramental table? How will you dare to eat that bread and drink that wine? And when you are alone on your knees and seeking fellowship with Him, how will you dare to seek it when you have just now been following His enemies and imitating them?

Ah, well may He say to you, "I have withdrawn Myself. I have gone, for you have grieved My Spirit and vexed My soul." Believer, if Jesus Christ were here, what would you say to make an excuse for your sin? Surely you would be speechless as the dumb and silent as the grave. Your tears might make confession. Your shudders should deepen your guilt. But your lips could not make an apology. What have you to do, O Christian, in the way of evil? What are *you* doing here, O God's Elijah?

I do not know whether there are any Christians here who have fallen into any special sin during this last week. If there is, Brother, open your heart to this question. It may be, my Master has sent me to you to nip your sin in its bud—to bring you back before you have backslidden very much. Turn, my Brother. He has not forgotten His love to you. Turn. His grace is still the same. With weeping and with bitter lamentation come to His footstool and you shall be once more received into His heart and you shall be set upon a rock again and your goings shall be established.

**2.** To take a different view of the subject. The pleasures of this world sometimes entice the people of God and they find some degree of mirth therein. To those Christians who can find pleasure in the common amusements of men, this question may be very pertinently put—"What have *you* to do to drink the water of that muddy river?"

I may be speaking to some Believers who try if they can to keep their conscience quiet while they frequent places of amusement—they lend their sanction to things which are not spiritual and sometimes even not moral. Now, I put this question to them. Christian, you have tasted of better drink than the muddy river of this world's plenums can give you. If your profession is not a lie, you have had fellowship with Christ. You have

had that joy which only the blessed spirits above and the chosen ones on earth can know—the joy of seeing Christ and leaning your head upon His bosom.

And do the trifles, the songs, the music, the merriment of this earth content you after that? Have you eaten the bread of angels and can you live on husks? Good Rutherford once said, “I have tasted of Christ’s own manna and it has put my mouth out of taste for the brown bread of this world’s joys.” Methinks it should be so with you. Again, Believer, have you not already learned the hollowness of all earth’s mirth? Turn to your neighbor and ask him. Does he frequent the play-house? Does he go from one party of pleasure to another? Does he indulge in the common pleasures of the world? Ask him whether they have ever satisfied him. If he is a worldling and is honest, he will say, “No.”

He will tell you that his soul pants after something better than fashion and dissipation can afford him. He will tell you, too, that he has drained that cup and it is not the wine which he thought it was. That it excites for the moment, but leaves him weak and miserable afterwards. What? Shall the parings and offal of this world’s joys, suit the heir of Heaven?—You who profess to be of nobler birth and to be brother to the angels—no—next akin to the eternal Son of God Himself—are you to wallow in this mire and think it a soft and downy couch fit for a royal resting place? Get up, Believer, you are not lost to every sense of shame. Betray not yourself in seeking satisfaction wherein worldlings confess they have never found it.

But let me ask you—will these pleasures yield to you any helps in your growth in grace? You say the world is crucified unto you—will these pleasures help to crucify it? You have prayed that you may be made like Christ—will these things help to conform you to His image? Often do you cry, “Oh Spirit of God, purge out the old leaven from me.” Will these help to purge out the old leaven? Unless you will fling the lie into the face of all your prayers, I pray you, shun these things.

Fly at higher game than this. Let the mere hawk fly at the sparrow. But the eagle needs something nobler to be the object of its chase. If you were of the world it would be right for you to love her. If she were your mother you might nurse—but even then should not be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation. But you confess that not *this* world, but the *next* is the mother of your soul. I pray you then, be not content with what this earth yields. Lift up your eyes and expect your manna to spring not from the earth but from Heaven and may it drop into your hands.

I can never understand that Christianity which alternately goes out to find joy in worldly amusements and returns home to have fellowship with Christ. In the life of Madame Guyon, who, though professedly a Papist, one must ever receive as being a true child of God, I have read an anecdote something to this effect. She had been invited by some friends to

spend a few days at the palace of St. Cloud. She knew it was a place full of pomp and fashion and, I must add, of vice also. But being over persuaded by her friend and being especially tempted with the idea that perhaps her example might do good, she accepted the invitation.

Her experience afterwards should be a warning to all Christians. For some years that holy woman had walked in constant fellowship with Christ—perhaps none ever saw the Savior’s face and kissed His wounds more truly than she had done. But when she came home from St. Cloud she found her usual joy was departed—she had lost her power in prayer. She could not draw near to Christ as she should have done. She felt in going to the lover of her soul as if she had played the harlot against Him. She was afraid to hope that she could be received again to His pure and perfect love and it took some months before the equilibrium of her peace could be restored and her heart could yet again be wholly set upon her Lord.

He that wears a white garment must mind where he walks when the world’s streets are so filthy as they are. He that has a thousand enemies must take care how he exposes himself. He who has nothing on earth to assist him towards Heaven should take care that he goes not where the earth can help towards Hell. O Believer, shun, I pray you, fellowship with this world for the love of this world is enmity against God.

Now some will say that I am an ascetic and wish you to become Puritans. I wish we were Puritans most certainly, but I am no ascetic. I believe the Christian man ought to be the happiest man in the world and I believe he is, too. But I know that *this world* does not make him happy—it is the *next world*. I say that the Believer has a more sure and certain right to be a happy and a cheerful man than any other man, but if in this world only are had hope, we should be of all men the most miserable because this world yields no joy to us.

**3.** For one minute I shall now take my text with regard to the Christian in a third sense. We are all tried with the temptation to put our trust in things which are seen, instead of things which are not seen. The Lord has said it—“Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm,” but “blessed is he that trusts in the Lord.” Yet Christians often do trust in man and then our text comes home—“What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the water of that muddy river?” “Some trust in horses and some in chariots, but we will stay ourselves upon the Lord God of Israel.”

Look at yonder Believer. He trusts in Christ and only in Christ for his salvation and yet he is fretted and worried even though this is the day of rest, about something in his business. Why are you troubled, Christian? “Because of this great care,” he says. Care? Have you care? I thought it was written, “Cast your burden upon the Lord.” “Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication make known your wants un-

to God.” Can you not trust God for temporals? “Ah,” says the Believer, “I wish I could.”

Believer, if you cannot trust God for temporals, how dare you trust Him for spirituals? Surely if He is worthy to be trusted with eternity, He must be fit to be relied upon in *time*. Can you trust Him for your soul’s redemption and yet not rely upon Him for a few paltry pounds? Then what are you trusting in? “Oh, I wish I had a good friend,” says one. “I wish I had someone at my book to help me.” Indeed, Sir, what have you to do to go in the way of Egypt, to want to drink of that water? Is not God enough? Do you want another eye beside that of Him who sees all things? Do you want another arm to help besides Him who—

***“Bears the earth’s huge pillars up,  
And spreads the heavens abroad?”***

Is His heart faint? Is His arm weary? Is His eye grown dim? If so, seek another God. But if He be infinite, omnipotent, faithful, true and all-wise, why do you go abroad so muck to seek another confidence? Why do you rake the earth to find another foundation when this is strong enough and broad enough and deep enough to bear all the weight which you can ever build thereon? Christian, be single in your faith. Have not two trusts, but one. Believer, rest only on your God and let your expectation be from Him. God bless you, Believer. Let this question ring in your ears this week and if you are tempted to sin, or to worldly pleasure, or to casual trust, think you see your minister and that you hear him saying in your ears—“What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river? Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of Euphrates?”

**II.** I now come to the second part of my subject. Let not our friends grow dreary. I shall be brief on the matter that remains—that the Word may be felt.

CONVINCED SINNER, I hope I have some such here. Some of those precious ones of God, whose eyes are bejeweled with the tears of penitence and whose hearts are like the fragrant spices, which when broken, send out a sweet perfume. And so, my Friend, you feel your lost estate. God’s Holy Spirit has kindly looked upon you and begun a good work in your soul. And yet during the past week you have fallen into your old sin. Ah, ah, smarting and yet sinning! Wounded and yet rebelling! Pricked with the ox-goad and yet kicking against the pricks! It is hard for you! It is hard for you!

To sin with a steeled conscience is easy, but to sin when conscience is raw is hard, indeed. You have a hard task. You have to go on in sin and tread its thorny path, when your feet are tender, having just been burned in the fire. And what was the cause of your sin, after all? Was it worth sinning for—to grieve your conscience and vex the Holy Spirit?

I have heard of a man who had just begun the Christian life and he had some months of sorrow, owing to a hasty temper. His neighbor had let some of his cattle stray into the field. He asked him to fetch them out again and mend the fence. His neighbor would not and he flew into such a passion with him, that afterwards he sat down and cried. Said he, "Why, if all the cows in the field were sold and I had lost the money, they were not worth the bother I made about them, nor worth one moment of the grief which I have to suffer."

Oh, What fools we all are! Let us, however, write ourselves fools in capital letters if when conscience is tender we yet go and do the very thing which we hate and choose the very cup which was so bitter to our taste, so nauseous to us just now.

And then, convinced Sinner, another question. You are under conviction of sin and you have been lately—as it is a festive season—you have been frequenting the dance hall, or the theater. Now these are amusements for *worldlings*. Let them have them. I would not prevent them for a moment. Let every man have his own amusement and his own joy. But what is this to you? What have you to do with it? Why you know you thought the place would fall down while you were sitting there. What business had you there? Suppose the devil had come in to take one of his own away and had taken you?

He might have been forgiven for his mistake—for he found you on his grounds. You were trespassing and therefore if the old Giant Grim had taken you away to Despair's Castle, who could have blamed him? Were you not for the time in his territory? Had he not therefore a right to do as he would with you? But you who have a tender conscience, how could you be merry there—listening to light music while you had a heavy heart? I never like to see a newly-made widow at a wedding and I do not like to see a convinced sinner where others are making merry.

When you have joy in your heart, you may join with the kindred sympathy of other men's joys. But while your soul is bleeding, what a mockery, what a farce it is for you to be pretending to find joy in the very thing which has given you the pain! You have heard the old and oft-repeated story of the celebrated clown who was under conviction of sin. He went to a certain doctor and told him he was exceeding melancholy and he wished that he could advise him something that would cheer his spirits. The doctor prescribed for him some remedies, but they failed.

He went at last to a celebrated popular preacher—who ought not to have been a preacher, for he did not understand the Gospel at all—and he, fool that he was, said to the poor man, "Well, I do not know what will cheer you up, but I should say if you were to go and see the tricks and antics of such-and-such a person, the clown at such-and-such a theater, if anything would make you merry that would." "Alas, Sir," said he, "I am that man myself!" So strange must have been his position, making others

roar with laughter while he himself was roaring with terror! And yet this is just your position, convinced Sinner, if you can find merriment in the world. Let other men have it. It is not the place for you—stand aloof from it and go not there.

And then, again, take care, convinced Sinner, that you do not trust in yourself in any degree. What have you to do to go to Egypt to drink the waters of the muddy river? Your works have ruined you. How can they save you? Your works have damned you. How can they wipe out the sentence of damnation? Fly to Christ, fly to the flowing wounds and to the open heart. There is hope for you there. But at the foot of Sinai there is thunder and fire and smoke. And if Moses did exceeding fear and quake, how much more should you when the mountain seems as though it would roll upon you and crush you and bury your spirit in eternal destruction? God help you, convinced Sinner, never to go in that way of Egypt, to drink the Waters of Sihon—for these things are not for you.

**III.** Lastly, to any here present who are CARELESS. I have a hard task and but a few moments for the attempt to bring a reasonable question to unreasonable men. You tell me, Sirs, that you love the vanities of this world and that they content you. I look you in the face and remind you that there have been many madmen in this world besides yourselves. Yet as there is some spark of reason left, let me see if I can kindle a flame of thought therewith.

Sinner, God is angry with the wicked every day. What have you to do with joy? You are condemned already because you believe not on the Son of God. What have you to do with peace—a condemned man dancing in his cell at Newgate with chains about his wrists? You're a dying man, you may drop down dead in this hall. What have you to do with merriment? You! If you were sure you should live a week you might spend six days if you would, in sin. But you are not sure you will live an hour. What have you to do with sin and its pleasures? God is furbishing His sword today. It is sharp and strong as the arm which shall wield it. That sword is meant for you except you repent.

What have you to do with taking your ease and eating and drinking and being happy? That man yonder, with his neck in the noose and his feet upon the treacherous drop—is it fitting that he should sing songs and call himself a happy man? This is your position, Sir! Sinner, you are standing over the mouth of Hell upon a single plank and that plank is rotten! Your hope is as the spider's web—your confidence is as a dream. Death follows you, not as the slow-paced footman, but on horseback, the skeleton rider on his pale horse is rattling after you with tremendous speed! And ah, Hell follows him! Hell follows Death—the sure and certain consequence of sin!

And what have you to do with making merry? Have you made appointments for the next week? Keep them if you dare, if in the name of God you can make it consistent. If you can make it consistent with reason to be

busy about the body and neglect the soul, to fritter away that time on which eternity depends, then go and do it. If it is a wise thing for you to leap before you look, if it is a prudent thing to damn your soul eternally for the sake of a few hours of mirth—say so—go and do it like an honest man.

But if it is unwise to forget *forever* and only think of *today*, if it is the strongest madness to lose your life to gain the mere apparel with which the body is to be covered. If it is madness to fling away jewels and hoard up dust as you are doing, then I pray you, I beseech you, answer the question, “What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?” Turn, turn! “For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves and I will love you.” “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.”

Lo, the Cross is lifted up before you! Jesus bleeds. His wounds are streaming with His life-blood. Yes and with yours, too. Believe, Sinner. Trust Him—with your whole heart trust Him. Come to Him, come to Him. With weeping and supplication I pray you come. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, I beseech you. As one that pleads for his own life, I plead with you. By Heaven. By Hell. By time flying so swiftly. By eternity approaching so silently. By death. By judgment. By the awful soul-reading eye. By the rooks whose stony bowels shall refuse your prayer to fall upon you. By the trumpet and the thunders of the resurrection morning. By the pit and by the flame—I pray you think and believe in Him who is the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.

God bless my words to you through His Spirit’s energy and He shall have the praise forever and ever. Amen.

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

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



# **THE BRIDE AND HER ORNAMENTS— THE SIN OF FORGETTING GOD NO. 1634-A**

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 4, 1881,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?  
Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.”  
Jeremiah 2:32.*

IT is a clear proof of the great love of God to His people that He will not lose their love without earnest expostulation. When you do not care at all for a person, he may love you or hate you, it is all the same to you. But when you have great love for him, then you earnestly desire to possess his heart in return. This, then, is clear proof that God greatly loves His people, since, whenever their hearts wander from Him, He is greatly grieved. And He rebukes them and earnestly pleads with them, setting the coldness of their hearts in a true light and striving to bring them back to warm affection towards Himself. Not only are God's rebukes proofs of His love, but when He goes farther and deals out blows as well as words, there is love in every stroke of His hand. Most truly does He say, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten,” since rebukes and chastening are proofs that He will not lose our hearts without a struggle for them.

Do not look, therefore, upon a sermon that rebukes as something to be avoided. Far from it! Hear it and accept it as a token of love from God to your souls. That man is very foolish who will not hear the warning of a friend. Few prize a friend's rebukes and yet a wise man knows that there is no greater token of the affection of a friend than when he will undertake the unpleasant duty of pointing out our faults. Many parents are like Eli—they cannot endure the task of chastening their children—and so, when their sons grow up to be their plague, they must not wonder, for they have procured this evil to themselves by their unworthy love of ease.

Our heavenly Father is never an Eli! He will not “spare the rod and spoil the child.” He loves us too well to suffer us to go on in our iniquity. He will not stay His hand and leave us to perish. He will scourge rather than abandon. He will chide rather than lose. Today He speaks in tones of severity that He may not be compelled to utter, tomorrow, words of doom. Accept, then, at this time, dear Friend, whatever shall come to you out of

this text. If it should be bitter in your mouth, yet receive it thankfully from God as good medicine to your spirit, and so may His Spirit cause it to be.

Coming to the text, in which God proves His love to His people because He will not let their love readily go away from Himself, notice, first, a grievous sin. “My people have *forgotten* Me.” Secondly, a chiding question about that sin. “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?” And then, thirdly, let us observe the call to repentance which lies within the text, like perfume in a flower. If we have forgotten God, let us grieve over such forgetfulness and turn to Him at once with full purpose of heart—even unto God our exceeding joy!

**I.** First, then, here is A VERY GRIEVOUS SIN. “My people have forgotten Me days without number.” Observe whom they had forgotten—it will help us to see the sin of it. The Lord says, “My people have forgotten *Me*.” It would not have mattered half as much if they had forgotten their dearest friends—if the husband had forgotten his wife, or the mother her child—but here are favored men and women who have forgotten their God, their Father, their life, their All! “My people have forgotten Me, their God. Other nations, having set up their false gods, did not forget them, but, with blind pertinacity of devotion, they bowed before them. But My people have forgotten their God, the only God, the living and true God. My people have forgotten Me—the good God, whom it is pleasure to remember.”

“You are good and do good,” said the Psalmist, and it is true. Yet too often we forget the Source of all goodness. If we could forget the evil, it were well, but to forget the only and essential Good is sad, indeed. “My people have forgotten Me,” whom they were bound in duty to remember. God is our Creator—shall we not remember Him that made us? God is our Preserver. Shall we not remember Him in whom “we live, and move, and have our being”? God is our Father—shall children forget the Father at whose table they feed and from whose lips they are comforted! God is our All in All and shall we yet forget *Him*? Surely, it were better to lose memory than for memory to lose its hold upon God! My people have forgotten Me! God, the good, the best, who has a chief right to be remembered!

Brethren, there is great evil in our hearts, or it would be so difficult to forget God as to be impossible. A friend has gone away from us and we do not see him, but he has left so many tokens of his goodness that we are reminded of him every day. Is it not so with God? Has He not left us innumerable tokens of His affection for us? Ought we to forget when so many forget-me-nots are round about us? But, supposing that friend has not gone away at all, but is living with us in the house and enters, even, into our chamber—what shall we say if we forget one who is constantly with us? No man is so present with his friend as God is with His people!

He is *in* us and round about us! Never can we depart from Him, for we are not only in Him, but He is in us and He sees all our ways.

Oh, strange sin that we should forget One who is everywhere present and manifests that Presence in deeds of love! O forgetful creature, what do you think of your Lord? What? Do you owe the breath in your nostrils to God and yet can you forget? Is the bread upon your table put there by the hand of a God whom you do not remember? Are the very clothes upon your back the gift of His Divine charity and do you forget Him? You would be in the grave—no, you would be in Hell—but for His mercy—and yet is He not in all your thoughts? Oh, this wicked forgetfulness of ours! Let us forget all else besides, but let it not be charged to us that we have forgotten our God! Yet it is so written, “My people have forgotten Me.”

Who were they that forgot God? That casts a second light upon this sin. “My people have forgotten Me. Not strangers, not heathen, not those who have only heard of Me but have never known Me, but My people.” It signifies, “My chosen, My elect, a people whom I have taken out from the midst of the earth that they may be a people unto Me forever. My people have forgotten Me.” Chosen of God and yet forget electing love? “My people.” It is a redeemed people who have become the Lord’s because they are not their own, but are bought with a price. He has redeemed them unto Himself forever—redeemed them from among men by the matchless price of His only-begotten Son’s life! And shall it be that those on whom there is the eternal blood—mark—who are set apart by sacrifice to be God’s own, that they shall forget Him?

Oh, sad ingratitude! “My people.” That is to say, a people not only chosen and redeemed, but brought to know Him, brought into fellowship with Him, brought into relationship with Him, brought absolutely into *union* with Him—they have forgotten Him. You that sat at Jesus’ feet and drank in His loving words! You that sat at His table and to whom He was made known in the breaking of bread! You that have laid your head upon the bosom of the Lord—can it, shall it be said of you, “My people have forgotten Me”? Oh, but this is sad! “He that eats bread with Me has forgotten Me. He that said He would die for My sake has forgotten Me. He that sang just now—

***‘Have You a lamb in all Your flock  
I would disdain to feed?  
Have You a foe before whose face  
I fear Your cause to plead?’***

“He has forgotten Me!” Alas, my Brothers and Sisters, that you and I should have been upon the mount with Jesus. That we should have been in the garden with Him. That we should have danced for very joy of heart in His Presence and should have felt ourselves next door to the gates of

Heaven when He has laid bare His heart to us—and yet it should ever be said of us that we have forgotten Him! This will be sad, indeed, if ever it comes to this! And yet this is the crime that is laid at the door of His own people. “My people have forgotten Me.”

Observe sadly the space in which they had forgotten—in the case of Israel, it is added, “days without number.” Ah me! I hope it has not come to that with any of us here present! And yet it may. It may. I may be touching a chord, now, which shall awaken the saddest memories. “Days without number.” How long is it, Friend, since you were in the habit of walking with God? How long is it since you have seen the face of the Well-Beloved? I ventured to put that question once to a professor and, shaking his head, he replied, “Don’t ask me that. If you will ask me whether I have been a drunk; whether I have been dishonest in business; whether I have done any positive action by which I have degraded the Christian name, I can answer you without fear. But if you ask, How long since I have had fellowship with Christ, I cannot—I dare not—answer you.”

Yet I venture to press the question and I hope the answer will not be, “I have forgotten Him days without number.” I hope you will not sing, as Cowper did—

***“What peaceful hours I then enjoy’d!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But now I find an aching void  
The world can never fill.”***

On the contrary, may it be yours and mine to be kept from forgetting God at all! And if there ever should be a moment in which we wander, may it be a small moment, much lamented and never repeated! May our soul soon come back as the needle of the compass returns to its pole. Turn it awhile with your finger and you may move it east, west, south—but take your finger away and back it comes to its pole—so may it be with us! May we be like the birds of the air which at eventide seek their nests. As the stone may be thrown aloft by force, but naturally returns to the earth, so may we, if tossed about by Satan, fall back upon our firm resting place in Jesus! May our forgetfulness be for a small moment, but in life and death may we remember our Well-Beloved.

You see, the sin lies in this, that we should forget God, that we should do it and do it, “days without number.” How is God forgotten? What are the manifestations of this offense? Some professors evidently forget God by their worldliness. When they were in a humbler condition of society they were known to find great enjoyment at Prayer Meetings—the assembling of the saints together was very joyful to them. The reading and hearing of the Word of God were gracious refreshments to them, but they are now too rich to care for this light bread! They have prospered so much

that if they prosper much more it will be a thousand times worse than adversity, as in the case of the celebrated captain who, when his soldiers said they had won a victory, said, “One more such victory as this and we shall be defeated forever.”

Such rising men, like the Israelites, have been filled with the quails, but while the meat is yet in their mouths the wrath of God has come upon them. They have been fattened with the treasures of the world, but their souls have been starved to very skeletons, for they have not fed upon the things of God! Some that were high professors now seem to have no religion whatever—they mix with worldly people—and seem quite happy with them. I have seen the hand of God go out against such followers of Demas. They prospered and, as they prospered, they became less and less attentive to Divine things. They turned aside from the Truth of God and their children have grown up to be utter worldlings—some of their sons to be debauched and depraved—till the name that stood high in the Church of God is struck out of the roll of Israel and their family is rather numbered among the sons of Belial than among the saints of the Most High!

Such have forgotten God, “days without number.” O my beloved comrades in the army of Christ, may you all be preserved from such a curse! Some have forgotten God by self-seeking. They live unto themselves. It is clear that though once they seemed to have a zeal for God, now their zeal is entirely to push their own way, to make their own fortunes to plant out their children—anything and everything except the Glory of God and the love of souls. And yet they profess to be God’s people even now! True is the lament, “My people have forgotten Me.” It is well to forget self to glorify God—but to make self our god is a thing accursed in the highest degree. Some, too, show that they forget God by the failure of their trust. They are in trouble and they are very anxious. Why? Because they have forgotten God, though He has promised to help them.

They are wondering what is to become of them, looking all about them with the greatest amount of carking care that even a worldling might feel. And if you say to them, “God will provide, God is your Helper,” they have forgotten God, they have left Him out of their calculations. They are fretting and worrying. They are troubled and cast down because they have forgotten God. You can do this in your daily concerns until you may act as if God, Himself, were dead! It is sad, indeed, when a Christian acts upon atheistic principles and despairs as if he had no God to succor him! Some people, when things run a little cross to them; some working men when they are out of work; some men when they cannot see God’s work prospering just as they would have it, leave out of their calculations the one great Worker, the one great Force—and soon get troubled, cast down and go crawling about the world full of distrust.

Ah me, what evils come to men when they have forgotten God! Alas, there are some who add to this a forgetfulness of God through neglect of private devotion. Prayers are slurred over. Drawing near to God becomes a form and a pretense. The Word is read, but it is not read with the view of finding God in the sacred Volume and having fellowship with Him through His Word. Oh, it is sad when it can be said that God's people are forgetting Him in the closet! "It was such a busy day," says one, "I could not find time to pray." Remember how Martin Luther acted—he said that He must have three hours prayer one day because it was such a busy day that He should not have strength to get through it if he did not have extra time for devotion!

It is foolish to say, "I have more to do and so I will take less time in getting strength to do it." As well might the mower say, "It is a bigger field to mow and so I will take less trouble in sharpening my scythe." It is, depend upon it, a dead waste of time to be short in drawing near to God! The Lord might well complain—"My people have forgotten Me. They have not waited upon Me in wrestling prayer. They have not cried to Me during the day. They have not lifted up their hearts to Me in the moment of trouble. They have not consulted Me in difficulty. They have not rejoiced in Me in the time of their joy. They have forgotten Me."

And you and I can do it in a very high sense by a breach of communion, by getting out of fellowship with God, by walking contrary to Him so that He walks contrary to us. It is very bad walking and very bad living when God and ourselves are at cross-purposes. It is a very sweet thing, when you are conscious of having done wrong, to go back to your heavenly Father at once and admit it and get right again. How willing He is to receive us! How glad He is to blot out the past and let bygones be bygones and to let us start anew with Him! He delights to forgive! Sometimes we let the stones accumulate till there is quite a heap and they are made into a wall which blocks our way. If every stone had been flung away, one by one, how much easier it would have been!

There would not be clouds of dust if we kept our ways well watered with daily repentance. There would not be a separation between God and our soul in great things if we would not allow it in little things. But, I fear too often it may be said of this high point of rapturous fellowship with God, "My people have forgotten Me days without number." I scarcely need, I think, to talk longer about this sin, except to notice that if we ever do forget God, it leads to all sorts of mischief. We lose our joy and our comfort—and then we lose our strength and our watchfulness. And then we backslide by little and little and then, probably, we fall into one sin and then into another, if not into a third, more grievous still!

David had never sinned with Bathsheba if he had not forgotten his God. By degrees we get hardened about our state and soon it comes to this—that we have lost the Presence of God—and do not care whether we have it or not. Oh, this is a sad, sad state of heart! God save us from it! May it never be said of us, “My people have forgotten Me days without number.”

**II.** And now, dear Friends, I call your attention to THE CHIDING QUESTION which is the very marrow of the text—“Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?” And I suppose that question is put, first, because there are many trivial things which occupy minds so that they cannot forget them. How sad it is that the most grand things, the best things, should not equally engross our thoughts! Now, I will not say a word about you Western women that are here—of course, you do not care about ornaments or dress—at least, you should not! But Eastern women were very fond of ornaments and it was a question which every Oriental could understand, “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?”

Of course such forgetfulness was impossible. The young woman’s mind was full of her jewels! Isaiah gives you a long list that seems to have been cut out of the fashion-book of the day—a long list of various things that ladies used to wear in those days—and these they never forgot. Their minds doted upon them and when the marriage day came round, that was the main thought—how they should be dressed, how they should glitter before all onlookers! Forget her ornaments? The question is absurd! The maid’s mind was taken up with them. A bride forget her attire? It could not be! And yet I venture to say that these things are trifles—that the costliest jewels in the world are nothing but mere stones—that the richest dress that ever was made is excelled by birds and flies—and that the flowers of the field far surpass anything that can be manufactured by the needle.

When the attire is all fitted and the ornaments are all in their places, the whole matter is a trifle. We should have had no need of either ornament or attire if it had not been for sin. Strange that the insignia of our fall should become the ground of our boasting! Yet so it is. But here is the point—do, then, these Eastern women value their jewels and their dress so much that they cannot forget them? Are their heads filled with these things so that they never slip out of their memories? And do the people of God forget their God? I do not know a stronger way of putting it. Can these trifles secure their places so surely and shall the most supreme good so readily escape our thoughts? Shame on us!

Every time we see one who, in dressing, has evidently paid the daintiest attention to every pin, we ought to stand rebuked! When we see a woman

curling, plaiting or bedecking her hair, or putting on jewels, let us think to ourselves, “Does she pay so much attention to such a thing as that and do I think so little of my *God*? Have I so much desire to be dressed in the rich things that the Divine Bridegroom has provided for me that I take little notice of the treasures of His Grace?” That is the first word of rebuke. It is a very powerful one to those who think it over. Shall trifles be remembered and God be forgotten?

The next is this—if a bride *did* forget her attire, or a maid *did* forget her ornaments, it would be very unreasonable behavior. The thing was so unreasonable that it was quite unknown! Suppose we found an Eastern woman having no regard whatever, on her marriage day, to her attire? She would be thought to be mad! They would say, “This is so contrary to all women’s ways in this part of the country that she must have lost her reason.” It is unreasonable that a bride should forget her ornaments and her attire—but how infinitely more unreasonable it is that you and I should forget God! He is our diadem of Glory—He is our beauty of holiness! In Christ we are arrayed in raiment of needlework and our garments are of worked gold! Can we, *shall* we forget *Him*?

There may be a reason for forgetting to eat bread. There may be a reason for forgetting to put on one’s garments. Such neglects have been reasonable in times of fire, or danger to life, but there never can be a reason for forgetting God! A child of God is in the most unreasonable condition in which a human being can be when he is living a single day without remembering his God, his life, his Heaven, his All-in-All! Next, it would have been a most unseasonable thing for a maid to forget her attire at her wedding. If she forgot her dress on other days, it might be well enough, but, when the marriage drew near, for the bride to forget her attire would be thought a most unseasonable neglect. Forget it tomorrow, if you will, but not when your marriage has come!

You may have forgotten it many days ago, but do not forget it, now, that the happy day has arrived. A bride who forgets her attire would be something like the foolish virgins who forgot to take oil in their vessels with their lamps. And, certainly, it is a most unseasonable thing for me and you to forget our God while we are here! Let the soldier, when the arrow is flying from every bush, forget his armor, but let us not forget our God! Let the hungry man, when famine rages through the land, forget his supply of bread, but let us not forget the Food of our souls, which is our Lord Jesus Christ!

Now, when dangers assail you, temptations surround you, corruptions rage within you and Satan molests you, forget not, now, your God. And I will guarantee you, if you do not forget God on earth, you never will in Heaven, for there we shall be all taken up with Him and never, for a mo-



ment, shall our thoughts wander from our God, our Heaven, our All-in-All. However, now, at any rate, it would be unseasonable in the highest degree to forget your God. Notice the conduct of the maid or the conduct of the bride with regard to her ornaments. What does the maid do? Her conduct is the reverse of forgetfulness as to dress and ornaments. She labors hard to obtain her ornaments and to gain her attire.

Many women in the East give up every coin that they have and turn all into silver. They do not care about storing up coins—they prefer the precious metal in the form of rings for their ankles, arms, necks, noses and ears. It is their life's work to provide themselves with ornaments for the marriage day. While they do this, let us do better—let us store up the thoughts of Christ, the Words of Christ and the things of Christ—and let us labor, let us wear ourselves out—to get more and more of Christ that we may be adorned with Him and made comely in His comeliness!

When the Eastern woman has, with great difficulty, obtained her ornaments and her attire, she then thinks a great deal of them. She preserves them with much care. She will, if possible, prevent a thief from taking away a ring or gem. She locks them up carefully. Oh, that we did store up every bit we get of our Lord's love and put it by to keep it, never losing any pearl that we find, or any ring that we fashion by experience! I say that the Eastern woman thinks about her bridal attire. Why, we hear of them *dreaming* about it—dreaming about the next bracelet they will buy, the next jewel they will hang about their necks! Would to God we were as much taken up with the preciousness of Christ! I sometimes dream of Christ and when I do, I am glad, for this is proof that my thoughts have been with Him when I was awake, or they would not have been with Him when I was asleep. Oh, to have our whole soul occupied with thoughts of Christ and Divine things!

How joyfully the Eastern woman puts on her jewels, puts on her attire. She has these things to wear. I am ashamed of those Christians who are ashamed of Christ. They have jewels—I hope they have—but they are very wary of ever showing them. Perhaps they get some Christian friend into a corner and they say, "I have a jewel that I mean to wear, but not yet. I am afraid it should not be seen as yet, but I will show it if you will not tell anybody else." If anybody comes round after a sermon and gently enquires, "Have you any of the precious things of Christ?" these timid ones blush and half deny their own joy! Some people—yes, some of Christ's well-beloved ones—whisper, "I hardly know." Is this after the right manner? The Eastern woman puts everything upon her on her marriage—and Eastern ladies at a banquet are all ablaze with diamonds and jewels—gold and silver.

I wish you Christian people would publicly put on your priceless jewels and never be ashamed of them! Do you know anything about Christ? Tell it! Tell it and you will soon know more! Do you know anything about Christ? Live it! Live it and you will soon have more! Put on your jewels! I do not see, while the Bridegroom is about, why you should put on your everyday rags. I have seen young folks smarten themselves up when their beloved has come to see them and, oh, since our Beloved is always coming to see us, we ought to keep ourselves in good trim, well decked in the Graces of His Spirit! “Shall a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?”

In the Presence of Christ let us glory in Him! Let us delight ourselves in Him! Let us tell the world we never can have enough of Jesus, our Lord! And when they ask, “What is your Beloved more than any other beloved?” let us show how He has enriched us and blessed us with His love and Grace—and let this be our happy answer to an unbelieving generation!

**III.** Now I close with a few words of CALL TO REPENTANCE if we have, in any measure or degree, forgotten our God. I am sure, first, that our God does not deserve to be treated so. “You use no other friend so ill.” Such love, such love, such wondrous love, infinite, unending, everlasting love to you! And can you forget? Can you forget? So undeserving and yet so favored! Can you forget your Friend? Loved by God as He loves His own Son! Can you forget? Have you forgotten? Will not the time past suffice for that? A half a minute’s forgetfulness of God is half a minute too long! Let it not come to be “days without number.” But, if the number is ever so small, let us weep to think we should have forgotten Him at all! Let our sorrows flow at the recollection that He has never forgotten us—no, never for a moment—and yet we have forgotten Him. Our names have been on Jesus’ breastplate and on His shoulders days without number—shall His name be always out of our minds? “I have engraved you on the palms of My hands,” He says.

Let us engrave His name upon the tablets of our hearts! Think for a minute, if He had forgotten you—forgotten you in your merriest moment, yes, in your *holiest* moment—what would have been your portion? If God had suspended the outflow of His Grace and left you to yourselves, what had been your fate? Oh, my God, my God, if You had once forgotten me, where had I been? But He never has forgotten us! He is not forgetting us at this moment. He says to each one, however wandering, “I do earnestly remember you.” He will never forget us. The dying thief said, “Lord, remember me,” and Jesus did remember him!

He cries, “I remember you, the love of your betrothal.” Lord, do you remember *me*? Then would I smite my heart to think I ever should have forgotten You! Oh, how can we forget when God is our diadem of Glory? It is

our highest privilege that He is ours and we are His. God is our beauty, the honor and excellence of all His saints. It is this that makes us illustrious in the eyes of cherubim and seraphim—that God is ours and we are His! God is our joy, our only joy, our overflowing joy! He that knows God has Heaven within His spirit even now. Come, let us not forget again, but let us bind the glorious name of our Lord about our heart. May the sweet Spirit do it now, for Jesus Christ's sweet love's sake. Amen.

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# GADDING ABOUT NO. 3007

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1906.

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

*“Why do you gad about so much to change your way?  
Jeremiah 2:36.*

GOD’S ancient people were very prone to forget Him and to worship the false deities of the neighboring heathen. Other nations were faithful to their blocks of wood and stone, and adhered as closely to their graven images as though they really had helped them, or could in future deliver them. Only the nation which avowed its belief in the true God forsook its God and left the fountain of Living Water, to hew out for itself broken cisterns which could hold no water!

There seems to have been speaking after the manner of men, astonishment in the Divine Mind concerning this, for the Lord says, in verses 10 and 11 of this Chapter, “Pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there is such a thing. Has a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate.” In the 32<sup>nd</sup> verse of this same Chapter, the Lord addresses His people thus, “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.” And here, in our text, the same astonishment appears, “Why do you gad about so much to change your way?” It certainly was a most unreasonable thing that a people with such a God, who had dealt out to them so graciously the riches of His love and had worked such wonders on their behalf, should turn from Him to the worship of Baal or Ashtaroth—mimic gods which had ears but heard not, eyes but saw not—and did but mock the worshippers who were deluded by them!

As in a mirror, I see myself in these people. The spiritual people of God are well imaged in the typical nation, for, alas, waywardness and wandering of heart are the diseases, not only of the Israelites of old, but also of the true Israel now. The same expostulations may be addressed to us as to that erring nation of old, for we as perpetually backslide and as constantly forget the Almighty One and put our trust in an arm of flesh. He says to us, also, “Why do you gad about so much?” For we are, alas, too often false to Him, forgetting Him and wandering here and there, rather than abiding in close and constant fellowship with God, our exceeding joy.

I desire to put this question first to Believers and then to the unconverted. May the Holy Spirit bless it to each class!

I. If you read this question, taking it in its context, you will see, in the first place, that there is A RELATIONSHIP MENTIONED. The question is asked, “Why do you gad about so much?”

The enquiry is not made of a traveler, nor of one whose business it is to journey from pole to pole and to investigate distant lands. It is not asked of a wayfarer lodging for a night, nor of a homeless vagrant who finds a poor shelter beneath every bush! It is asked by God of His people Israel, describing them under the character of a married wife. He represents the nation of Israel as being married to Him, Himself the Husband of Israel, and Israel His bride. To persons bearing that character, the question comes with great force, “Why do you gad about so much?” Let others wander who have no central object of attraction, who have no house and no “houseband” to bind them to the spot, but you, a married wife, how can you wander? What have you to do in traversing strange ways? How can you excuse yourself? If you were not false to your relationship, you could not do so! No, Beloved, we strain no metaphor when we say that there exists between the soul of every Believer and Jesus Christ, a relationship admirably imaged in the conjugal tie. We are married to Christ. He has betrothed our souls unto Himself. He paid our dowry on the Cross. He espoused Himself unto us in righteousness in the Covenant of Grace. We have accepted Him as our Lord and Husband. We have given ourselves up to Him and under the sweet Law of His Love we ought to dwell evermore in His house. He is the Bridegroom of our souls, and He has arrayed us in the wedding dress of His own righteousness. Now it is to us who acknowledge this marriage union and who are allied to the Lord Jesus by ties so tender that the Well-Beloved says, “Why do you gad about so much?”

Observe that the wife’s place may be described as a threefold one. In the first place, *she should abide in dependence upon her husband’s care*. It would be looked upon as a very strange thing if a wife should be overheard to speak to another man and say, “Come and assist in providing for me.” If she should cross the street to another’s house and say to a stranger, “I have a difficulty and a trouble—will you relieve me from it? I feel myself in great need but I shall not ask my husband to help me, though he is rich enough to give me anything I require and wise enough to direct me. I come to you, a stranger, in whom I have no right to confide and from whom I have no right to look for love—and I trust myself with you and confide in you rather than in my husband.” This would be a very wicked violation of the chastity of the wife’s heart! Her dependence, as a married woman with a worthy husband, must be solely fixed on him to whom she is bound in wedlock.

Transfer the figure, for it is even so with us and the Lord Jesus. It is a tender topic. Let it tenderly touch your heart and mine. What right have I, when I am in trouble, to seek an arm of flesh to lean upon, or to pour my grief into an earthborn ear in preference to casting my care on God and telling Jesus all my sorrows? If a human friend has the best intentions, yet he is not like my Lord—he never died for me, he never shed his blood for me and even if he loves me, he cannot love me as the

Husband of my soul loves me. My Lord's love is ancient as eternity, deeper than the sea, firmer than the hills, changeless as His own Deity! How can I seek another friend in preference to Him? What a slight I put upon the affection of my Savior! What a slur upon His condescending sympathy towards me! How I impugn His generosity and mistrust His power if, in my hour of need, I cry out, "Alas, I have no friend." No friend while Jesus lives? Dare I say I have no helper? No helper while the Almighty One, upon whom God has laid help, still exists with strong arms and unchanged heart? Can I murmur and lament that there is no escape for me from my tribulations? No escape while my Almighty Savior lives and feels my every grief?

Do you see my point? Put it in that shape and the question, "Why do you gad about so much to look after creatures as grounds of dependence?" becomes a very deep and searching one. Why, O Believer, do you look after things which are seen, heard, handled and recognized by the senses, instead of trusting in your unseen but not unknown Redeemer? Oh, why, why, you spouse of the Lord Jesus, why do you gad about so much?

Have we not even fallen into this evil with regard to our own salvation? After a time of spiritual enjoyment it sometimes happens that our graces decline and we lose our joy. And as we are very apt to depend upon our own experience, our faith also droops. Is not this unfaithfulness to the finished work and perfect merit of our great Substitute? We knew, at the first, when we were under conviction of sin, that we could not rest on anything within ourselves, yet that Truth of God is always slipping away from our memories and we try to build upon past experiences, or to rely upon present enjoyments, or some form or other of personal attainment. Do we really wish to exchange the sure Rock of our salvation for the unstable sand of our own feelings? Can it be that having once walked by faith, we now choose to walk by sight? Are graces, frames, feelings and enjoyments to be preferred to the tried foundation of the Redeemer's Atonement? Be it remembered that even the work of the Holy Spirit, if it is depended upon as a ground of acceptance with God, becomes as much an antichrist as though it were not the work of the Holy Spirit at all! Dare we so blaspheme the Holy Spirit as to make His work in us a rival to the Savior's work for us? Shame on us that we should thus doubly sin! The best things are mischievous when put in the wrong place! Good works have "necessary uses," but they must not be joined to the work of Christ as the groundwork of our hope! Even precious gold may be made into an idol calf and that which the Lord, Himself, bestows may be made to be a polluted thing, like that bronze serpent which once was used to heal, but when it was idolized, came to be styled by no better name than a piece of brass—and was broken and put away. Do not continually harp upon what you are, and what you are not—your salvation does not rest in these things, but in your Lord! Go and stand at the foot of the Cross—still an empty-handed sinner to be filled with the riches of Christ—a

sinner black as the tents of Kedar in yourself and comely only through your Lord.

Again, the wife's position is not only one of sole dependence upon her husband's care, but it should be and is *a position of sole delight on her husband's love*. To be suspected of desiring anything of man's affection beyond that would be the most serious imputation that could be cast upon a wife's character. We are again upon very tender ground and I beseech each of you who are now thinking of your Lord to consider yourselves to be on very tender ground, too, for you know what our God has said—"I the Lord your God am a jealous God." That is a very wonderful and suggestive expression—"a jealous God." See that it is engraved on your hearts. Jesus will not endure it that those of us who love Him should divide our hearts between Him and something else. The love which is strong as death is linked with a jealousy which is cruel as the grave, "the coals thereof are coals of fire which have a most vehement flame." The royal word to the spouse is, "Forget also your own people, and your father's house and so shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for he is your Lord; and you must worship him."

Of course, Beloved, the Master never condemns that proper natural affection which we are bound to give and which it is a part of our sanctification to give in its due and proper proportion to those who are related to us. Besides, we are bound to love all the saints and all mankind in their proper place and measure. But there is a love which is only for the Master. Inside the heart there must be a *sanctum sanctorum*, within the veil, where He, Himself, alone must shine like the Shekinah, and reign on the Mercy Seat. There must be a glorious high throne within our spirits where the true Solomon alone must sit, the lions of watchful zeal must guard each step of it. There must He, the King in His beauty, sit enthroned, sole Monarch of the heart's affections. But, alas, alas, how often have we gone far to provoke His anger? We have set up the altars of strange gods hard by the Holy Place. Sometimes a favorite child has been idolized! Another time, perhaps, our own persons have been admired and pampered. We have been unwilling to suffer though we know it to be the Lord's will—we were determined to make provision for the flesh. We have not been willing to hazard our substance for Christ, thus making our worldly comfort our chief delight instead of feeling that wealth to be well lost which is lost as the result of Jehovah's will. Oh, how soon we make idols! Idol-making was not only the trade of Ephesus, but it is a trade all the world over! Making shrines for Diana, no, shrines for *self*, we are all master-craftsmen at this work in some form or another! We have set up images of jealousy which become abominations of desolation!

We may even exalt some good pursuit into an idol! Even work for the Master may sometimes take *His* place, as was the case with Martha. We are cumbered with much serving and often think more about the serving than of *Him* who is to be served. The problem being that we are too mindful of how *we* may look in the serving, and not enough considerate of *Him* and of how He may be honored by our service. It is so very easy

for our busy spirits to gad about, and so very difficult to sit at the Master's feet. Now, Christian, if you have been looking after this and after that secondary matter—if your mind has been set too much upon worldly business, or upon any form of earthly love, the Master says to you, “My spouse, My beloved, why do you gad about so much?” Let us confess our fault and return unto our rest. Let each one sing plaintively, in the chamber of his heart, some such song as this—

***“Why should my foolish passions rove?  
Where can such sweetness be  
As I have tasted in Your love,  
As I have found in Thee?  
Wretch that I am, to wander thus  
In chase of false delight—  
Let me be fastened to Your Cross,  
Rather than lose Your sight.”***

But a third position, which I think will be recognized by every wife as being correct, is not simply dependence upon her husband's care and delight in her husband's love, but also *diligence in her husband's house*. The good housewife, as Solomon tells us, “looks well to the ways of her household and eats not the bread of idleness.” She is not a servant—her position is very different from that, but, for that very reason she uses the more diligence. A servant's work may sometimes be finished, but a wife's never is. “She rises also while it is yet night, and gives meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.” She rejoices willingly to labor as no servant could be expected to do. “She seeks wool, and flax, and works willingly with her hands.” “She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good: her candle goes not out by night. She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.” All through the night she watches her sick child and then through the work day, as well, the child is still tended, and the household cares are still heavy upon her. She never relaxes. She counts that her house is her kingdom and she cares for it with incessant care. The making of her husband happy, and the training up of her children in the fear of God—that is her business. The good housewife is like Sarah, of whom it is written that when the angels asked Abraham, “Where is Sarah, your wife?” he answered, “Behold, in the tent.” It would have been well for some of her descendants had they been “in the tent, too, for Dinah's going forth “to see the daughters of the land” cost her dearly!

Now this is the position, the exact position of the chaste lover of Jesus—he dwells at home with Jesus, among his own people. The Christian's place with regard to Christ is to be diligently engaged in Christ's house. Some of us can say, I trust, that we do naturally care for the souls of men. We were born, by God's Grace, to care for them, and could not be happy—any more than some nurses can be happy without the care of children—unless we have converts to look after and weaklings to cherish. It is well for the Church when there are many of her members, beside her pastors and deacons, who care for the souls of those who are born in the Church. The Church is Christ's family mansion. It should be the home of newborn souls, where they are fed



with food convenient for them, flourished, comforted and educated for the better land. You have all something to do—you who are married to Christ have all a part assigned you in the household of God. He has given you each a happy task. It may be that you have to suffer in secret for Him, or you have to talk to two or three, or perhaps in a little village station, or at the corner of a street you have to preach, or possibly it is the distribution of a handful of tracts, or it is looking after the souls of a few women in your district, or teaching a class of children.

Whatever it is, if we have been growing at all negligent, if we have not thrown our full strength into our work and have been expending our vigor somewhere else, may not the question come very pertinently home to us, “Why do you gad about so much?” Why that party of pleasure, that political meeting, that late rising, that waste of time? Have you nothing better to do? You have enough to do for your Husband and His Church if you do it well. You have not a minute to spare—the King’s business requires haste. Our charge is too weighty and too dear to our hearts to admit of sloth. The Lord has given us as much to do as we shall have strength and time to accomplish, by His Grace, and we have no energies to spare, no talents to wrap up in napkins, no hours to idle away in the marketplace. One thing we have to do and that one thing should absorb all our powers. To neglect our holy life-work is to wrong our heavenly Bridegroom. Put this matter in a clear light, my Brothers and Sisters, and do not shut your eyes to it. Have you any right to mind earthly things? Can you serve two masters? What do you think would any kind husband here think if, when he came home, the children had been neglected all day, if there was no meal for him after his day’s work and no care whatever taken of his house? Might he not well give a gentle rebuke, or turn away with a tear in his eye? And if it were long continued, might he not almost be justified if he should say, “My house yields me no comfort. This woman acts not as a wife to me”?

And yet, Soul, is not this what you have done with your Lord? When He has come into His house, has He not found it in sad disorder, the morning prayer neglected, the evening supplication but poorly offered, those little children but badly taught and many other works of love forgotten? It is your business as well as His, for you are one with Him, and yet you have failed in it. Might He not justly say to you, “I have little comfort in your fellowship. I will leave until you treat Me better. And when you long for Me and are willing to treat Me as I should be treated, then I will return to you. But you shall see My face no more till you have a truer heart towards Me”?

Thus, in personal sadness, have I put this question. The Lord give us tender hearts while answering it!

**II.** Painful as the enquiry is, let us turn to it again. A REASON IS REQUESTED—what shall we give? “Why do you gad about so much?”

I am at a loss to give any answer. I can suppose that without beating about the bush, an honest heart, convinced of its ingratitude to Christ, would say, “My Lord, all I can say for myself is to *make a confession of the wrong*. And if I might make any excuse, which after all is no excuse,

it is this—I find myself so fickle at heart, so frail, so changeable—I am like Reuben, unstable as water and, therefore, I do not excel.” But I can well conceive that the Master, without being severe, would not allow such an extenuation even as that because there are many of us who could not fairly urge it. We are not fickle in *other things*! We are not unstable in minor matters. Where we love, we love most firmly, and a resolve once taken by us is determinedly carried out. Some of us know what it is to put our foot down and declare that, having taken a right step, we will not retrace it and, then, no mortal power can move us. Now, if we possess this resolute character in other things, it can never be allowable for us to use the excuse of instability! Resolved elsewhere, how can you be fickle here? Firm everywhere else, and yet frail here? O Soul, what are you doing? This is gratuitous sin, wanton fickleness! Surely you have worked folly in Israel if you give the world your best, and Christ your worst! The world your decision, and Christ your wavering? This is but to make your sin worse! The excuse becomes an aggravation. It is not true that you are thus unavoidably fickle. You are not a feather blown with every wind, but a man of purpose and will! Ah, why, then, are you so soon removed from your Best-Beloved One?

I will ask you a few questions, not so much by way of answering the enquiry, as to show how difficult it is to answer it. “Why do you gad about so much?” *Has your Lord given you any cause of offense?* Has He been unkind to you? Has the Lord Jesus spoken to you like a tyrant and played the despot over you? Must you not confess that in all His dealings with you in the past—love, unmingled love has been His rule? He has borne patiently with your ill-manners when you have been foolish. He has given you wisdom and He has not upbraided you, though He might have availed Himself of the opportunity of that gift, as men so often do, to give a word of upbraiding at the same time. He has not turned against you, or been your enemy. Why, then, are you so cold to Him? Is this the way to deal with One so tender and so good? Let me ask you, has your Savior changed? Will you dare to think He is untrue to you? Is He not, “the same yesterday, and today, and forever?” That cannot, then, be an excuse for your unfaithfulness! Has He been unmindful of His promise? He has told you to call upon Him in the day of trouble and He will deliver you—has He failed to do so? It is written, “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Has He withheld a really good thing from you when you have walked uprightly? If, indeed, He had played you falsely, your excuse for deserting Him might claim a hearing, but you dare not say this! You know that He is faithful and true.

“Why do you gad about so much?” *Have you found any happiness in gadding about?* I confess, sorrowfully, to wandering often and wandering much, but I am ready enough to acknowledge that I get no peace, no comfort by my wanderings, but, like a forlorn spirit, I traverse dry places, seeking rest and finding none. If, for a day, or a part of a day, my thoughts are not upon my Lord, the hour is dreary and my time hangs heavily. And if my thought is spent upon other topics even connected

with my work in the Church of God, if I do not soon come back to Him—if I have no dealings with Him in prayer and praise—I find the wheels of my chariot taken off and it drags along heavily, while I cry to my Lord—

***“The day is dark, the night is long,  
Unblessed with thoughts of You  
And dull to me the sweetest song,  
Unless its theme is You.”***

The soul that has once learned to swim in the river of Christ, will, when His Presence is withdrawn, be like a fish laid by the fisherman on the sandy shore—it begins to palpitate in dire distress and, before long, it will die, if not again restored to its vital element. You cannot get the flavor of the Bread of Heaven in your mouth and afterwards contentedly feed on ashes! He who has never tasted anything but the brown, gritty cakes of this world may be very well satisfied with them, but he who has once tasted the pure white Bread of Heaven can never be content with the old diet. It spoils a man for satisfaction with this world to have had heart-ravishing dealings with the world to come. I mean not that it spoils him for practical activity in it, for the heavenly life is the truest life even for earth, but it spoils him for the sinful pleasures of this world—it prevents his feeding his soul upon anything but the Lord Jesus Christ’s sweet love. Jesus is the chief ingredient of all his joy and he finds that no other enjoyment beneath the sky is worth a moment’s comparison with the King’s wines on the lees, well refined!

“Why then do you gad about so much?” For what? Oh, for what reason do you wander? When a child runs away from its home because it has a brutal parent, it is excused. But when the child leaves a tender mother and an affectionate father, what shall we say? If the sheep quits a barren field to seek after needed pasturage, who shall blame it? But if it leaves the green pastures and forsakes the still waters to roam over the arid sand, or to go bleating in the forest among the wolves, in the midst of danger, how foolish a creature it proves itself! Such has been our folly. We have left gold for dross! We have forsaken a throne for a dunghill! We have quitted scarlet and fine linen for rags and beggary! We have left a palace for a hovel! We have turned from sunlight into darkness! We have forsaken the shining of the Sun of Righteousness, the sweet summer weather of communion, the singing of the birds of promise, the turtle voice of the Divine Spirit and the blossoming of the roses and the fair lilies of Divine Love to shiver in frozen regions among the ice caves and snow of absence from the Lord’s Presence. God forgive us, for we have no excuse for this folly!

“Why do you gad about so much?” *Have you not always had to pay for your gadding?* O Pilgrim, it is hard getting back again to the right road! Every Believer knows how wise John Bunyan was when he depicted Christian as bemoaning himself bitterly when he had to go back to the arbor where he had slept and lost his roll. He had to do a triple journey—first to go on, and then to go back, and then to go on again! The back step is weary marching. Remember, also, Bypath Meadow, and Doubting Castle and Giant Despair. ‘Twas an ill day when the pilgrims left the narrow way. No gain, but untold loss comes of forsaking the way of

holiness and fellowship. What is there in such a prospect to attract you from the happy way of communion with Christ? Perhaps the last time you wandered, you fell into sin, or you met with a grief which overwhelmed you—ought not these mishaps to teach you? Having been already burned, will you not dread the fire? Having before been assaulted when in forbidden paths, will you not now keep to the King's Highway, wherein no lion or any other ravenous beast shall be found?

“Why do you gad about so much?” *Do you not even now feel the drawings of His love attracting you to Himself?* This heavenly impulse should make the question altogether unanswerable. You sometimes feel a holy impulse to pray, and yet do not pray. You feel, even now, as if you wished to behold the face of your Beloved and yet you will go forth into the world without Him—is this as it should be? The Holy Spirit is saying in your soul, “Arise from the bed of your sloth and seek Him whom your soul loves.” If your sloth prevents your rising, how will you excuse yourself? Even now, I hear the Beloved knocking at your door. Will you not hasten to admit Him? Are you too idle? Dare you say to Him, “I have taken off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?” If you keep Him outside in the cold and darkness, while His head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night, what cruelty is this? Is this your kindness to your Friend? Can you hear Him say, “Open to Me, My Love, My Dove, My undefiled,” and yet be deaf to His appeals? Oh, that He may gently make for Himself an entrance! May He put in His hand by the hole of the door and may your heart be moved towards Him! May you rise up and open to Him and then your hands will drop with myrrh, and your fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. But remember, if you neglect Him now, it will cost you much to find Him when you do arise, for He will make you traverse the streets after Him and the watchmen will smite you, and take away your veil. So rise, and admit Him now—

***“Behold! Your Bridegroom’s at the door!  
He gently knocks, has knocked before.  
Has waited long; is waiting still—  
You treat no other friend so ill!  
Oh lovely attitude! He stands  
With melting heart and laden hands!  
Delay no more, lest He depart.  
Admit Him to your inmost heart.”***

He calls you yet again, even now! Run after Him, for He draws you. Approach Him, for He invites you. God grant that it may be so!

I wish I had the power to handle a topic like this as Rutherford, or Herbert, or Hawker would have done, so as to touch all your hearts if you are at this hour without enjoyment of fellowship with Jesus. But, indeed, I am so much one of yourselves, so much one who has to seek the Master's face, myself, that I can scarcely press the question upon you, but must rather press it upon myself—“Why do you gad about so much to change your way?” Blessed shall be the time when our wanderings shall cease—when we shall see Him face to face and rest in His bosom! Till then, if we are to know anything of Heaven here below, it must be by

living close to Jesus, abiding at the foot of the Cross, depending on His Atonement, looking for His coming—that glorious hope—preparing to meet Him with lamps well trimmed, watching for the midnight cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes”—standing always in His Presence, looking up to Him as we see Him pleading before the Throne of God and believing that He is always with us, even unto the end of the world. May we be, in future, so fixed in heart that the question need not again be asked of us, “Why do you gad about so much?”

And now I have to use the text, for a few minutes, in addressing those who are not converted.

I trust that some of you who are not yet saved, nevertheless have a degree of desire towards Christ. It is well when, like the climbing plant, the heart throws out tendrils, trying to grasp something by the help of which it may mount higher. I hope that desire of yours after better things and after Jesus, is something more than Nature could have imparted. Divine Grace is the source of gracious desires. But that is not the point. Your desires may be right and yet your method of action mistaken. You have been trying after peace, but you have been gadding about to find it. The context says that the Israelites would soon be as weary of Egypt as they had been of Assyria. Read the whole passage, “Why do you gad about so much to change your way? You also shall be ashamed of Egypt, as you were ashamed of Assyria. Yes, you shall go forth from him and your hands upon your head: for the Lord has rejected your confidences, and you shall not prosper in them” (Jer 2:36, 37). Their gadding about would end in their being confounded at last as they were at first. Once they trusted in Assyria and the Assyrians carried them away captive, that was the end of their former false confidence. Then they trusted in Egypt—and met with equal disappointment.

When a man is first alarmed about his soul, he will do anything rather than come to Christ. Christ is a harbor that no ship ever enters except under stress of weather. Mariners on the sea of life steer for any port except the fair haven of Free Grace. When a man first finds comfort in his own good works, he thinks he has done well. “Why,” he says, “this must be the way of salvation! I am no longer a drunkard. I have taken the pledge. I am no longer a Sabbath-breaker. I have taken a seat at a place of worship. Go in and look at my house, Sir, you will see that it is as different as possible from what it was before! There is a moral change in me of a most wonderful kind and surely this will suffice!” Now, if God is dealing with that man in a way of Grace, he will soon be ashamed of his false confidence. He will be thankful, of course, that he has been led to morality, but he will find that bed too short to stretch himself upon. He will discover that the past still lives—that his old sins are buried only in imagination—the ghosts of them will haunt him, they will alarm his conscience. He will be compelled to feel that sin is a scarlet stain, not to be so readily washed out as he fondly dreamed. His self-righteous refuge will prove to be a bowing wall and a tottering fence! Driven to extremities by the fall of his tower of Babel, the top of which was to reach to Heaven, he grows weary of his former hopes. He finds that all the outward religion

he can muster will not suffice, that even the purest morality is not enough, for, over and above the thundering of conscience, there comes clear and shrill as the voice of a trumpet, "You must be born-again!" "Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." "Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Well, then, what does he do? He resolves to find another shelter to exchange Assyria for Egypt. That is to say, as works will not do, he will try feelings! And the poor soul will labor to pump up repentance out of a rocky heart and, failing to do so, will mistake despair for contrition! He will try as much as possible to feel legal convictions. He will sit down and read the books of Job and Jeremiah till he half hopes that, by becoming a companion of dragons and an associate of owls, he may find rest. He seeks the living among the dead, comfort from the Law, healing from a sword. He conceives that if he can feel up to a certain point, he can be saved! If he can repent to a certain degree—if he can be alarmed with fears of Hell up to fever heat then he may be saved. But, before long, if God is dealing with him, he gets to be as much ashamed of his feelings as of his works. He is thankful for them as far as they are good, but he feels that he could not depend upon them and he remembers that if feelings were the way of salvation, he deserves to feel Hell, itself, and that to feel anything short of eternal wrath would not meet the Law's demands! The question may fitly be put to one who thus goes the round of works, feelings and, perhaps, of ceremonies and mortifications, "Why do you gad about so much?" It will all end in nothing.

You may gad about as long as you will, but you will never gain peace except by simple faith in Jesus! All the while you are roaming so far, the Gospel is near you, where you now are, in your present state, available to you in your present condition, now, for, "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." O Sinner, you are thinking to bring something to the Most High God and yet He bids you come "without money and without price." Your Father says to you, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He declares to you the way of salvation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." He calls to you in His gracious Word and says, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." He bids you trust in His Son, who is the appointed Savior, for He has laid help upon One that is mighty! He thus addresses you, "Incline your ears and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." You want pardon and Jesus cries from the Cross, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." You want justification and the Father points you to His Son, and says, "By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." You want salvation and He directs you to Him who is exalted on high to give repentance and

remission of sins. The God of Heaven bids you look to His dear Son and trust Him!

Though I preach this Gospel almost every day of the week—and scarcely a day passes without my telling the old, old story—yet it is always new. If you who hear me so often, grow weary of it, it is the fault of my style of putting it, for, to myself, it seems fresher every day! To think that the tender Father should say to the prodigal son, “I ask nothing of you. I am willing to receive you, sinful, guilty, vile as you are—though you have injured Me and spent My substance with harlots. Though you have fed swine and though you are fit to be nothing but a swine-feeder all your days, yet come, just as you are, to My loving bosom—I will rejoice over you and kiss you, and say, ‘Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet!’” Sinner, God grant you Grace to end all your roamings in your Father’s bosom! “Why do you gad about so much?” Renounce all other hopes and fly away to the wounds of Jesus. “Why do you gad about so much to change your way?” Listen and obey these closing lines—

***“Weary souls who wander wide  
From the central point of bliss  
Turn to Jesus crucified,  
Fly to those dear wounds of His!  
Sink into the purple flood  
Rise into the life of God.  
Find in Christ the way of peace,  
Peace unspeakable, unknown!  
By His pain He gives you ease,  
Life by His expiring groan.  
Rise, exalted by His fall—  
Find in Christ your All in All.”***

—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 PROCLAMATION FROM THE KING OF KINGS NO. 1833

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 5, 1885,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON OCTOBER 16, 1884.**

*“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say,  
Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will  
not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful,  
says the Lord, and I will not remain angry forever.  
Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have  
transgressed against the Lord your God,  
and have scattered your ways to the  
strangers under every green tree,  
and you have not obeyed  
My voice, says the Lord.”  
Jeremiah 3:12, 13.*

BACKSLIDERS are very many. Departing from the living God is no strange thing. Every Church has to lament many that turn aside. In fact, it has become so common in many Churches, that they have not faith enough to hold to the Scriptural doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints—as if the lack of perseverance in mere *professors* could alter the Truth of God that where the life and power of God are *really in the soul*, there it will abide and remain. Bitter are the disappointments which result from the apostasy of avowed disciples and the declension of true followers of the Lamb. We sow, but when we expect to reap, we fill not our bosoms with sheaves, for many of those who sprung up hastily from the stony ground are withered as soon as the sun has risen! The morning cloud charms us with the hope of rain, but it soon vanishes—the early dew gives us promise of moisture, but it is exhaled—and the earth is hot beneath our feet. Our hearts ache because of blighted hopes where we looked for blessed results.

And not only is it a common thing for men who profess godliness and, for a while, run well, suddenly to turn aside, but even God's own people do not keep up the pace as they should! Many Christians are one while hot, another lukewarm and even cold. They are diligent and fervent today, but idle and indifferent tomorrow. There are still Galatians among us who seem, one way or another, to be bewitched with error. Even the best of Believers are not always at their best. Who among us has not had cause to make confession that he has not kept up to his first love at all times? Neither has his lamp been always clearly burning, nor has he, himself, been



all through the night equally wakeful and watchful for the coming of the Lord. The wise virgins sleep as well as the foolish ones!

Alas, that it should be so! Had it not been for the interposition of God's Grace, in many an instance, backslidings that have been healed might have been backslidings *unhealed*—and the gaping wound might have bled to the dreadful weakness of those who suffered from it. May God, in infinite mercy, help those of us who have been kept by His power until now, to rest in faith in Him—and may we be very careful that we slip not with our feet and decline not with our hearts! Nor let our earnestness end with *self*, but let us pray with all our might for those who have wandered upon the dark mountains, that they may not wander for another hour, but that at once, before this service is ended, they may be restored to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls—and may find rest as once they used to find it—at the feet of Jesus Christ.

Pray for me, that I may speak in the power of the Holy Spirit, so as to lead back benighted ones who are now stumbling upon the dark mountains. I feel deeply my need of such help and would breathe my own desire to God in the language of our sweet poetess—

***“O strengthen me, that while I stand  
Firm on the Rock, and strong in Thee,  
I may stretch out a loving hand  
To wrestlers within the troubled sea.”***

I. I shall keep to the passage before us and we will commence with it at once and notice, first, in the text—THE PROCLAMATION. The Prophet receives this message—“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord.”

*It was to be a proclamation, for God is King*, and if His subjects rebel, He does not lose the rights of His sovereignty. He sends them, therefore, a royal message with all the power which belongs to the word of a king. “Go and proclaim.” It is meant to be a loud summons, such as a proclamation should be when the herald, in the name of his royal master, publishes a decree. “Go and proclaim.” It is to be done in state, with order and regularity, with a purpose and with authority. And so do I wish to speak at this time. Hear me, O my Brothers and Sisters, while I plead with you in Christ's name! In the name of the Ever-Blessed, who has not lost His right to you, O Backslider, you are called upon to return! In His name, who is your Creator and your Lord, is the message sent to you, “Return unto Me.” It is not delivered as a mere piece of advice from myself, personally, which you may treat as you like, because it comes from your friend and your equal—it comes from your *God* and your *King*, to whom you must give an account, by-and-by! It is not even sent as a simple word of advice from Him, but the majesty of God is at the back of it! At your peril it will be if you trifle with it! I pray you act not so presumptuously. It is a proclamation which demands that every ear should hear it and that every heart should bow before it. Only traitors will despise our message when the Lord says to us, “Go and proclaim these words, and say, Return.”

*This proclamation is sent to the worst of sinners—to the very basest of backsliders!* The proclamation is to be given *publicly*, but it was intended for a certain people and meant for their hearts as well as their ears. It was

meant for those who have backslidden—and the house of Israel contained many jet-black backsliders! They were people who had gone aside after beholding the most glorious manifestations of God, for unto what people did the God of the whole earth ever reveal Himself as He did unto Israel, a people that had been delivered by the plagues of Egypt, that had drunk of water from the Rock and had been fed upon angels' food—a people in the midst of whom the peculiar Presence of God had been revealed? He had ransomed them, fed them, led them and taught them—and they had been singularly indulged—and yet, for all that, they had turned aside from the living God!

They were a provoking nation of backsliders because they turned aside to the basest idols. After knowing something of Him who is invisible, they made a golden calf and said, "These are your gods, O Israel"—and in later years they bowed themselves before the lowest and most degrading shapes of idols. They went after the wickedness and the bestialities of the nations among whom they dwelt—and they defiled themselves so that God, who never speaks too harshly, said—"They went a whoring after the gods of the heathen." They broke their marriage bonds to the one living and true God and made themselves loathsome in His sight by the most detestable idolatries! It is sad that there should have been such a race of backsliders, but it is *glorious* to think that to such as these the message of God's mercy was sent! They were the lowest grade of backsliders—and if there are any here, tonight, who must be put in the same list, it is to *them* that the message of God's Grace and mercy is to be proclaimed! And I proclaim it in the name of Him that sent me!

These backsliders were old offenders who had long been false to their vows and covenants. They went aside once and they were chastened—and they repented. But their hearts were not true and so, when the scourge was taken away, they went aside *again* and proved that deceit was bound up in their souls! Many a time did He forgive them and put back His wrath, but as often did they return to their provocations. Many and many a time did He smile upon them, again, in favor and forgive their transgressions, but they provoked Him unto jealousy yet more and more until He declared that they were bent to backslide from Him. It seemed to be the way of them. It was ingrained in their nature. "Israel is a backsliding heifer," says the Lord. They would not go aright—they would turn aside.

Do I address any such in this discourse? O my Hearers, may the Lord deal graciously with you by my means, and my heart shall sing for joy! I am not going to enlarge upon any of these points of character, for if the Spirit of God is dealing with you, *He* will enlarge upon them. I have lately met with a considerable number over whom I have both sorrowed and rejoiced—I think of them, now, with mingled feelings because God is bringing them very low under a sense of their backsliding and I am hoping that this will be a blessing to them. The Lord is chastening them and I trust they will turn at His rebuke. Their sin, which was written with an iron pen upon the very horns of their altars, they did not see and would not see, but now He says they *shall* see and He is making them weep as they see! I know that some of you bleed with an inward wound at the heart, a wound

which man cannot reach, which only God can heal. I am glad that it is so, for this will convince you that you shall not be at ease away from God—but that in wandering from Him into the far country there shall come a mighty famine for you and you shall begin to be in need. Oh, may your need drive you home to the great Father's House where the best of welcomes awaits you!

The Israelite people were not only the worst kind of backsliders, *but they had already reaped, in a very large measure, the result of their backsliding*, for they had been carried away captive. They were taken away to the north country by the king of Assyria, far off from the land of promise which flowed with milk and honey! They were bond slaves under the most cruel of oppressors. They had suffered the loss of all things because they had departed from their God and yet they had not learned the lesson which affliction was meant to teach them. It was still necessary to call them to repentance and God bade them return to Him—His proclamation was to *them!*

I have known men to come down from wealth to poverty through their sin. I have known them fall from health and happiness to disease and misery. I have seen them brought down from honorable associations to degradation and shame wholly as the result of their departing from the living God! While they walked with Him, all went well with them. But when they walked contrary to Him, He began to walk contrary to them. There are some who hear me, at this moment, who know the meaning of that text, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." They have sinned and they have smarted—and in the smart this thought has come to their mind, "He will never forgive me. He has beaten me with the blows of a cruel one. He has set me for the target of all His arrows; His arrows drink up the blood of my soul. I am sorely wounded and broken in the place of dragons."

Yes, so was Israel carried away by Shalmaneser and yet they were bid to return unto God with a promise of mercy! Captives and poverty-stricken, they sat down and wept when they remembered Zion—and then came this royal proclamation of reconciliation upon repentance. From the Throne of God, where they might have expected condemnation and the sentence of death, there came this mission, this word, this message, "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord."

*I see some mercy, and that of no little kind, in the messenger who was sent to deliver this message*, for it was Jeremiah, that man of a broken spirit, who could say of himself, "I am the man that has seen affliction." Somehow, your bright-eyed joyous spirit astonishes the backslider into greater grief. "Alas," he cries, "such joy *I might have known*, but I put it all aside!" Such reflections deepen the poor sinner's woe. Moreover, the man that has never been emptied from vessel to vessel and has had no experience of the bitterness of sin is too apt to speak proudly, or, at least, harshly and severely, to a wandering brother. He does not sufficiently remember himself, lest he, also, is tempted. But as for *Jeremiah*, his eyes were red with weeping and his cheeks were guttered by his burning tears!

And when he spoke, there was a depth of pathos about every word—thus he was qualified to meet mourning souls upon their own ground.

How he longed for men to come back to God who had chosen them! How pathetically he exclaimed, “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!” And God selected this man that he might go after the smitten ones and proclaim in stately manner, blended with womanly tenderness, this message, “Return.” I do not feel so fitted as Jeremiah and yet I have an intense desire that any of you who have gone away from God would come back while I speak with you. The Lord knows how this has burdened me of late, for I cannot bear it that you who have sunned yourselves in His smile should choose darkness! That you who once rejoiced in Christ and gloried in His Cross, should now be crucifying Him afresh and putting Him to an open shame!

Here is a huge world that “lies in the Wicked One” and we need all our time to try and enlighten it and, meanwhile, you that are our camp followers and, as we thought, our fellow soldiers, have put away your swords and gone over to the enemy! At least you *act* as if you had, and it pains us! It pains us at the heart! Hear, then, at this hour, the proclamation which we will give forth as best we can, looking in your direction if you have gone up to the north, and proclaiming these words towards your place, your cold and shivering place, your place of darkness and of misery, your place in the far-off country. I say, we look anxiously and yet hopefully in your direction and proclaim these words to you, “Thus says the Lord, Return!”

So far concerning the proclamation.

**II.** But now, secondly, in our text we find A PRECEPT. It is a very simple one and as short as it is clear. It is given in the proclamation—“*Return, you backsliding Israel.*” *Return*—be as you were. Come back—repent and do your first works. O Wanderer, return to your God! You have forgotten Him. You have transgressed against Him and you have grieved Him exceedingly. For these months you have not sought Him, nor called upon Him. You have not trusted Him nor confided in Him. You have not loved Him, nor sought His honor. Return! You can never be right if you stay where you are! All ills attend the man who forsakes His God. Come back—back to the old place of humiliation in His Presence, of confession, of childlike faith, of holy consecration—come back to the happy place which was yours when you were in your best estate! Yes, further back than that—back nearer to God than ever you were before! Return unto your God!

Listen! This is the precept—return to your Savior! Just as you are, come back to Him. Come back as you came at first, with your sin acknowledged, looking to His Cross for pardon! Did you grow too great and think you could live without your Savior? Return! Did you dream of being so perfect that you did not need His righteousness, for your own would suffice? Away with that glittering bauble, that idle notion of your perfection, and come back and beat upon your breast, and say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” Repent of your pride and return, again, to your Lord

Jesus Christ. He will as gladly receive you as a mother presses to her bosom a lost child. The road is paved for your return, the stumbling blocks have been removed, the door of the Father's House is open wide!

Come yet again and receive pardon and cleansing from the precious blood of Jesus. It has not lost its power! The fountain of cleansing is open, not only for the common sinner, but for you, the backslider, for remember how the Scripture has it, "A fountain opened *to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*" It is open for those who are *already* in the Church of God, as well as for those who are newly brought into it! Come at once and tarry not! If your feet are foul with your wandering through the mire and through the slough, your Savior takes the towel, yet again, and fills the basin from the ewer and stoops to wash *your* feet! Will you not have them washed at this moment till He can say to you, again, "You are clean every whit"? You have once been washed in the atoning blood and you need not now except to wash your feet—and when this is done, all is well! Go and wash your brethren's feet in gratitude. "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren."

You see, then, dear Friends, how the Lord puts it to you. "Return," for where you lost your roll there you will find it. Mr. Bunyan pictures his pilgrim dropping his passport under the seat in that arbor at the bottom of the Hill Difficulty, or half way up it, where he sat down to rest—but where he did not only rest, but fell into a sinful slumber. Under that very settle, whereon you sat and went to sleep, you will find the roll which you must carry in your bosom to secure you a welcome at the Palace Beautiful! You must go back and look for your spiritual enjoyment where you lost it. Did you lose it by neglect of prayer? Then search the closet through. Did you lose it by a dusty Bible? Dust that Bible and search its pages till you find it. Did you lose it by neglect of the means of Grace? Were your Sabbaths wasted and week-night services neglected? Then go back, I say again, to the place where, by your sin, you allowed your holy confidence to slip from you—and there you will find it again. The point at which you diverged from the right road is the point that you must find and come back to. "Repent, and do your first works," is the Master's call to you tonight! It is His royal proclamation, "Return, you backsliding Israel."

But listen while I make this proclamation, again, in God's name. *Return at once.* Delays are always dangerous, but never so dangerous as when they are proposed by backsliders. Return without another day's indulgence in sin! The message tolerates no further backsliding. Come back at once! Wait not for second thoughts—your prompt, immediate thoughts are best. *And come you back with all your heart.* Let there be no mimic repentance; no pretended returning. You shall find the Lord if you seek Him with all your heart and all your soul. God help you to do it now!

And mind that you *return practically.* That is, that your life shall be changed, your idols broken, your omitted duties fulfilled with eagerness, neglected means of Grace pursued with fervor—that done which you have left undone and that evil forsaken into which you have gone with such headlong folly. When the Lord says, "Return," He does not mean, "Think about returning; promise to return; talk about your wandering" and all

that—He means that you should practically come back to Him with weeping and with supplication, with a true heart believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and beginning again.

“Alas,” says one, “I do not know whether I am a backslider, or whether I have been a hypocrite up till now!” Do not argue that question at all. I am constantly asked to decide for people whether they ever were true Christians or were in error about their condition. It is a difficult enquiry and of small practical value. I say to myself, sometimes, “Well if I never was a child of God, I know that I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—and so I will at once trust in Him.” Thus I recover confidence. If ever I *was* a child of God, then I *am* a child of God and He will bring me back. But if I *never was* a child of God and my profession was all a mistake, yet still the free salvation sounds out its silver trumpet—

**“Come, and welcome, Sinner, come,”**

and I hasten to accept the invitation! You can discuss the question of your previous character after you get back into the fold. But while you are out of it, it does not matter much to you. You had better leave such discussions till you are out of the reach of the wolf. In all probability it would be impossible for you to discover your precise condition—but, O poor Soul, *this* is clear enough, that the Lord cries to you, “Return, you backsliding Israel!”

This precept is clear as noon-day, and it is sent to you. Come back with the whole of your nature, in all ways and respects, back to your God and back to your Savior—and back to prayer, and back to holy living, and back to the people of God—back to the very Church from which you have wandered! It will be wise to do that before another sun has risen. Come back to the Lord’s Supper, back to feeding spiritually upon His flesh and upon His blood and living only in Him, and by Him, and to Him, and with Him! God help you to hear this precept and to turn it into practical effect!

**III.** Now, listen, in the third place, to THE PROMISE—“Return, you backsliding Israel, says Jehovah, and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.” “*I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.*” See that anger, like a black cloud, charged not with refreshing rain, but with fire flakes that shall burn as they fall—yes, burn their way into the very core of your being as with the fires of Hell! A sense of wrath is Hell setting the soul on fire till conscience flames with its own peculiar fierceness and seems to anticipate the fire that never can be quenched. You see that gathering storm around you, do you not?

But here is the fair promise, “Return, and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.” Not a flake of it shall burn you if you return unto your God. There is forgiveness, there is full, free and immediate forgiveness to be had! “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins. Return unto Me.” This is a grand motive for coming back—the sin that separates is put away! He will wash you thoroughly from your iniquity and cleanse you from your sin and whatever you need, He will give to you—and He will not upbraid you. When the father received the prodigal, did he remind him of his ingratitude, or of his wasting of his

substance? Not a word of it—he kissed away the memory of his wrongdoing! He covered him with a robe of righteousness and he put a new song into his mouth. The Lord is prepared to do that with you at this moment!

I know that your doubts and fears ask the question again and again, “Can it be possible?” All things are possible with God and especially all deeds of mercy! His mercy endures forever and He delights in it! I know that you say, “Oh, but does the promise mean me, even *me*?” It means you, even you! You are a backslider! You plead guilty to the charge and, therefore, it is to you that the promise is given. Accept the mercy! The man that is condemned by that description—the “backslider”—is the man who is commanded to return and he is the man to whom the promise is made, “I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.” In all this you can see yourself as in a mirror!

I find that the passage might be read, “I will not cause My *face* to fall upon you,” meaning this—that if the child of God comes back, God will not look angry at him any more. This is a very great blessing, for when the Lord does not lay chastisement upon His people by way of judgment and wrath, yet He does often hide His face from them, or frowns upon them like a cruel one. If you have sinned, God cannot smile upon you! He must chasten you. His own words are, “you only have I known of all the families of the earth: *therefore* I will punish you for all your iniquities.” You are a child and, therefore, you must be whipped if you do wrong—love ensures you the chastisement. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”

But the great Father, here, shows that He will not continue to frown on you—He will not make His face to fall at the mention of you. He has said, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from them.” He might justly say, “you are My child, but I cannot speak comfortably to you, for you are so disobedient that I must send you to a distance and make you feel the evil of disobedience.” But, instead of that, He says, “I will not cause My anger to fall upon you. I will not even cause my face to fall at the sight of you; but I will receive you graciously; I will, in tender mercy, put away your transgressions and reveal My love to you.” “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.” Will you not come to Him, when He speaks thus?—

***“Return! O erring, yet beloved!  
I wait to bind your bleeding feet, for keen  
And rankling are the thorns where you have been.  
I wait to give you pardon, love, and rest.  
Is not My joy to see you safe and blest?  
Return! I wait to hear once more your voice  
To welcome you anew, and bid your heart rejoice.”***

A woman has a husband who has loved her as his own, but she has lent her ear to a serpent—to one who with words of flattery has beguiled her, and she has sinned against her fidelity. She has defiled herself with another and she has gone away, far away—and the man who has deceived her has forsaken her. She is now a woman of a sorrowful spirit, broken down and cast off. A friend whispers to her, “Return to your husband, for

it was better with you then, than now.” But this is her stumbling block—“Will he receive me? Can he receive me? I have dishonored him. Will he take me back? Can I expect the love that gladdened my girlish days to be lavished upon me again? Will he not call me an outcast and say that I have darkened his house and shall never enter it again?”

But if the message comes to her, “He will receive you graciously and love you freely,” will she not hasten home? When she learns that the anger which he felt is gone and that his heart yearns towards her, will she not fly home as on the wings of the wind? Unless she has become a monster of wantonness, she will seek the man whom she has grieved and, at his feet she will fall in gratitude for his forgiveness! The parable is concerning ourselves who have backslidden from the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall we not, also, return, now that we hear Him thus inviting us to come back—yes, making a royal proclamation of His Grace? “Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.” The Lord grant that this word may go home to those whom He has ordained to bless.

**IV.** I pass on, in the next place, fourthly, to notice THE ARGUMENT. The argument here used is twofold and you will recollect the two arguments all the more readily because they begin with the same letter—Mercy and Marriage. We have, in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse, “For I am *merciful*, says the Lord.” And in the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, “For I am *married* unto you.”

Here is, first, *God’s mercy*. Nothing delights God more than to forgive sin—He is at home in this blessed work! To some men it is a hard task to forgive an injury. They do it with a squeeze, a twist and a wrench—and even then it is questionable if it is done at all, for forced forgiveness is no forgiveness. Some are not unlike the dying man who said to the priest, “If I die, you will remember that I forgive Pat Maloney, but if I live, I’ll pay him back as soon as I can.” Many forgive because they cannot revenge—their virtue is the result of their inability to be vicious. But, with God, it is His nature to forgive—He is Love—and mercy is a drop from the honeycomb of love. God must be just, but to punish is His left-handed labor, while to forgive is His right-handed work. He is happy at it! He finds pleasure in man’s turning to Him and finding life.

Mercy was His last-born attribute. Until sin came there was no room for mercy—the mercy that forgives and, therefore, mercy is God’s Benjamin, the son of His right hand and He delights to give to it 10 times as much as to His other attributes when they feast together. It is written, “He delights in mercy,” but I never read that He delights in justice, or delights in wisdom, or delights in power—He delights in *mercy*! God is charmed when He can wash a scarlet sinner white. It is the Heaven of His Heaven to receive a Hell-black sinner to His heart and put away his sin. “I am merciful,” says the Lord.

Did I hear a trembling voice exclaim, “Oh, but you do not know what I have done, Sir”? No, and, “Sir,” does not want to know! But then I do know that the Lord delights in mercy! Perhaps you had better not tell those midnight deeds, those sins that have defiled you through and through—the confessional is by no means a healthy place—the smell of it



is putrid! Confess to God—not to me! You have lain in the dye till you are soaked and saturated in sin. You are ingrained with the scarlet of iniquity, but the Lord delights to take out these glaring stains! Things which are impossible with man are the joy of God. Therefore come to Him and believe in His mercy! Doubt no longer, but lovingly receive what He lovingly gives.

As for you who once knew Him, loved Him and rejoiced in Him, I want you just to dwell on that second argument, namely, *marriage*. “For I am married unto you, says the Lord.” Oh, those were blessed days when you used to sing—

**“’Tis done, the great transaction’s done!  
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.  
He drew me, and I followed on  
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.”**

And then you used to join with all of us in singing—

**“Happy day! Happy day!  
When Jesus washed my sins away!”**

Ah, poor Soul, where have you been since then? You have been where you ought not to have been and now your Bridegroom says, “Return, for I am married unto you. You may have put off the ring, but you are Mine for all that, and I will have you come back to Me. Return.” The bonds that Christ makes are not to be broken. The favor that Christ has shown is not to be removed. Stronger than death and Hell is the love of Christ and who shall separate us from it? Notwithstanding all your sins and iniquities, He says, “Return, for I am married unto you, says the Lord.” It is done and though you do not stand to it, He does! The great transaction still stands on His part—though *you* believe not, *He* abides faithful!

He has bought you with His blood and the price will never return into His veins. He has loved you with an everlasting love and, therefore, it cannot cease! In that love He will always rest, nor from His oath return. Come back to Him!—

**“Return! O fallen, yet not lost!  
Can you forget the life for you laid down,  
The taunts, the scourging, and the crown of thorns?  
When over you first My spotless robe I spread  
And poured the oil of joy upon your head,  
How did your wakening heart within you burn!  
Can you remember all, and will you not return?  
Return! O chosen of My love!  
Fear not to meet your beckoning Savior’s view;  
Long before I called you by your name, I knew  
That very treacherously you would deal;  
Now I have seen your ways, yet I will heal.  
Return! Will you yet linger far from Me?  
My wrath is turned away, I have redeemed thee.”**

**V.** And I finish (for time has failed me) by noticing THE ADVICE that He here gives as to how we are to return. He says, “*Only acknowledge your iniquity.*” “Oh,” you have said, “I cannot get back to God—it is such a long way back to Him. I feel that I have to set myself right and in that process to pass through a world of sorrow.” Yet the Lord says, “*Only acknowledge.*” I rejoice in those blessed, “*onlys*” of the Bible! “*Only acknowledge*

your iniquity.” “Alas, I have so wandered!” Acknowledge it! “But I have done it so many times!” Acknowledge it! “But I have wandered against light and knowledge!” Acknowledge it! It is not a hard thing to do, to get to your chamber and, before God, confess your fault. You have, first of all, to have a knowledge of it and then to acknowledge it. Feel your sin and then confess it. Be convinced of it and then plead guilty at the Judgment Seat. Do not attempt to excuse it, or to make apologies for it. As long as you do so, you will never get peace—but let this perilous stuff be purged from your soul by a clear, plain acknowledgment, such as David made when he said, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness.” He had tried to call his crime by other names, but his forgiveness came when he admitted that it was murder! When we know our sin, God will make us to know His Grace—but if we are self-righteous, our pride will be our ruin.

“What am I to acknowledge?” Acknowledge chiefly three things. *Your breach of covenant*—that you have transgressed against Jehovah your God. You professed to be a child of God, a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit and you have been false to all these avowals. You have broken your vows, you have been false to your Baptism, false to your communion at the Lord’s Supper, false to your Church membership, false to your prayers. Go and tell the Lord all this and acknowledge that you have transgressed against Jehovah your God.

Next acknowledge *your greedy sin*—that you “have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree.” Israel had sinned wherever she had an opportunity—sinned openly. You would not have thought that she would have dared to do it—sinned again and again till as many as there were trees in the grove were her adulteries with idol gods! Confess this crime if it is, indeed, true—“Lord, I have sinned with both hands since I have departed from You. I have committed sins of the eyes, sins of the feet, sins of the hands, sins of the head and sins of the heart—sins against Your holy Law, sins against Your love and blood, sins immense and innumerable. I might as well hope to count the drops that make the ocean as to tell the number of my sins.” Make this confession heartily and explicitly. Do not stutter over it and try to lessen it, but bring it straight out in deep humility. As a backslider you have done far more evil than you know and there is no fear of your exaggerating your guilt!

And I finish with this—“*You have not obeyed My voice, says the Lord.*” That is to say, you have been guilty of *sins of omission*. This is sufficient to swamp any one of us! Our sins of commission may be few, but as for our omissions, these would sink me, I know, past all hope, were it not for the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Dear Friend, hasten to acknowledge your omissions.

Confess also your *hardness of heart*. God has spoken and you would not hear. He has entreated and you would not regard Him. He has come very near to you and you have turned your back on Him. Thus He complains of you, “I have spoken and you would not hear. You have not obeyed My voice.”

Confess, also, *your ingratitude*. His voice, which is your Father’s voice, you have not heard or obeyed. What unnaturalness! Shall a wife not know

her husband's voice? Shall a brother forget his brother's? Yet it is so with some of you who once used to be with us—you were our joy and we were your joy—and God the joy of us both but you have gone aside. You have left your first love. You have departed from the ways of the Lord. Yet remember at this moment there is no judgment for you—no threats, no scolding words—simply this, “Only return.” The heart of love has room in it for you! Hasten home to Him who is your only resting place. You can never be happy where you are and as you are. You have tried it! Oh, how long you have tried it, but you are going downward and waxing worse and worse!

Oh, that you would say, “I will end it! I will end it! Never more will I depart from Him who has redeemed me with His blood. I will yield myself to Him at once.” Happy is the preacher if this has been effected by the Spirit of God. Happy shall you be, also, and happy are these Christian folk to know that such a thing has been done in their midst. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Jeremiah 3:12-25.*  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—373, 476, 521.**

**LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:**

MR. SPURGEON has not been very well for the last few days, but he is now much better and feels assured of returning to his work with renewed energy. He begs his friends to pray for this desirable blessing and also for the blessing of God upon the Conference of the Pastors' College which will take place in the beginning of May. It is of the utmost importance that the pastors then assembled should be filled with the Spirit of God. The times are evil. The Gospel is needed. The Spirit of God, alone, can make it effectual! Let all the saints pray mightily for a Divine visitation. Mr. SPURGEON'S College work also needs to be aided by the liberality of his friends at this time and he would remind them of it very hopefully.  
MENTONE, MARCH 27, 1885.

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# RETURN! RETURN!

## NO. 2931

**A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 1905,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 17, 1876.**

***“Return, you backsliding Israel. Turn, O backsliding children.  
Return, you backsliding children.”  
Jeremiah 3:12, 14, 22.***

IT is, indeed, a horrible thing that a saved soul should ever wander from its Savior. After having had so much of past sin fully and freely forgiven and, after having then made to rejoice in perfect pardon, can it ever turn away from those dear pierced hands which lifted its heavy burden from its shoulders? Can it ever wander from the Fountain in which it was washed whiter than snow? If so, it will, indeed, have committed a shameful sin! After so many spiritual benefits have been enjoyed and the soul has not only been washed, but also robed, fed, adopted into the family of God and been taught many wonderful lessons—can such a child as that leave such a home and such a Father—and go back to “the beggarly elements” from which it has been delivered? Ah, if it even thinks of doing so, it has, by that very *thought*, committed treason against the Sovereign Love of God!

No, Beloved, with so much sin forgiven and so much favor bestowed, we ought to feel ourselves bound with cords to the horns of the altar! And with such bright prospects before us, such a Heaven prepared by such a Savior—with the assurance that we shall forever be with Him where He is, beholding His Glory—and with such exceedingly great and precious promises as He has made to him that overcomes, why, Brothers and Sisters, if we think of turning our backs in the day of battle, or of forsaking the King’s Highway for a meadow path, the very *thought* must be most grievous to God as well as most shameful on our part! It ought to be intolerable to us to even *think* of such a thing! For any Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to actually go astray; to actually sin against the Light of God and knowledge; to sin against Infinite Love and mercy; to sin against Your wounds, Emmanuel, and against Your crown of thorns—to offend against Your matchless love—oh, this is dreadful, indeed!

Well did the Lord say, concerning Israel’s backsliding, “Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid.” Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let me remind you that there is nothing for us to gain and everything for us to lose by forsaking the ways of God, even for a moment! We are not like those who have never known His ways, for we know them to be to paths of pleasantness and peace. We are not like those who are still deceived by the world, for we have proven how false she is. Her painted charms once bewitched our hearts and we were

enamored of her, but we have been undeceived, and now we cry with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" This empty world does but mock and deceive all who seek for true treasure in it—are we going back to it after all that we have received from Christ, forsaking the real for the imaginary, the substantial for the shadowy?

Can it be that we are going to commit these two evils—to forsake the fountain of Living Waters and to hew out for ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water? If any of us have done so in the past, let us be ashamed of ourselves! And if some of us have done so almost without knowing what we were doing, let us prostrate ourselves in the very dust before the Most High, for this is no common sin. It is a sin that has a high degree of heinousness and aggravation, when any of us who have known the way of righteousness—and who have enjoyed sweet and hallowed fellowship with God and the liberty with which Christ has made us free—go back to wear, again, the chains of sin's slavery and even, for a while, or in part, have a guilty complicity with that vain world which we professed to have forsaken once and for all.

Every man, however great his experience may be, is in danger! I have heard that more horses fall at the bottom of the hill than anywhere else because the drivers fancy they have no need to hold them back when they have reached the bottom of the hill. And I have noticed that some of the saddest falls I have ever witnessed among Christian men and women have been among elderly Christians—among they who said of the young people, "Ah, they ought to be very watchful, for they have strong passions, and they may very easily be led astray. But as for us, we have had such a long experience that we have passed out of the range of temptation." The most dangerous place in the world is that which is supposed to be beyond the reach of temptation! The power of the devil is most often to be feared when he has left you alone for a while, for he has then probably left you to something or someone who will be more dangerous to you than he, himself, would be. That is to, say, when a man says, "I shall never be tempted again," he has already fallen into one of the devil's most dangerous snares, for the *pride of his heart* has deceived him and made him an easy prey to the great adversary.

Satan delights to pluck gray beards and to prove their owners to be fools! He has great joy in tripping up young men, in the fullness of their strength, to show that he is more than a match for the very strongest of them! But he is even more glad to waylay a man in middle life and to teach him that, even when he thinks he has all his wits about him, he is not so shrewd as the old tempter is! But I think it is his chief delight to waylay those who imagine that their long experience will preserve them from the his snares. Therefore I say that we are all of us, from the little child to the man who is on the very brink of Heaven—from the most timid up to the bravest of us all—in danger from our great adversary. Remember the dreadful conflict with Satan which John Knox had just as he was about to enter Heaven—and remember Martin Luther's desperate fight with the arch-fiend even in the midst of the waters of Jordan—and learn from the experience of these mighty men of God that we are all,

always, from the first to the last, in danger! And, therefore, all of us have need to cry unto the Lord unceasingly—

***“Keep us, Lord, oh keep us forever!  
Vain our hope if left by Thee.  
We are Yours! Oh leave us never,  
Till Your face in Heaven we see,  
There to praise Thee  
Through a bright eternity!  
All our strength at once would fail us,  
If deserted, Lord, by Thee—  
Nothing then could aught avail us,  
Certain our defeat would be.  
Those who hate us  
Thenceforth their desire would see.”***

Now, supposing that I am addressing any persons who have unhappily fallen into this sin, what is the message that I am to give to them from my Lord? After this morning’s service, I was talking with a Brother in Christ who was in this sad condition. If he is here now, I would very affectionately commend to him the message which the Holy Spirit sends to him and to all who are like he—the Word of God which comes over and over again in the three texts upon which I am about to speak to you—“Return! Return!”

**I.** In trying to press that one simple message home to the backsliding heart, I shall, first of all, speak of THE SURPRISE WHICH THIS MESSAGE OUGHT TO AWAKEN—“Return!” Does God really mean that? After I have wandered so far from Him, does He invite me to come back to Him? Yes, Beloved, He does, and He does so fully realizing all that the word, “Return,” involves. There is a holy jealousy in the heart of God which causes Him to feel a righteous anger when any of His children wander away from Him. Yet this word, “Return,” proves that He has put aside that jealousy in a marvelously gracious manner!

Let me read to you what the Lord says in the first verse of the chapter from which my texts are taken, for I want to keep you to God’s own Word which will do you far more good, and give you far more solid comfort than any word of mine. “They say”—that is, everybody says it—“If a man puts away his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man’s, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to Me, says the Lord.” I cannot say much about the illustration which the Lord here uses—it is a thing to be *thought* of rather than to be talked about—but do you not see that the delicacy which makes a man feel that he cannot take back his erring spouse is far more developed in the mind of God? Yet, over the head of that delicacy, there rides this Omnipotent Love which makes Him say, even to you who have wandered the furthest from Him, “Return unto Me, notwithstanding all that has happened.”

Are you not surprised at the Lord’s message when it is set before you in such a light as this? Yet, surprising as it is, I pray you to believe it and promptly to obey it! The wonder is increased when we remember that the sin of going away from God has, in some cases, been so *grossly*

*committed as to involve a terrible mass of guilt.* If you read the whole of this chapter—which is more suitable for your own private reading than for the general congregation—you will see that Israel had wandered from the Lord in the most shameless manner. And yet He said to her, “Return, you backsliding Israel.” Now, if you are, indeed, a child of God, although you may have become neglectful of the Sabbath. Though it may have been a long time since you bowed your knee in prayer. Though your Bible has become covered with dust through your neglect and though you have so acted that even mere worldlings might have been ashamed to act as you have done—yet, still, Almighty Mercy, with the tears of pity standing in its eyes, says to you, “Return, return, return!” It condemns your sin and you, also, must condemn it, for it is an exceedingly loathsome and horrible thing—but you, yourself, that same Mercy would gladly save—and it still says to you, “Return, return, return!”

To add to the wonder that this message excites, remember *the obstinate adherence to evil which some of you have evinced even when you have been suffering for your wrongdoing.* Turn to the third verse—“Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain; and you had a whore’s forehead, you refused to be ashamed.” God had kept back the rain and thus had prevented the ripening and ingathering of the harvest! Famine and need had stalked through the land and smitten multitudes of the guilty people with death. Those who were spared knew why this judgment had come, yet they did not return to the Lord. They had a forehead of brass and they would not acknowledge their guilt, but obstinately clung to their sin.

Brother, Sister, have you had this painful experience? Have you been Divinely afflicted again and again, and yet have you not repented and turned to the Lord? And notwithstanding that the blows of His rod appear to have been lost upon you, and though He has scourged you again and again, apparently to no purpose, still does His blessed Spirit yearn over you! And the message He sends to you is not one of condemnation or threat, but simply this, “Return, return, return!” Oh, this is indeed amazing love that puts up with your ill manners and will not take, “no,” for an answer from you, but still sweetly invites you to return to the Lord from whom you have wandered so far—and against whom you have sinned so grossly!

Notice, also, that *these sinful people had refused repeated invitations to return to the Lord.* How tenderly He says, in the fourth verse, “Will you not, from this time, cry unto Me, My father, You are the guide of my youth?” As if the Lord meant to say to the sinning one, “Have you not had sufficient suffering as the result of your sin? The showers have been withheld, poverty has come upon you, your barns are empty and there is no corn in the fields to fill them. Will you not, at least from this time, begin to call Me, ‘Father,’ and ask Me to be your Friend?” Yet the guilty nation put all this pleading aside! But, even then, the Lord still cried, “Return, return, return!” And if, dear Friends, you have heard a great many earnest, faithful sermons and had many loving entreaties from Christian men and women—and yet have put them all aside—it is

unutterably grievous that it should have been so, yet still there is only this message for you, even now, “Return, return, return!”

Worse still, *these people had even turned the Grace of God into licentiousness, and had made mischief out of God’s goodness.* Read in the fifth verse, what they said—“Will He reserve His anger forever? Will He keep it to the end? Behold, you have spoken and done evil things as you could.” Because God is so merciful, they were the more sinful—and because He does not keep His anger forever, therefore they dared to provoke it again and again! This is one of the worst ways in which sinners prove how exceedingly sinful they are. A man is very far gone in guilt when he reads Divine Grace the wrong way upwards and infers, from the long-suffering of the Lord, that he may continue in sin! Still, if you have done this, my Brother or my Sister, the Lord’s message to you is, “Return, return, return.”

Give me your hand and come back with melting heart and streaming eyes—and seek your Heavenly Father’s face, again, for the great bell still rings out from the hospice of mercy and its message to you is this, “Though you have lost your way in the blinding snows of despondency and doubt, mercy is still proclaimed to you; therefore, Return, return, return.” Can you not hear that great bell swinging in the tower of God’s love and compassion? Turn your head that way and ask the Lord to lead you where that bell’s message summons you—“Return, return, return.”

**II.** Now, in the second place, we will change the run of our thought a little by noting that THIS VOICE MUST AWAKEN MANY MEMORIES IN THE BACKSLIDER’S MIND. He has long been going away from God, but even while he has been sitting in this place, he has been obliged to think of former and happier times in his history. And now that word, “Return,” causes him *to recollect the time when he first came to the Lord.* Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, with what a broken heart, and with what terrors and alarms, and with what weeping eyes you loved up to Jesus on the accursed tree! And, as you looked to Him, you found, as you thought, and as I hope you really did, peace, pardon and everlasting life! Where have you been, my Brother, my Sister, since that memorable day? Where have you been?

Wandering from that dear Cross, always going further and further away from that Divine Love Incarnate which hung bleeding there for you! Peter, your Lord’s loving, pitying eyes are still fixed upon you though you have denied Him and have falsely said, “I know not the Man.” Still do the glances of His eyes say, “Peter, return to Me. Return, My poor, foolish, sinful disciple. You have sadly fallen by your iniquity, but, although you have so greatly changed, I have not. My heart still yearns for you. Return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.”

That word, “Return,” must also awaken in your memories *recollections of the happy days you used to have when you were living near to God.* Some of you have had times of great joy and gladness in this very Tabernacle. You used to sing as sweetly and as joyfully as any, especially when we sang the song of songs—

**“Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain.”**



Ah, you loved Him then, did you not? You were not a hypocrite, were you? You meant what you sang and you felt it, did you not? You have often had, since then, to question yourselves to know whether you really were sincere at that time, or not. I hope you can truthfully say, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I did love You then." Why, the time was when the very mention of that dear name used to fire your blood as the sound of martial music stirs the soldier's spirit in the day of battle! You know how you would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear the Gospel preached in those days—and you would cheerfully have put up with the discomfort of standing in the aisle of the overcrowded building—you were not so dainty and thin-skinned, then, as you are now!

How you relished the Gospel then! What sweetness, what marrow and fatness it was to your spirit at these communion times when you sat among the people of God and remembered the dying love of Christ! Many and many a time you have joined with your fellow members in singing—

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

Yet now, alas, you have but to sing, or to sigh—

***"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still!"***

Well, let the recollection of them come up in your mind, for it will do you good. While you hear your Lord saying to you, "Return, return," it will help you to return if you recall what it is to which you have to return—those halcyon days, those happy Sabbaths when your heart seemed to have a whole peal of bells within it and every one of them gave forth the richest melody to the praise and glory of Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior!

Do you not also recollect *how you used to talk to others about the Savior?* Ah, my Brothers, if I ever wander from my Lord, my sermons will be a sufficient rebuke to me even if no one says a word! Lord, reprove me for my backsliding! What are you doing, you who once preached so earnestly to others? What are you doing, you who used to conduct a Bible class where you warned young people against going into the world, yet you have gone there, yourself? You used to tell them that if all others in the world should be ashamed of Christ, you would never be ashamed of Him, yet you are! You used to pray very fervently at the Prayer Meetings. You visited the sick and cheered them. And God made you useful to souls that are now in Heaven—yet you have begun to doubt whether you will ever get there yourself! O Soul, remember from where you have fallen and repent and do your first works! If you are, indeed, a child of God, let the recollection of your own sermons, addresses, warnings and prayers rise up before your spirit, to stir your conscience and to make you feel ashamed of your backsliding!

The Lord's call to you to return to Him will probably also awaken other memories. It will help you to remember *how it was you first went astray.* You went on swimmingly at first, did you not? But where did you begin to go astray? Nine times out of 10, declension from God begins in the

neglect of private prayer. Possibly, it was so in your case. And it may be that everything seemed to go about as well with you when you did not pray as when you did. Indeed, everything went far too smoothly with you—it would have been much better for you if your way had been hedged up with thorns and briars. Then you know that you began to get lax in your mode of life. You would not admit that you were doing anything that was sinful—and you were very angry with those who told you that you were in danger. You said that you did not believe in such Puritanical prissiness as they advocated—you were a man who could think and decide for himself! And you did so, did you not, and have you not thought yourself and brought yourself into a sad plight? And you were going to sail a little closer to the wind than others could do because you felt that you had a stronger will than they had—and could turn your vessel whenever you pleased. There were certain amusements that might be harmful to young people, but not to *you*, for you felt that you had greater strength of mind than they had.

That is how you began to wander from God. The declension came on by degrees. You did not jump down all at once, but you went down just as surely, step by step. As to your first little slip, as you called it, you said there was nothing wrong in it. And nothing wrong in the second slip. And not *much* wrong in the third slip *by itself*—but putting them all together, with all the subsequent slips—where have they landed you? Yet, notwithstanding all this, I want you to hear the Master still saying to you, “Return, return, return.” Remember how far you have to go back, for you have to traverse again all that road along which you came with your face turned the wrong way.

**III.** Now we will pass on to notice, in the third place, THE REASONS WHICH ARE URGED IN THE CONTEXT WHY WE SHOULD RETURN. Look at the 12<sup>th</sup> verse. I think I will not explain these reasons, but just read them to you. “Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not remain angry forever.” Can you hear that verse without tears coming into your eyes? There is still in your Lord’s heart, forgiveness, mercy, pardon—will not that biased fact lead you to come back to Him?

Now read the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, for it contains a second reason why you should return to the Lord. “Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married to you.” Can you believe that? If you can, you cannot continue to be a backslider! After all that you have done against Him, the Lord still acknowledges the marriage bond that exists between your poor polluted souls and His own holy and gracious Self, and He says to you, “Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married to you.” Who can hold back when the Lord uses such an expression as that—“married to you”—you black, foul wanderer—“I am married to you”?

In the East, a man could very easily divorce his wife—he just gave her a letter and sent her away. But the Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away—that is to say, He hates divorce—and He will never

have a divorce from the soul that has once been married to Him! Come back to Him, then! If He is faithful despite your sin, let your heart yearn towards Him. Return to your first Husband, for it was better with you then than now! Now read the 22<sup>nd</sup> verse—“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” Is not that another blessed reason why you should return to the Lord? He promises that He will remove all the evil that sin has done to you and that into whatever sin you may have fallen through your wanderings, He will rescue you from it! He will treat your backsliding as a *disease* and heal it! I need scarcely stay to tell you what is the remedy that He will apply to you, for you all know that it is by the stripes of Jesus that we are healed.

So, come again to that Cross to which you came at first and there you shall again find that His dear pierced hands shall be laid upon your wounds, taking the venom out of them, and so perfectly restoring you that your flesh shall be, again, unto you like the flesh of a little child! And then you will be able to gratefully sing, “He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

**IV.** I am speaking briefly upon each point, but I trust that each one of them will abide in your memories without a multitude of words to press the Truth of God home to your hearts. And I want you, in the fourth place, to notice SOME GRACIOUS DIRECTIONS WHICH ARE GIVEN TO ASSIST YOU TO RETURN TO THE LORD. Read the 13<sup>th</sup> verse if you wish to learn the way by which you are to return—and give heed to every syllable of it—“Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the Lord.”

That is the first thing you have to do—*make a full confession of your wrongdoing*. Go at once to God and make it! Do not delay another minute. You have sinned against the Lord—go to Him and acknowledge from your very heart that you have done so. Then turn to the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> verses—“Surely as a wife treacherously departed from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the Lord. A voice was heard upon the high places—weeping and supplications of the children of Israel—for they have perverted their ways and they have forgotten the Lord their God.” So, let *the acknowledgment of your wrongdoing be attended with deep contrition of heart*. Be grieved that you have grieved your God! Ask the Holy Spirit to melt your spirit so that you may mourn before the Most High and lament that you have wandered so far from Him.

Once again, the way to come back to God is plainly set before you at the end of the 22<sup>nd</sup> verse—“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” “Behold, we come unto You; for You are the Lord our God.” *Take the Lord to be your God all over again*, Go back and begin again where you began before with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit. May the Sacred Trinity graciously enable you to do so! And, further, come back to the Lord by confessing the result of your

sin, the mischief that it has brought upon you, even as these ancient backsliders did when they sorrowfully said, "For shame has devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God."

So, dear Friends, you see that the way to get back to God is to confess the wrong that you have done by wandering away from Him—to lament that wrong and again to take the Lord to be your God by an act of simple faith—and to begin once more even as you *began* your spiritual life. It is possible that you are anxious to know whether you ever were a child of God or not. Well, that is a knot which you cannot untie, so you had better cut it! Do you ask, "How can I cut it?" You can do it in this way. Say to yourself, "If I am not a saint, I am a sinner. And Christ Jesus come into the world to save sinners, so I will trust Him to save me." I have begun again, in this fashion, a great many times. Often, when doubts and fears have arisen within my spirit, and my evidences have grown dim, I have found that the best thing I could do was to pray the Publican's Prayer, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

I am only asking you, poor wandering Soul, to do that which it is the delight of God's people to be doing every day. Come, repenting and humbled, and take the Lord Jesus Christ again to be your All in All, your living, loving Savior!

**V.** Now, lastly, I want to encourage you to return to the Lord by very briefly mentioning SOME OF THE MERCIES WHICH GOD PROMISES IN ORDER TO KEEP YOU FROM ANY FUTURE WANDERING. Our blessed Master knows that *many of His children wander because they are not well fed*. There were many supposed converts during the recent revival, of whom we have not heard anything simply because there was nobody to look after them, in many cases, when the evangelists, whom God so greatly blessed, had gone to other places. Their converts were left to starve spiritually. Listen to the 15<sup>th</sup> verse of this chapter, those of you who have been thus starved, whose backsliding was, in the first instance, the result of your not hearing good Gospel teaching—"I will give you pastors according to My heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Plead that promise with the God who gave it and you will find that He will fulfill it in your experience!

The next thing that you need, in order to keep you from further wandering from God, is that you should seek to become more spiritual in your worship. Some poor souls, who are, we trust, truly converted, never seem to get beyond mere external, formal worship. They do not get into the heart of it. Let all such persons note what the Lord says in the 16<sup>th</sup> verse—"And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the Lord, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done

any more.” That is to say, mere formal worship shall come to an end—“At that time they shall call Jerusalem the Throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.”

To be enabled to render true, spiritual worship unto the Lord, and to learn the inner meaning of His Word, will cause you to be established in the faith so that you will not likely be carried about with every wind of doctrine and be caused to backslide. Bear with me just a minute while I give you another sweet promise which will help to keep you from again wandering from the Lord. *You shall have the Spirit of adoption in your heart*, as the Lord says, in the 19<sup>th</sup> verse—“But I said, How shall I put you among the children, and give these a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me.” O Beloved, get a firm grip of that precious promise, for it assures you that final perseverance which is the heritage of the saints! “You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me.” As the Lord promises that great blessing, there need be no fear of your backsliding to destruction, whatever your temptations may be in the days and years that are yet to come.

Last of all, if you wish to be kept from wandering away from the Lord, come back to the simplicity of your first dependence upon him. Read the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse—“Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.” So that, what you need is to get back, again, to the place where you first began to worship God in spirit and in truth, to know yourself to be His child and to be clean cut off from every trust except in the Lord Himself. You must see that salvation is all of Grace from first to last—that it is the work of the Holy Spirit and that it is freely given to you, an undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinner! When you get back to that blessed position, you will learn more of the love of God which will hold you with a grip that nothing can loosen, and from which you shall never escape from this time forth and forever!

Therefore, poor Backslider, come here and breathe the prayer to your Heavenly Father, not merely to receive you, but also to keep you, so that from now on you shall never again go astray from Him who keeps the feet of His saints. “And now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 2:20-37.**

**Verses 20-26.** *For of old I have broken your yoke and burst your bands, and you said, I will not transgress, when upon every high hill and under every green tree you lay down, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest nobility. How, then, have you turned*

*before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? For though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord GOD. How can you say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after the Baals? See your way in the valley, know what you have done: you are a swift dromedary breaking loose in her ways; a wild donkey used to the wilderness, that sniffs the wind in her desire; in her time of mating who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves. In her month they will find her. Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst. But you said, There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers and after them will I go. As the thief is ashamed when he is found out. And there are many people whose repentance is of no more value than the shame of a thief when he is found out. Oh, for something better and deeper than this!*

**26, 27.** *So is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, saying to a tree, You are my father; and to a stone, You have brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto Me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise and save us. Some men never pray except in stormy weather. Their religion is wholly dependent upon their condition and circumstances. If all is going well with them, they bend not their knees before the Lord. But when they are in sore distress and especially if they think they are likely soon to die, then they cry unto God, "Arise and save us," with no more true faith than these idolaters had when they cried to their powerless idols.*

**28-30.** *But where are your gods that you have made? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your troubles: for according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah. Why will you plead with Me? You all have transgressed against Me, says the LORD. In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword has devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion. So far from accepting God's rebukes in the right spirit and forsaking their idol gods, they even turned upon the Lord's messengers and put His Prophets to death.*

**31.** *O generation, see you the Word of the LORD. "If you will not hear it, see it."*

**31.** *Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? Or a land of darkness? Why do My people say, We are lords. We will come no more to You? "Do you not see," says the Lord to these rebellious people, "how much I have done for you? Have you forgotten the numberless mercies I have lavished upon you? I have kept from you nothing that was really good for you. When you worshipped Me in sincerity and in truth, you prospered exceedingly. But when you turned away from Me, you made a sad mistake. See, then, the sermons which Providence itself preached to you if you will not hear what My Prophets say to you in My name."*

**32.** *Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me, days without number. The very beauty of a Believer—his glorious dress—is his God. Then can we ever forget Him, or all the precious things of the Covenant of Grace which He so freely*

bestows upon us? Can we—*can* we—have fallen so low as to forget the God to whom we owe so much? Alas, He can still say, “My people have forgotten Me, days without number.”

**33, 34.** *Why do you beautify your way to seek love? Therefore you have also taught the wicked ones your ways. Also in your skirts is found the blood of the lives of the poor innocents. I have not found it by secret search, but plainly on all these things.* God’s ancient people had so completely turned away from Him and wandered so far from Him, that they had practiced all manner of evil in order to prove their love for other gods. They even went among the heathen and taught them to sin yet worse than they had sinned before! This was most shameful backsliding, a horrible evil in the sight of God.

**35.** *Yet you say, Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me.* The most guilty people are often the most self-righteous. The sinful nation, which ought to have pleaded guilty, here, says, “Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me.”

**35.** *Behold, I will plead My case against you, because you say, I have not sinned.* That is the great abuse of quarrel between God and men. Many a man still says, “I have not sinned,” although God’s Law condemns him, and the very office of the Savior proves that the guilty one needed to be saved by One who was almighty. Self-righteousness is a thing which God utterly abhors.

**36.** *Why do you gad about so much to change your way? You shall also be ashamed of Egypt, as you are ashamed of Assyria.* First they trusted to Assyria to save them. And when that broken reed failed them, then they trusted to Egypt. And in a similar fashion, we go from one false hope to another—from one carnal confidence to another, gadding about to change our way—yet, all the while, *refusing* to turn to the Lord.

**37.** *Indeed, you will go forth from him with your hands on your head—* You shall go forth as a captive, with your hands bound above your head, or, like one in great pain or sorrow, you shall hold your hands to your head.

**37.** *For the LORD has rejected your confidences, and you shall not prosper in them.* May God, in His mercy, save all of us from false confidences, both now and throughout our whole lives!

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

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

# THE RELATIONSHIP OF MARRIAGE

## NO. 762

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

***“Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you.”***  
***Jeremiah 3:14.***

THESE are dainty words—a grateful sedative for a troubled conscience. Such singular comfort is fitted to cheer the soul and put the brightest hue on all her prospects. The person to whom it is addressed has an eminently happy position. Satan will be very busy with you, Believer in Christ, tonight! He will say, “What right have you to believe that God is married to you?” He will remind you of your imperfections and of the coldness of your love, and perhaps of the backsliding state of your heart. He will say, “What? With all this about you can you be presumptuous enough to claim union with the Son of God? Can you venture to hope that there will be any marriage between you and the Holy One?”

He will tell you as though he were an advocate for *holiness* that it is not possible that such a one as you can feel yourself to be, can *really* be a partaker of so choice and special a privilege as being *married* unto the Lord! Let this suffice for an answer to all such suggestions—the text is found addressed *not* to Christians in a flourishing state of heart. It is *not* said to Believers upon Mount Tabor, transfigured with Christ. It is *not* addressed to a spouse all chaste and fair, sitting under the banner of love, feasting with her lord! It is addressed to those who are called “backsliding children.”

God speaks to His Church in her lowest and most abject estate and though He does not fail to rebuke her sin, to lament it, and to make her lament it, too, yet still in such an estate He says to her, “I am married unto you.” Oh, it is Divine Grace that He should be married to any of us! But it is Grace at its highest pitch—it is the *ocean* of Grace at its flood-tide that He should speak thus of “backsliding children!”

That He should speak in notes of love of *any* of the fallen race of Adam is “passing strange—’tis wonderful.” But that He should select those who have behaved treacherously toward Him, who have turned their backs on Him and not their faces—who have played Him false, although, nevertheless, His own—and say unto them, “I am married unto You”—this is loving kindness beyond anything we could desire or think!

Hear, O Heaven, and admire, O earth! Let every understanding heart break forth into singing, yes, let every humble mind bless and praise the condescension of the Most High! Cheer up, poor drooping hearts! Here is sweet encouragement for some of you who are depressed, and disconsolate, and sit alone to draw living waters out of this well. Do not let



the noise of the archers keep you back from the place of the drawing of water. Be not afraid lest you should be cursed while you are anticipating the blessing! If you do but trust in Jesus, if you have but a vital interest in the once humbled, now exalted Lord, come with holy boldness to the text and whatever comfort there is here, receive it and rejoice in it!

To this end let us attentively consider the relationship which is here spoken of and diligently enquire how far we are experimentally acquainted with it.

**I. IN CONSIDERING THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH IS HERE SPOKEN OF,** you will observe that the affinity of marriage, though exceedingly near kin, is not one of birth. Marriage is not a relationship of original relationship. It is contracted between two persons who may, during the early part of their lives, have been entire strangers to one another. They may scarcely have looked each other in the face except during the few months that preceded their nuptials. The families may have had no previous acquaintance. They may have lived afar off as the very antipodes.

One may have been opulent and in possession of vast domains, and the other may have been indigent, and reduced to straitened circumstances. Genealogies do not regulate it. Disparities do not hinder it. The connection is not of natural birth but of voluntary contract or covenant. Such is the relationship which exists between the Believer and his God. Whatever relation there was originally between God and man, it was stamped out and extinguished by the Fall. We were aliens, strangers, and foreigners far off from God by wicked works. We had, before, no relation to the Most High. We were banished from His Presence as traitors to His Throne, as condemned criminals who had revolted against His power.

Between our souls and God there could be no communion. He is light and we are dark. He is holiness and we are sin. He is Heaven and we are far more akin to Hell. In Him there is consummate greatness and we are puny insignificance. He fills all worlds with His strength, and as for us—we are the creatures of a day who know nothing—and who are crushed before the moth. The gulf between God and a sinner is something terrible to contemplate. There is a vast difference between God and the creature even when the creature is pure, but between God and the *fallen* creature—oh, where is he that shall measure the infinite leagues of distance?

Where was there a means of ever bridging so terrible a chasm except the Lord Jesus had found it in His own Person and in His own passion? How could we have ever perceived the infinite design unless it had been revealed to us as an accomplished fact by which He has reconciled us and brought us into communion with Himself that we should be married unto Him?

Now, Christian, just contemplate what you *were*, and the degraded family to which you belonged that you may magnify the riches of His Grace who espoused you in your low estate and has so bound Himself

with all the pledges of a husband that He says, "I am married unto you." What were you? That is a black catalog of foul transgressors which the Apostle gives in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (6:9, 11). I forbear a recital of the filthy vices—at the end of which he says, "But you are washed, but you are sanctified."

In those crimes he enumerates, many of us had a share, no, *all* of us! What was our father and our father's house? What was our aim? What was our practice? What were our desires? What were our tendencies? They were earthly, downward, Hell-ward! We were at a distance from God and we loved that distance well. But the Lord Jesus took upon Himself our nature—upon Him the Lord did lay the iniquity of all His people. And why? Not merely to save us from the wrath to come, but that we, being lifted up out of our degradation by virtue of His Atonement, and being sanctified and made meet by the power of the Spirit, should have a relationship established between us and God which was not formed by nature, but which has been achieved and consummated by astounding Grace!

Unto the Lord let us give thanks this night as we remember the hole of the pit from where we were dug and call to mind the fact that now we are united to Him in ties of blood and bonds of love! Marriage union the result of choice! Any exceptions to this rule that might be pleaded are void in reason because they arise from folly and transgression—there ought to be no exception. It is scarcely a true marriage at all where there has not been a choice on each side. But certainly if the Lord our God is married unto us, and we are married unto God, the choice is mutual.

The first choice is with God. That choice was made, we believe, before the foundation of the world—

***"Long before the sun's refulgent ray  
Primeval shades of darkness drove,  
They on His sacred bosom lay,  
Loved with an everlasting love."***

God never *began* to love His people. It were impossible for the spiritual mind to entertain so unworthy a thought. He saw them in the glass of His decrees. He foresaw them, with His eyes of Prescience, in the mass of creatureship all fallen and ruined. But yet He beheld them and pitied and loved them, elected them and set them apart. "They shall be Mine," says the Lord.

Here we are all agreed. And we ought to be all agreed upon the *second* point, namely, that *we* also have chosen our God. Brethren, no man is saved against his will! If any man should say that he was saved against his will it would be a proof that he was *not* saved at all! Reluctance or indifference betrays an entire alienation of all the affections of the heart. If the will is still set *against* God then the whole man is proven to be at enmity with Him. By our nature we did not choose God—by our nature we kicked against His Law and turned aside from His dominion.

But is it not written, “My people shall be willing in the day of My power”? Do you understand how, without any violation of your free agency, God has used proper arguments and motives so as to influence your understanding? Through our understanding our will is convinced and our souls are spontaneously drawn. Then we throw down the weapons of our rebellion, and humble ourselves at the footstool of the Most High. And then we do freely *choose* that which we once wickedly abhorred! Do you, Christian, at this very hour, choose Christ with all your heart to be your Lord and Savior?

If it could be put to you over again, to make an election whether you should love the world or love Christ, would you not say, “Oh, my Beloved is better to me than 10,000 worlds! He fixes all my love, engrosses all my passion. I give myself up to Him most freely. He bought me with a great price. He won me with His great love. He enraptured me with His unspeakable charms so I give myself up to Him”? Here is a *mutual* choice!

I wish that some of our friends would forbear to make such a stand against the doctrine of God’s choosing us. If they will but read Scripture with an unprejudiced mind I am quite sure they will find it there. It always seems inexplicable to me that those who claim free will so very boldly for *man*, should not also allow some free will to *God*! I suppose my Brethren would not like to have to be married to somebody whom they had not chosen, and why should Jesus Christ not have the right to choose His own bride? Why should He not set His love where He wills, and have the right to exercise, according to His own Sovereign mind, that bestowment of His heart and hands which none could by any means deserve? This know, that He will have His own choice whether *we* impugn the doctrine or not! He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.

At the same time I wish that those friends who believe this Truth of God would receive the other, which is quite as true. We *do choose* Christ in return and that without any violation of our free agency. Some people cannot see two truths at one time. They cannot understand that God has made all the Truths of God to be double. Truth is many sided. While Divine Predestination is true, Human Responsibility is also true! While it is true that Christ chooses us, it is also true that the unrenewed mind will not choose Him—“You will not come unto Me, that you might have life.”

This is the sin and the condemnation of man, that “light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Settle it, however, in your minds that when God says, “I am married unto you,” it implies that there is a blessed choice on *both sides*—and so it is a true marriage.

Our third reflection is that marriage is cemented by mutual love. Where there is not this mutual affection it deserves not the name of *marriage*. The dark shadow of a blessing they cannot realize must be a heavy load for either heart to bear—but where there is true and genuine love, it is the

sweetest and happiest mode of living. It is one of the blessings of Paradise which has been preserved to us after the Fall. Without love wedded life must be a very “purgatory” above ground. In the solemn contract, which has brought our souls this night to God, the marriage is sustained, cemented, strengthened, and made delightful by mutual love.

Need I talk to you of the love of God? It is a theme we are scarcely competent to talk of. You need to sit down and weep about it for very joy—joy which fills the heart and makes the eyes overflow—but well near chains the tongue, for it is a deep, profound, and inexpressible. “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us.” “As the Father has loved Me, even so have I loved you.” Oh, the love of God—it would surpass the powers of an angel to set it forth.

Sure, sure, it shall be the blest employment of eternity’s long ages for us to comprehend it. And perhaps, when myriad’s of ages have rolled over our happy souls, we shall still be as much struck with wonder with it as we were at first! The marvel does not diminish on inspection—familiarity cannot make it common. The nearer we approach, the deeper our awe. It will be as great a surprise that God should love such cold, such faithless, such unworthy beings as ourselves, at the end of 10,000 years as it was at first—perhaps more so! The more thoroughly we shall know ourselves, the more fully we shall understand the good of the Lord, and thus will our wonder grow and swell.

Even in Heaven we shall be lost in surprise and admiration at the love of God to us! The rapture will augment the reverence we feel. Well, but, beloved Brothers and Sisters, I trust we also love Him in return! Do you never feel one soft affection rising after another as you muse on the Christ of God? When you sometimes listen to a sermon in which the Savior’s dear affection to you is set forth, do you not feel the tears wet your cheeks? Does not your heart swell sometimes as if it were unable to hold your emotions? Is there not a “joy unspeakable and full of glory” that comes over you? Can you not say?—

***“Jesus, I love Your charming name,  
‘Tis music to my ears.  
Gladly would I sound it out so loud  
That earth and Heaven should hear.”***

I hope you do not need to sing tonight—

***“‘Tis a point I long to know,”***

but, I trust, that in the solemn silence of your souls you can say, “You know that I love You,” grieved that the question should be asked, but still ready to answer, with Peter, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You.”

Now, it is impossible for you to love God without the strong conclusive evidence that God loves you. I once knew a good woman who was the subject of many doubts and when I got to the bottom of her doubt, it was this—she knew she loved Christ, but she was afraid He did not love her!

“Oh,” I said, “*that* is a doubt that will never trouble *me!* Never, by any possibility, because I am sure of this—that the heart is so corrupt, naturally, that love to God never did get there without God’s putting it there.”

You may rest quite certain that if you love God, it is a *fruit* and not a root. It is the fruit of God’s love to you and did not get there by the force of any goodness in you. You may conclude, with absolute certainty that God loves you if you love God. There never was any difficulty on His part. It always was on *your* part, and now that the difficulty is gone from you, none whatever remains. O let our hearts rejoice and be filled with great delight because the Savior has loved us and given Himself for us. So let us realize the truth of the text, “I am married unto you.”

My fourth observation is that this marriage necessitates certain mutual relations. I cannot say “duties,” for the word seems out of place on either side. How can I speak of the great God making pledges of faithfulness? And yet with reverence, let me word it so, for in any vocabulary I have hardly words to set it forth. When God becomes a Husband, He undertakes to do a husband’s part. When He says, “Your Maker is your Husband,” you may rest assured that He does not take the relationship without assuming (well, I must say it) all the *responsibilities* which belong to that condition! It is the part of God to nourish, to cherish, to shield, to protect, to bless those with whom He condescends, in infinite mercy, to enter into union.

When the Lord Jesus Christ became the Husband of His Church, He felt that He was under an engagement to us, and inasmuch as there were debts incurred, He paid them—

***“Yes, said the Son, with her I’ll go,  
Through all the depths of sin and woe.  
And on the Cross will even dare  
The bitter pains of death to bear.”***

He never shrunk from the doing of any of those loving works which belong to the husband of his chosen spouse. He exalted the word “husband,” and made it to be more full of meaning than it had ever been before, so that the Apostle could see it glittering in a new light and could say, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.”

Oh yes, dear Friends, there is a responsibility arising out of this relationship, and He of whom we speak has not departed from it! You know He has not. And now, what upon *our* side? The wife has to reverence her husband, and to be subject unto him in all things. That is precisely our position towards Him who has married us. Let His will be our will. Let His wish be our Law. Let us not need to be flogged to service, but let us say—

***“‘Tis love that makes our willing feet  
In swift obedience move.”***

O Christian, if the Master condescends to say, "I am married unto you," you will not any longer ask, "What is my duty?" but you will say, "What can I do for You?" The loving wife does not say, "What is my duty?" and stand coldly questioning how far she should go, and how little she may do—but all that she can do for him who is her husband she will do—and everything that she can think of, everything she can devote herself to in striving to please him in all things she will most certainly do and perform. And you and I will do the same if we have realized our union with Christ!

O Beloved, do not grow sentimental and waste your energies in driveling fancies as some have done. Speak you of a wife?—where the family is large, the work is heavy and the responsibility great. I could gladly remind you here, did time permit, of the words of King Lemuel and the prophecy that his mother taught him. Bear with me, at least, while I admonish you to such a one, that the heart of your husband may safely trust in you. Let it be your care to give meat to your household. Lay your hands to the spindle. Suffer not your industry to fail. Eat not the bread of idleness.

Stretch out your hand to the poor and reach forth both your hands to the needy. Open your mouth with wisdom and in your tongue be the law of kindness. Yes, and consider this with yourself, that in your regard for all the duties of your station, you are fulfilling your bounden obligations to your Lord. Short words, but mighty, matchless deeds have told how Jesus loved us! Be it ours to carve our song of love to Him on the hearts of some tender nurslings who are cast in our way and committed to our care.

O that the life I now live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God, might become a poem and a grateful response to Him that loved me, and gave Himself for me. I hope we do know, then, that when God says, "I am married unto you," it necessitates mutual relations.

Fifthly, it also involves mutual confidences. How shall we call that a marriage where the husband and wife are still two persons, maintaining individuality as if it were a scrupulous condition of the contract? That is utterly foreign to the Divine idea! In a true marriage the husband and wife become one. Therefore their joys and their cares, their hopes and their labors, their sorrows and their pleasures rise and blend together in one stream. Brothers and Sisters, the Lord our God has said it, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant."

"Judas says unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?" *There* was the secret because there is a *union* between Christ and His people which there is not between Christ and the world! How joyously do the words sound—they have a silvery ring in them—"Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does. But I have called you friends, for all

things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." Christ keeps nothing back from you!

Remember another word of His—"If it were not so, I would have told you." Oh, how delightful! He says, "I go to prepare a place for you." He tells them that He is going to prepare a place for them, and then He says, "If it were not so, I would have told you—I keep no secrets back from you—you are near Me, My flesh and My bones. I left My Father's house in glory that I might become one with you, and manifest Myself to you. And I keep back nothing from you, but reveal My very heart and My very soul to you."

Now, Christian, just look—you stand in the relation of a spouse, and you must tell your very heart out to Christ. No, do not go and tell it to your *neighbors*, nor your *friends*, for, somehow or other, the most sympathizing heart cannot enter into all our griefs. There is a grief which the stranger cannot intermeddle with—but there never was a pang into which Christ could not enter. Make a Confidant of the Lord Jesus—tell Him all! You are *married* unto Him! Play the part of a wife who keeps no secrets back, no trials back, no joys back—tell them all to Him!

I was in a house yesterday where there was a little child, and it was said to me, "He is such a funny child." I asked in what way, and the mother said, "Well, if he tumbles down and hurts himself in the kitchen, he will always go upstairs crying and tell somebody, and then he comes down and says, "I told somebody." And if he is upstairs he goes down and tells somebody, and when he comes back it is always, "I told somebody," and he does not cry any more." Ah, well, I thought, we must tell *somebody*! It is human nature to want to have sympathy. But if we would always go to Jesus and tell *Him* all and there leave it, we might often dismiss the burden and be refreshed with a grateful song. Let us do so, and go with all our joys and all our troubles unto Him who says, "I am married unto you."

I know the devil will say, "Why, you must not tell the *Lord* your present trouble—it is too insignificant—and besides, you know you did wrong and brought it upon yourself." Well, but you would tell your husband, would you not? And will you not tell your Lord? You could not tell a master, but you can tell a husband. Oh, do not go back into the old legal state of calling Christ Baali, but call Him Ishi—"My man, my husband"—and put that confidence in Him which is expected that the wife should place in a husband who dearly loves her.

We must go on to a sixth point. This marriage implies fellowship in all its relations. Whatever a husband possesses becomes his wife's. She cannot be poor if he is rich, and what little *she* has, whatever it may be, comes to him. If she is in debt, her debts become his. When Jesus Christ took His people, He gave them all He had. There is nothing which Christ has which He has not given to us. It is noteworthy that He has given His Church His own name! "Where?" you ask. Well, there are two passages in

Jeremiah that most remarkably illustrate this (23:6 and 33:16). In the one it says, "This is the name whereby He shall be called," and in the other, "This is the name wherewith *she* shall be called." In both, the name is identical. "Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness."

What? "*She* shall be called"? Yes, as though He said, "She shall take My name," and with the name, of course, the entire open acknowledgment of His interest in her and her interest in Him. As such she is partaker of all His glory—if He is a king, she is a queen—if He is in Heaven, "He has raised us up together, and made us to sit in heavenly places with Him." If He is heavenly, she also shall bear the image of the heavenly. If He is immortal, so shall she be. And if He is at the right hand of the Father, so shall she be also highly exalted with Him.

Now, it is saying but very little when I add, that, therefore, whatever *we* have, belongs to Him—oh, it is so little, so very little, but one wishes it were more. "O that Christ were not so glorious as He is," I have sometimes thought! It was half a wicked wish, but I meant it well, that I might help to glorify Him. O that He were still poor that one might ask Him to a feast! O that He were still in this world that one could break the alabaster box of ointment and pour it on His head! But You are so great, most blessed Master, that we can do nothing to increase You! You are so high, we cannot exalt You! You are so happy, that we cannot bless You!

Yet, what am I saying? It is all a mistake! He is still *here*! He calls every one of His people "Members of His body." And if you wish to enrich *Him*, help the poor! If you want to feed *Him*, feed the hungry. They that bind garments about the naked put vestures upon the Lord *Himself*. "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me." I hope we can sing without falsehood that verse of Dr. Watts'—

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

A seventh observation and then I shall refrain from dwelling longer on this point. The very crown of marriage is mutual delight and complacency. The wife of a Persian nobleman, having gone to a feast which was given by the great Darius, was asked by her husband whether she did not think that Darius was the finest man in the world. No, she said, she did not think so. She never saw anyone in the world who was comparable to her husband.

And doubtless that is just the opinion which a husband forms of his wife and a wife of her husband where the marriage is such as it should be. Now, certainly Christ sets a very high store upon us. I remember turning over that passage in Solomon's Song, looking at it and wondering how it could be true—believing it, and yet not being able to comprehend it—where Christ says, "You are all fair, My Love. There is no spot in you!"



Oh, what eyes He must have! We say that love is blind—but that cannot be true in Christ's case—for He sees all things!

Why, this is how it is—He sees Himself in us! He does not see us as we *are*, but in His infinite Grace He sees us as we are to be, as Kent sings—

***“Not as she stood in Adam's Fall,  
When sin and ruin covered all.  
But as she'll stand another day,  
Brighter than sun's meridian ray.”***

The sculptor says he can see a bust in a block of marble and that all he has to do is to chip away the extra marble and let the bust appear. So Christ can see a perfect being in every one of us if we are His people! And what He is doing with us day by day is taking off the warts, making us to be like Himself. He can see us as we shall one day be before the Throne of God in Heaven, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Ah, Beloved, He sets great store by us! His delights are with the sons of men! He loves to hear our praise and to listen to our prayer. The songs of His people are His sweet perfume, and communion with His people is like the beds of spices, the beds of lilies where He feeds. And as for us who are His people, I am sure we can say that there is no delight which can equal communion with Christ! We have tried other delights—shame upon us! We have tried some of them, but after having done so, we find that there is nothing like our Lord, “Vanity of vanity, all is vanity,” says the preacher! But when we come to Christ, we find no vanity there! We can truly say—

***“Where can such sweetness be  
As I have tasted in Your love,  
As I have found in You?”***

The Christian's heart is like Noah's dove—it flies over the wide waste and cannot rest the sole of its feet until it comes back to Christ. He is the true Noah who puts out His hand and takes in the weary dove and gives it rest. There is no peace the whole world over but with Christ—

***“There's no such thing as pleasure here,  
My Jesus is my All.  
As You do shine or disappear,  
My pleasures rise or fall.”***

Thus much, by way, as it were, of skimming the surface of this delightful word, “I am married unto you.”

**II.** Two or three sentences only upon the second point. How FAR DO YOU AND I EXPERIMENTALLY UNDERSTAND THIS? I am afraid some of you think me half crazy tonight. You are saying, “Well, I do not comprehend this. What is the man talking about? God *married* to us! Christ *married* to us! I do not understand it!” God have mercy upon you, my poor Hearer, and bring you to know it! But let me tell you, if you did but know it, there is a secret here that would make you a thousand times more happy than all the joys of the world can ever make you.

You remind me of the cock in the fable who found a diamond on the dunghill, and as he turned it over, he said, “I would rather have found a grain of barley.” That was according to his *nature*. And so with you. This

precious pearl of union to God will seem to be nothing to you—a little worldly pleasure will be more to your taste. One could weep to think there should be such ignorance of true joy and true delight! Oh, blind eyes that cannot see beauty in the Savior! Oh, stone-cold hearts that can see no loveliness in Him!

Jesus! They are drunk! They are mad who cannot love You! It is a strange infatuation of the sons of men to think that they can do without You, that they can see any light apart from You, You Sun of Righteousness, or anything like beauty in all the gardens of the world apart from You, you Rose of Sharon, you Lily of the Valley! O that they knew You!—

**“A thousand sorrows pierce my soul,  
To think that all are not Your own.”**

Do I address any tonight, who, while they pretend to be religious people, hold loosely by their allegiance to the Lord? There are many such, and we occasionally meet with them here. They cannot appease their conscience without some show of profession, so they join with us as hearers and spectators in the solemn assembly!

But they never unite with the Church because they have not devotedly yielded up their hearts to Christ. Ask them the reason and their answer sounds modest, and yet the reserve it implies is anything but chaste. Do you tell us that you are afraid you should not walk consistently? Would it not be more true to admit that your relationship with the world, your service of mammon, your ordinary pastimes, and your occasional revelries, harmless as you try to persuade yourselves they are, if viewed in the light of marriage to Christ must be accounted as very shame? So far as the principles of Christianity are concerned you endorse them with your private creed, and you are “Protestant” enough to prefer the most evangelical doctrines. But the reserve in your conduct is a clear index to a most fatal reserve in your character.

You might admit God to be the supreme, but not the *exclusive* Lord of your heart. You would give the Lord’s altar more honor than any other altar, but still you would not remove the high places which desecrate the land. Your opinion is that there is no god in all the earth but the God of Israel, yet your practice is to bow down in the house of Rimmon. You wish to have all the promises of God vouchsafed to you, but you decidedly object to make any vows in His sanctuary. It is to such as you that these delicate appeals are most distasteful, “Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you.” Nothing in your experience responds to this. You stand aloof as if you were grieved. I must warn you, therefore, that God can be your God only in these bonds of Covenant Union.

But, Christian, I speak to *you*. Surely *you* know something about this, that God is married to you? If you do, can you not say with me, “Yes, and He has been a very faithful Husband to me”? Now, there is no one of you who can object to that! Thus far He has been very faithful to you and what have you been to Him? How kind and tender has He been! How faithful,

how generous, how sympathizing! In your every affliction *He* has been afflicted, and the angel of His Presence has saved you. Just in your extremity He has come to your rescue.

He has carried you through every difficulty, even until now. Oh, you can speak well of Him, can you not? And as for His *love*—Christian, as for His love—what do you think of that? Is it not Heaven on earth to you? Do you not reckon it to be—

**“Heaven above  
To see His face,  
To taste His love”?**

Well, then, speak well of Him, speak well of Him! Make this world hear His praise! Ring that silver bell in the deaf ears of this generation! Make them know that your Beloved is the fairest of the fair and compel them to enquire, “O you fairest among women, what is your Beloved more than another beloved?”

As for you who do not know Him, I should like to ask you this question, and you answer it for yourselves. Do you want to be married to Christ? Do you wish to have Him? Oh, then there will be no difficulties in the way of the match! If your heart goes after Christ, He will have you. If, when you get home to your bedside, you say to Him, “Dear Savior, here is my heart. Take it, wash it, save me,” He will hear you! Whoever you may be He will not refuse you. Oh He *seeks* you, He seeks *you*! And when *you* seek *Him*, that is a sure sign that He has found you!

Though you may not have found Him, yet He has found you already. The wedding ring is ready. Faith is the golden ring which is the token of the marriage bond. Trust the Savior! Trust Him! Have done with trusting to your good works. Have done with depending upon your merits. Take *His* works, *His* merits, and rest alone upon *Him*, for now does He say unto you, “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—and you shall know the Lord.” So may He do unto every one of you, and may Christ’s name be glorified forever. Amen.

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

# THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

## NO. 1621

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1881,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.”***  
**Jeremiah 3:16.**

THIS text speaks concerning the material ark. I should like to append to that another which speaks of the ark *spiritually* and tells us where its antitype is to be found—

***“And the temple of God was opened in Heaven and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament (or covenant)”***  
**”Revelation 11:19.**

When inward piety is low, the externals of religion are frequently cried up. Those who know nothing of God are the very people to exclaim concerning themselves and their brethren, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” The Pharisees, who were furthest from God, were the most bitter advocates of ritualism and formalism—they would not even have a man healed on the Sabbath, or allow the hungry to rub a few ears of corn out of the husks! It is not always so, but yet too often, “The nearer the Church the further from God.” The more grown, the less Grace. The more phylactery, the less sanctity. The more of ecclesiasticism, the less of true godliness.

On the other hand, whenever the Spirit of God is largely poured out, although the ordinances of God are carefully attended to, yet, as external things, they are sure to be put into their proper place and that proper place is a secondary one. The *spiritual* is put foremost and the ritualistic is placed hindmost when Grace is largely given. It was so with David in the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm. When he had made a hearty confession of his sin and cried to God for mercy, he uttered those memorable words, “You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offerings.” He puts aside the symbol because he has a clear view of the *substance*! That is exactly the case with the people mentioned in my text—they had been sadly sinful, but God, in His mercy, promised to turn to them, to bless them and bring them back into their own land again.

He says—“And I will give you pastors according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when they are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the Covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.” The visible golden ark, which was so much their glory, would be quite forgotten be-

cause of the gracious visitation of God! That shall be our subject this morning.

First, I shall invite your attention to the symbol revered. Secondly, we shall see that reverence obliterated and, thirdly, we shall dwell upon that reverence transferred, for though we no longer revere the ancient ark of shittim wood overlaid with pure gold, we do honor to that forever enduring ark of which we read in our second text—"The temple of God was opened in Heaven and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant."

**I.** First, then, let us think upon THE SYMBOL REVERENCED. The ark of the covenant was a small coffer not exceeding four and a-half feet in length by about two feet, eight inches in breadth. It was made of an enduring kind of wood and was covered with pure gold both inside and out. Upon the upper part of it was a golden crown into which fitted a solid slab of gold which formed the lid of the ark. That golden lid was called the propitiatory or Mercy Seat—in the Hebrew, Kapporeth, or a place of covering. Upon the two ends of this Mercy Seat and part and parcel of the same solid metal, were two cherubs, with outstretched wings.

The Lord said of them, "And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the Mercy Seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the Mercy Seat shall the faces of the cherubim be." Between those wings, when God was favorable to His people, the bright light, called the Shekinah, was known to shine forth. And when, once in the year, the High Priest went into the innermost place, bearing with him a cloud of incense and sprinkling the blood, he saw the Glory of that Light of God. This ark was the object of great reverence and very fitly so, because it symbolized God's Presence, the Presence of Jehovah, the living God, in the midst of His people. They saw no similitude, for what likeness can there be of Him that fills all in all?

They knew that God's excellent Glory shone above the Mercy Seat and they thought of the ark in connection with the Lord, as David did, when he said, "You and the ark of Your strength." It was, therefore, a thing greatly to be revered, for God was there. To no other people had God given such a token of His Presence. He walked in the midst of no other camp—but of Israel He had said, "My Spirit shall go with you." It was the first article of the tabernacle concerning which Moses received instructions, for, indeed, it was the first in honor. Read the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus and see how speedily the Lord, who gave the Law, provided a chest for its honorable preservation! Although Solomon made most of the furniture of the Holy Place anew, he retained the same ark which was too much esteemed to be changed.

When it was carried abroad in the marches of the Israelites it always went in front, and it was distinguished from all the other furniture by being covered externally with blue, as if to signify its heavenly character. Lifted high on men's shoulders, upon golden staves, the blue colored wrapping of the ark was seen in the van of the Lord's host occupying the place of honor. We do not wonder, therefore, that it was much spoken of and esteemed by the tribes of Israel. That Presence of God meant blessing, for God was with His people in love to them. The Lord abides not with His

enemies, but with His chosen. So long as He gave the token of His Presence, it was a sign that He had not cast them off as hopeless. He still heard their prayers and granted them His favors, for He still remained in residence among them while His Mercy Seat was in the Holy Place.

When the ark went into the house of Obed-Edom for a time, the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom for the sake of the ark of the Lord. Therefore David was encouraged to bring up the ark into his own city and he did so with gladness which he expressed by dancing before the Lord with all his might. Well, then, might the people speak of it, think of it, visit it and magnify it because it brought blessings to them! The ark was held in reverence by the Israelites because it was their leader. When the time came to march through the wilderness, the ark went in the forefront. Often did Moses cry, "Rise up, Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered," and on they went across the pathless desert rightly led by this ark of the covenant.

When they came to the brink of Jordan, as soon as the feet of the priests that bore the ark touched the waters, the river was parted and they went through dry shod! It was so trusted in that they bore the ark, on one occasion, into the battlefield when God was *not* with them and the golden coffer was carried into captivity to vindicate its own honor among the Philistines by smiting its captors with sore diseases and breaking in pieces Dagon, their God! A wonderful ark it was when God was with it! It was such a symbol of power that we wonder not that when David brought it up to Mount Zion all the people shouted—and with sound of trumpet celebrated its triumphal march. It was also so much a symbol of holiness that Solomon removed Pharaoh's daughter out of the city of David, for he said, "My wife shall not dwell in the house of David, king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord has come."

In Solomon's day the ark was finally installed in the Temple and the king placed over it two greater cherubim, ten cubits high, with outspread wings. These were made of olive wood overlaid with gold and probably covered the entire structure of the coffer and the smaller cherubim which were component parts of it. Then they drew out the staves of the ark, signifying that there the ark was to stay—but they left the ends of the staves visible to show that God might yet depart from them if they sinned against Him. In the Temple the ark rested until the time of the captivity and from that time it was no more heard of and possibly never appeared again in the Temple that was built by Zerubbabel or in that which was enlarged and beautified by Herod. The ark was to the Israelites, after their wanderings were over, the fixed center of their nationality, even as while they were in the wilderness it had always been placed in the center of the camp. In the desert it had been the central kernel of the whole army. Outside the ark was the tabernacle or Holy Place and, outside of that, in various rows and orders, were the tents of the tribes—but the core of it all was this honored ark.

Today we have a center to which we rally—a fixed center which faith perceives in Heaven where the true Ark of the Covenant has gone up. Marvel not that the men of Judah paid great reverence to this ark, when, in so many ways it was a token of good to them. What they did to this ark

is mentioned in the text. First, they recognized it as the ark of the Covenant of the Lord. They were known to say, "The ark of the Covenant of the Lord." They spoke much of it and prided themselves upon the possession of it. No, they not only *spoke* of it, but they *loved* it, for we read, "Neither shall it come to mind," or as the margin has it, "Neither shall it come upon the heart." The ark of the Covenant was upon the hearts of God's people—they had a deep affection for it. When it was carried away, captive, we read of a godly woman who was seized with sudden travail at the news, while the aged Eli fell backward with horror at the tidings. It was very dear to the people of God and if it was taken away, they reckoned that the Glory was departed from them.

Hence, in the next place, they remembered it, as the text plainly informs us. If they were captives they prayed in the direction in which the ark was situated. Wherever they wandered, they thought of God and of the coffer which represented His Presence. Next, they visited it. On certain holy days they came from Dan and from Beersheba, even from the utmost ends of their land, in joyful companies, singing from stage to stage and making joyful holiday as they went up to the place where God did dwell between the cherubim! When they came back they rejoiced because they had worshipped before the ark of the Covenant, even before the Presence of the Most High God.

Visiting it, they were accustomed, also, to speak highly of it, for in the margin of your Bibles you will find, "Neither shall they magnify it any more." They used to tell one another what the ark had done—the Glory that shone forth from it, the acceptance of the offering whose blood was sprinkled upon it on the Day of Atonement—and the testimony which was heard from between the cherubic wings. They would tell how the ark divided the Jordan, how it laid the walls of Jericho level with the ground, how it slew the prying men of Bethshemesh. And they would tell of Uzzah who laid presumptuous hands upon it and how the Glory of the Lord came upon it and filled the Temple so that the priests could not stand to minister. Of their God and the ark of His strength they would not cease to sing, for the ark of the Covenant was honored in Israel.

**II.** Secondly, I would have you observe THAT REVERENCE DISAPPEARED. They were to say, no more, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord." Yet that fact was to be a blessing. Observe that the words are not spoken as a *threat*, but as a gracious *promise*. Now, this cannot merely mean that they would be without the ark, for they would certainly understand that to be a sign of Divine anger. Neither would the mere absence of the ark fulfill the Prophet's words, for if the ark were gone, they would still remember it and their hearts would hunger after it. If they could not visit it, yet it would come to their minds and they would speak of it. It was, somehow, to be a gift to them that they should speak no more of the ark of the covenant, for the text was delivered in the form of a promise.

The fact is, they were to have done with the symbol because the Substance would come. They were no more to speak of the ark itself, because they would have that which the ark was intended to foreshadow. Bear with me with great patience this morning while I try to interest you in the points in which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is the Ark of the Covenant

now in the Temple of God for us. Our Lord Jesus, by His coming, has put out of His people's thoughts the material ark of the covenant because its meaning is fulfilled in Him! And this, first, in the sense of preservation. The ark was intended to be a sacred treasury in which God laid up the two tablets of stone upon which the Law was written, that they might be kept there as priceless things, not to be commonly handled or even seen, but shut up there as the most precious gifts of Heaven.

We know not where the tablets are, now, and we know not what has become of the golden chest. But where is the Law now? Once it lay broken at your feet and mine, even as the tablets were shattered at the feet of Moses. When Moses took the tablets of the Law into his hands, he soon grew angry with the sinful people and he broke them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. But where is the Law now? In Christ, for, "He is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes." "How I love Your Law," says David. David knew where the Law was and where it could become an object of love in the hands of the Mediator. The Law apart from Christ is a terror to our guilty souls because it is a Law broken and, therefore, condemning!

But the Law in Christ Jesus, honored and fulfilled by Him, is a delightful sight to true worshippers. In Him the Law is more honored than by any merely human obedience and it smiles upon us as if we had perfectly obeyed it. The Law fulfilled is our confidence as much as the Law violated was our dread. We think nothing of the ark, now, and we think nothing of the tablets of stone—but we do think everything of Christ Jesus, "who is made of God unto us righteousness for He has completely kept the Law," for He said, "Your Law is within My heart." It was not within His heart, alone, but within all His life! His whole thoughts, words and acts went to make up a golden chest in which the precious treasure of the perfect Law of God should be contained. O come, let us magnify His blessed name!

Next, the ark signified propitiation, for over the top of the sacred box which held the two tablets of the Law was the slab of gold called the Mercy Seat which covered all. We will not talk of that golden covering, now, but we will speak of Jesus, our blessed Lord, who covers all! When God looks down upon His Law, He does not see it nakedly—He beholds it in the Person of His Son. He sees it, there, perfectly preserved without taint or flaw of any kind, and He rejoices therein. You and I magnify the Lord, that instead of having a naked Law to look at, which would flash devouring flames upon us, we see the Law in Christ covered with mercy, fulfilled by love on our behalf!

We often speak of the Mercy Seat, but do we, as often as we should, remember that Jesus Christ, Himself, *is* that Mercy Seat? There is no Mercy Seat to which we can draw near in prayer except the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, who is the Propitiation for our sins and through whom our supplications are accepted! "Ah," said the Jew, "we have a Mercy Seat that covers all." "Ah," say we, "but *we* have One who does not do that *typically* and in outward pattern, alone, but He is the real covering upon which we lay our prayers and thanksgivings and find ourselves accepted." We come not to God on the footing of the Law, but the interposing Propitiation! He covers all and comes between—and upon *that* Mercy Seat we



offer our petitions and praises! That is a second blessed reason why we will say no more, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord,” neither shall it come to mind, for Jesus is the Propitiatory for us.

The next word is a very blessed one and that is covenant. The ark was called “the ark of the covenant.” It represented a Covenant of Works, as it was a part of a visible sanctuary and, ah, how soon was that covenant broken! There is no wonder that in the breaking of that covenant, the golden pot of manna was lost and that Aaron’s rod that budded was no more seen, for we are told in the Chronicles that when they opened the ark, in the days of Solomon, there was nothing found in it “save the two tablets which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.”

Paul tells us that they were there originally and so it is probable that they were taken away by the Philistines. Ah, how soon we should lose the sweet things of God if we were under the Covenant of Works—and how soon we should miss the gentle sovereignty of His shepherd rod! I thank and bless God that in Christ Jesus we have a Covenant of Grace which can never fail and never can be broken! In Him we have all that our souls desire—pot of manna and rod of Aaron—covenant provision and covenant rule we find in Him. Dear Hearer, have you ever seen Christ as your Covenant? It is not every Believer that has seen Him in that light. When we first come to Christ, we look to Him as our Savior and we are lightened—and a very blessed look it is!

It may not be till years after that we come to understand that God has entered into Covenant with us in Christ; that He will bless us, sanctify us and keep us to the end. But, mark you, while a knowledge of Christ as a Savior gives you the Bread of Life, yet the “wines on the lees well refined” and the “fat things full of marrow” are unknown to you till you can spell that word, “covenant.” Oh, how I wish some of the people of God understood it and realized that there is established between God and us, in the Person of Christ Jesus, a Covenant ordered in all things and sure! May the Holy Spirit teach you this! God has pledged His honor for the salvation of His people and He has sealed the Covenant with the precious blood of Jesus and, therefore, He will not turn away from it, but will keep it for His Son’s sake! Oh, blessed Jesus, we need no ark of the covenant, for You are the Covenant, itself, to us, and in You we rejoice!

Fourthly—because this ark was the ark of the covenant of God, it was from it that He was accustomed to reveal Himself—and so it is called the “ark of testimony.” Jehovah often spoke from the Mercy Seat to His waiting people. His priests and Prophets heard a voice coming forth from the thick darkness of the secret chamber wherein God dwelt—a voice from off the Mercy Seat giving them promises of succor in their times of need. It was a great thing to possess what they called, “the oracle.” No other people had a true oracle except these chosen ones of God, but now that its voice is silent, we need not regret it, for we have another Oracle. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, has, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son.”

His Son is the Testimony of the Father's mind. "He that has seen Me," He says, "has seen the Father." In all the world of Nature; in all the realm of Providence; in all the books of Revelation, God is seen, but nowhere as He is seen in the Person of Jesus Christ—Jesus, the Word, is the most plain Revelation of God! His Sacrifice is the heart of God written out in readable characters. Jesus Christ is "the Testimony!" Come, then, Beloved, let us rejoice in the faithful and true Witness. Some will say that they know God by study. Others declare that they have found God by reflection. And some dream that they perceive Him by imagination. But all their knowledge put together cannot equal the blessed testimony of God which He has given us concerning Himself in the manifestation of His Incarnate, holy, obedient, suffering, dying, risen Son! We say no more, "the ark of the testimony," but we rejoice that God was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His Glory and saw the Father in the Son.

We have only reached the middle of the subject now—this ark also signified enthronement—for the top of the ark was, so to speak, the Throne of God. It was "the throne of the heavenly Grace." There God reigned and dwelt, that is, *typically*. It was a throne to which petitioners came with their pleas to obtain favors at the hand of the great King. Where, now, is the visible Throne of God? Ah, Sirs, His holy place has been broken down and He dwells not in temples made with hands, that is to say of this building. There is now no visible Throne of God upon the face of the earth. Whereunto shall you liken the Throne of the Most High? We have heard of thrones of mighty kings adorned with gold, ivory, pearls and gems till they have shone like rainbows—but what would these trifles be to the God of the whole earth?

If you would see the Throne of God, behold the Person of the Christ, for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily! The Lord reigns from the tree, from the Cross—here is the kingdom of God set up in the Person of Christ Jesus among the sons of men! Oh what a blessing to have such a Throne to come to—to Jesus, Himself, who *is* the Throne of the invisible God! We talk no longer of the ark and of its gold. Of its crown and of its golden lid. Of the winged cherubs, for the Lord Jesus is infinitely better than these! Oh, our beloved Lord and Master, You chase away these shadows from our minds, for the very Throne of God is You!

Out of this grows the next idea, that as it was the place of God's enthronement, so it was the door of man's approach. Men never came nearer to God on earth, typically, than when they stood in the Holy Place close by the ark. Israel was nearest to God, symbolically, on that day when the atonement had been made and accepted—and her priest stood before the ark—awe-stricken in the Presence of God. You and I need not speak of the ark of the covenant, for we have a blessed way of approach. We do not come to Christ only once in the year, but every day in the year and every hour of the day! He who came but once in the year came tremblingly. The Jews had a tradition that they put a cord about the foot of the High Priest so that if he should die before the ark, they might draw out his corpse—such was their servile fear of God!

That tradition shows what was the trembling nature of that entrance within the veil—how different from the Apostle's words, "Let us come

boldly unto the Throne of the heavenly Grace.” We are not afraid of being stricken with death there—we are full of reverence—but we have not received the spirit of bondage, again, to fear. There is no approaching God except in Christ, but in Christ our approach to God may be as near as possible. Come nearer, nearer still—it is your fault that you do not come near enough! There is nothing to tremble at, here—come right up to God and speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend.

I would leave others to worship as they find they can, but to me, though the prayers of our national Church are very beautiful—they are so very cold! What a long way off is God in the Liturgy! What word is there in it of childlike delight in God? Therefore certain Brothers and Sisters who have been accustomed to that style of praying chide us for our boldness and familiarity in prayer. They think we are presumptuous in drawing so near to God! Brothers and Sisters, we do not marvel at your judgment, nor complain of it! We would not condemn you for your distant prayers, but we *cannot* yield to your censure of our bolder approach, for we have in our bosoms a sense of acceptance and a spirit of adoption which will not let us speak with God otherwise than as His favored children!

We come boldly because we come through Jesus! Who is afraid of Jesus? Who shudders when drawing near to Him? And if He is the Mercy Seat to which we come—and the place where the Father meets us—we feel that He permits the holy familiarity, the humble freedom which is suggested to our hearts by the spirit of adoption! I must go a step further—the ark was the place of gracious power. On the top of the Mercy Seat stood cherubic figures and, notwithstanding all that learned men may have said, I do not think that any idea is nearer the mark than that these cherubim were types of angelic *power*—and of all the powers of Providence which God is pleased to use in the behalf of His people.

Notice how frequently the Word associates angels with our Lord. For instance, when Jacob saw the ladder which reached to Heaven and God at the top of it, there were angels ascending and descending upon it. Cherubim were on all the curtains of the Most Holy Place which enclosed the ark and the ministry of angels is interwoven into the great covenant plan of salvation. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Consider, then, that the angels on the Mercy Seat typify the *power* of God by which He will defend His people. Right well did He defend them, for who could harm them when He was in the midst of them?

Yet we will not speak of the ark. Neither will we remember it. Neither will we visit it, for we see in Christ Jesus that all the power of God is on our side! He is, “God With Us,” and if God is with us, who can be against us? Every angel is the servant of our Covenant Head and so the guardian of every member of Christ. As He might have summoned 12 legions of angels by one uplifted glance to Heaven, so will He fill the mountain with horses of fire and chariots of fire whenever His people need such succor! The stars in their courses fight for the Savior and for the saved ones—nothing shall, by any means, harm them! In Heaven and earth and Hell, the warrant of the great King stands in full force, “Touch not My anointed,

and do My Prophets no harm.” And this protection comes to us because we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

An eighth explanation, however, I must close with, so far as this second head is concerned. The ark was much revered by the Jews because it was the center of their nationality. Around the ark in the wilderness gathered all the tribes. The pillar of fire and cloud above the ark of the Covenant was God’s flaming standard marking the pavilion where the Lord of Hosts abode. After they were settled in Canaan, it was the center of the nation. There the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of our God. Today we have no such sacred ark or chest. We have no palladium or central standard. There is a church which has a man they call, “infallible,” who is her center—and there are others who, in their cravings after uniformity in the churches would, I have no doubt, soon create a second hierarchy and bring forth by prodigious birth a second pope—but it is not so among us! God will not have it so! He will have no *human* center and our very divisions are overruled to prevent such a thing.

But there is one Center to which all God’s people gather! There is one name above every name, “of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named.” Find me a dozen spiritual men and, to describe their different modes of thought, one of them may be called a Baptist, another an Episcopalian, a third a Presbyterian, a fourth a Methodist and so forth. Let them sit together and begin to talk of the things of God—of the Covenant of Grace; the work of the Spirit in the soul; the preciousness of the blood of Jesus—and you will see that they are one! Though they talk with various brogues, their language is one. Even as men from Somersetshire, or Essex, or Yorkshire all differ and yet all are Englishmen—so are Christians of various denominations one in the common language of the Cross of Christ.

They say that Christians ought to be one and so we ought. But I go further and assert that all who are in Christ are already one! When our Lord prayed, “That they all may be one,” was He unheard? Was His prayer unavailing? I believe it was answered and that to this day there is a vital union among all the people of God in every place. And though they sometimes try to conceal that unity, yet the love of Christ wills out and will fuse them into one. Put two mere *theologians* together and they will fight like Kilkenny cats! But bring two spiritual men together at the Cross and they will lie down like two lambs—they cannot help it—they must love each other in Christ.

There is, there must be, an essential unity among those who are quickened by the Spirit! And I rejoice and glory that the name, the Person and the work of Jesus are, at this hour, the center of Christendom! Talk not of the ark, neither visit it, neither let it come to mind, for the King, Himself, is in the midst of us, “the standard bearer among ten thousand.”

**III.** Thirdly, let us see THIS REVERENCE TRANSFERRED. Let us render to Jesus the honor which aforetime was offered to the ark. First, let us say that Jesus is our Covenant. We are told, “They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” People must talk, it is natural to them, they must say something—what else are their tongues for? Let us, then, say concerning Christ that *He* is the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord.

Come, let us each one say it for himself—"Lord Jesus, I am in covenant with God through You. Jesus, You are my Propitiation—by You I approach unto the Father." Recognize this Truth of God for yourself, my Brothers and Sisters, and it will be a grand day for you.

When you have said it to yourself, say it to those about you. Say it to strangers, but especially say it to your own Brothers and Sisters. "They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another," and what better subject could they have than to say one to another, "Brother, what fellowship we have with God in Christ! What a covenant there is between us and Him! Oh how sweetly does Christ cover our sins! How blessedly does He fulfill the Law! How sweetly does He bring us into fellowship with angels and how does He enable God to shine forth upon us!" Say this, say it often, nobody will rebuke you—it is a subject upon which you may be as fluent as you please. When you have said all you know, say it over again! And when you have said it again, say it a third time! This is a kind of note of which the human ear, when once it is cleansed, never grows weary!

The text takes you a step farther, for it says of the original ark, "neither shall it come to mind," or, (I give the margin), "neither shall it come upon your heart." Brethren, let *Christ* come upon your heart and dwell there! Beloved, let us not have Christ in the head, but Christ in the heart! Know all you can about Him, but love Him on account of everything you know, for everything we learn about Christ ought to be another argument for affection to Him. How I loved Him when I only knew myself a sinner and Christ a Savior! But oh, I love Him more as I begin to see my greater need and His greater fullness—as I see my greater sinfulness and His greater graciousness! Oh for a great Christ! Oh to see Him grow upon us! Oh to get more knowledge and then to have our hearts enlarged that we may love Him more and more!

Carry Christ in your heart, even as the Israelite bore the ark in his affections. Oh love the Lord, all you His saints! You can love other things too much, but not your Lord! Embrace Him! Cry in the language of the Song, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." Outsiders do not understand the Song—they say it is a mere love ditty. They never will understand it till the Lord Jesus is laid on their hearts. But when He is once there—their Joy, their All—they will need just such golden speech as Solomon's Song! And every word of it will be dear to their souls. Let us, then, love our Lord with all our hearts.

And, next, if we should ever grow dull or cold at any time, let us take the third step in the text and let us remember the Lord—

***"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still."***

If I have not this enjoyment now, I will remember it and struggle till I find my Lord again. O my Lord, I will remember You. If I forget You, let my heart forget to beat—

***"Gethsemane, can I forget?  
Or there Your conflict see,  
Your agony and bloody sweat,  
And not remember Thee!  
When to the Cross I turn m eyes,  
And rest on Calvary,  
O Lamb of God! My Sacrifice!"***

***I must remember Thee.  
Remember You and all Your pains,  
And all Your love to me.  
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,  
Will I remember Thee.***

O memory, leave no other name than that of Jesus recorded upon your tablets! Let us sometimes set apart a little space for the exercise of our memory. It is good for children at school to have their memories trained. Should not we sometimes, especially we who speak so much, get alone and sanctify our memory by going over all the blessings of the Covenant which come to us by Christ—all the glory of His Person and all the wonders of His work? Oh, yes, we must remember it!

The next thing is, let us visit Him. We cannot set out on journeys, now, to go to Jerusalem on foot—little bands of us together—yet let us visit Jesus. Let us continually come to the Mercy Seat alone. Who that knows the worth of prayer but wishes to be often there? Next, let us come up by twos and threes. You that live at home and seldom get out, could you not, every now and then during the day, say to your maid, if she is a Christian, or to your sister who lives with you, “Come, let us have a five minutes’ visit to the Ark of the Covenant. Let us go to the Lord and speak with Him—maybe He will speak with us. Perhaps we have not been agreeing as we should—let us go and hear what God the Lord will speak, for He may speak peace to us in more senses than one. Perhaps we have had a trouble today and we do not see our way—let us go up to the Ark of the Covenant and hear what the Oracle will tell us. Perhaps the Lord will say, ‘This is the way, walk you in it’ and we shall know what to do.”

Frequently, in twos and threes, visit Christ your Ark and take care, also, to join the great caravans of Church prayer. One starts in this place every Sunday at seven o’clock in the morning and another at the hour of ten. Join those bands of pilgrims! A still larger company goes up to the Oracle on Monday nights at seven o’clock. Some twelve or fifteen hundred of us are usually to be found in happy fellowship going up to the Mercy Seat on Mondays. A very blessed little company meet on Thursday nights, before I begin my sermon, and they say, “Come and let us go and enquire of the Lord and ask His blessing upon His servant.” Besides these, there are meetings for prayer in this place at so many hours that I cannot now mention them all.

If you live where they are giving up on Prayer Meetings, carry home a live coal and drop it into your minister’s bosom. “Ah,” you say, “he might not like it.” That is very likely, but he certainly needs setting on fire if he lets the Prayer Meeting go out! Churches without Prayer Meetings? Pull them down, their day is over! Stop the preacher’s mouth if he does not pray and let His Church be scattered to the winds, for the Church that forgets to assemble for prayer has “Ichabod” written on its walls! No prayer, no power! The Ark of the Covenant is gone when the people no longer come together to cry unto the Lord in their companies. Let us constantly visit the ark, then, together! Let us go up to the Holy Place that we may speak with the Most High!

The last thing is, “Neither shall that be done any more,” but the margin has it, “Neither shall that be magnified any more.” Transfer your rever-

ence, then, and as you cannot magnify the literal Mercy Seat, come and magnify Christ, who is the *real* Mercy Seat. Oh, that I knew how to speak words worthy to lie under the soles of my Master's feet! Oh, that I could speak a sentence that was fit to be laid in the road like the palm branches with which the disciples strewed His way, not worthy to be touched by His feet, but by the feet of the beast that He rode upon! I am not worthy to unloose His shoe lace! He is so glorious that archangels fall on their faces to adore Him! Heaven is splendid, but the splendor of Heaven is the Presence of my Lord and Master! His Throne is a glorious high throne, but it owes its Glory and its height to Him that sits upon it! Hallelujah unto You, O Christ! Hallelujah forever and ever, for You were slain and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood! If the Jew was ever permitted to look upon the golden chest of the ark, he saw but little compared with what I see in You, You Man, You God!

The wood that could not rot, covered over with precious gold, was a poor representation of His perfect Manhood and glorious Godhead. The ark was crowned, but we see Jesus made a little lower than the angels and crowned King Of kings and Lord of lords! Again my heart cries hallelujah! The Jew could but see a slab of gold that was called the Throne of God, but we see the spotless, perfect life and infinitely precious Atonement of Christ which are better than the much fine gold. I see God, not as a light for the eyes, but as shining upon the soul in Jesus, my Lord. Oh, the Glory, the Glory of that Light of God! I am reconciled! I am a child of God! I am brought near! Jehovah speaks to me! I speak to Him! Hallelujah! All praise to Him through whom such fellowship is rendered possible so that a man can see God and live! Glory, glory be unto Him who is now in the Temple above! The veil is torn and faith can see Jesus, to whom we come this day. God bless you this day. God bless you, Beloved! Amen.

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# QUESTION AND EXCLAMATION NO. 2742

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-BAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1901.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 13, 1879.*

*“But I said, How can I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me.”  
Jeremiah 3:19.*

MEN think very lightly of sin unless it brings them under the eyes of the law of the land. They smile at it, as though it were a trifle, but God thinks not as they do. He calls sin by very black names. In this chapter, from which our text is taken, the Lord uses very strong terms in describing sin and He knows what sin is. He is a better judge of it than we are, so He does not regard it as a trifle, but He calls it “*adultery*,” which among men is regarded as one of the grossest of wrongs and the foulest of crimes. Oh, if some here who think themselves righteous, could only see themselves, not as their fellow creatures see them, but as God sees them, the sight would appall them!

Then, because man thinks so little of sin, he also thinks very little of the Grace of God. To him it seems a very simple matter to remove human guilt—just let God rub it out and leave a clean sheet. But God, who knows what sin really is, makes a very different estimate of the difficulties in the way of mercy and, accordingly, in our text we find Him asking the idolatrous nation, “How can I put you among the children?” The Omniscient, the Omnipotent, is enquiring, “How can such a thing as this be done?” The Lord adopts the language of wonder and speaks after the manner of men, as the best method by which He can communicate to our mind His own conception of the difficulty of saving a sinner. He wants to save him—longs to save him—yearns to put him among His children, but so many difficulties arise that He says, “How can I put you among the children?”

I am going to speak of my text in two ways. You have, perhaps, noticed that our translators regarded the first clause of this verse as a question and they, therefore, put a note of interrogation, or question mark, after the word, “nations.” “How can I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?” But the Hebrew bears another sense and some later scholars assert that the second meaning is the true one, namely that there ought to be here a note of exclamation or of admiration, as if God Himself delighted to think of all



the wonders His Grace was about to work—“How can I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations!” The same meaning really underlies each of these two renderings, and we may get at the true sense of the passage by considering both of them. But please understand that my objective is not so much to expound this text as to bring unrenewed hearts into harmony with it. I long, I pray, I agonize that God may put among His children many of you who have never been numbered with them before.

I. First, then, let us CONSIDER THE TEXT AS WRITTEN WITH A NOTE OF INTERROGATION. And, in that sense, it divides itself into two parts—a difficult question. “How can I put you among the children?” And the Divine answer—“I said, You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me.”

First comes *the difficult question*. “How can I put you among the children?”

The Lord seems to say, “How can I do it? This man has lived in total neglect of Me. I was not in all his thoughts, or if he did think of Me at all, it was only to say to Me, ‘Be You far from me. I do not want to be brought near to You.’ How can I put him among the children? He neglected My statutes and my testimonies, and would have none of them. I called him, but he refused to come to Me. I warned him, but he despised My warnings. How can I, whom he has thus treated with neglect, put him among the children? No, he has not merely forgotten Me and neglected Me, but he has chosen other lovers. He has found some other objects for his life’s ambition and spent his strength in seeking everything but that which is for My Glory. Let him go to his idol gods and find refuge among them in the day of his trouble. Let him call upon the objects of his ambition to administer comfort to him. If he has sought gold, let gold console him. If he has gone into the pleasures of sin, let the pleasures of sin yield him sweetness in the retrospect if they can. But why should I interfere with him? He has destroyed himself. He has pulled the house down upon his own head and all the while, when I stood by offering to bless him, he refused Me, rejected Me and turned against Me. Why then should I be called in now? Why should I be summoned to the rescue of one who is his own destroyer, and who has deliberately rejected Me?”

Let that solemn enquiry go home to the hearts of all whom it concerns. Some of you know that all these thirty, forty, or fifty years—or even longer—you have been living without God. Now that you are in trouble, you are beginning to think about Him. But suppose He were to say, “Go to your former companions and see what they will do for you. Now that you have spent all and there is a mighty famine in the land, go to the citizens of that country and join yourself to them. Go to the swine trough and fill your belly with the husks that the swine eat.” Ah, the mercy is that the Lord does not talk like that! Still, the difficulty of the task is suggested by the form of His question, “How can I put you among the children?”

The difficulty arises, next, because of the character of the person to whom He refers—"How can I put *you* among the children?" "You have been a willful sinner. You have not sinned as some have done, through ignorance—you knew better! From your early childhood you have been taught the right way, but you have neglected it. You have deliberately chosen the path of evil. You were not taken unawares, like a bird in a snare, but you have gone after sin with your eyes open. You have been foolish enough to follow after your own lusts and to drink down iniquity as the thirsty ox drinks water. You have been a willful sinner—a sinner against a mother's tears and a father's exhortations—a sinner against a conscience that would be tender against your will—a sinner against many a dream by night and many a throb of heart by day. 'How can I put *you* among the children,' when you have been set on mischief and have made your neck like an iron sinew and have kicked against the goads that would have guided you aright?"

Especially may the Lord put this question concerning some who, in addition to being willful sinners, have been open sinners. "O thief, how can I put *you* among the children? O drunkard, in your beastliness of excess, how shall I put *you* among the children? O unchaste, unclean haunter of the filthiness of night—you who have deceived and seduced others, and defiled yourself—how shall I put *you* among the children?" Does not the question seem to come with peculiar power to any who may be now present who have upon their conscience, this very hour, the guilt of sins we dare not mention in the public assembly and who, as they sit in these seats, would not greatly wonder if we were deliberately to point them out and say what they have done? Yet it is even with you, and such as you, that God determines to work marvels of mercy, although He rightly raises the question, "How can I put you among the children?"

After all, if we have not gone into open sin, as others have done, there is not much difference between one sinner and another, for we have all sinned and, having sinned, we stand condemned by the sentence of God's holy Law. See how God's question appears to you now! You are a condemned criminal—"How can I put you among the children?" You are one against whom the sentence of death is already recorded and you are only spared by a reprieve which the mediation of My Son brings to you when He cries, 'Let him alone this year, also.' Shall I have criminals in My family? Shall I take the condemned out of the cell and say, 'These shall be My sons and daughters?' Can it be so?" Oh, yes! Tell it the whole world over—it is so and it shall be so again tonight, by God's Grace! But, still, it seems to strike the Lord Himself as being a difficult thing to do, for He says, "How can I put you among the children?"

The question suggests the difficulties that must arise in the case of some who have denied the very existence of God, ridiculed the Gospel, made jests of the wounds of Christ and blasphemed His holy name, invoking His vengeance and daring to defy Him to His face. Some have persecuted the Lord's people, as Saul of Tarsus did, and that is a great and aggravating sin in His sight. They have, as it were, thrust their fingers

into the very eye of God, “for thus says the Lord of Hosts, He that touches You touches the apple of His eye.” It does seem to be a serious question as to how sinners such as these can be put among the children—yet God is constantly working this miracle of mercy! Therefore, publish the glory of His Grace! Tell what His arm has done, and can do again, and will do even tonight, but, still, while you publish the glad tidings, stand astonished that He should put such guilty ones among His children!

Now just turn the kaleidoscope a little and get the same thought under another aspect. Think of the position which He proposes to give to this character—to put you, great sinner, “*among the children.*” What will the world say? “What? Saul of Tarsus, who persecuted the saints—has he become a child of God? What? Is the blasphemer saying, ‘Abba, Father’? Is he sitting at the feet of Jesus? Then, surely, we may say, ‘Let us sin, that Grace may abound.’” It may be that some ribald tongues will draw blasphemous inferences from the very mercy of God—shall it, then, be exercised?

And if it is, what will “the children,” themselves, say? When they see such an one as you are coming in among them, will they not be likely to say, with the prodigal’s elder brother, “Lo, these many years did I serve You, neither transgressed I at any time Your Commandments and yet You never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this, Your son, was come, which has devoured Your living with harlots, You have killed the fatted calf for him.” The Lord knows that there are some of His children who still talk that way and he might, therefore, very well say to the gross sinner, “How can I put you among the children?”

It was not so very long ago that I heard a minister say that he did not believe in the revival, which was then being experienced, because so many outrageous sinners had professed to be saved. He thought it was due to regular attendants at places of worship that, if anybody was saved, they should be the first—a precious piece of abominable legalism! But the Lord does not act in that fashion. He makes them a people who were not a people, and calls her beloved who was not beloved. He takes the very lowest of the low and exalts them! He lifts the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes, even the princes of His people, to the praise of the glory of His Grace! Yet still, He is obliged to ask the question, ‘How can I put you among the children?’ How will the children like it?” Blessed be God, the children at the Tabernacle will like it very much! They will say, “The more, the merrier. Oh, that the Lord would bring in among us some of the outcasts of Israel, and some of the worst sinners of the Gentiles! How we would rejoice to welcome them!” Still, only fancy what would happen if you were to propose to take into your family some of the vilest characters possible? I am afraid that lady-like daughter of yours would object to such a brothel! And I am not certain that that most respectable, gentlemanly son of yours would care to re-

ceive such a sister! But God takes into His family such persons as we should never think of receiving into ours!

Think of another individual to whom the Lord has to say, "How can I put you among the children?" Who is he? Where is he? He used to be among the children, at least, in name, for he was enrolled with them. He used to sit among them with considerable delight and he was highly esteemed among them. But he went aside to drink from the drunkard's bowl, or he was led astray by some Delilah and his locks, like Samson's, have been shorn. I think I hear the Lord say to him, "How can I put you back again among My children? You went from the Communion Cup to the cup of devils! You rose from your knees to go deliberately into vice. You knew your duty, but you did it not. You denied your Savior, as Peter did, even if you did not betray Him, as Judas did." We do not wonder that God speaks thus, yet we rejoice that in this very chapter we have this gracious invitation, "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Happy will they be who respond, "Behold, we come unto You, for You are the Lord our God."

There are others concerning whom the Lord might appropriately ask this difficult question. They are the Grace-resisting sinners. Years ago, they were "almost persuaded." They almost yielded to Christ, yet they never fully surrendered themselves to Him. They were, for a time, burdened with a sense of guilt—they seemed to be, for a while, earnest in the pursuit of righteousness—but, somehow, the root of the matter was not in them. Whatever was good in them withered away and now it would take a very sharp knife to cut them to the quick, Do not some of you remember when you used to sit in these galleries and tremble as you listened to the Word? Yet, now, though I should speak to you as straight as words could enable me, and pour out my very soul so as to make the Gospel of God's Grace a living message to you, it would only glide past your ears and utterly fail to reach your heart. Now the Lord seems to say, after so many rejected warnings, after such violence done to the man's own conscience and to all the better instincts of his nature, "Let him alone! How can I put him among the children?" Would you wonder if He said it?

I will speak to just one other individual, and then I will turn to another part of the subject. How old are you, my Friend? I see by your white hairs, that you are past the usual age of men. You lean heavily upon your staff—you cannot live much longer. What has been your manner of life? Alas, it has been a life spent in neglect of God and in the pursuit of sin of one kind or another! You have passed your threescore years and ten. You are going on towards eighty—perhaps you are even past that. What is to become of you? You have given your best days to the devil, may he not as well give you rest? You made your choice of masters long ago and you have served Satan even until now—so take your wages, terrible as they are. Shall God be put off with the tail end of your life? Shall all the prime, and pith, and marrow of your manhood be spent in opposition to God and then, just at the last, shall you be received and be put

among the children? Yes, that you shall, if the Lord, by His Grace, brings you to the feet of Jesus, no matter how old you may be, nor how sinful you may have been! And we will give you the right hand of holy fellowship as we see the hoary sinner made into a babe in Grace—and your end shall not be like your beginning, but you shall find mercy at the hand of our God, whose love surpasses all thought and outshines all the imaginations of our hearts!

I think I have thus shown you that, in many cases, the question in our text is really a very difficult one. “How can I put you among the children?”

But I must not omit to remind you of *the Divine answer to it*. If you will read the whole of our text, you will see that there are two, “I saids,” in it—“I said, How can I put you among the children?...And I said, ‘You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me.’” If God had left us to answer this difficult question, it never would have had a reply, but He has Himself answered it in the best possible way!

What does the Lord propose to do? He proposes, first of all, to bring in one of his “*shalls*”—“*You shall call Me.*” But has God power over human hearts, to decide what they shall do? Is not man a free agent? Yes, he is, otherwise he would not be responsible for his actions. Yet, without at all infringing the freedom of man, God can exercise power over human minds. He is Omnipotent in the world of mind as in the world of matter and, as He said to the dark world, “Let there be light, and there was light,” so can He say to dark minds, “Let light come,” and light will come! And, often, in the inscrutable Sovereignty of His Grace, He speaks to those of whom it seemed impossible to imagine that they would ever be among His children—and He gives them an altogether new bias, so that they seek after that which, before, they had abhorred and, not knowing why, they turn and retrace their steps to the very thing from which, in the past, they had fled! Oh, I do pray that the Lord may say to someone here tonight, “You shall.” If He does but say it, you will sweetly melt under the beams of His love! You will gently dissolve as the icebergs do in the warm Gulf Stream! Your opposition to Him shall exist no longer and you will gladly yield yourself up wholly to Him!

Observe that the way the Lord will effect the great change is this—He will give us a new spirit. “You shall call Me, My Father.” Now, it is by the reception of the Spirit of adoption that we are enabled to cry, “Abba. Father,” so, if the Lord, in His great mercy, shall give to any of you a new heart and a right spirit, then His own Divine Spirit shall come upon you and dwell in you! The change that will be worked in you will be so great that you will not be what you were before and there shall no longer be the question of difficulty, “How can I put you among the children?”

With the new spirit, comes the new cry. The man used to say, “There is no God.” But now hear what he says, “My Father.” If he admitted God’s existence, he used to say that he did not care anything about God. But listen to him now as he says, “My Father.” He said that he did not need God, that he could do very well without Him, but now he cries, “My Fa-

ther.” He said that he was happiest when he thought least of God, but now he cries, “My Father, my Father, my Father! Let me come to You, my Father. I am undone until I find You, O my Father!” He said he had no association with God and did not want to have any. But now he says, “My Father, my Father.” He said he could look up to the starry vault at night and yet not think of God. But now every star seems to twinkle the great Father’s name and he cries, “My Father, manifest Yourself to me. Come, pour Your love into my soul, for my heart says, ‘I will arise, and go unto my Father.’” Oh, yes, now there is no need to ask the question, “How can I put you among the children?” for, as soon as ever God teaches a man to cry, with all his heart, “My Father,” why, he is among the children! There was never yet the cry in the soul, “My Father,” that the Fatherhood of the great God did not respond to, but He said, “My child, My child,” and He fell upon his neck, and kissed him, and blessed him. Now I see how He puts us among the children!

There is also a “shall not” which is worthy of notice. “You shall call Me, My Father, and *shall not depart from Me.*” This reminds us of the Grace that not only brings us near to God, but that also keeps us there. Possibly someone is saying, “Well, I now call God, ‘Father,’ but perhaps I may lose Him and forget Him, and go away from Him.” No, if He has brought you to Himself, you shall never go away from Him any more! There is no fear of that happening—

**“Whom once He loves He never leaves,  
But loves them to the end.”**

The Grace which He gives us is in us as a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life!

Now you see how sweet it is to be a child of God and to be among the others of His children, because, although a servant may be dismissed, you cannot be sent away. The servant may go, but the son always abides. “There are your wages, Mary, and I give you a month’s notice that I shall not require your services after that time.” Ah, but I cannot say that to my boys, whatever they may do! Your father could not say that to you, could he? No, no—your relationship is not a matter of wages and, therefore, it is not a matter of temporary abiding in the house. Once you are God’s child, you cannot be “un-childed” forever! Once brought by His great love to sit at His table, you are no longer like a guest at an inn, coming and going, but you are a child who has taken up eternal lodgings in the heart of his great Father.

All things are also yours in prospect—and the day shall come when you shall possess such things as eyes have never seen, nor ears heard of! You may now be poor, but, in a very short time, you will be rich beyond the miser’s wildest dream of wealth! You may now be cast down, but, within a few months or years, you will be as happy as the angels are, and be with them forever. You may be now obscure and unknown, but if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will have to endure only another prick or two of the pin of affliction and then you will go to be with God where there are pleasures forevermore! Everything is yours in rever-

sion, and you shall have it when you come of age. You are only a child at present, but you will enter upon your majority in due season—and when you become a man, then you shall be fit to be a partaker of all those blessings that your Heavenly Father has provided for you!

I wish I could talk about these blessed Truths of God as I should like to. If I could get rid of my tongue and my lips, and let my soul speak without the intervention of these organs of clay that are such dumb cold things, I would try to tell you the grandeur of the superlative love which takes the child of the devil and puts him among the children of God—that takes the servant of sin, the companion of the swine, the man degraded below the level of the brute—and yet lifts him up and makes him to sit among the children of the eternal God and to be made like unto them! May you all know what it is by happy personal experience!

**II.** Now I must close My sermon by just asking you, very briefly, to CONSIDER THE TEXT AS WRITTEN WITH A NOTE OF EXCLAMATION. I have already tried to bring out that meaning—God Himself saying, as if with intense satisfaction, talking to Himself, congratulating Himself, depicting to Himself the bliss of His own benevolence when the object of His mercy is achieved, “How I will put you among the children!”

In order to bring out this great Truth of God, think of the parable of the prodigal son and try, if you can, to realize the great change in his condition. There is the Father saying, “My dear, dear son, starved in the far-off country, and defiled among the swine, you shall come back to Me and let Me once but see you coming back, and how swiftly I will run to meet you! Oh, how I will fall on your neck! How I will kiss those lips that penitently say, ‘I am not worthy to be called Your son!’ I will stop that utterance with many a kiss repeated again and again. How I will press you to My bosom, My son, My long-lost son, My son that was dead and is alive again! How will I bring you to your mother’s house and to the chamber of her that bore you! How I will conduct you within My gates, and say, ‘Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.’ How gloriously will I array you among the children! You shall have the best My house can afford.”

The Father seems to see it all before it is actually done and He thinks, “How princely My poor boy will look when the best robe, bespangled with jewels, shall hide his nakedness! How I will put him among the children! He shall have a ring such as I give to My choicest favorites. ‘Put shoes upon his feet.’ My boy shall no longer be a bare-footed beggar. Then bring out the fatted calf, and kill it, and hold high holiday. Ring the bells of Heaven! Pour forth your sweetest minstrelsy, and let this be the keynote of it all, ‘My son, that was dead, is alive again! He was lost, but now he is found.’ How gloriously will I put you among the children!”

Of whom does my Master speak this? Soul, do you feel guilty? Does your heart repent of your sin? Are you willing to be reconciled to God? Then He speaks all this of you—of you, poor draft and scum that you are in your own estimation! Since you have been precious in His sight, you have been honorable and He has loved you, and given a wondrous price

for you, even the blood of His well-beloved Son. How I wish I could get side by side with some big sinner here, tonight, and tell him what I was myself, and what the Grace of God has done for me! I would tell him that my Father in Heaven has said, even concerning him, “How gloriously will I put you among the children! How I will give you a pleasant land and a goodly inheritance among the sanctified! How I will open your lips to shout of My mercy and fire your heart with zeal to proclaim My goodness!”

Does it seem too good to be true? Listen to my own testimony. Had anybody told me, when I was seeking the Lord’s face nearly 30 years ago, that I should be here tonight to tell these thousands of people all that His love has done, in putting me among the children, I should not have thought it possible! Then, arise, young man, for the Lord can do the same for you! Look to Jesus, for the opened fountain has not yet been closed, nor shall it be till the last of His elect is washed whiter than snow—and that time has not yet arrived. Believe and live! All difficulties are removed by the atoning Sacrifice of Christ. And among the children of God you shall stand and He shall delight in all that His mighty love, His superlative Grace has done for you—

***“Cast your guilty soul on Him,  
Find Him mighty to redeem!  
At His feet your burden lay,  
Look your doubts and cares away!  
Now by faith the Son embrace—  
Plead His promise, trust His Grace!”***

If I had to tell you of a hard master—if I had to stand here, like Moses, to tell of the thunders of the Law of God, I would do it, though it would go hard with me to deliver such a message. But when I have only to tell you that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men—that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin. When I have to quote His words, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” and tell you that, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above your ways, and His thoughts above your thoughts—“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!” When I have such a Gospel as this to proclaim to you, oh, I think you should accept it! No, I am sure you should accept it!

I have not to impose hard terms upon you. I do not come with threats of war and destruction. Mercy fills the Throne of God and wrath stands silently by. Oh, come and accept the mercy of your God! Some of you will do so, I know. The Lord shall lead you to do it by His gracious Spirit—and to His name shall be the praise forever. Amen and Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
HOSEA 14.**



According to the heading of this chapter, we have here, “an exhortation to repentance,” and, “a promise of God’s blessing.”

**Verse 1.** *O Israel, return unto the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.* Fallen into sorrow, fallen into shame, fallen into spiritual poverty, fallen into weakness of faith, fallen almost to destruction! Though you are Israel and God loves you, yet, “you have fallen by your iniquity,” and the only possible way in which you can obtain restoration is to “return unto the Lord your God.” Seek once again your Father’s face. Cry, with the prodigal, “I will arise and go to my Father.” “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” You *may* do so, for He bids you come back to Him. You *should* do so, for it was unwise of you to wander from Him—so end your wandering and return to Him. “Return unto the Lord your God.” He is still “your God!” He denies not the sacred band which binds you to Himself. Though you have forsaken Him, yet still He bids you think of Him, not as a stranger, but as your God!

O child of God, are you just now very heavy in heart because of your backsliding? Is the lamp of spirituality burning very low? Do you feel as if you had got into a state of spiritual barrenness? Then return—return at once—unto the Lord your God, for your sad condition is due to your iniquity!

**2.** *Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him.* He puts the Words into our mouths, for He knows that sometimes we feel as if we cannot give proper expression to our repentance. We feel it, but we cannot utter it, so He puts the very form of the confession into His children’s mouths—“Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him”—

**2.** *Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* Sin has had the mastery over you, therefore ask to have it taken away by pardon and by the cleansing which shall deliver you from the influence and power of it! Do not ask the Lord merely to take away some of your sin, but say to Him, “Take away all iniquity.” Especially if I have indulged some darling sin that has been my ruin, take that away.” “Take away all iniquity, and receive us.” “You cannot receive us with our sins upon us. Will You press us to Your bosom while we are black and foul with iniquity? No, that cannot be! So, first take away all our sin, and then receive us. Receive us again into favor with You, into a conscious sense of Your love. Receive us when we come to You in prayer. Receive us when we come to the Communion Table. Receive us as You did at the first, as Your sons and daughters.” “Receive us graciously.” “We cannot hope to be received on any other footing but that of Your free and abounding Grace, for even if You forgive and cleanse us, we shall still be sinners and shall still need Your Grace and mercy.” “Receive us graciously; so will we render.” “When You have put away our sin, and received us, then we will begin to serve You. And we will bring to You, not the calves of the legal sacrifice, for a sense of Your love will make us feel that You delight not in burnt offering. But we will render unto You the calves of our lips—our testimony to Your faithfulness—our declaration of Your Truth—our prayer—our praise.”

**3.** *Asshur shall not save us.* When a man trusts to his God, he gets away from all other trust. Confidence in God is the death of all other confidences. “Asshur shall not save us.”

**3.** *We will not ride upon horses.* Which, somehow or other, were always the Israelites’ fear and trust. They always looked upon horsemen as the most powerful friends or foes in the day of battle. But now they feel that all creatures shall be given up and they will cling to God alone. “Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses.”

**3.** *Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods: for in You the fatherless finds mercy.* What a sweet reason this is for confidence in God, namely, that He cares for those who have nobody else to care for them—that He becomes the Helper of those who have no other helper and the Guardian of those who are left friendless in the world! O My Soul, are you not just such an one—friendless, helpless, hopeless, orphaned? Fly, then, to that God in whom the fatherless finds mercy and you, too, shall find mercy! Now let us listen to the voice of God—

**4.** *I will heal their backsliding.* He can do it. He will do it. He evidently rejoices to do it. He soliloquizes with Himself, as though it were a very pleasant thought to Him! “I will heal their backsliding.”

**4.** *I will love them freely.* “Though there is nothing lovely in them, though they deserve My wrath—though, according to their own confession, they have gone after false gods, I will love them freely.”

**4.** *For My anger is turned away from him.* “I have fully forgiven them, and I have caused My great wrath to pass away from them.” Now, dear child of God, you to whom I spoke just now, who have fallen into a dull, dead, dreary sort of state—are you not encouraged to return unto the Lord when He thus declares that He will heal your backsliding and love you freely? You shall have your joy-days back again! You shall have your old love restored! You shall have your old delight renewed! You shall again dance before the Lord for very joy of spirit!

**5.** *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* “When they come back to Me, I will refresh them—softly, sweetly, efficaciously, abundantly, mysteriously—even as the dew refreshes the thirsty earth.”

**5.** *He shall grow as the lily.* Your souls shall suddenly spring up. As the daffodil-lily springs up almost in a night, and its golden bells speedily appear, so you who seem so dead, shall grow up adorned with the golden flowers of God’s delight in you.

**5.** *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* Fickle as you have been, God’s Grace will make you stable. You shall have as firm a roothold as a cedar has and be as fixed as Libanus himself.

**6.** *His branches shall spread.* You shall begin to have influence upon others and cast a shadow over them for their good.

**6.** *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree.* His soul, bedewed by Divine Grace, shall be beautiful as the olive tree, which has an almost indescribable loveliness all its own.

**6.** *And his smell as Lebanon.* There shall be a gracious flavor about you who are now so sapless and dry, when once the Lord returns to you because you have returned to Him.

**7.** *They who dwell under his shadow shall return.* Your children, your friends, all those who live in your house, shall be the better for your repentance and return to God. They try you, now, but when you have left off trying God, they will leave off trying you. Among a man's own children, there are often those who remind him of his own sin against God. Do you wonder that Jacob had so much trial with his sons when you remember what kind of man he was? Are you surprised that David's latter days were so full of trouble when you recollect his great sin? Ah, but if the Lord restores, and revives, and refreshes you, your household shall also be blessed! "They who dwell under his shadow shall return."

**7.** *They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* Your household shall have such a blessedness about them that observers shall say of you and yours, "They are a seed that the Lord has blest." The Lord has a most gracious way of making families to be very choice and select, and full of comfort and peace when those families walk in His fear. But when there is sin in the head of the household, there comes disorder in the family, the departure of the Divine blessing and all goes awry.

**8.** *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* "I have had enough of them! They have cost me enough sorrow! They have plagued me enough. I will put them away, for I must have my God, and I cannot have Him and idols too."

**8.** *I have heard him and observed him.* God hears the cry of the penitent, and observes what is going on in his heart.

**8, 9.** *I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.* The Lord give us wisdom, by His Holy Spirit, to understand and know these things—and to put our understanding to practical account by returning to Him, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

—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.**

# HOPE FOR THE WORST BACKSLIDERS NO. 2452

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,  
FEBRUARY 16, 1896.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 14, 1886.

*“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.  
Behold, we come to You; for You are the LORD our God. Truly  
in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from  
the multitude of mountains:  
truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.”  
Jeremiah 3:22, 23.*

SIN is quite sure to cause sorrow—and the longer the sorrow is delayed, the heavier it will be when it comes. This ship may be long at sea, but it will come home, at last, with a heavy cargo. There was never a man who broke the Law of God who had not in the end to rue it. “He that digs a pit shall fall into it and who breaks a hedge, a serpent shall bite him,” is one of Solomon’s sayings, and it is most certainly true. How many there are in this world who have upon them a load of sorrow which is plainly and evidently the result of their own folly and iniquity! Their sin procured it for them.

There is also a godly sorrow which comes after sin has been committed and which is not merely occasioned by the sin, but by the love of God and the action of the Spirit of God upon the heart. When God means to save a man, He usually begins by making him sorrow on account of his evil ways. It is the sharp steel needle of the Law of God that goes through the convicted heart and draws the silken thread of comfort and salvation after it! It is not God’s way to make men alive, again, until they are really dead. I mean, that, *spiritually*, they must be first, slain by the Law, before they are made alive by the Gospel. It is not God’s way to heal the unwounded heart, or to provide garments for those who are already clothed. Our heart must be broken and we, ourselves, must be stripped before the healing balm can be applied—and the robe of righteousness can be put upon us.

I know that what I say upon this subject will be had in small esteem by those who have not learned the evil of sin. It is to such, only, as have felt the arrows of the Lord’s righteous anger rankling in their spirit that the Gospel message will come with any kind of sweetness. If any here are suffering greatly under the burden of sin—as once I was myself—if any here are crushed to the earth as once I was crushed, they will be glad to hear God’s invitation of mercy and to know the way by which it may be accepted!

The other day I read in the newspaper a story which certainly surprised me and, undoubtedly, it is an instance of wonderful patience and

forbearance on the part of a loving woman. I do not think that I have heard or read the likes of it in all my days. And I should think that such action as hers never was excelled. The wretch of whom I speak must have been the meanest man who ever lived—and died without being hanged! And the woman must have been one of the most wonderful of women ever seen upon the face of the earth! According to the account I read, the man had not been long married, but he did not prosper in his profession and, feeling that he had talent and ability, he came to London with his wife's permission and consent, that he might make his way in the world. He did make his way and became, afterwards, a portrait painter of considerable eminence, so that he obtained admission into fashionable society and lived upon the fat of the land.

He had told his wife, when he wrote to her once, that if she came she might be a burden to him, so he never fetched her up to London. Indeed, he never but on that one occasion communicated with her and never sent her even a solitary sixpence! That state of things lasted for 40 years and the wife remained true and faithful to him notwithstanding all the heartbreak caused by his cruel conduct. In the process of time, he spent all his money and reduced himself to beggary—beside that, he was full of disease, yet he was mean enough to crawl to the door of the woman he had neglected all those years and, strange as it may seem, she opened it with delight and welcomed him back to her heart. She put him in her bedroom, she carefully nursed and cared for him and she wore her own life away by sitting at his bedside till he died.

Was it not splendid on her part? What monument ought not to be raised to such a loving woman as that? But I merely tell you this story in order to say that this woman's forgiveness of her unworthy husband is but a faint picture of the great love of God towards ungodly men! He feeds them and supplies their every need—they are always dependent upon Him—they could not live an instant without His permission, yet some whom I know have never communicated with their God for 40 years! Forty years, did I say? Fifty, 60, or perhaps even more years than that they have lived as if there were no God! And worse, still, they have, perhaps, only used His name for the purposes of blasphemy! They have made a mockery of holy things, they have provoked the Lord to jealousy and yet even now, though they are decrepit and old, if they are not only sick but sorry, if they are broken down and despairing, if they will but come creeping to God's door, He will say, "Come in and welcome!"

He never yet refused to receive a soul that came to Him by Jesus Christ, His Son. And Jesus Christ Himself has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Oh, how many old sinners have come to Christ even at 80 years of age and He has never uttered a word about those 80 wicked years—but He has said to each one of them, "Come in. I died for you. Come in and welcome." There have been many, many sins of the most aggravated kind committed, yet those who committed them have been freely forgiven! What did the Lord Jesus say to Saul of Tarsus? "I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks." Yet, having asked, "Why do you persecute Me?" He had nothing more to say to him by way of reproof or rebuke, but He blotted out his sin and, more than that, He counted him worthy—putting him into the

ministry—so that this very man could afterwards say, “To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

I earnestly trust that God’s infinite mercy and patience may be verified in the case of some whom I am now addressing, who have not yet turned to God. Pray, dear Christian Friends, that it may be so! In handling this subject I shall notice two things in my text. The first is, *the call from God*—“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” The second is *the method of obeying the call*. This is set forth in the words, “Behold, we come to You; for You are the LORD our God. Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.”

**I.** To begin, then, here is THE CALL FROM God—“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.”

You observe that it is a call to come back to God—and that means, first, *remember Him*—begin to *think* of Him, let Him be a living God to you. Come back to Him in your thoughts. The Lord Jehovah is the greatest factor in the universe! He works all things. He is the great Unit without which all the rest of the figures would be but ciphers. He made you—you are dependent upon Him from day to day. Before long your spirit must return to God who gave it—and you will have to stand before His Judgement Seat. Why, of all the persons in the world, must God be forgotten? Why, of all the things that are, should you forget this chief of all things, the great I AM? Do you say that there is no God? Ah, then I have nothing to do with you—your conduct in forgetting Him may be quite consistent with that declaration, though I am sure that you know better. But if there is a God and you believe that He is, begin to think of Him in due proportion. I mean that as He is the greatest of all beings, give to Him your greatest and highest thoughts. And as He is most to be revered, give Him your most reverent and careful consideration.

I think that I am not asking too much of you. Certainly, if you are sorry for your sin and wish the Lord to forgive you, the very first thing for you to do is to obey that ancient command, “Acquaint, now, yourself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come to you.” I know that the thought of your sin sometimes troubles you—so it ought, and it will do you good to be troubled if it leads you back to the Lord against whom you have sinned! If you have offended anyone, go and confess your offense and make matters right. Perhaps you say that you do not like the person and you are not willing to go to the person. Of course you are not! But that only proves how very right it would be for you to do so! That dislike of yours has sprung out of two things—first, your having been the offender and secondly, your not being acquainted with the offended one. Now, if those two things are acknowledged, confessed and remedied, you will soon find it to be the most joyful thing in all the world to think of God! It will be your delight above all things to rejoice in Him and in all that He does. Begin, then, to think of God, for this is what He means when He says to you, “Return, you backsliding children.”

The next thing is, really *turn to Him*. I know that you must have been shocked with the figure used in this chapter. [See exposition at the end of this sermon—EOD.] That sense of shame I cannot help. As God used this symbol, it

is good enough for me, and I am sure that there is an instructive meaning in it. I must turn again to that figure. We will suppose—(and, alas, bad as the case is, we need not go very far to find the likes of it)—that a woman has grievously offended against the honor of her husband. She has gone away and left him and plunged into all sorts of sin and vice. Well no, suppose that there should come to her the message, “Return. He knows it all. He realizes all that it means. He has grieved over it all, yet he says to you, Return.” She says, “I have spent all. I am in rags. I have but a miserable lodging. Those who once flattered me and lived with me in sin, have forsaken me. I am a poor cast-off wretch, whom even a reformatory refuses.” Then the husband writes to her and says, “Return. Return to me and all shall be forgiven you, whatever it may be.”

Do you not fancy that you can see her starting to go back to him? If there is anything left in her that is worth saving, she makes haste to accept the invitation. Yet she is very timid and very much afraid. Oh, how her sad face is covered with the blushes of shame! How the tears fall down her furrowed cheeks! Sometimes she can hardly believe that such wonderful love can be exhibited to so undeserving a woman as she is. Perhaps she is troubled, and rightly troubled, by the thought that no man would do such a thing as her husband appeared to have done—and that it would not be right that he should do so. She therefore stops a while and considers the matter. Yet it is all true. Her husband is one in a million, perhaps there is no other quite as loving and forgiving as he is. “Come back,” he says, “only confess your transgression and comes back to me just as you are.” I think she must be a wretch, indeed, if she does not feel that she will lay all the rest of her life out in service and love to such a forgiving husband as she has!

Now, this is just how the Lord offers to deal with you. He says, “Come back. I will say nothing about the past. ‘I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return to Me; for I have redeemed you.’ I have forgiven your iniquities. I laid them all on My dear Son. He died for you, His precious blood has washed all your guilt away. Come back to Me. Come back to Me. ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.’ Come back to Me. ‘The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away.’ I have not put you away, notwithstanding all your sin and all your iniquity. Here is the message of My love and mercy, ‘Return, you backsliding children,’ for I am married to you, says the Lord your God.”

Well now, in some such way as that striking figure would import, come back to your God at once, poor wandering sinner, confessing all your wrong, wondering that there should be mercy for you, trusting that what the Lord says is, indeed, true because He says it—and resolve henceforth to live and to die at His dear feet—His servant as well as His beloved. This is the way to come back to God, so I would entreat you thus to return to Him!

There is one word in this call from God which proves that *you are invited to come back just as you are*. He says, “Return, you backsliding children.” I notice that He does not say, “Return, you penitent children.” He pictures you in your worst colors, yet He says, “Return, you backsliding children.” I also notice that He does not say, “Heal your wounds, first,

and then come back to Me.” He says, “Return, you backsliding children,” with all your backslidings *unhealed*—“and I will heal your backslidings.”

Many sinners seem to suppose that they must make themselves better and *then* come to Christ—a most unworthy supposition and an utterly unfounded one! Come just as you are, with no goodness, or virtue, or hope of any sort—come to Christ for it all! “But all who would be saved must believe in Jesus and repent of their sins,” says one. Exactly so, but Christ does *not* want *you* to *begin* the work of salvation and then let Him finish it! He never came to be a make-weight to add the last half-ounce to all that you had gathered. Come to Him with nothing and He will fill the scale! Come empty, ragged, filthy, just as you are, and believe in God that justifies the ungodly. Cast yourself on Him who came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance! Bow in humility and patience before Him who flashes the lightning of Sinai in the face of every self-righteous sinner, but who kindles the milder, genial rays of Calvary to guide every truly humble and repentant sinner into the Port of Peace and everlasting love!

Thus have I put before you the call from God—“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.”

**II.** Now, in the second place, I want to show you THE METHOD OF OBEYING THIS CALL. There are two things in the text that are specially noteworthy. First, he who would return to God and find salvation, must distinctly *renounce all other trust except that which God Himself gives him* and sets before him in the Gospel. Listen—“Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains.” Judea was a hilly country and wherever there was the peak of a mountain, or the summit of a hill, there was an idol temple—and wherever there was a grove of oaks, there would be an idolatrous shrine. Whenever the people traveled through the valleys, they kept looking up to these shrines, so their trust was in the hills and in the multitudes of mountains. They had gods everywhere, blocks of wood and stone. So the Lord said to them, “If I am to receive you back, you must renounce all this idolatry.” The spiritual meaning of this passage is this—if you are to be saved by the Grace of God, you must solemnly, formally and heartily renounce all confidence in any but the living God and His Son, Jesus Christ!

First, there must be a distinct renunciation of all righteousness of your own. You are a very excellent person in your own estimation. You think yourself well up to the mark—what have you ever done that is wrong? Ah, Friend, there is no salvation for you on *that* ground! Your righteousness must in your own esteem become as filthy rags! You must acknowledge yourself to be defiled and undone or there is no hope for you! The man who clings to his own righteousness is like a man who grasps a millstone to prevent himself from sinking in the flood. Your righteousness will damn you if you trust in it, as surely as will your sins, for it is a false proud lie—there is no truth in it and no dependence must be placed upon it. There is not a man living who, by nature, does good and sins not—and the soul that sins must die. We have not, any of us, a righteousness that will stand the test of the all-searching eyes of God! And in our heart of hearts we know it is so. Therefore, away with that lie once and for all!



When I came to Christ, this matter did not trouble me, for I had not any righteousness of my own to which I could trust. And there are many poor souls who are in much the same condition in which I was. They do not want to keep the counterfeit money which they once reckoned to be great riches—they are anxious to be rid of it! Yes, Brothers and Sisters, and even at this present moment I do not know of anything that I have ever been, or done, or thought, or said that I could patch up into a righteousness upon which I could place the slightest reliance! I have not anything to trust to except the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior! And, what is more, I never wish to have, and never shall have any other ground of confidence. And I am sure, Beloved, that you must build on the same foundation, or else Christ will never save you. You must altogether renounce any trust in your own righteousness.

The next thing that you must renounce is your own strength. There is many a young man whom I have known who has been going into impurity and into drunkenness. And he has been warned by kind friends to see the wrong in his course of action, but he has said, “Yes, I see it, but I shall make everything right. I shall become a total abstainer. I shall forsake evil companions. I shall keep out of harm’s way. I shall be as right as a trivet, I know that I shall. I have great strength of mind and I always could command myself.” Excuse me, dear Friend, but I should like very politely and very kindly to tell you that you are a fool. You have not any strength and, what is more, if you have, you will certainly be lost, for I read concerning those who are saved, “When we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” So that those for whom He died had not any strength! Believe me, dear Friend, you have not any strength.

Oh, I have seen many a young man with splendid moral principles trusting in himself! But where has his moral principle been when a woman’s pretty lips and smiling face have enticed him to wantonness, or when, in frivolous company, he has been chaffed into that other glass of wine that has upset his balance of mind and has led him to say things which he never thought could have come out of his mouth? Poor Hazael was told by the Prophet Elisha of the enormities he would commit and he said, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” No, he was not a dog, but he was much worse than a dog, for he was a *devil*—yet he did not know it! And there is many a man who is fair to look upon, who is like John Bunyan’s tree which was green on the outside, but inwardly it was as rotten as to be only fit to be tinder for the devil’s tinder-box! You must give up your own strength—there is not much of it to give up, but whatever there is, give it all up, renounce all trust in your own strength as well as in your own righteousness!

With that must also go all trust in your own knowledge and abilities and even in your own understanding. Yet this is the bane and ruin of many men! They know so much that, like Solomon’s sluggard, they are wiser in their own conceit than seven men who can render a reason. See how they treat the Bible, itself—when they open it, it is not that they may hear what God says in it—but that they may tell God what He ought to have said! When they condescend to listen to the Gospel, it is not that they may hear what the Gospel is, but that they may note how the man

preaches it. Is he an eloquent orator? Does he use fine words? That is all that many care to hear. Sirs, if I could use grand words, I would loathe to use them lest I should ruin your souls! As the Apostle Paul said, so say I, "Not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect." If I could get you to Heaven by using the plainest words that can be uttered, I would sooner do it than I would leave any to perish in their sins because I was anxious to display the niceties of language and the beauties of style!

There are some men who are so wonderfully wise that they would quarrel with the angel Gabriel, or with the archangel Michael, himself. Solomon—well, Solomon did not know everything, but these men do. According to their own ideas they not only know everything, but they know a little more besides! If ever we need anybody to rule the nation, I would undertake to find 50 prime ministers, so wise in their own esteem are many men, who are, I must add, so little and so foolish when they come to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary and the unerring scales that God holds in His hand! Hear this, you great ones of the earth, "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." He must become as a little child who would become a child of God. To be saved, we must not only—

***"Cast our deadly 'doing' down,  
Down at Jesus' feet,"***

but we must also—

***"Lay our boasted reason down,  
Down at Jesus' feet,"***

and ask that He may be made of God unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Now, Friends, what do you say to this? Are you willing to give up your own mind to God and simply to believe what He tells you in His Word? Are you also willing to give up self-rule? "We are our own," says one. "We may do as we like. Our tongues are our own, we may say what we like. We are free thinkers and free livers." Let me tell you that if you are saved by Christ, you shall find the only true freedom you can ever enjoy! But there must first be a complete surrender of yourself to your God. Come now, who is to rule? Shall it be His will, or your will? Shall it be His way, or your way? If it is to be your way, it will be your ruin! But if it is to be God's way, it shall be your salvation! When the Romans attacked a city and the people yielded to them, they usually drew up a declaration which ran something like this—"We, craving mercy at the hands of the powers of Rome, surrender ourselves, our houses, our goods, our bodies, our souls, all that we have, and all that we are, to be dealt with by the Roman power exactly according to its will." It was so worded that there could be no escape from it and it contained no stipulations and no conditions. And then, as soon as it was signed, the Roman conqueror, in the generosity of his power, said, "You have yielded to me, now you are free."

God demands just that kind of submission! If you are to be forgiven, you must yield yourself up body, soul, spirit, purse, heart, brain, *everything* to belong wholly to Christ henceforth and forever! I wish that yielding were over with all of you. If you would be saved, that submission must be yours. Oh, then, let it be so at once! Will you keep your sins and

go to Hell, or leave your sins and go to Heaven? Will you have sin or the Savior? Which shall it be? Oh, that the blessed Spirit may lead you to the right decision and lead you to that decision at once!

Finally, it is clear from the text that there must also be a *hearty, true-minded acceptance of God, alone, as our one hope*. Read the passage again. “Behold, we come to You; for you are the LORD our God...Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.”

There is but one living and true God! Men have made almost as many gods as there are sands on the seashore. There is, however, but one God—whose name is Jehovah—the Creator of all things, in whom we live, move and have our being. Will you have this God to be your God? Will you say, “This God is our God forever and ever—He will be our Guide even unto death”? Will you take Him to be yours, not regarding Him merely as another man’s God, but henceforth as *your* God, whom you love, whom you embrace, not comprehending Him by thought, but apprehending Him by love?

Will you take God to be your God and shall He be truly yours? Notice how the text says, “*Truly* in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.” There must be no playing at this acceptance of God as our one hope. There must be no mocking of God by a pretended yielding up of ourselves to Him. It must be a true acceptance of God, to be our God henceforth and forever.

God only must be accepted as yours. There cannot be two Gods, nor two Christs. No man can serve two masters, nor can a woman love two bridegrooms. If you would be saved, you must, by a deliberate act, give up yourself, your whole self, to Christ, and take His whole salvation to be yours!

To help you to do this, let me remind you that there is a blessed Trinity in Unity. There is, first, the ever-blessed Father. What say you? Will you have this Father to be your Father? You have sinned against Him, will you crave His forgiveness for Christ’s sake? Will you ask to be admitted into His house by the blood-stained door of His Son’s atoning Sacrifice? Will you honor Him as your Father? Will not each of you young people from this time cry unto Him, “My Father, You are the Guide of my youth”?

The next blessed and adorable Person of the United Trinity is the Son of God. Will you have this Son of God as your Savior? He died that sinners might live—will you have His death to be your life? He poured out His blood to cleanse the guilty from every stain of sin—will you be washed in the crimson stream? Shall Christ be Prophet to you? Will you sit at His feet and learn of Him? Shall Christ be Priest for you? Will you trust Him to present His Sacrifice for you and to intercede for you? Christ is a King—will you have Him as King to reign over you? In reality, will you have Him in all His offices and in all His relationships, in the majesty of His glorious Godhead and in the humiliation of His perfect Manhood? Will you have this Man as yours? I put the question to you as one of old put it to the damsel he met at the well, “Will you go with this man?” Will you have Christ to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, so that death, itself, shall not part you from Him? If so,

have Him and welcome, for He is prepared to give Himself to every soul that is willing to accept Him!

There is a third Person of this blessed Unity and that is the Holy Spirit. Are you willing to let the Holy Spirit come and dwell in you? It is He who must regenerate you if you are to be born again. It is He who must teach you. It is He who must sanctify you. It is He who must illuminate you. It is He who must comfort and guide you. Without Him you can do nothing. The Holy Spirit is the very life of the Christian. What the Father decreed, what the Son purchased, that the Holy Spirit applies—and without that Holy Spirit, there is nothing for you. Will you obey His monitions? Will you put yourself under His superintendence? Will you resign your body to be His temple?

If you will do all this, God helping you, then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! His own word is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” With the heart, believe on Him, then let the body be washed with pure water in Baptism. Those two things the Lord Jesus Christ asks of you. Again I remind you that it is He who says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Demur not to either of these Gospel words. Come at once and do what He bids you, and enter into life, for he that believes in Him has everlasting life! And then, at once, make the Scriptural confession of your faith, as they did who heard the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost—“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

Now look, Sirs, I have done, for I do not know what more I can say to you than I have said. If I did know what more I could say, I am sure that I would say it, but I will tell you how this matter strikes me. If I had come into this Tabernacle, tonight, conscious of guilt and desirous to be saved, I feel that, after hearing what has been said, tonight, I could not go out of this place without willfully refusing the Gospel invitation, if I did refuse it. May you not refuse it, but accept it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 3:1-23.**

In this chapter, the sin of God’s people is put in the strongest possible light. The figure used may even be said to be a coarse one, but man’s sin is, itself, a coarse thing. The thoughts suggested in this chapter are not what the delicate might desire, but then there is no delicacy in sin.

1. *They say, If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him, and becomes another man’s, may he return to her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted?* God Himself seems, here, to be at a nonplus. His people had gone away from Him, they had acted unfaithfully to Him, they had joined themselves unto other gods. The case was a very difficult one. If the Lord takes these people back, will it not look like putting a premium upon sin? That is just the question that is constantly being raised. If God freely forgives great sinners, will it not look as if He treated sin too leniently? Will not free salvation, by faith in Jesus, lead to sin? The world says that it will and even the Scripture seems to raise the question—“If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him, and becomes another

man's, may he return to her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted?" Yet Judah had been worse than the woman here described.

**1.** *But you have played the harlot with many lovers.* Here was an awful depth of sin, a terrible enormity of wickedness!

**1.** *Yet return again to Me, says the LORD.* What a splendor of Divine Love is here revealed! I do not wonder that the question should be put, "How can God act thus, and yet be just?" He can do it and yet be just, as we have often showed you, but, still, it is a very great wonder of Grace.

**2, 3.** *Lift up your eyes unto the high places, and see where you have not lain with men. By the road you have sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness and you have polluted the land with your whoredoms and with your wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain; and you have had a whore's forehead, you refused to be ashamed.* This was very strong, rough language, but oh, how true it was! The people had gone astray from God into all manner of filthiness and pollution. And even when God had chastened them by withholding the showers till they were threatened with famine, they did not turn to Him. They seemed to have a brow like granite, they could not be made ashamed. There may be some persons of that kind in this assembly—if so, let them notice what God says—

**4.** *Will you not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, You are the Guide of my youth?* Will not you come back again? You are invited to return to the Lord, in spite of your wandering, your perverseness, your abominable iniquity! Will you not remember the better days when God was the Guide of your youth? You were not always what you are now. Will you not, from this time on, cry unto the Lord, "My Father, you are the Guide of my youth"?

**5.** *Will He remain angry forever? Will He keep it to the end?* No, that He will not! There is none so slow to anger as our God and there is none so ready to be rid of it as He is. He is a God ready to pardon, waiting to forgive, delighting in mercy. Even though the sin should be as foul as that I read to you—I seem almost to blush in the reading, as you may in the hearing—yet, black as it is, God can put it all away in the greatness of His mercy.

**5.** *Behold, you have spoken and done evil things as you could.* You have gone as far in sin as you could go! Only lack of power has prevented you from being even worse than you are. Yet this is the kind of people to whom God speaks in mercy, inviting them to return to Him.

**6.** *The LORD said also unto me in the day of Josiah the king, Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot.* Building temples to false gods on every mountain and in every grove.

**7.** *And I said after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.* That made Judah's sin even worse than that of Israel! She saw this great iniquity in another, and yet went and committed it herself.

**8, 9.** *And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she*

*defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with trees. Bowing down before idols made of wood and stone!*

**10-12.** *And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, says the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north—What must these words be? Must they not be, “You have treated Me so ill that I will never have anything to do with you again! Even common decency requires that I should put you away from all hope forever”? No! Listen to these words and be astounded—*

**12.** *And say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the LORD and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the LORD, and I will not stay angry forever. Oh, the measureless mercy of these gracious sentences! Deep and black as the sin is and fearful and terrible as is the description of it, how bright, how clear is the immeasurable love which promises to put that sin away and forget and forgive it once and for all!*

**13.** *Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the Lord. Confess that sad fact. Acknowledge that you have thus sinned. Into the ear of God pour out the full confession of your criminality. He cannot ask for anything less than this—surely you cannot refuse to do it! If you have thus treated Him, come and confess it with your head on His bosom, for He is willing to receive you even if you are the biggest sinner out of Hell.*

**14, 15.** *Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you, one from a city, and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. When God once begins to pardon men, there is no end to it. He goes on to bless them with all that they need! He makes them to be like the sheep of His pasture who shall be richly and happily fed.*

**16.** *And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. You know that they had been accustomed to the old ceremonial religion which was full of outward rites and forms. God says that when He brings His erring people back to Himself, they shall have done with all that mere externalism. They shall come to worship God in spirit and in truth and to commune with Him without the medium of the Ark of the Covenant or an earthly priest. They shall walk before Him in the joy of their spirits—yet these, mark you—are some of the people who are described in this chapter as having defiled the House of God, and gone astray from Him to their utter disgrace!*

**17.** *At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. Even to that very city that had become like a harlot and was full of abominations.*

**17, 18.** *Neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, There is no more quarrelling when Divine Grace comes in! Israel and Judah in the old days fought against each other, but when they, alike, taste of pardoning Grace, they shall love each other.*

**18-19.** *And they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said, how shall I put you among the children—*When God had said all this, He appears to have come to a pause and, even in His own heart the question seems to arise, How can He deal with these greatly sinful ones as His children? *“I said, How shall I put you among the children”—*

**19.** *And give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations? And I said, You shall call Me, my Father; and shall not turn away from Me.* God knew how to change the character and to change the heart so that these filthy ones who went farthest astray, should come back to Him and should become among the most holy, the most loyal, the most obedient of all His children! Oh, that His Grace might work that miracle, again, in our midst! Remember what He did for Saul of Tarsus, that transcendent persecutor, how He made him to be the very bravest of His Apostles? He can at this moment take those who form the chosen body-guard of the devil and so change them that they shall become the soldiers of the Cross, nearest to Christ, the great Commander! The Lord, by His servant the Prophet, goes over this sad story again—

**20.** *Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the LORD.* But listen—

**21.** *A voice was heard upon the high places.* The places where they had built the altars to the false gods—*“A voice was heard upon the high places”—*

**21.** *Weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God.* How pleasant to the ears of God is the weeping of His backsliding people! The happy God does not wish men to be sorrowful, but He is glad that they should be sorrowful for sin. Now that they have begun to bemoan their wanderings and their wickedness, they will come back to their God, so He says to them—

**22, 23.** *Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come to You; for You are the LORD our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.* So they come back to Him and find the salvation which they need.

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—383, 521, 544.**

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# BAD LODGERS AND HOW TO TREAT THEM

## NO. 1573

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

**“O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness that you may be saved.  
How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?”  
Jeremiah 4:14.**

ONE notices, in reading such a chapter as this fourth of Jeremiah, that the change which God required in the Jewish people was a very deep and thorough one. It was not only the washing of their hands, nor the cleansing of their outward lives, but the washing of their *hearts* from wickedness—and the Lord did not only require of them that they should cease from wicked actions, but even from vain *thoughts*. The like demand He makes of us, for He says by the mouth of His servant James, “Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded.” This makes our holy religion a weighty and solemn business!

If it were wholly a matter of *outward* ordinances, we might take the child and sprinkle it, or might bring the adult and plunge him. Or we might admit all to a table where they should eat and drink such consecrated materials as should save them. This would all be easy enough and, therefore, men cling to a religion of ceremonies, for *heart religion* is troublesome and the ungodly cannot endure it! Ritualism is the most popular religion in the world because it is all, “Ho! Presto!” Done in a minute—nothing to think of, nothing to care about, nothing to sorrow over! It is all a mere matter of form which men leave to their priests—as they leave their deeds to be drawn up by their lawyers and their medicine to be prescribed by their doctors! The little that is needed of them can be done without thought and they can go on in their sins as pleasantly as ever.

Next to that in popularity is the religion of mere morality. “Yes, we know we do amiss. We will amend. Gross vices shall be lopped off as stray branches that run over a wall. We will at once purge ourselves from everything for which our fellow men would blame us. Is not that enough?” Many hope it is and live as if they felt sure it was! But the religion of the Word of God is not so. It is, “Rend your hearts and not your garments”—therefore ceremonies are not enough! “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”—therefore outward actions are not enough! This is too hard a demand and as for repentance and faith, the ungodly cannot enter upon such spiritual duties for they have no mind to them.

The carnal mind hates the mention of *spiritual* things. This, I take it, while it makes the Christian religion so solemn, throws us back upon one of its great first principles—that salvation must be of Grace because if it is necessary that my heart must be changed, can *I* change it? I am bid to do so! I am told in such a text as this to wash my heart from wickedness! But how can I do it? Shall a fountain purge itself? It has sent forth bitter waters, bitter as Marah—can it, of itself, do the reverse? “Can the Ethiopian



change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” That would be a very simple business, for skin and spots are *outside* things—but how shall a man change his heart—his very *nature*?

Do you expect the crab tree to change itself into a sweet apple-bearing tree? Will you go and talk—to come back to the former metaphor—to the waters of Marah and expect them to change themselves into the sweet wells of Elim? No, this requires the finger of God! If ever this is done, God must do it. It is a rule that Nature can only rise as high as Nature. Put water where you please, it will rise up to where it started from and, unless under pressure, it will rise no higher. And you shall not find man rising above his fallen and depraved nature. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can it be.”

Out of the grave there comes not life. Out of an unclean thing there comes not a clean thing. We must be born from above if we are ever born aright. We must be newly created by the Creator, Himself, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus or else we can never come up to the mark which God’s Law requires. “Wash your heart.” Oh, God, how can I wash my *heart*? Though I take to myself snow water and make myself seem outwardly ever so clean, yet what have I done with my *heart*? You bid me drive out my thoughts, but, O my God, my thoughts often come against my will and sometimes with my will and I am tossed about by them as a poor sea shell by the restless waves of the sea! They compass me about like bees! Yes, they compass me about, these vain thoughts of mine, like bees which sting my good desires to death.

Like flies of summer, they buzz about my ears and fill my mind with corruption and they will not be driven away. I can no more resist them than Jannes and Jambres could withstand the Egyptian plague! Oh, how can I purge out vain thoughts? Where shall I turn for strength to perform this necessary duty? “By Grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” And what you cannot do, in that you are weak through the flesh, God can do for you and His Divine Spirit will sweetly enable you to perform all duties which He requires of you! If you are willing and obedient and yield yourselves up to the blessed Gospel of the Grace of God, He will make you clean—and your thoughts, too, shall be purged as with fire till they shall rise like a sweet incense unto Him! Let this word at the outset encourage any person who may be inclined to say before I have done, “It is a hard saying: who can bear it?”

Now to our text, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” Bad lodgers! Some people have admitted bad lodgers into their chambers. I have known a good many people troubled with them and there is no use in keeping them—they must be sent adrift. So the text says, “How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?” It means that we must not be slow to give them notice to leave, for they ought not to be tolerated in the human breast. First, let me name some of these lodgers. Secondly, let me show what bad lodgers they are. And, thirdly, let me give you some advice as to how to get rid of them.

May the Holy Spirit come and bless this word to their immediate ejection and may a stronger than they come and dwell forever in you, not as a lodger, but as Lord and Owner of your whole being!

**I.** First, then, **HERE ARE CERTAIN BAD LODGERS** and I should not wonder if some people here have found and furnished chambers in their hearts and heads for these mischievous tenants whose name is “vain thoughts.” Many thoughts may be called vain because they are proud, conceited thoughts. Thus, whenever a man thinks himself good by nature, we may say of his thoughts, “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity!” If you are unrenewed and dream that you are better than others because your parents were godly, it is a vain thought!

If you have never been born again by the Spirit of God and are trusting in your infant baptism, it is a vain thought! If you have never come to believe in Jesus but think yourself very good because you are a respectable person and regularly attend a place of worship, it is a vain thought! If you have got it in your head that when we talk about sinners we do not mean *you* and that when God’s Word condemns men for their sins it leaves a loophole of escape for *you*, it is a vain thought! If you have an idea that you do not need to come to Christ as a poor, helpless sinner—that you do not need the same kind of change as others—that, indeed, there is a private way to Heaven for *you* and you have found the silver key for it, you have made a mistake! It is a vain thought!

You will have to be born again or else if you are *not* born twice you will die twice! You will have to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ or you will die in your sins! You will have to come crying to Him for mercy and to find everything in Him or you will remain under condemnation and perish in your iniquity! If you think it is not so, it is a vain thought! Every thought of self-righteousness is a vain thought! Every idea, moreover, of self-power—that you can do this and do that towards your own salvation and at any time, when it pleases you, you can turn and become a Christian and so there is no need to be in a hurry, or to seek the help of the Holy Spirit—that, also, is a vain thought! To reckon yourself to be anything more than a mass of sin and helplessness is a vain thought! You have misconceived your own true value and your condition before God.

Now, perhaps I speak to some here who really are a very nice sort of people. At least *they* feel they are, for they go to a place of worship where they are not often spoken to very personally. And if the minister does speak pointedly, they say, “I do not think he has any right to talk in that way. People should be charitable.” Is it supposed to be charitable to allow people to go down to Hell without warning them? My charity leads me to try, as best as I can, to break up all shams and I am sure that self-righteousness is a sham, a deadly delusion, a destructive error! It is ruining tens of thousands of people—good, quiet, harmless, inoffensive people—people, too, that are generous in their business and kind and all that and who, therefore, conclude that they are safe for time and eternity.

They say, “Well, now, I don’t know that I have done anything so very wrong. I do not see that I need repentance and faith, or that I need come as that poor thief did on the Cross and just look to Christ and say, ‘Lord, remember me.’” Dear Friend, I must address you in the language of the text, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” For they are all vain, every one of them! “By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified” in the sight of God. The way to Heaven is not by our fancied works

of righteousness—salvation is by Grace through faith in Jesus Christ! Another sort of vain thoughts may be ranged under the head of carnal security. The poet says, “All men think all men mortal but themselves” and, as often as the saying is quoted, never was a proverb more generally true.

We are surprised to hear that So-and-So, who was well and hearty three days ago, is dead. We are quite taken aback for the moment but we never dream that it will happen to us! We are alarmed when we hear that a person who was sitting near to us in the pew on Sunday is now in his coffin, but we indulge the hope that *we* shall see old age! A person, the other day, who was consumptive died suddenly of hemorrhage of the lungs and yet another consumptive person says, “This sad thing does happen to invalids whose lungs are diseased, but I do not suppose it will ever befall *me*.” Men go out to their daily business and they say, “Many that wake this morning will never see the sun go down,” but they, themselves, talk of what they will do in the evening as if they were sure of surviving! There is no hint of, “If the Lord wills, we shall do this or that.”

We know, all of us, that life is very uncertain, yet multitudes are hazarding their souls upon the uncertainty of that life under an inward belief which they would not dare to express—that somehow or other they are sure not to die just yet. What is such security but a vain thought? Does it not strike you, dear Friends, when a man is 80, 88, 90, that surely he cannot expect to get through another year? As a reasonable man, he must reckon that he is soon to die. Not at all! He is often the man who thinks *least* about death and if you introduce the topic, he does not like the conversation and starts you on another tack. Many who are younger than they do not like you to mention anything about advanced age or growing old. You must talk of these old sheep as if they were still lambs or they will not like it—speak plain truth about their years and they are offended.

If you want an old man to move quickly out of the road when you are driving, always cry, “Move on, my lad,” and he feels complimented and moves immediately because there is in him a joy in being thought young and an aversion to the idea of his being old. This is ridiculous! You smile and you may well smile, for it is a folly, but yet how common a folly. Why, when a man is of ripe age, or a woman, why should they not know it and let it be known? Why should they not number their days and keep the reckoning before their own minds? If all things are right with you and me, the older we are, the better!

Someone said to a Christian man, “What is your age?” and he replied, “I am on the right side of seventy.” They found out that he was 75 and they said, “You told us you were on the right side of seventy.” “So I am,” he answered, “that is the right side, for it is the side which is nearest Heaven, my blessed Home.” Why should not all Christians think so? They *do* think so when they judge rightly, for they joyfully sing—

***“Here in the body tent,  
Absent from Him I roam,  
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent  
A day’s march nearer Home.”***

If a day’s march is worth singing about, is not a year’s journey nearer Home a theme for still greater delight? Should we try to make out that we have so much longer to stay in exile—so much longer before we shall see

the face of the Well-Beloved—so much longer before, like heirs that have come of age, we shall enter on our Divine inheritance?

My Hearers, drive out these vain thoughts about not dying! I will lead the way for you. I am as likely to die tonight as any other man upon the face of this earth. You, too, my Friend, may as likely never see another Sunday as anyone else. You tell me you do not know that you have any special disease and, indeed, I hope you have not—but we all carry something about us in which Death can fix his arrow. Depend upon it that the seeds of mortality are in every constitution. I have met with one man—no, with two men—who do not believe that they shall die. But as they are getting very much older and one of them stoops very much, I am under the impression that they *will* die—and I pray anybody here who thinks that such an idea is a folly, to remember that it is a minor form of the same folly to say—“I shall not die just yet.”

You may as well say, “I shall not die at all,” for it leads to the same practical conclusion—death at a distance influences us very little more than no death at all! You may die at any moment! And what, my dear Hearer, if at this moment, while seated in that pew, your naked spirit were suddenly to find itself at the bar of God? What would become of you? I charge you, by the living God and by your care about your own soul, do not let that thought escape your mind! It is a vain thought for me to suppose that I shall have 10 minutes longer to live! It is a vain thought to grant myself a lease for another week, for I am a tenant-at-will and I may be ejected in a moment! So let me get rid of the folly and vanity of carnal security.

At this moment the Holy Spirit says to any of you who may be presuming upon long life—“How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” I know another set of thoughts—they are better looking, but they are equally vain—for they promise much and come to nothing. They are vain because they are fruitless. These vain thoughts are like the better order of people in Jerusalem—good people after a sort—that is to say they really thought that as God threatened them with judgments they would turn to Him. Certainly they would! They had no intention of being hard-hearted! Far from it! They acknowledged the power of the Prophet’s appeal. They felt a degree of awe in the Presence of the just God as He threatened them and, of course, they meant—they meant to wash their hearts and they meant to put away all their forbidden practices—but not just yet!

They would not wait very long, of course. A long delay would be very dangerous, but they might safely tarry a little longer. They had an engagement which would take them into worldly company and so they must wait till that was over. They had formed close connections which they could not very well break and so religion must be regretfully postponed for a more convenient season. They were engrossed in a certain business which they could not easily get out of for a term of years—but they would! Oh, they would! Certainly! Certainly they would attend to God and their souls! Though they did not say so in words, yet their faces appealed to the preacher pleadingly—“Do not press us too much just now. We are honest people. We acknowledge the bill. Let it run a little longer. We do not mean to break away from the demands of God by any means. We quite intend to

comply with them at a near date, but not today. Oh, no, we do not deny the Scriptures! Do not think that we are *infidels*! We do not doubt the love of Christ to men or the power of His Gospel—we hope to feel it in a little while.”

They mean to enjoy the love of God one of these days and they hope to wind up their lives in a saintly manner. They feel rather pleased with themselves because they are so good as to resolve—if it is not virtue, itself, which they possess—yet the resolve to possess it flatters them into great notions of themselves! It is a great deal to be able to get so far as good resolutions, so they think. Well, now, my Friend, has not that been the style of *your* thoughts for a great many years? Did you not think like that when you were a child—when you were yet fresh to the ways of religion and had not yet learned so much of other ways as you have now? Do you not remember those early impressions—those tears at night, those child-like cries to Jesus, your mother’s Savior? Yes, you do remember them and there were times not so very long ago when all came back to you and you sat in the House of God trembling and wishing you could get to your chamber and bow your knees in prayer!

You were on the borders of Immanuel’s land and there was only a step between you and Life. You wished that the step was taken, but still—well, there was a reason why it should not be taken just yet—and so you dared to bid the Lord to wait your leisure as if He were a beggar at your door to whom you were under no obligation. Alas for this constant delaying! Where will it land you? I see upon your head the signs of age, but you are not yet born of God. Your eyes are failing. You need spectacles, but you have not yet looked to Jesus! Years have followed years and the record of your sin is a long roll written on both sides and you are still resolving and still making up your mind to something very good—still hoping that the right time is coming, only you must wait a little longer.

Now, the Lord says, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” for they are all vain, these delays, these false promises, these self-deceptions. How long shall it be that they shall throng the avenues of your soul and curse your spirit? In some, who I hope are saved, their vain thoughts lie in a similar direction—they trust that they have believed, but they are slow to obey their Lord in publicly avowing their discipleship. They know that the Gospel has two precepts—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” or, in other words, “He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved.”

They resolve that they will, one of these days, make a confession of their faith—such is their fixed intention—but the time is not yet come, for at present they are filled with questions as to their condition. They once felt sure that they had faith. Had they confessed it, then, that certainty might have continued. They have so long kept their obedience to their Lord in abeyance that they begin, now, to question and, perhaps rightly, whether they have really believed. The Lord Jesus has said, “He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in Heaven.” But, then, somebody would laugh at them—they would have a cross to carry and this hinders them and so they postpone *obedience* to an indefinite period.

Jesus Christ says, "He that takes not up his cross and follows not after Me is not worthy of Me." But they mean, if they can, to find a by-path, so as not to go along the king's highway and pay toll at the gates, or be met by the king's officers, or be seen by the king's enemies. They will, if they can, creep under a hedge when the battle begins and so escape the perils of the fight. Their religion gives them the courage of a rat behind the wainscot and no more. They do not come out except at night when nobody sees them. But this cowardice is not intended to last *forever*—they are going to be very brave one of these days—you shall see them performing great exploits! They intend, before very long, to openly say, "I am on the Lord's side."

They will come forward and display their colors. They will be the bravest of the brave—only not just yet. Another time for seeing the Church officers with reference to union with the Church will pass away and another and another and yet they will be no nearer the point of decision. Their resolutions are vain thoughts and so I put the question, "How long?" Do fix some time or other! Do not forever remain a trifler with God and His Church and His command! "How long shall your vain thoughts"—your ineffectual promises of obedience to Christ—"lodge within you?"

Now I shall come closely home to some here whom I love in the Lord if I say that resolutions to be very useful, prayerful and holy are often little better than vain thoughts because they are encumbered with procrastination. There are many who love the Lord who have never done much for Him because the time of figs is not yet. Leaves and leaves, only, have they produced. They are live branches of the vine, although they have not brought forth many grapes—but they cheer themselves with the conviction that *one of these days*—they do not quite know when—they will bring forth clusters as famous as those of Eshcol, though, up to now, they have been poor specimens of Christian professors! Their mind is made up to rise to a higher life! They will grow in Grace! They will give more time to Bible-reading and prayer! They will live nearer to God! They will grow to be strong Christians—and when that happens they are going to do some great thing—I do not know what form their resolution is to take, but they will do something extraordinary!

They will enter the Sunday school and bring scores of little children to the Savior's feet. They will commence a class for young men—the class is sure to grow and out of it many will come to build up the Church of God. They will become fathers or mothers in Israel and their children will be many. Or they are going to preach at the village stations, draw large congregations and lead hundreds to the Savior! They are going to serve the Lord by personal exertion, or to give to the cause of God very much of their substance. It has been on their hearts a long time to be bountiful benefactors to the poor, to the Church at home and to missionaries abroad. They have not given much, yet, but before long they intend to overflow like gushing fountains which send forth rivers of water! They are resolving—when will they come to *acting*?

Dear Brothers and Sisters, if we had, any of us, done about half what we *thought* we would do, we would have been tolerably fruitful branches of the vine! But we spend so much of our time in this proposing and then

proposing again, that we have little left for the actual performance of anything! We dream with our eyes open, not at night when we are asleep and are being really refreshed, but in the day when our dreaming does no good, but merely flatters us into a good opinion of ourselves. These are vain thoughts, for the Lord *deserves* to be really served—not with imaginary blood were you redeemed—nor with *imaginary* fruit can you reward your Savior's love!

Not with imaginary woes, nor with a painted death upon a painted Cross did Christ ransom us from Hell and do we think to reward Him with *proposals* and *plans* and *schemes* and *fancies* and *hopes* and *resolves*? Is this your kindness to your Friend? Some men brood so long over their future intentions that they, all of them, become addled eggs and nothing whatever is hatched! O Man, "whatever your hand finds to do, do it!" Do it! Do it "with all your might!" Do not leave it for somebody else to do when you are dead! Many make up their minds that a great thing shall be done—when they die. When they cannot hold their money any longer, *then* they will give it up—a wonderful sacrifice to God! But he that would serve God acceptably determines, "I will give Him of my substance while it is mine and not when it is my heir's."

My dear Friend, I would have you regret your idleness! It is infinitely better to get to work and perform the little which you are able to do—to give the Lord your service while you can serve Him—than that you should have to lie upstairs trying to amuse yourself or quiet the upbraiding of a guilty conscience by proposing to do great things which you could not accomplish if you were to set about them and which, indeed, you will never even so much as attempt!

I have thus mentioned to you several groups of bad lodgers, of whom the text says, "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?" "How long," says God to every Christian here that has loitered, lingered, hesitated—"How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?" Perform at once the doing of that which you have resolved, if, indeed, the resolve is such as you ought to have made. God help you, by His sacred Spirit, to lead a practical life and not a dreamy one!

**II.** Now, secondly, let me show WHAT BAD LODGERS THEY ARE. Vain thoughts get admittance into our heads and hearts and there they make themselves at home and do mischief without end. They run upstairs and downstairs and all over the house and they multiply every day. They are dreadful pests—the worst lodgers the soul can harbor. For, first, they are deceitful. The man that says, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for you," does not ever send for Paul—He never intended to do so. A man says, "Tomorrow," but tomorrow never comes. When that comes which would have been, "tomorrow," it is, "today"—and then He cries, "Tomorrow"—and so multiplies lies before God!

What deceptiveness it is on the part of any man who knows to do good and does it not, that he should think to put off God with empty promises! Now, listen to this—"To him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin." "Sin." That is God's word, not mine. But you ask me, "To him that knows to do good and truly intends to do it, does not the *intention* remove the sin?" I answer decidedly, No! "To him that knows to do good

and does it not, to him it is sin.” So long as he refuses to do what he knows to be right, he is sinning and every minute that he delays heaps up another sin and so the sin multiplies like money that is borrowed at compound interest! The amount of guilt runs up and you never know what it comes to.

Delay in performing duty is the most mischievous evil, doing infinite damage to the heart in which it lodges because it defiles it with falsehood upon falsehood and thus provokes the Most High. Oh, I would turn such a lodger as that out! David said, “He that tells lies shall not tarry in my house.” Do not suffer these vain thoughts to lodge a day longer, for they disgrace you and place you in jeopardy. Vain thoughts are bad lodgers, for they pay no rent—they bring in nothing good to those who entertain them. There is the lodger of self-righteousness, for instance. What good does self-righteousness ever do to the man who entertains it? It pretends to pay in brass farthings—it *pretends* to pay—but the money is counterfeit!

What good does it do any man to harbor in his mind the empty promise of future repentance? It often *prevents* repentance! I would rather hear a man say straight out, “Now, look here. I never mean to repent or believe! My mind is made up as to that matter.” This, at least, is truthful. That man will, perhaps, change his mind, or *God* will change it. But that other man—the soft, putty-like being, the India rubber man—squeeze him; pull him out; force him together again. Do what you will with him, he gets back into his old shape! There is no solid stuff in him. You cannot make anything of him. These irresolute men, “unstable as water,” cannot excel. They are neither good for use nor for ornament and we have plenty of this class! Are you one of them, my Friend? If so, God help you to get rid of these bad lodgers of instability, self-sufficiency and constantly promising, because they pay no rent. And as for you Christian people who are always on the verge of being splendid—you members of churches who are always going to be generous, who are quite certain that you shall be useful, only you never are—what profit has ever come to God or yourself from this continued hesitation? Let such a lodger as that depart at once, for the longer he lingers the more will you lose by him.

The next reason for the ejection of these lodgers is this—they are wasting your goods and destroying your property. For instance, every unacted resolution wastes time and that is more precious than gold. It also wastes thought, for to think of a thing and to leave it undone is a waste of reflection. It is a waste of energy to be energetic about merely promising to be energetic! It is a great waste of strength to be forever resolving to be strong and yet to remain weak. You screw yourself up to the sticking-point and you are going to be holy and yet never are! You mean to turn to God and yet never do. Why, you are wasting time! You are wasting thought! You are wasting opportunity! You are wasting the Gospel under which you sit! These bad lodgers are causing you such daily loss that before long you will be utterly ruined unless you can cleanse your house of them! You cannot afford to give them shelter—send them packing at once! Worse than their damaging your house, they are damaging you!

Bad lodgers will break your windows, burn your shutters, pull down your wainscots and do a thousand spiteful things. When they will neither



pay nor go, they will do all the mischief they can! And thus do vain thoughts—foolish, ineffectual thoughts—work us grievous ill, for the man that resolves and does not carry out the resolve grows in irresolution. He that yesterday said he would, but today does not, may today say he will, but there will not be so much strength in his resolve as there was in that of yesterday. And since he failed yesterday, he is even more certain to fail now. A man that has been 10 years making up his mind to think about eternity is 10 degrees less likely to do so. A man who has had 10 years' sermons earnestly driven at him and yet they have not penetrated him, is as one that has been 10 years hammered on the anvil and is just so much the harder. O, how men are hardened, besotted, befooled and enslaved by vain thoughts! How long will you let these lodge within you? Shall they remain till they have plundered you of heart and hope and left your mind a wreck and ruin?

Worst of all, these vain thoughts are bad lodgers because they bring you under condemnation. There have been times when to entertain certain persons was treason and many individuals have been put to death for harboring traitors. Rebels condemned to die have been discovered in a man's house and he has been condemned for affording them a hiding place. Now, God declares that these vain thoughts of yours are condemned traitors. Are you going to harbor them any longer? If a lodger came to your house and, after a while, a policeman called and said, "You let your front room, I think." "Yes." "What kind of a person is your lodger and what is his business?" I think after one or two visits of that kind you would say to your lodger, "I shall be obliged if you will go somewhere else," for you would not enjoy the idea of having a suspected person within your doors. Nobody does.

Now, these vain thoughts, these self-righteous thoughts, these boasts in *self*—they are something more than suspected—they have been judged and condemned to die! And, oh, let not your heart become a haunt for things that God abhors! And when He sends a summons, as He does tonight in the words of the text, "How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?" oh, that God would grant you Grace to drive out the Canaanites who will dwell in the land as long as they can find a den to hide in! Let Beddome's hymn be your prayer—

***"Astonished and distressed,  
I turn my eyes within:  
My heart with loads of guilt oppressed,  
The seat of every sin.  
What crowds of evil thoughts,  
What vile affections there!  
Envy and pride, deceit and guile,  
Distrust and slavish fear.  
Almighty King of saints,  
These tyrant lusts subdue;  
Drive the old serpent from his seat,  
And all my pow'rs renew.  
This done, my cheerful voice  
Shall loud hosannas raise;  
My soul shall glow with gratitude,  
My lips proclaim Your praise."***

**III.** That brings me to my closing head, which is LET US SEE WHAT TO DO WITH THESE BAD LODGERS. The first thing is to give them notice to leave at once. Let there be no waiting. When a man is converted, it is done at once. There may be a long process by which he comes up to it and there may be a long succession of the breaking Light of God before he gets clear about it, but there is a turning point. There is a line, thin as a razor's edge, which divides death from life—a point of decision which separates the saved from the lost. Did you ever notice, in our Lord's parable of the prodigal son, the decision of the repenting one? He said, "I will arise and go unto my father"—and he arose and went to his father and, as I heard a quaint Divine say, he did not give his master a day's notice!

The narrative tells us that he had joined himself to a citizen of that country who had sent him into the fields to feed swine. He ran off, then and there, just as he was! If he had gone to see his master and had said, "Sir, I am obliged to go home and see my father," or if he had stopped to clean himself—if he had stopped to purchase better linen and a fairer suit of clothes before he went home, he would have died of hunger at the swine trough. But, instead of that, he did the right thing—he ran for his life—and that is what you must do. "Well, I shall, I hope," says one. You never will, my Friend, if you get no farther than that! It must be done at once. And, possibly, it is, "now or never"—before the clock ticks again.

Will you have Christ and go to Heaven, or your sins and go to Hell? Quick! Sharp! God help you to answer aright, for on that answer may hang eternal things! I believe that it is always so. Men decide at once, or not at all. It was so with me. I was thinking, as I stood up here to preach, that this is just the kind of weather in which I found the Savior. Some did not come out that morning, it snowed so hard. But I had a heavy heart and I wanted to lighten it and so I went out to the place of worship and when I heard the Gospel and he that preached it said to me, "Look! Look, young man! Look, now!" I did, then and there, look to Jesus, otherwise I had never looked! When the Word of God came to me, by His Grace, I immediately received it!

There is one heavy knock, sometimes, at a man's door and he must open *then*, or no other knock may come. I think that somebody has come in here tonight that, in God's name, I may give that knock at his heart. And if the door is opened and he says, "Come in, blessed Savior," then it shall be well. The first thing, then, is to give a notice to leave to all self-righteousness. Away with it! Away with it! What a fool I was ever to have any! All self-confidence—away with it! I had better lean on a broken reed than lean on myself! To all delays—to all hopes that I shall live another week—away with them! Away with them! I have no ground for such hopes. Away with them! Leave, leave, vain thoughts! Oh, that they would go at the bidding!

Suppose that these vain thoughts will not go just when you bid them to go? I will tell you what to do to get rid of them—starve them out! Lock the door and let nothing enter upon which they can feed. I would have you unconverted people say, "We confess that we have fed our vain thoughts, but now we will not go where they can get food. We will not go to ungodly amusements, nor into evil company, nor will we talk with idlers on our

way home.” Send into your heart what you know vain thoughts cannot be nourished upon—what will be poison to them. Give them God’s Word! Read it and study it and cry to God to have mercy upon you. Do nothing which will help these vain thoughts live.

I will tell you a secret and then I have done. The best way in all the world that I know of to get rid of vain thoughts out of your house—these bad lodgers that have gone in and that you cannot get out—is to sell the house over their heads. Let the house change owners! When you have done that, you know, it will be the *new* Owner that will have the trouble of turning them out—and He will do it. I recommend every sinner here that wants to find salvation to give himself up to Christ. Come out, you vain thoughts! They will not come out. We give you a notice of eviction—but they will not go!

Now we will tell them something that will change the nature of the struggle. Lord Jesus, I trust You to be my Savior from every form of evil and I am not my own, now, for You have bought me with a price. Ah, now the stronger than they are has come and He will bind the strong ones and He will fling them out of the window and so break them to pieces with their fall that they shall never be able to crawl up the stairs again! He knows how to do it! He can expel them—you cannot. Oh, that you might have Grace, now, to give your whole nature to your Creator and Redeemer! Give the house over to the new Owner and let Him come and He will drive them out and He, Himself, will come and live there and His Divine Spirit will come and fill every chamber with His own Presence and there shall be no fear that these bad lodgers shall ever come back again!

God bless this simple word to many, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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# THE WAILING OF RISCA

## NO. 349

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

***“Suddenly are my tents spoiled and my curtains in a moment.”  
Jeremiah 4:20.***

THE sorrow of the weeping Prophet was exceedingly heavy when he uttered these words of bitter lamentation. A great and present burden from the Lord is weighing so heavily upon our hearts this morning that we cannot spare so much as a moment for sympathy with the griefs of past ages. God has visited our land and His strokes have been exceedingly hard. We are constrained to take up a wailing and cry aloud, “Suddenly are my tents spoiled and my curtains in a moment.”

There is a spot in South Wales which has frequently yielded me a quiet and delightful retreat. Beautiful for situation, surrounded by lofty mountains, pierced by romantic valleys—the breathing of its air refreshes the body and the sight of the eyes makes glad the heart. I have climbed its hills, I have seen the ever-widening landscape, the mountains of Wales, the plains of England and the seas sparkling afar. I have descended the hills and marked the mist creeping up the side of the hills and covering the woods in clouds. I have mingled with its godly men and women and worshipped God in their assemblies.

These lips have ministered the Word in that once happy valley. I have been fired with the glorious enthusiasm of the people when they have listened to the Word. Well does my soul remember one night which I shall never forget in time or in eternity, when, crowded together in the place of worship, hearty Welsh miners responded to every word of Christ’s minister with their “gogoniants” encouraging me to preach the Gospel and crying “Glory to God” while the message was proclaimed.

I remember how they constrained me and kept me well nigh to midnight, preaching three sermons one after another, almost without rest—for they loved to listen to the Gospel. God was present with us and many a time has the baptismal pool been stirred since then by the fruit of that night’s labor. Nor shall I ever forget when standing in the open air beneath God’s blue sky I addressed a mighty gathering within a short distance of that spot. The Spirit of God was poured upon us and men and women were swayed to and fro under the heavenly message as the corn is moved in waves by the summer winds. Great was our joy that day when the people met together in thousands and with songs and praises separated to their homes, talking of what they had heard.

But now our visitation of that neighborhood must ever be mingled with sorrow. How has God been pleased to smite down strong men and to take

away the young men upon a sudden! "How suddenly are my tents spoiled and my curtains in a moment." Oh, valley of Risca, I take up a lamentation for you—the Lord has dealt sorely with you. Behold and see if there is sorrow in any valley like unto your sorrow which is done unto you. The angel of death has emptied out his quiver upon you. The awful reaper has gathered to himself full sheaves from your beautiful valley.

You all know the story—it scarcely needs that I should tell it to you. Last Saturday week some two hundred or more miners descended in health and strength to their usual work in the bowels of the earth. They had not been working long—their wives and their children had risen and their little ones had gone to their schools when suddenly there was heard a noise at the mouth of the pit—it was an explosion—all knew what it meant. Men's hearts failed them, for well they prophesied the horror which would soon reveal itself.

They wait awhile—the foul gas must first be scattered—brave men with their lives in their hands descend into the pit and when they are able to see with the dim miner's lamp, the light falls upon corpse after corpse. A few, a handful are brought up alive and scarcely alive, but yet, thank God, with enough of the vital spark remaining to be again kindled to a flame. But the great mass of those strong men have felt the grip of death.

Some of them were brought up to the top with their faces burned and scarred, with their bodies disfigured by the fire. But many are discovered whose faces looked as if they sweetly slept, so that it was scarcely possible to believe that they really could be dead, so quietly had the spirit quitted the habitation of clay. Can you picture to yourselves the scene? The great fires lit around the pit flaming both night and day? The thick mist? The pouring rain drenching the whole of the valley?

Do you see the women as they come clustering round the pit shrieking for their sons and their husbands and their fathers? Do you hear that shrill scream as yonder woman has just discovered the partner of her soul? And there do you mark another bending over the form of her two stalwart sons, now, alas, taken from her forever? Do you mark the misery that sits upon the face of some who have not found their sons, or their fathers, or their husbands, or their brothers and who know not where they are and feel a thousand deaths themselves because they feel convinced that their precious ones have fallen, though their corpses cannot be found? The misery in that valley is past description—those who have witnessed it fail to be able to picture it.

As the cry of Egypt in the night when the destroying angel went through all the land and smote the firstborn. As the wail of Rachel when she could not be comforted for her children because they were not—such has been the howling, the weeping, the lamentation of that fair but desolate valley.

My Friends, this judgment has a voice to us and the scarce buried bodies of those men which lie around us in vision have each a sorrowful lesson. The cry of the widow and of the childless mother shall come up into our ears today and, O Lord God of Sabbath, may it so arouse us that we

may hear and fear and tremble and turn unto You—that this dread calamity may be to us the means of our salvation, or if saved, the means of stirring us up more earnestly to seek the salvation of our fellow men.

There are three points upon which I shall try to address you this morning, though I feel inadequate to such a task. First, I shall say somewhat upon *sudden bereavements*. Then I shall dwell awhile upon the fact of *sudden death*. And afterwards we will say but a little, for we know but little of the *sudden exchange* which sudden death shall bring both to saints and sinners.

**I.** Our first sorrowful theme is SUDDEN BEREAVEMENTS. Alas! Alas! How soon may we be childless! How soon may we be widowed of the dearest objects of our affections! O Lord, You have shown to us this day how soon You can blast our gourds and wither all the fruits of our vineyard. The dearest ones, the partners of our blood—how soon can death proclaim a divorce between us—our children the offspring of our loins, how soon can You lay them beneath the sod. We have not a single relative who may not become to us within the next moment a fountain of grief. All that are dear and precious to us are only here by God's good pleasure. What should we be today if it were not for those whom we love and who love us?

What were our house without its little prattlers? What were our habitation without the wife of our bosom? What were our daily business without our associates and friends to cheer us in our trials? Ah, this were a sad world indeed if the ties of kindred, of affection and of friendship all were snapped. And yet it is such a world that they must be sundered and may be divided at any moment.

From the fact that sudden bereavements are possible—not only to miners and to women whose husbands are upon the sea, but *to us also*—I would that we would learn profitable lessons. And first let us *learn to set loose by our dearest friends* that we have on earth. Let us love them—love them we may, love them we should—but let us always learn to love them as dying things. Oh, build not your nest on any of these trees for they are all marked for the axe. “Set not your affections on things on earth,” for the things of earth *must* leave you and then what will you do when your joy is emptied and the golden bowl which held your mirth shall be dashed to pieces?

Love first and foremost Christ. And when you love others, still love them not as though they were immortal. Love not clay as though it were undying—love not dust as though it were eternal. So hold your friend that you shall not wonder when he vanishes from you. So view the partakers of your life that you will not be amazed when they glide into the land of spirits. See you the disease of mortality on every cheek and write not *Eternal* upon the creature of an hour.

*Take care that you put all your dear ones into God's hand.* You have put *your* soul there, put *them* there. You can trust Him for temporals for yourself, trust your jewels with Him. Feel that they are not your own, but that they are God's loans to you—loans which may be recalled at any moment—precious benisons of Heaven of which you are but a tenant at will.

Your possessions are never so safe as when you are willing to resign them and you are never so rich as when you put all you have into the hand of God. You shall find it greatly mitigates the sorrow of bereavements, if before bereavement you shall have learned to surrender every day all the things that are dearest to you into the keeping of your gracious God.

Further, then, you who are blessed with wife and children and friends, take care that you bless God for them. Sing a song of praise to God who has blessed you so much more than others. You are not a widow, but there are many that wear the weeds and why is it not your lot? You are not bereaved of your spouse, but there is many a man whose heart is rent in two by such a calamity—why is it not your portion, too? You have not to follow tomorrow your little ones to their narrow graves—early flowers that did but bud and never ripened, withering alas, too soon. Oh, by the sorrow which you would feel if they were taken away, I exhort you to bless God for them while you have them.

We sorrow much when our gifts are taken away, but we fail to thank God that He spared them to us for so long. Oh, be not ungrateful lest you provoke the Lord to smite very low the mercy which you do not value. Sing unto the Lord, sing unto His name. Give unto Him the blessing which He deserves for His sparing favors which He has manifested towards you in your household.

And then permit me to remind you that since these sudden bereavements may come and there may be a dark chamber in any house in a moment and the coffin may be in any one of our habitations, let us so act to our kinsfolk and relatives as though we knew they were soon about to die. Young man, so treat your hoary father as you would if you knew he would die tomorrow. When you shall follow him to the grave, amidst all your tears for his loss, let there not be one tear of repentance because of your ill behavior to him.

And you godly fathers and mothers, to you I have a special message—your children are committed to your care—they are growing up and what if after they are grown up they should plunge into sin and die at last impenitent! Oh, let not the fierce regret sting you like an adder—“Oh that I had prayed for my children! Oh that I had taught them before they departed.” I pray you so live that when you stand over your child’s dead body you may never hear a voice coming up from that clay, “Father, your negligence was my destruction. Mother, your want of prayer was the instrument of my damnation.”

But so live that when you hear the funeral knell, for a neighbor even, you may be able to say, “Poor soul, whether he is gone to Heaven or to Hell, I know I am clear of his blood.” And with double earnestness be it so with your children. “Yes,” says one “but I have thought of teaching my children more of Christ and being more earnest in prayer for them bye-and-by.” But what if they should die tomorrow! “Yes,” says the wife, “I have thought of speaking to my ungodly husband and trying to induce

him to attend the house of God with me, but I was afraid he would only laugh at me, so I put it off for a month or two.”

Ah, what if he dies before you have cleared your conscience of him? Oh my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay and not madly to destroy themselves. If Hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.

In the light, then, of sudden bereavements, let not another hour pass over your head, when you have reached home, before you have freed your conscience of the blood of your children's souls. Gather them together around you this afternoon and say to them, “My dear children, I have learned today that you may die. I knew it before, but I have had it impressed upon my mind by a solemn incident. My dear children, I cannot help telling you that as you must die, I am anxious that God's Holy Spirit should graciously lead you to repent of sin and seek a Savior.”

And then, when you have told them the way to salvation in simple terms, put your arms about their necks and bid the little ones kneel down and pray, “O God! upon their infant hearts, stamp the image of Yourself. As they are in the image of the earthy, so make them in the image of the heavenly that at the last I may be able to say, ‘Here am I and the children You have given me.’”

**II.** The second head of my discourse this morning was to be, SUDDEN DEATH. AS WE VIEW IT MORE PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO OURSELVES.

The miners of Risca had no more idea of dying that Saturday morning than you or I have—nor did there seem much likelihood that they would. They had gone up and down the pit, some of them, many thousands of times in their lives. It is true that some had perished there, but then, how very many had gone up and down and had not perished? No, they had grown so fearless of danger that some of them even thrust themselves into it in defiance of every regulation for the preservation of human life. They were bold and careless and would gratify a selfish indulgence when a spark might have caused the destruction of them all.

We will not say that it was any negligence that caused this accident. God forbid that we should lay anything to the charge of those who have now departed and have to answer before their God—but, at any rate, sure it is that men who have most to do with danger are generally the most callous and those who are most exposed are usually utterly careless about the very danger which others see but which they will not see themselves. Any warning you or I might have given them would have been thought unnecessary, if not impertinent. “Why need I be so careful? I have done this fifty times before. Why may I not do it again?”

But as in a moment, although there was no lightning flash, no earthquake, no opening of a pit to swallow them up—in a moment the gas explodes and they stand before the Eternal God. It was but the twinkling of



an eye—as though the last trump had sounded (and indeed it did sound as far as they were concerned) and down fell the lifeless corpse and the spirit returned to God who made it. And you and I are in danger, too. We are not in the pit in the midst of explosive air, but there are a thousand gates to death. How many there are who have fallen dead in the streets? How many sitting in their own homes?

I stayed but a week or two ago with an excellent Christian man who was then in the best and most hearty health. I was startled indeed when I heard immediately after that he had come home and sitting down in his chair had shut his eyes and died. And these things are usual and in such a city as ours we cannot go down a street without hearing of some such visitation. Well, our turn must come. Perhaps we shall die falling asleep in our beds after long sickness. But probably we shall be suddenly called in such an hour as we think not to face the realities of eternity. Well, if it is so, if there are a thousand gates to death. If all means and any means may be sufficient to stop the current of our life. If really, after all, spiders' webs and bubbles are more substantial things than human life. If we are but a vapor, or a dying taper that soon expires in darkness—what then?

Why, first, I say, let us all look upon ourselves as dying men, let us not reckon on tomorrow. Oh, let us not procrastinate. For taken in Satan's great net of procrastination we may wait and wait and wait, till time is gone and the great knell of eternity shall toll our dissolution. Today is your only time. O mortal men, the present moment is the only moment you may call your own and oh, how swift its wings! This hour is yours. Yesterday is gone—tomorrow is with God and may never come. "Today if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts."

Many have had their first impressions from thoughts of death and hence it is that Satan never likes to let a man think of the grave. I know a family in which the governess, the daughter of a Christian minister, was told upon her entering her office that she was never to mention the subject of death to the children. They were never to know even that children might die. I did not marvel when I knew the infidelity of the head of the household. What better atmosphere for an infidel to breathe in than where the blast of death is never felt? Infidels ought to be immortal. They ought to live in a world where they can never die—for their infidelity will never be able to pass the stream of Jordan.

There are infidels on earth but there are none in Heaven and there can be none in Hell. They are all convinced—convinced by terrible facts—convinced that there is a God while they are crushed beneath His vengeance and made to tremble at His eternal power. But I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, be not such fools as to live as though your bones were iron and your ribs were brass. Let us not be such madmen as to run as though there were no bounds to our race. Let us not play away our precious days as though days were common as sands on a sea shore. That hour-glass yonder contains all the sands of your life.

Do you see them running? How swiftly do they empty out! With some of you, the most of the sands are in the bottom bulb of the glass and there

are only a few to go trickling through the narrow passages of its days. Ah, and that glass shall never be turned again—it shall never run a second time for you. Let it once run out and you will die. Oh, live as though you meant to die. Live as though you knew you might die tomorrow. Think as though you might die now and act this very hour as though I could utter the mandate of death and summon you to pass through the portals of the tomb.

And then take care, I pray you, that you who do know Christ not only live as though you meant to die, but live while you live. Oh what a work we have to do and how short the time to do it in! Millions of men unconverted and nothing but our feeble voice with which to preach the Word! My soul, shall you ever condemn yourself in your dying moments for having preached too often or too earnestly? No, never. You may rebuke your sloth—but you can never bemoan your excessive industry. Minister of Christ! In your dying hour it will never be a theme of reproach to you that you preached ten times in the week—that you stood up every day to preach Christ and that you so preached that you spent yourself and wasted your body with weakness.

No, it will be our dull sermons that will haunt us on our dying beds, our tearless preaching, our long studying, when we might have preached better had we come away and preached without them. Our hunting after popularity, by gathering together fine words, instead of coming right up and saying to the people, “Men and women, you are dying, escape for your life and fly to Christ”—preaching to them in red-hot simple words of the wrath to come and of the love of Christ. Oh, there are some of you members of our churches—who are living—but what are you living for? Surely you are not living to get money—that is the worldling’s object. Are you living merely to please yourselves? Why that is but the beast’s delight. Oh, how few there are of the members of our churches who really live for God with all their hearts.

Do we give to God as much as we give to our own pleasures? Do we give Christ’s service as much time as we give to many of our trifling amusements? Why we have professional men of education, men of excellent training and ability—who when they once get into a church, feel that they could be very active anywhere else—but as Christians they have nothing to do. They can be energetic in parish vestries or in the rifle corps. But in the Church they give their name but their energies are dormant. Ah, my dear Hearers, you who love the Savior, when we shall come before Christ in Heaven, if there can be a regret, it will be that we did not do more for Christ while we were here.

I think as we fall down before His feet and worship Him, if we could know a sorrow it would be because we did not bring Him in more jewels for His crown—did not seek more to feed the hungry, or to clothe the naked—did not give more to His cause and did not labor more that the lost sheep of the house of Israel might be restored. Live while you live. While it is called today, work, for the night comes wherein no man can work.

And let us learn never to do anything which we would not wish to be found doing if we were to die. We are sometimes asked by young people whether they may go to the theater, whether they may dance, or whether they may do this or that. You may do anything which you would not be ashamed to be doing when Christ shall come. You may do anything which you would not blush to be found doing if the hand of death should smite you. But if you would dread to die in any spot, go not there. If you would not wish to enter the presence of your God with such-and-such a word upon your lip, utter not that word. Or if there would be a thought that would be uncongenial to the Judgment Day, seek not to think that thought. So act that you may feel you can take your shroud with you wherever you go.

Happy is he that dies in his pulpit. Blessed is the man that dies in his daily business, for he is found with his loins girt about him serving his Master. But, oh, unhappy must he be to whom death comes as an intruder and finds him engaged in that which he will blush to have ever touched when God shall appear in judgment. Power Supreme. You everlasting King—permit not death to intrude upon an ill-spent hour—but find me rapt in meditation high—hymning my great Creator—proclaiming the love of Jesus, or lifting up my heart in prayer for myself and my fellow-sinners. Let me but serve my God and then, Death, I will not say to you when you may come—come when you will. But if I might choose, come to me while I am yearning after souls. Come to me when the cry of inviting love is on my lip and when I am weeping over the souls of men. Come to me, then, that men may say—

**“He did his body with his charge lay down,  
He ceased at once to work and live.”**

But I may talk thus about sudden death and the likelihood of it, but ah, Sirs, I cannot stir your hearts for I cannot stir my own as I would. The fact that so many die each day has very little force in it for us, because it is so trite an event—we have heard of it so many times. We look down the catalogue of deaths and take the average and we say, “Fifty below the average, or a hundred above the average,” but *our* dying never comes home to us.

All men will persist in thinking all men mortal but themselves. If there were a great Hydra in the city of London which every day ate ten of the inhabitants of London alive we should be dreadfully miserable—especially if we never knew when it would be our turn to be eaten, too. If we were certain that it would eat all in London by-and-by, but would only eat ten in a week, we should all tremble as we passed by the huge monster’s den and say, “When will it be my time?” And that would cast a cloud over the whole metropolis, blacker than its usual fog.

But here is a monster, Death, which devours its hundreds at its meal. And with its iron tongue the funeral knell keeps crying out for more. Its greedy and insatiable appetite is never filled. Its teeth are never blunted. Its ravenous hunger is never stayed. And here we are and though it will be our turn by-and-by to be devoured of this great monster, yet how little do

we think about it! One reason I think is because we so seldom visit the dying. I stood once by the side of a poor boy whom I had taught as a Sunday-School teacher. He had received very little good training at home and though he was but a lad of seventeen, he became a drunkard and drank himself to death at one debauch. I saw him and talked to him and tried to point him to the Savior and heard at last the death-rattle in his throat and as I went down stairs I thought everybody a fool for doing anything except preparing to die.

I began to look upon the men who drove the carts in the street—the men who were busy at their shops and those who were selling their wares—as being all foolish for doing anything except their eternal business and myself most of all foolish for not pointing dying sinners to a living Christ and inviting them to trust in His precious blood. And yet in an hour or so all things took their usual shape and I began to think that I was not dying after all and I could go away and be, I fear, as heartless as before. I could begin to think that men were after all wise in thinking of this world and not the next. I mean not that I really thought so, but I fear I acted as if I thought so.

The impression of the deathbed was soon obliterated. If you could see all die who die, perhaps the impression would be different. I would liken the sons of men to a company of South Sea Islanders whose canoe, being disabled, floated upon a raft and they were attacked by sharks. They disappeared one by one, till but three or four were left. Can you conceive the despair which would settle upon the countenance of these few? If they knew a god, do you not think they would then indeed call on him? And in what respect, except that death was more apparent to them, were they different from us?

Man after man is being taken away from us by the devouring Monster. Friends and kinsfolk have been snatched into the deep and some of us remain upon the edge of the raft. Yon gray-haired man may be the next that is carried away. The hosts of God are crossing the flood. Some have already passed it and are singing the eternal song and—

***“We are to the margin come,  
And soon expect to die.”***

God help us so to live in the expectation of death that Christ may be glorified in us whether we sleep or wake and that we may be able to say, “For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.”

**III.** I shall detain you but a few minutes longer, while I dwell upon the third theme, which is, THAT SUDDEN EXCHANGE WHICH A SUDDEN DEATH WILL CAUSE.

You see yonder Christian man—he is full of a thousand fears—he is afraid even of his interest in Christ. He is troubled spiritually and vexed with temporal cares. You see him cast down and exceeding troubled, his faith but very weak. He steps outside yon door and there meets him a messenger from God who smites him to the heart and he is dead. Can you conceive the change? Death has cured him of his fears. His tears are wiped away once for all from his eyes. And, to his surprise, he stands

where he feared he should never be—in the midst of the redeemed of God, in the general assembly and Church of the First-born.

If he should think of such things, would he not upbraid himself for thinking so much of his trials and of his troubles and for looking into a future which he was never to see? See yonder man, he can scarcely walk, he has a hundred pains in his body. He says he is more tried and pained than any man. Death puts his skeleton hand upon him and he dies. How marvelous the change! No aches now, no casting down of spirit. He then is supremely blest, the decrepit has become perfect, the weak has become strong, the trembling one has become a David and David has become as the angel of the Lord!

Hark to the song which pours from the lips of him who just now groaned. Look at the celestial smile which lights the features of the man just now racked with pain and tormented with anguish! Was ever change so surprising, so marvelous? When I think of it, I could almost long for it to come across myself this morning. To go from the thousand eyes of you that look upon me, to look into the eyes of Christ and to go from your songs, to the songs of spirits before the Throne. To leave the Sabbath work on earth for an eternal Sabbath of rest—to go from unbelieving hearts, from Christians who need to be cheered and sinners that need to be convinced—to be with those who need no preaching, but who in one eternal song sing “Hallelujah to God and the Lamb”!

I can imagine that when a man dies thus suddenly one of the first emotions he experiences in the next world will be *surprise*. I can conceive that the spirit knows not where it is. It is like a man waking up from a dream. He looks about him. Oh, that glory! How resplendent yon Throne! He listens to harps of gold and he can scarce believe it true. “I, the chief of sinners and yet in Heaven? I, a doubting one and yet in Paradise?” And then when he is conscious that he is really in Heaven, oh, what *overwhelming joy*—how is the spirit flooded with delight, covered over with it—scarcely able to enjoy it because it seems to be all but crushed beneath the eternal weight of glory.

And next, when the spirit has power to recover itself and open its eyes from the blindness caused by this dazzling light and to think—when its thoughts have recovered themselves from the sudden effect of a tremendous flood of bliss—the next emotion will be *gratitude*. See how that believer, five minutes ago a mourner, now takes his crown from off his head and with transporting joy and gratitude bows before his Savior’s Throne. Hear how he sings! Was ever song like that, the first song he ever sang that had the fullness of Paradise and perfection in it?—“Unto Him that loved me and washed me from my sins in His blood, unto Him be glory.”

And how he repeats it and repeats it again and looks round to cherubim and seraphim and prays them to assist him in his song, till all the harps of Heaven and re-taught the melody of gratitude, re-tuned by the one faithful heart and send up another hallelujah and yet another and another—while the floods of harmony surround the eternal Throne of God!

But what must be the change to the unconverted man? His joys are over forever. His death is the death of his happiness—his funeral is the funeral of his mirth. He has just risen from his cups. He has another cup to drain which is full of bitterness. He has just listened to the sound of the harp and the viol and the music of them that make merry. An eternal dirge greets his ears, mixed with the doleful chorus of the shrieks of damned souls. What horror and surprise shall seize upon him! “Good God,” he says, “I thought it was not so, but lo, it is. What the minister said to me is true. The things I would not believe are at last really so.”

When the poor soul shall find itself in the hands of angry fiends and lifts up his eyes in Hell, being in torment so hot, so feverish, so thirsty, that it shall seem in that first moment as though it had been athirst for a million years, what will be his surprise! “And am I,” he will say, “really here? I was in the streets of London but a minute ago. I was singing a song but an instant before and here am I in Hell! What? So soon damned? Is the sentence of God like a lightning flash? Does it so instantaneously give the spirit and destroy its joys? Am I really here?”

And when the soul has convinced itself that it is actually in Hell, can you imagine next the overwhelming horror that will roll over it? It, too, will be stunned with a mighty flood—not with a flood of glory but with a flood of anger, of wrath, of Divine Justice. Oh, how the spirit is tormented now—tormented beyond thought! And then at last, when the wave recedes a moment and there is a pause, what black despair shall then seize upon the spirit! Have you ever seen men die without hope? I read but yesterday a case of a young woman who had procrastinated many times and at last she was told by the physician that within nine hours he really believed she would be a corpse. Then, when death really became a matter of fact to her, she rose up in the bed upon which she had been laid by the sudden stroke of God and she prayed—prayed till she fell back fainting and her lips were livid and her cheek was pale, while she cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Friends talked to her, consoled and comforted her and bade her trust in Christ. But she said, “It is of no use for you to comfort me. No, it is too late. I made a fatal resolve some months ago that I would again enjoy the world and that resolve has destroyed my soul.” And then she rose up in bed again, with eyes starting from their sockets and prayed again till she was breathless and groaned and cried and fell down again in a faint, needing to be restored once more. And so she did, till with a ghastly look—an awful look of horror—as though she felt the anguish of another world, she expired.

Now if such is the remorse of a spirit before it feels the wrath of God—if the first drops are sufficient thus to destroy all hope and beat in pieces all our boastings—what will the eternal hail be—what will the everlasting sleet of Divine Wrath be when once it is poured out? Sodom and Gomorrah! Why all their fiery hail from Heaven shall be nothing compared with the eternal fire that must fall upon the sinner. Do you think I love to speak on such a theme as this? My soul trembles while she thinks of it.

No, I would sooner preach of other things by far—but it is needful that men may be awakened.

Oh, I implore you, Brothers and Sisters, you that know not God and are still condemned because you believe not in Christ—I pray you think of these things. Oh that I had a Baxter’s heart that I could weep over sinners as he did. But my soul feels as true an anguish for your souls as ever Baxter felt. Oh that you would be saved! My eyes ache. My brow is full of fire now because I cannot preach as I wanted to preach to you. Oh that God would take up the work and send that Truth right home.

I know I shall soon die and you, too. And I shall face each of you and your eyes shall stare on me forever and ever, if you are lost through my unfaithfulness. And shall it be—shall it be? Oh that we had a hope that all of us might see the face of God and live! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Spirit of God, convict of sin and bring the heart to Christ and may we all without exception see Your face in joy and glory and praise You, world without end. Amen.

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

# SUDDEN SORROW

## NO. 1363

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 8, 1877,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

***“Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.”  
Jeremiah 4:20.***

***“And when you are spoiled, what will you do?”  
Jeremiah 4:30.***

JEREMIAH was describing the havoc of war, a war which was devastating his country and bringing untold miseries upon the people. He says of it, “My soul, my soul! I am pained at my very heart; my heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled; suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?”

How grateful we ought to be that war is not raging in our own land. We should read those terrible stories which come to us concerning the destruction of human life by the two armies in the East with the utmost regret. On whichever side the victory may turn, it is still to be daily lamented that men should slaughter men and glory in wholesale murder! How true it is neither the elements in their fury, nor wild beasts in their rage, have ever been such terrible enemies to man as men! We should thank God that we dwell apart and see our harvests ripening without the dread of their being reaped by invaders. We walk our streets without the fear of bursting shells and seek our chambers without the apprehension of being awakened in the dead of night by the shouts of advancing adversaries.

Blessed be the Lord who has given centuries of peace to the fertile hills and valleys of His chosen isle—

***“O Britain, praise your mighty God,  
And make His honors known abroad!  
He bade the ocean round you flow;  
Not bars of brass could guard you so.”***

Let the name of Jehovah our God be praised, this morning, for giving peace in our borders and filling us with the finest of the wheat. There are, however, in this land, and in all lands, whether at war or peace, many calamities which come suddenly upon the sons of men concerning which they may bitterly lament, “How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.” This world, at its best, is not our rest. There is nothing settled below the moon. We call this terra firma, but there is nothing firm about it—it is tossed to and fro like a troubled sea forevermore. We are never, for any long time, in one stay—change is perpetually operating.



Nothing is sure but that which is Divine. Nothing is abiding except that which comes down from Heaven. All things change as they pass before us and perish in the using. At this moment your ship lies becalmed—be not too secure, for within the next few minutes you may be driving before a hurricane with bare poles. Today your garden is planted with blooming flowers which are loading the air with their perfume—rejoice not too much in their sweetness, for within a short time nothing may remain—the spoiler may tear them up by the roots and your garden may become a desolation. There is nothing bright, beautiful, fair, lovely, or desirable beneath the sun which may not be speedily withered!

Even as a vision are all these things—they are, and lo, they are not! They flash upon us as the meteor which blazes in the midnight sky and then leaves the darkness to be blacker than before. “Boast not yourself of tomorrow,” yes, boast not yourself of *today*, lest haply on that morrow, or even in this very day, you may have to cry with Jeremiah, “How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment!”

This expression may be, without any straining, very readily applied to many matters and to three especially. First, to the sudden spoiling of all human righteousness. Secondly, to the sudden spoiling of all earthly comfort. And, thirdly—and this is by no means an unusual thing—to the sudden spoiling of human life, itself. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditations upon the instability of all earth-born things so that we may despise the things which are seen and temporal, and follow after the things unseen and eternal!

**I. A SUDDEN SPOILING HAPPENS TO HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Beloved, when I put those two words together—“human righteousness”—I inwardly smile. It sounds like a comedy or a satire, I scarcely know which! “What is man that he should be clean? And he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?” Mere human nature and righteousness are two things not easily joined together—and when they are united for a time, they soon separate—for they agree no better than oil and water. There is a *Divine* righteousness, worked out by our dear Redeemer and imputed to all His believing people, which will remain—

***“That glorious robe the same appears  
Then ruined nature sinks in years.  
No age can change its glorious hue,  
The robe of Christ is ever new.”***

But the righteousness which comes of man is a dream—how suddenly does it vanish from our view! Lighter than the spider’s web, more subtle than the mist, more fleeting than the wind—the very name of it is vanity! Let us look at the history of human righteousness and begin in the garden of Eden and lament the Fall. Human righteousness existed in the bowers of Paradise and man was happy with his God. Adam was created sinless. His mind was upon an equal balance and without tendency to evil. He was placed in a garden of delights, with but one commandment to test him, and that a very simple one, costing but slight self-denial to obey.

We do not know how long Adam was in the garden, but we know that man, being in honor, continues not, and in a very short time he and our mother, Eve, were spoiled of all they had. The serpent crept in and be-

guiled them. He who was a murderer from the beginning plundered them! How suddenly were their tents spoiled and their curtains in a moment, for their eyes were opened and they perceived that they had lost all! The righteousness which covered them much better than a vesture had been taken from them so that they were utterly naked before the eyes of the living God. He is a cruel spoiler, indeed, who strips a man of every garment. But thus completely were our first parents robbed and despoiled!

They found that they had lost the garden wherein they had lived in such content, lost peace, lost happiness, lost themselves, lost their posterity, lost all! Everything was taken from them except that which Infinite Mercy stepped in to give them in the form of a gracious promise concerning the restoring Seed of the woman. Whenever we think of the Fall we ought to be humbled and to be restrained from all idea of self-righteousness, for if Adam, in his *perfection*, could not maintain his righteousness, how can you and I, who are imperfect from our very birth, hope to do so? If the thieves broke in and stole our ancestor's righteousness when his tent was pitched amid the sunny glades of Eden, how much more will our curtains be spoiled in this land of the Ishmaelite and the Amalekite? If the old, wily serpent found a way into the unfallen hearts of our first parents when they had no surroundings to mislead them, how vain is it for us to hope to overcome the Evil One so as to attain to everlasting life by the works of the Law?

A second instance of this very commonly occurs in the failure of the moralist's resolutions. See yonder young people tutored from their childhood in everything that is good! Their character is excellent and admirable, but will it so abide? Will not the enemy despoil their tents? Often it is so. The young man starts in life with the conviction that he is not of the common herd of sinners and will never descend to their level. He has heard of other youths who have fallen into temptation and destroyed themselves by dissipation, but he feels certain that he shall do nothing of the kind. Like Hazael, he cries, "Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?"

He fancies that his ship can weather all storms and he plumes himself upon the idea that the record of his life will be very different from that of other men. How truly lovely, at first sight, he seems! How honest, generous and true! Even looking upon him with the eyes of Jesus, we might love him and only mourn that he lacks one thing. The righteousness which he wears is merely an *human* one and it is altogether in his own keeping, but he believes that he shall hold it fast and never let it go. His tent is so well pitched that no wind from the wilderness will ever overturn it!

Have not these delusions been sadly dispelled in hundreds of instances? A fierce temptation arises and the man's resolutions are carried along like thistle in the wind! The young man did not think that such a temptation could ever happen to him. He had been kept by his parents and friends like a flower in a conservatory and he could not believe that the nights could be so bitterly frosty in the cold world outside. But now he has to feel the nipping influence of sin and he withers speedily. Satan,

discovering his weakness, takes him at a tender point. He brings before him that lust to which he has the greatest tendency, sets before him that dainty delicacy of sin to which he has the sweetest tooth and, by-and-by, the hopeful youth can no longer talk of his virtues nor boast of his purity, for he has fallen low.

The ship Boastful has struck on a rock and is going down! The self-confident young man now finds himself to be human—being human, to be liable to temptation! Being tempted—to be ready to yield to sin. “I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble,” for the cords of resolution are broken and the stakes of principle are loosed. Alas, poor human righteousness, you are soon smitten on the forehead and speedily rolled in the dust! How soon does the comeliness of human nature pass away in the hour of trial! Many a young man and young woman, opening their eyes all of a sudden after temptation, have had to cry, “How suddenly are my tents spoiled and my curtains in a moment!”

Ah, you that think yourselves beyond all danger of falling into sin! But you know not yourselves—you understand not the plague of your own hearts, for if you did, you would see that you carry within your souls all manner of iniquity which only waits for an opportunity to develop itself! And when it finds a fit occasion, it will display its deadly nature and then you will mourn that you did not seek a new heart and a right spirit at the hands of Christ.

My second text asks, “And when you are spoiled, what will you do?” And I would earnestly answer it for any of you who have gone through this experience. Do not try to reestablish that righteousness of yours which has been so thoroughly spoiled, but look for something better! Quit the tent for a mansion! Flee from the curtains of self to the walls of salvation! Your own resolutions have failed you, therefore leave such a sandy foundation and build upon the Rock of Divine Strength! Go and confess your sins with deep contrition—ask the Lord Jesus to wash you in His precious blood—and then desire Truth in the inward parts and ask that in the hidden parts the Holy Spirit may make you to know wisdom. So shall it come to pass that you shall no longer build upon the sand, nor yet with wood and hay and stubble, but on the Rock with gold and silver and precious stones!

Another liability of human righteousness is one which I must not call a calamity, seeing it is the commencement of the greatest blessing. I mean when the Spirit of God comes to deal with human righteousness, by way of illumination and conviction. Here we can speak of what we know experimentally. How beautiful our righteousness is and how it flourishes like a comely flower till the Spirit of God blows upon it—and then it withers quite away, like the grass in the hot sun! The first lesson of the Holy Spirit to the heart is to lay bare its deceivableness and to uncover before us its loathsomeness, where we thought that everything was true and acceptable. What a different character you gave yourself, dear Friend, before the Spirit of God dealt with you! To what were you compelled to give yourself afterwards!

Truly, your beauty consumed away like a moth. You began to mourn over your holiest things, for you saw the sin which polluted them. And as for your transgressions, which you thought so little of, when the Spirit of God set them in a true light, you found them to be hideous and horrible offenses against the God of Love. Before you emblazoned your name in letters of gold, but when you learned the *truth*, you chose a black inscription and, with a heavy hand, you wrote out your own condemnation, feeling that you were bound to do so.

Now, it is a great mercy when the Spirit of God brings home the truth to the heart and makes a man see the deceptiveness of outward appearances. I pray that it may happen to you all if it has never done so. May your tents be spoiled until you see yourselves to be utterly undone—for you are so by nature whether you see it or not! I would ask all who are under conviction of sin to answer this question, “When you are spoiled, what will you do?” May you reply, “We know what we will do. We will flee away from self to Jesus! Our precious things are removed and our choice treasure is taken from us, therefore we take the Lord Jesus to be our All in All.”

If such is your resolve, you are fulfilling the end and design of the ever blessed Spirit who works in order to wean us, for then we turn to Jesus and seeks for that clothing which the matchless righteousness of Christ Jesus, alone, can afford. But there will come to all human righteousness one other time of spoiling if neither of those should happen which I have mentioned before. Remorse will come and that very probably in the hour of death, if not before. Apart from the Holy Spirit, conscience often does its work in a very terrible fashion and tears to pieces, before a man’s eyes, the curtains of righteousness which he had so laboriously woven.

Have you ever seen a sinner happy and contented, because he is self-deluded? But all of a sudden he has found out that his lies and hypocrisy were known to God and would be all exposed and punished. At such a time, instead of turning to God, he has despaired and said, “I am lost, there is no hope for me,” and therefore he has plunged into deeper sin and become worse! And all the while, like the vulture at Prometheus’ liver—conscience has continued tearing away at his heart, eating into his very soul and drinking the blood of joy out of his life till he has been dried up by an anguish from which he could not escape! I have seen men die so—the consolations of the Gospel have been sounded into a deaf ear! They have lifted up their hands as though they would thrust the minister away!

When he talked of mercy, they replied that there was none for them. And when he spoke of cleansing, they declared that their sin was of more than scarlet hue and never could be washed away. Oh, how suddenly are their tents spoiled and their curtains in a moment! And when spoiled thus, what does a man do? What, but give himself up to that everlasting despair, which has, at last, overtaken him! While any man is yet alive I would exhort him to apply to Christ—though it were the last breath he breathed. I would still hold up the Redeemer before his expiring gaze! But when remorse has fully set in, this is seldom of any use. They cry, “Too late, too late!” They continue to refuse their Savior and pass away naked,

poor and miserable to stand before God's righteous bar to hear the sentence of their conscience confirmed forever by the mouth of the Eternal Judge!

In that dreadful day their overthrow will be terrible, indeed! God save us from this. I hope, dear Friends, that all of us know what it is to have seen all our tents spoiled of all the precious things in which our pride boasted itself—and that we have now become rich in the riches of the Lord Jesus and secure in the cleft of the Rock which was opened in His side. If we have done so, we shall not regret, but greatly rejoice, that our tents were suddenly spoiled and our curtains in a moment!

**II.** The words of our text are exceedingly applicable to THE SPOILING OF ALL EARTHLY COMFORTS. Sudden destruction to all our earthly comforts is common to all sorts of men. It may happen to the best, as well as to the worst. Did it not so occur to Job, who on a certain morning was amazed by messenger after messenger hastening to tell him that all his property was swept away? Last of all came one who told him that his entire family had been destroyed! Sudden sorrow happened, also, to rebellious Pharaoh as well as to pious Job, for at the dead of night he was awakened to bewail the firstborn of him that sat upon the throne and heard throughout all the land of Egypt a chorus of lamentations on account of a similar calamity which had happened to every household.

Neither the just nor the unjust can tell when tribulation will befall them! David returns from among the Philistines and he finds Ziklag burned with fire and his wives and his children carried away captive. Yet not to the righteous, only, are such trials, for Belshazzar feasts in his palace in Babylon and that same night he was slain! An arrow pierces the heart of wicked Ahab, but gracious Josiah fell in the same manner—with impartial feet does calamity come to the door of all kinds of men! As darts the hawk upon its prey, so does affliction fall upon the unsuspecting sons of Adam. As the earthquake all of a sudden overthrows a city, so does adversity shake the estate of mortals.

Sudden trial comes in various forms. Sometimes it is the loss of property as in the instance of Lot when the kings came and took him captive and all that he had. Then was he utterly spoiled! The same thing has happened in ordinary commerce, as in the case of Jehoshaphat when he made ships to go to Tarshish and they were broken at Eziongaber. His letters were opened one morning and the merchant, who thought himself rich as a prince, found that he had become a bankrupt! These are but common things in days of panic and convulsion.

Frequently the calamity comes in the form of the loss of one dear to us. So came it to the Shunammite, whose child had been such a comfort to her. He fell on a day that he went into the field unto the reapers and he said, "My head, my head," and very soon the little gift from Heaven had left a childless mother to weep over his little lifeless form. So happened it to Jacob, who sent his darling son away with a kiss, but before many hours had passed, he saw his garment covered with blood and exclaimed, "An evil beast has devoured him! Joseph is, without doubt, torn in pieces." You cannot be sure of child, or wife, or husband. The fondest love

may be torn from your side and the dearest babe may be taken from your bosom. Here below nothing is certain but universal uncertainty. One way or another God knows how to bring the rod home to us and to make us smart till we cry out, "How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment."

Now, this might well be expected. Do we wonder when we are suddenly deprived of our earthly comforts? Are they not fleeting things? When they came to us, did we receive a lease with them, or were we promised that they should last forever? Jonah sat under his withered gourd wringing his hands and complaining of God, but if you and I had been there we might have said, "What ails you, Man? Are you surprised that gourds wither?" "I murmur," he says, "because I have lost the shade which screened me from the sun." "But, Man, is it not the nature of a gourd to die? It came up in a night! Do you marvel that it perished in a night? A worm at the root of a gourd surely is no novelty. O Prophet, be not angry with your God—this is what you should look for from such a growth."

If our tents are spoiled, we should remember that they are tents and not fortresses. They are curtains and not bulwarks. The thief can readily enough enter and spoil the habitation which is made of such frail material. Do you wonder that your offspring die? Why so? Across your children's brows, if you read aright there is written the word, "mortal." Did you expect a mortal mother to bring forth an immortal son? Did you, a dying father, expect to be the parent of a daughter who would never see death? Your love is astonishing, but your reason is not! Your affection counts it strange, but your understanding judges it to be according to the frequent course of Nature.

Your children came to you and you received them into your home and heart with the knowledge that they were mortal and, therefore, you are not deceived. Bow, therefore, to the Divine will and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." You lament that you have lost your riches. Are you surprised at that? Do you keep birds? Do you wonder when they fly away? What are riches but birds of a golden feather? They take to themselves wings, we are told, and fly away! It is not the most marvelous thing in the world, if your boy has a tame bird, and he comes to you and says, "Father, my bird has taken wings and fled away." "Dear child," you say, "I always wondered that it did not do so before now."

So may you say to the merchant who has lost his property in trading—the marvel is not that wealth departs but that it stays with any man, seeing it is the nature of winged things to fly away! Clouds dissolve, bubbles burst, snowflakes melt and even so do this world's treasures waste away! Moreover, our earthly comforts were never given to us to be held forever by a Covenant of Salt. They are always loans and never gifts! All that we possess here below is God's property! He has only loaned it out to us and what He lends, He has a right to take back again. We hold our possessions and our friends, not upon freehold, but upon a lease terminable at the Supreme Owner's option! Do you wonder when the holding ceases?

Do you know the parable of the wise Jewish woman? When her husband, the Rabbi, had gone out to teach, his disciples, certain neighbors in great sorrow, brought home to her the corpses of her only children, two sweet boys who had been drowned. She took them upstairs, laid them upon a bed and covered them with a sheet. She then waited in her deep affliction till her husband came home, grieving most of all for the sorrow which would overwhelm him. She stood at the door and mournfully said, "My husband, do you know that a great tribulation has happened unto me? A Friend had lent me a treasure and, while I have had it, it has been a great joy to me, but this day He has taken it back, again, and I know not what to do."

"My Beloved," said the Rabbi, "Speak not so! Can it be a sorrow to you to return that which you have borrowed? O daughter of Abraham, you cannot harbor dishonesty in your soul! If the treasure has been lent, be grateful to him who permitted you the loan and send it back with cheerfulness." "Is this what you say?" she asked. "Come here." Then she turned back the coverlet and he gazed upon the cold faces of his two children. And he said "You have spoken wisely, O Woman, for I understand that God has lent these children to me and that I must not complain because He has taken back His own."

Don't you see how natural it is that loans should be returned to their lender in due season? Say not, "I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath," as though you were the chief or the *only* sufferer, for in this thing there has no trial happened to you but such as is common to men. Cry not in dismay, "How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment!" for when war is raging, it is little surprising that tents should be spoiled! It is according to the nature of things that in a world which brings forth thorns and briars in all its furrows, some of the sharp points should pierce your flesh!

Once more, we live in a world that is full of thieves, and it is no wonder if our joys are stolen. Our Master has warned us that our habitations here below are not thief-proof. He forbids us, therefore, to lay up our treasure where thieves break through and steal. The mud houses of the East are very soon entered by burglars. They break a hole wherever they please and steal a man's wealth while he sleeps. And this present life is of the same fashion. This world swarms with thieves such as false friends and deceivers, slanderers and cavilers, losses in business and crosses in our expectations, unkindness of enemies and fickleness of acquaintances and especially sickness and death! We must not marvel, therefore, if some thief or other should take away the dear delight which makes our tent so happy.

Beloved, since these calamities may be expected, let us be prepared for them. "How?" you ask. Why, by holding all earthly things loosely—by having them as though you had them not—by looking at them as fleeting and never expecting them to abide with you. Love the creature in the measure in which the creature may be loved and no more! Mortal things may only be loved in their proportion—never make them your gods, nor suffer your heart to live upon them or stay itself upon them—for if you do, you are

preparing sorrow for yourself and, "When you are spoiled, what will you do?"

You will cry with Micah, "They have taken away my gods." If you suffer your heart to be filled with earthly things while you have them, you will have your heart broken when they are taken away! Let us take care to make good use of our comforts while we possess them. Since they hastily fly by us, let us catch them on the wing and diligently employ them for God's Glory. Let us be careful to place our chief treasure in Heaven, for, as old Swinnock says, "A worldling's wealth lies in the earth. Therefore, like wares laid in low damp cellars, it corrupts and molds. But the godly man's treasure is in Heaven and, like commodities laid up in high rooms, it continues sound and safe."

Treasure in the skies is treasure, indeed! Where moth and rust and thief can reach is no fit place for us to store our treasures! Let us commit our all to the custody of God who is our All in All. Such a blessed thing is faith in God that if the Believer should lose everything he possesses here below, he would have small cause for sorrow so long as he kept his faith. If a rich proprietor with thousands of acres of land, in walking down the street were robbed of his handkerchief, he would not lie down in despair, nor even make a great noise over his loss. "Ah," he would say, "they could only steal a mere trifle! They could not rob me of my parks and farms and yearly incomes."

Believers invest their true wealth in a bank which never breaks. And as for their earthly substance, it is not theirs at all, but their Lord's—and they desire only to employ it for His cause so that if He takes it away they are bound to look upon themselves as not losers—but as, in some measure, released from responsibility! And they may thank their Lord for such relief. Be sure you use this world as not abusing it and fix all your joy and love and hope and trust in the eternal God—and then, happen what may—you will be safe. "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."

But let me solemnly remind you that in times when we meet with sudden calamity, God is putting us to the test and trying the love and faith of those who profess to be His people. "When you are spoiled, what will you do?" You thought you loved God—do you love Him now? You said He was your Father, but that was when He kissed you! Is He your Father now that He chastens you? The ungodly kick against God—they can only rejoice in Him while He gives them sweet things. But His true children learn to kiss the rod! Can you believe in Jesus when distress is upon you and when need assails you as an armed man? You talked of your faith in summer weather—have you faith, now, in the long, wintry nights?

Can you trust the Lord when the fierce winds from the wilderness threaten to overturn your tent? Has the Holy Spirit given you the faith of God's elect which can bear a strain? That faith which cannot endure trial is no faith at all! If the death of a child, or the loss of wealth, or being struck down by disappointment or sickness shall make you doubt your God, what will you do when you come to die? If, in running with footmen you are wearied, what will you do when you contend with horses? If these



minor trials overwhelm you, what will you do in the last dread day when all things pass away from your sight? This is a trying time for your heart—a testing time for your faith.

If all things are right within us when our tents are spoiled, we shall live closer to God than ever and thus we shall be gainers by our losses because they have increased our spirituality and our peace. It would be a blessed thing to be like the planet Venus, of which it is certain that the earth can never come between her and the sun. The world often hides our God from us and when our comforts are swept away there is all the less likelihood of its doing so. If our bereavements bring us into the clear and ever-abiding sunlight of the Lord's own face, we may be thankful to lose that which before caused the eclipse—

***“Nearer, my God, to You!  
Nearer to You!  
What, though it is a cross  
That raises me,  
This, still, my cry shall be,  
Nearer to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee!”***

Blessed is he who is resolved with Job and, by God's Grace, is enabled to abide by it, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” We should learn to give up everything that is dear to us in this present life and find our comfort in the hopes of the next world! So that, like David, when his darling child had been taken away, we may say, “I shall go to him. He shall not return to me.” Happy and blessed is the man who acts thus! He shall not be cast down in the cloudy and dark day. “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.” Oh, you worldlings, what will *you* do in the time of trouble? How will you comfort your hearts in the day of visitation?

Most of you young people are full of fun and mirth and I am glad you have happy times. But the holidays of youth are not forever! Your tents will be spoiled, one of these days, as surely as you live—and what will you do then? All the joy which you can draw from this world's wells will turn to brackish water before long and you will loathe it—what will you do, then? Nothing will remain of all this momentary mirth when the heyday of your youth is over and the evil days come! And the days draw near when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them. Why, then, are you so taken up with fickle, fleeting joys? I beseech you seek substantial happiness! Ask for eternal blessings! Draw near to God by Jesus Christ and seek unfading bliss in His abiding love.

**III.** In the third place there may come A SUDDEN SPOILING OF LIFE, ITSELF. In a moment, prostrated by disease and brought to Death's door, frail man may well cry out, “How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment!” It is by no means unusual for men to die very suddenly. One does not wish to suggest an unhappy thought, but this is so salutary a consideration that it ought never to be absent from us—we are but dust and may be dissolved in an instant by death! We are continually surprised that one and another have suddenly been called away—yet it is more strange that so many remain!—

***“Our life contains a thousand springs,  
And fails if one is gone,  
Strange that a harp of a thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long.”***

In this large congregation, Death’s work is very manifest to one who stands upon this central tower of observation! During the last few days we, as a Church and congregation, have lost several from our midst. I will not point out the seats which are, today occupied by others, where old friends have sat for many years. But so it is, that some have gone quite suddenly from us and their graves are scarcely filled in. Who will be next? It frequently happens that those who are apparently very healthy and strong are among the first to fall. Our friends who are continual invalids remain with us, some of them, many months and even many years after we have sorrowfully given them up.

Consumption keeps many for long months lingering slowly into everlasting life, while strong, hearty persons are in an instant taken away! It is therefore no new thing for men to die suddenly. Not one man or woman here has a guarantee that he or she shall live till tomorrow. It is almost a misuse of language to talk about life insurance, for we cannot insure our lives—they must forever remain uninsured as to their continuance here. If I could be a prophet, this morning, and point out one and another and say, “That man will be dead before next Sunday.” Or, “That woman will not live a week,” I should feel I had a very painful duty to discharge.

But is it not wise for us to reflect that it may happen to any one of us? There are no reasons by which we can prove that we shall escape the mighty Hunter for another day! We are ready enough to think of this for others, for all men think all men mortal but themselves—but practical wisdom would lead us to suggest to ourselves that *we* are mortal and that, perhaps, the death arrow which has just left the bow of God may be aimed at *our* hearts. The question is, “When you are spoiled, what will you do?” When all of a sudden the curtains of our tent shall tear in two and the tent pole shall be snapped and the body shall lie a desolate ruin, what will we do?

I will tell you what some of us know that we would do. We know that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! As poor, guilty sinners, we have fled to Christ for refuge and He is ours and we know that He will surely keep what we have committed to Him until that day! Therefore we are not afraid of all that the Spoiler can do. We are not afraid of you, O Death, for you are the porter that shall open the gates of immortality! And you, you worms, we are not afraid of you, for though you devour this body, yet you shall not destroy it, for in our *flesh* we shall see God! O Grave, we are not dismayed at your gloom, for what are you but a refining pot out of which this poor earthly body shall arise free from all corruption?

Time, we fear not your trials! Eternity, we dread not your terrors! Our soul shall dwell at ease, come what may! Glory be to the blessed name of the Lord Jesus, we shall rise because He has risen! We shall live because He lives and reign because He reigns! We are not afraid of the Spoiler! But

O, Worldling, when you are spoiled, what will you do? Rich men, your acres will be yours no longer—no parks for you to roam over, no fine trees to boast of, no ancestral halls in which to glorify yourselves! You will have *nothing* left—no barns, no ripening harvests, no noble horses or fattened sheep—you must leave them all and if these are your treasures, what will you do when God requires your *soul* of you?

Then the largeness of the amount invested will only make it all the harder to die and palaces and gardens will make the pang of separation yet more keen! You will find it a dreadful wrench to be torn away from that in which your heart so much delighted. “When you are spoiled, what will you do?” Your money bags will not ease your conscience. All the leases, title deeds and mortgages that you can heap upon yourself will not warm your dying heart into the life of hope! What will you do? Alas, what will you do? And you, you worldlings who have no wealth, but live for present pleasure—where, then, will be your wine cups and your dances? Where your draughts of mighty ale, your oaths and blasphemies?

Where, then, your midnight revelry and wantonness? When you shall appear before the Judge of all the earth, what will be left to you? When all these unhallowed pleasures are swept away, what remains? Yes, you lover of pleasure, make merry and rejoice today, but “when you are spoiled, what will you do?” With your children about you, rejoice in your home and live at ease without God but, “when you are spoiled, what will you do?” Despise religion if you will—and count it all a dream invented to make men sour and wretched—but when you are dying and your pulse is faint and failing, what will you do?

What *can* you do? Opportunities over and space for repentance nearly run out—what will you do? The thought perhaps, will seize you, then, “Too late, too late! I cannot enter now.” The voice which says, “Behold the Bridegroom comes,” will startle you in the midnight of your ignorance just as you are about to die—and then you will wring your hands in everlasting despair because you did not, in due time, seek Him who can save you from the wrath to come! Awake, I beseech you, your sluggish hearts, and look forward to your latter end! I pray that I may leave one or two solemn thoughts upon the minds of the careless. Better still, I pray God the Holy Spirit to lead them, now, to believe on the Lord Jesus to the saving of their souls! Amen.

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

# TRUTHFULNESS

## NO. 1585

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

***“O Lord, are not Your eyes upon the truth?”  
Jeremiah 5:3.***

THE allusion is not to doctrinal Truth of God, or truth in the abstract, but to practical truth as it should exist in the hearts and lives of men. It might be read, “Lord, are not Your eyes upon truthfulness?” Or, “upon faithfulness?” The Lord bade them produce a single truthful man in all Jerusalem and Jeremiah answers that if truth were to be found, the Lord Himself best knew where it was, for His eyes were always upon it. In this chapter you must have noticed, when I was reading it, that we have a fearful description of the condition of things in the days of the Prophet Jeremiah. We have also a most melancholy set of pictures of untruthful men which are drawn to the life with a grimly graphic touch which strangely reminds me of the series of Hogarth’s sketches known as, “the Rake’s Progress.” They hold the mirror up not only to the life, but to the heart of the men of the times.

Jerusalem was rotten to the core—the nation was deceitful through and through. In the 27<sup>th</sup> verse we read, “As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit.” They had schemes without number, plots without end and tricks without limit moving about in their minds like birds herded together in a little cage. What worse could be said? When a heart is untruthful and crooked—when uprightness has gone from it—then is it prepared to be the seed plot of every evil thing. Any crime is possible to a liar! He who is rotten with falsehood will tear at the touch of temptation. A man of bold, outspoken vice is far more hopeful than a sly, cunning hypocrite! These untruthful people began with acting untruthfully towards their fellow men. God challenges them to run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see whether they could find a man that executed judgment and sought the truth.

He says that they were not even commonly honest towards those persons whose necessities generally plead for favor. “They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless and the right of the needy do they not judge.” They were not upright in cases where they should have been charitable. They even cheated the widow and the orphan! When a man has once become a rogue, all will be fish that comes to his net and he will as soon rob the fatherless as anybody else. Greed destroys common humanity. Cheating of men is a very common form of deceit, both in the open puffery of trade and the more quiet deceptions of daily life. Traders frequently think it useless to tell the honest truth, even, to one another and so society becomes a network of craft and falsehood. It is a dreadful

thing when men are not to be trusted; when their word is but wind; when without its being to their advantage they would as soon lie as not.

God save us from that form of untruthfulness, since it leads on to something worse, for in the second verse it is said that these people were faithless even to their oaths! "They say, 'Jehovah lives,' but surely they swear falsely." They dared to take that most sacred of all names upon their lips and call God to witness to a lie! He who has gone as far as falsehood will not always stop at perjury. That which makes our blood ran cold to think of may yet be perpetrated by us if we take the first steps in deceit. This being so—that they could perjure themselves—it is little wonder that they were not faithful to their marriage vows. I need not read the strong expression in which the Prophet sets forth the fornication and adultery which abounded in his day—when they did not hesitate to bring grief into their houses and the utmost sorrow and misery to their wives by indulging their passions—for he that is traitorous to *God* will soon be treacherous to all domestic ties.

What can we expect, even, when a man is irreligious but that he will soon be impure if he is not already? I have marked it often that when men who profess to be religious decline from the ways of God, it often happens that if you track them home—not to the home of their wife and children, but to their favorite haunts—you will discover a corruption of life of which the external observer little dreamed! Only Judgment Day will reveal how many hearths have been desolated, how many hearts have been broken by the cruel unfaithfulness of husbands who have crushed those whom they vowed to cherish! This is one of the meanest forms of falsehood—false to their marriage vows as well as to everything else! It is small wonder that they were false to the plain teachings of Providence, for it is written that "they have belied the Lord and said, It is not He."

When God had been chastening, they said, "It is not God. It is bad luck: it is fate: time and chance happen unto all." They would not see the hand of God! Do you wonder that when men have corrupt and crooked hearts they should not be able to see God's plain and truthful proceedings or that when they *do* see them they deny them?" "There is no God," they say, "Or if there is a God, He does not meddle with the things of daily life." "It is cant and hypocrisy," they say, "to talk about our troubles coming from God! He does not interfere with human affairs. The laws of matter, the principles of nature—these govern all things. God has set the world going like a clock and left it to its own wheels and pendulum! Or, better still, He has wound it up like a watch and put it under His pillow and has gone to sleep. How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?"

These men were liars, I say, and all who talk in their fashion are liars, too. These wretches hesitated not to lie against the eternal Light of that thrice blessed Providence which shines in all the lives of men—yes, shines like the daylight to men who are commonly honest and are willing to see. It needs no great learning to perceive the Presence of God all around us. The greatest need is an upright, candid mind. This being so, these men cast off God, Himself—the first step is to put Him out of the field of action

and the next is to have done with Him altogether—to substitute other gods. According to the 19<sup>th</sup> verse, these people had forsaken God and served strange gods. Superstition follows on the heels of unbelief, for bad men are frequently among the most ardent votaries of superstition.

Cast off a pure God and you need a god of some sort and so every man manufactures a god for himself to his liking. The earthy mind of the heathen makes a god of mud. The man whose soul is bound up in his bags makes the golden calf his deity. The dreamy thinker evolves an airy nothing out of his own imagination. The free-thinker invents a god who has no justice and, consequently, takes no vengeance upon sin. Man looks for God and thinks he sees Him when he sees himself in a mirror! By nature every man is his own deity—he worships his own image. It is only the man that is pure in heart that can see God, for what the man is, that will his god be to him—but these men cast off God and set up superstitious beliefs of their own and, therefore, false gods were their choice.

And, worst of all, if there can possibly be worse, when a man once gives himself up to a deceitful heart, he gets to be a destroyer of others. Notice the 26<sup>th</sup> verse. “They lay wait, as he that sets snares; they set a trap, they catch men.” Not content with being lost, themselves, they became the servants of Satan to destroy others! Oh, it is a lamentable thing to think that there are persons whose lips drop moral plagues among youth whenever they speak—whose conduct and example are such that they might well be put in an everlasting quarantine and shut away like lepers, especially from youth, lest they should infect the rising race! I hope that I do not speak to anyone here who is a man-catcher—who sets traps to catch men, aiming to pervert, to corrupt, to mislead, to beguile. Such fiends in human form have surely reached the last stage of corruption when they not only sin, themselves, but are the creators of sin in others!

Look well at this picture of the progress of the deceitful. They begin with being dishonest to their fellow men and at last it comes to this—that they become Satan’s commissioned agents, trappers for the devil, fowlers who ensnare men as bird catchers take the winged fowl! This was the state of affairs in Jeremiah’s time. We have not, I trust, quite such a condition of things among us today, as a plague universally prevalent, but we have much of the disease of deceit in all quarters, high and low, and to what a head it may come, time, alone, can tell! The appeal of Jeremiah was that of a holy man to God. He says, in effect, “O Lord, are not Your eyes such that You can detect what is truth and what is deceit? You spy out the truth. That which is brought to You as worship, You can tell whether it is sincere or not. You can see the pretender’s face through his mask and read his heart through his outward profession. Your eyes spy out the facts which lie beneath the covering of appearances. You can discern between the righteous and the wicked.”

Yes, God is the detector of shams and counterfeits and by His infallible Judgment the precious shall be severed from the vile—“for the Lord is a God of judgment and by Him actions are weighed.” “Are not Your eyes upon the truth?” That is, “Do You not discover truthfulness wherever it

exists?" The Prophet had bid them go through the streets and search for an honest man, but he, in effect, cries, "Lord, You know where he is if there is one yet remaining." God has not to search with a lantern to find a truthful man, for, "the Lord knows them that are His." Lot in Sodom is like a lone bird on the mountains, but the Lord perceived him. The truthful ones are often hidden from mankind, but the eyes of God are steadfastly fixed upon them, as it is written, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open to their cry."

The Lord can detect imposters, but He can also discover truthfulness and we may be sure He will do it. The Prophet also means that God approved of that which He discovered. "Are not Your eyes upon the truth?" You will not look upon hypocrisy—it is Your abhorrence and You will not turn Your eyes that way. Your eyes burn like fire to consume those that would impose upon You, but as for those that are sincere of heart, You love them and watch over them to do them good. They are never out of Your sight. They leave not Your Presence! They bask in Your smile. O Lord, are not Your eyes upon truthfulness, to approve of it, to help it, to defend it, to vindicate it even to the last?

Let this which has gone before stand for a preface. And now let us come to the practical instructions which our text should yield us.

**I.** I think that there are four lessons and the first is THE UTTER FOLLY OF ALL PRETENCE. Hypocrisy is useless altogether, for God sees through it. You may, by great cleverness, delude your fellow men for a while, though you will find it a poor and difficult business. But you can never deceive God. It is not that you may deceive the Lord for a little time and then afterwards be discovered. No, you cannot mislead Him even for an instant. He reads us as we read a book. He sees through us as we see through a sheet of clear glass. The instantaneous imagination which flits across the mind like a stray bird leaving no track nor trace, God observes and knows it altogether.

To pretend to be other than we are before God is a hideous madness. Surely, Satan, himself, must laugh in his sleeve at those who come before God with words of piety on their lips when there is no devotion in their hearts—it is the comedy of a tragic blasphemy! It is utterly useless. It is a waste of time and energy. It were infinitely better that you were doing something else than dress and paint and put on ornaments to go before God who sees you in your spiritual death to be nothing but naked corruption. May God grant that we may never play the fool in this way, for playing the fool it is—to hope to appear before Him otherwise than what we really are deep down in our hearts.

Nor is it only useless, it is hilarious for any man to hope that he can stand better with God by speaking more softly than his heart would suggest, or by using words which his soul does not really enter into! It is, in reality, to be doing the reverse of what he thinks to do. You spoil your sacrifice if there is any tincture of the odious gall of hypocrisy about it. Oh, if the Pharisee did but know that when he made broad the borders of his garments, put on his phylactery and sounded a trumpet before him in the

streets he was not pleasing God, but was actually provoking Him, surely he would have sense enough to mend his ways!

Everything about you and me that is unreal, God hates, and hates it more in His own people than anywhere else! If in prayer we use expressions that really do not come from our *hearts*, or if in talking to our fellow men we stick feathers in our caps to be a little taller and finer than we really are, it is abhorrent in the sight of God! He would sooner have us come before Him in all the nakedness and shame of our first parents and stand there and confess our crimes than dress ourselves out in the fig leaves of formality and hypocrisy. Pretence is injurious to men as well as useless—it is not only an empty wind—but it is as the breath of pestilence.

Moreover, pretense is deadening, for he that begins with tampering with truth will, as I have already shown you, go on from bad to worse. He may say at first, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” And yet, like a dog, he will go into all manner of filthiness before he has done. Let a man once begin to tamper with his conscience, to play tricks with words and especially to trifle with the solemnities of religion—and there is no telling what he will be or do! Oh, I charge my tongue, as I charge yours, never to use a word which is not true when speaking with God or for God, for falsehood before the Judge of all the earth is blasphemy! When we think of Him in our secret souls we must be careful not to allow a false idea, for it is dreadful, even, to *think* an untruth before God.

Falsehood in common life must not be tolerated for a moment. Once begin to sail by the wind of policy and trickery and you must tack and then tack again and again—and as surely as you are alive, you will yet have to tack again! But if you have the motive force of truth within you as a steamboat has its own engine, then you can go straight in the teeth of wind and tempest. The man of truth is the true man. He is the man to honor God in life and death. He is the man to fear nothing and win everything. He is the man whom the Lord accepts, who feels that if the heavens fall it is not for him to prop them with a lie if that could make them stand!

He is the man who is resolved to be before God and before man just what he is, wearing his heart upon his sleeve and throwing back every shutter of his soul that the Divine Eye may inspect all! “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, in whose spirit there is no guile.”

This freedom from guile is a main ingredient of the blessedness. The conscience must be clear and honest or it will gather dust and defilement every day and the man will wax worse and worse. And there is this to be added—that falsehood and pretense before God are damnable! I cannot use a less forcible word than that. Pretence fatally condemns men if it is continued in. I have noticed in reference to conversions one noteworthy fact. I would not wish to assert as a general rule that which happens to be the result of my personal observation, but be the rule what it may, all the world over, this one thing is a statement of my own experience—I have constantly seen almost all sorts of people converted—great blasphemers,



pleasure-seekers, thieves, drunkards, unchaste persons and hardened reprobates—but rarely have I seen a man converted who has been a thorough-paced liar.

I might have been still more correct if I had said *never* to my knowledge have I seen a wily, crafty man of cunning become a disciple of Jesus! The heart which is crammed with craft and treachery seems as if it had passed out of the reach of Divine Grace. You remember that the ground which brought forth fruit when the sower went forth to sow is called “honest and good ground.” There was nothing good in it *spiritually*, but it was honest, true, sincere and, so far, “good.” Give me plain-spokenness and I have hope for a man. If a fellow can look you straight in the eyes, you can deal with him. An open-hearted sailor, honest as the noonday sun, puts on no imitation of religion, but is evidently a bad fellow, a very bad fellow and yet, when the Grace of God enables him to listen to the Gospel, how he sucks it in and with what heartiness he responds to it!

How very different it is with that clever gentleman who always attends a place of worship and knows how to raise quibbles and to answer texts of Scripture—and to blunt the edge of any Truth of God that touches his conscience! You know him, do you not? He is a great sorrow to me. What a mischief-maker he is in all sorts of circles and what a fetcher and carrier of religious gossip! He slips in and out of Gospel services like a dog in a fair and nothing ever comes of his running about. He is not good enough to be good to himself! How can you get at him? He knows all you can tell him and yet knows nothing in truth. He is harder to handle than an eel, for he is all twists and turns. The man is shut up in armor! He is cased all over with his lying self-deceitfulness and the arrows of the Truth of God are blunted when they touch his harness. May none of you ever grow into the likes of him.

I charge you, above all things, be true. If Baal is God, serve him, but say so and do it in broad daylight. If the devil is your master, do not disown him—but do not be one of those mean sneaks who will serve God on Sundays and the devil when it pays them better! Be not one who will profess to be a Christian to be respectable—and under the cover of that will indulge in the most disreputable vices. Such a man, though never out of the reach of the infinite Grace of God—I never meant to say that—is usually the kind of man that the election of God does not light upon and that the Grace of God seldom visits. Amidst a very large and wide observation I have noticed the fact which I have stated and, therefore, I bid all pretenders look to themselves lest their bands be made strong and their death-irons be riveted on their wrists before they know of it.

I would say to young persons beginning life, whatever errors you fall into, whatever mistakes you make, yes, and into whatever transgressions you may wander, be true. Wear no cloak of hypocrisy! Profess not to be what you are not! Never dare to jeopardize your soul by a lie! Remember, no way to Hell is surer than the way of deceit, for it is written, “All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.” He that loves and makes a lie shall be cast away from the Presence of God

and from the Glory of His power. May the Holy Spirit of Truth bless this warning as to the folly of making pretences and forging falsehoods before God.

**II.** Our second lesson is THE GREAT VALUE OF TRUTHFULNESS. “O Lord, are not Your eyes upon truthfulness?” The great value of it is this—that it, alone, is regarded by God in matters of religion—His eyes are upon that which is truthful about us and all the rest is not worthy of His notice. For instance, suppose I say, “I repent.” The question is—Do I really and from my heart sorrow for sin? Is there a change in my mind with regard to sin so that what I once loved I now detest? Is it so?—for only that part of our repentance which is of the *heart* is accepted before God. Tears, sighs, groans—these are mere wind and water and go for nothing if the heart is not broken.

The same holds good in reference to faith. A man may say, “I believe,” as thousands say their creed—“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth,” and so on. Ah, but do you *trust* in God with your whole heart? Are you truly and sincerely believing in God and God’s Word and God’s Son and God’s Gospel? If not, all your professed faith is useless! True faith the Lord accepts and smiles upon, but it is a *real* thing and dwells deeper down than the lips and the throat. As to love to Christ, you know how very easy it is to sing sweet hymns about love to Jesus and yet how few are living so as to prove their attachment to the Redeemer. We say—

**“O love Divine, how sweet You are!  
When shall I find my willing heart  
All taken up by You?”**

But are we knit to Jesus? Is it heart-work? Does our very soul cleave to Jesus? Do we follow after Him as the thirsty hart after the water brook, resolved to find Him and to abide by Him, or to die in the attempt?

Lip-love is little better than hate in the esteem of Christ. Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Christ in your very soul tonight? If you do not, all talk about love is but a mockery of His name! Simon, son of Jonas, have you real practical love to Jesus? Your can sing, Simon, but can you, *will* you feed your Master’s sheep and so give *evidence* of your love? Simon, son of Jonas, you are very eager and fervent, but do you so intensely love Jesus as to care for His little ones and feed His lambs? This shall be the test of your love! This is coming to the point! The same Truth of God bears upon all the ordinances of religion. When we professed to worship God, how much praise was there in the song? As much as the *heart* made?

There was no true praise of God in the noise of that set of pipes and pedals and keys and stops! I judge not those who find these noises helpful to devotion, but assuredly the sounds, themselves, are no part of Divine worship! God does not accept praise from inanimate machinery! What cares He about what noise the air makes when it passes through pipes and valves? Even our singing is no better—it is but the sound of air as it is passing through the throat. What is there in that? No, the Lord only regards *heart*-singing and the song of the soul is the amount and quantity

of our song that was accepted of the Lord. As to prayer. "A large Prayer Meeting." Yes, but the largeness of the number of attendants is not always a gauge of the quantity and power of prayer! The quantity of *heart* in the prayer decides its quality. The same is it with Baptism and with the Lord's Supper. The test is, How far is this done as unto the Lord? How far does the soul enter into the meaning of the outward symbols and get at God in the use of them?

A plunge in this baptistery is no better than a bath you may take in your own home! And the bread and wine on yonder table are no better than what you shall eat tomorrow at your own table unless your *heart* comes to the Baptism, rejoicing in being buried with Christ, and unless your *heart* comes to the Table that you may feast upon His flesh and drink His blood! Let this stand, therefore, as the great test and gauge of all religion! We have no lack of external religion in these days. There, fill a cauldron with it! Set the great pot upon the fire! It turns into steam—see how it flies away! And what is left? Ah, so little that you may search with a microscope to discover any solid residue! Those few grains at the bottom of the pot are, however, all that is real and all that will remain in the day of testing.

Such is the stern fact, that God values the truthfulness and the sincerity of our actions, the heartiness and the depth of them. And He does not regard what we do unless the Truth of God appears in it in all its forms. This is equally true of all your private worship. That daily reading of the chapter is a very excellent thing, but do you read with your *soul* as well as with your eyes? That morning prayer and that evening prayer—those few minutes snatched in the middle of the day—these are good. I will not wish you to alter the regularity of your devotion, but still, it may all be clock-work, godliness with no life in it! Oh, for one single groan from the heart! It may have more prayer in it than an army of collects and liturgies, though there may be prayer there, too, if the heart uses them before the living God with sincerity.

The value of truthfulness will be seen because even in its lowest development, God regards it. I think I might call that its lowest development which is spoken of in the first verse of the chapter, "Go and see if there are any that seek truthfulness"—a man who feels that he is not all he wants to be, but yet he wishes to be truthful. The man who is here sought for is conscious of many faults. Yes, and he feels that sometimes he is not perfectly candid and transparent and, therefore, he hates himself and watches the deceitful tendencies of his heart and zealously seeks to be true. Oh, my dear Friend, if you really are on the right tack. If you are trying to be truthful. If you are laboring to be quite honest before God. If you can say, "I need genuine conversion and real faith in Christ. I cannot put up with shams and hollow professions," then God accepts even that seeking after truth which is in your soul! May He keep you to that search by His Divine Spirit till you come out into the clear, noonday light of the blessed Truth of God as it is in Jesus.

It is evident that truth is regarded by God with acceptance and with pleasure wherever He sees it in the soul. My Friend, you cannot pray in public as you would dearly like to do, but the few words you utter are hot from your heart. You cannot pray long, even in private, but your groan is sincere. In secret you sigh, "Oh, that!" And, "Ah!" And, "Would that!" You *mean* those short prayers. There is no sham in such cries of the heart! Your very soul goes in them and God is pleased with them. I would sooner have a little diamond than a block of granite—and the Lord would sooner have the least morsel of truthfulness than the largest mass of pretentious, ostentatious religion! How far, dear Friend, are you anxious to be right with God? Will you confess that you have sinned and pray to have your sin blotted out by the Lord who sees it all?

How far do you wish that God should know all about you? How far are you glad that there *is* a God? How far are you anxious to get into the very light of God through Jesus Christ? For, just so far as you truthfully wish to be like the true and living God, so far are you acceptable with the Most High! Oh, my dear Brother, Sister, you may have only one talent. You may be very poor and very obscure and, to the Church of God, you may be almost unknown. But if your soul goes up and down these streets crying to God to bless your fellow men. If you speak only what you feel and if you walk before the Lord with tenderness and brokenness of spirit, striving always to be true, He accepts and blesses you! If you are resting on Jesus Christ, alone, and on His precious blood, though your faith is feeble, it is true and God will bless you and save you—and you shall be His in the day when He makes up His jewels!

**III.** Thirdly and very briefly, let us learn THE INFLUENCE OF TRUTHFUL MEN. The influence of really truthful men is too wonderful to be overlooked. First, it is so great with God that one of them can save a city from destruction! Jerusalem was full of every evil and God said, "Shall I not punish such a people as this?" And yet He also said, "If there is any that executes judgment and seeks truth, I will pardon it." He will save a *city* for the sake of one man! A parallel case is that in which the Lord was ready to pardon Sodom if but 10 righteous had been found there. No doubt many a state has been preserved by the godly remnant in it whom the majority would have exterminated had it been in their power! Hence the value of good men in bad localities.

When you, my dear Friend, go into a hamlet or village where there is no religion, do not be so very sorry at your position, for God may have great ends to be served by you. You are a lump of salt and we do not want to keep the salt locked up by itself in the storeroom. Where should the salt be put? Why, where the corruption is likely to come—to preserve what is good—and to keep away that which is evil! I believe that every now and then the Lord puts His hands into the saltbox of the Tabernacle and takes away some that do not wish to go, but He says, "You must go for the benefit of mankind. I have need of salt over there and over there." In the happy Church of which you are a member you would like always to remain, but you must go, or else be useless—which is your choice?

When the Gospel chariot needs horses, will you forever stand in the stall? Are the oxen today as in the days of Job, to be plowing and the asses to be feeding beside them forever? Let us not complain of being used, or of being placed where we can be used! All light must not be stored up in the sun—scatter it over earth's poor lands that need it lest all the trees of the field die in perpetual night. Surely you would not have all waters in the sea—let them be exhaled and let them return in silvery drops upon the soil to fertilize it. It must be so—God blesses us to make us blessings! One good man can benefit a whole district. Ask of God that you may be so sincere, so truthful that He may bless those round about you for your sake.

This influence is such that it never was attributed to any man on account of his riches. God never saved a city because there was a millionaire in it—it may be He has done the reverse! I never heard of any city being saved because there was a learned man in it, or an eloquent man in it, or because there was some great architect in it. No, no, no! The Lord is no respecter of persons and He sees not as man sees. Sincerity before God is approved—true reliance upon Christ the Lord is accepted—and for this He blesses us and others through us. And, mark you one other thing, dear Friend. If you are upright before God and you should happen to fall among people that despise you and reject you, it is a sad thing to have to say, but it is true and a proof of the great influence of truthful men—your word, when you speak for God, shall be like fire and those round about you shall be wood and it shall devour them!

If you are not a savor of life to life to men, you will be a savor of death to death to them. And, mark this, if the Christian Church sends missionaries, as I trust it yet may be awakened to do in such numbers as it ought to send them—and if they are rejected—we are not to conclude that, therefore, they have had no influence whatever. But, solemn and dreadful as it is, it is a fact that the preaching of the Gospel shall be a testimony against the nations and this shall fulfill the eternal purpose of the Lord! This all proves how strong is the influence of a truthful man. He is never a “chip in the porridge—there is a flavor in him.

He that is sincerely right towards God is an efficient operating cause to which effects will be given. He cannot be a mere name or nullity—he must produce results by his influence. He has force and that force will, according to those he comes in contact with, turn to blessings or else involve dread responsibility on those who resist it! Go, I pray you, then, dear Friends, and live with God and then be not afraid to live with men. Whoever they may be, God will make you to have power over them and power with Himself on their behalf.

**IV.** To close. Let me urge upon you, in the fourth place, the last lesson, namely—THE NECESSITY AND THE MEANS OF OUR BEING TRUE AND SINCERE BEFORE HIM WHOSE EYES BEHOLD TRUTHFULNESS. My first argument is this—these times require it. This is an age of tricks and policies. Oh, the puffs—the lying puffs—you meet with everywhere in books and innumerable broadsides. Everybody who goes abroad has need

to carry a discount table with him to arrive at the truth of statements that are made. Be you, therefore, the more true! At the present moment there is going through this city of ours a lying influence of the worst kind on the behalf of Popery. I do not refer to the honest Catholic priest who comes bravely before us in his true colors, but I refer to those who would be Protestant ministers who are beguiling the people and leading them gradually away from the doctrines of the Reformation and the Gospel of Christ.

The land swarms with Jesuitical churchmen who look towards Canterbury but row towards Rome! Everywhere in society you meet with this disguised influence! Are there not hospitals not far from here that are simply houses for proselytizing? Are there not sisterhoods which are more for the making of Romanists than they are for the healing of the sick? Why, we are surrounded with the givers of bribes of all kinds, whose one design is to buy the people from the Gospel! Is there a house but what these sisters and brothers will enter, if they possibly can, with gifts and so called charities, trying to buy the souls of the poor that they may plunge them into the darkness which surrounds themselves? The net is coming closer to us than ever and we cannot help feeling its meshes!

The Truth of God is the way to cut the net! The Truth of God is a straight, honest, sharp-bladed sword and you have only to use it well and away go the meshes of deceit! They may compass sea and land and make their proselytes if they will, but we will preach the everlasting Gospel of the blessed God and we will pray that all who love it shall live it and be truthful and be straight, whoever may be dark and mysterious! I would scorn to make a convert to my persuasion by the concealment of anything that I believe, or by the putting it in a light that was not clear, or by bribery and scheming! If men cannot be saved by truth, they certainly cannot be saved by lies and tricks and policies. Let us be true, then, Brothers and Sisters, all of us, and we may not question the result.

Meet the Prince of Darkness with the Light of God! He cannot stand against it. Our times require our sincerity. So does our God also require it. I have already spoken to this and I need not repeat the solemn strain. So do our souls require it. Our eternal welfare demands it. Oh, there must be no mistake about our being true before God, for when it comes to dying work, nothing will stand us, then, but sincerity! When he comes to the light of the judgment-bar, where will the hypocrite appear? Ah, Judas, come and kiss your Master, again! Betray Him again if you dare! See how the traitor flies! He cannot bear the Light of God, nor can men who are like he is! May you never have one drop of Judas' blood within your veins. God take it away if it is there.

It is an awful thing to live untruthfully. It is a sort of minor Hell to go about and feel that you have not spoken the straight thing in every company. You spoke against a certain person very bitterly when he was not present to defend himself and now you have to meet him and to fake admiration of him in the presence of those who heard your former tirade! You are in an awkward position—a worm in a ring of fire could not wriggle

more painfully! I thank God that I have learned, always, to say to a man what I think of him and I do not find that I make enemies by doing so. No, those to whom I have said the harshest things are some of my best friends this day! I am sure that there is no plain path, no easy path, like that of downright truthfulness towards our fellow men and there is no right path for eternity like that or downright honesty before the living God!

May His Spirit work this excellence in us, for He is the great Author of truth in the inward parts. We are all crooked from birth. We go astray, speaking lies from our childhood! One of the first things that a child does is to speak what is not true and parents, sometimes, teach their children to be false by laughing at their little deceits. Yes, and they will tell their children what is not true as a kind of sportive childish recreation. But this will not do! We are all inclined to shuffle with God. It is hard work to bring us up to confession of sin at the first and to make us pull off our pretty, cheating righteousness. We like to wear a rag or two of our own as long as we can. That base money of our own merit—those counterfeit farthings of supposed excellence—we do not like giving them up.

It is hard to get the last penny out of us and make us bankrupts in the court of Heaven and yet to this we *must* surely come. When we do wrong, do we not feel a tendency to think that it was not so very wrong in *us*? The same offense in anybody else is horrible and we go off to a neighbor to report what has been done—but in ourselves it is a venial error not worth a censure! We hold the scales of justice, as we think, with blind eyes, but we just wink a little beneath the handkerchief and spy out an excuse for ourselves. We must get away from all this false judging and yet we never shall unless the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Truth and Light—shall create in us a new heart and a right spirit. He must keep us true, too, or we shall go aside like a broken bone.

This is the sum of the matter—we must come to God as poor, weak, helpless sinners! We must trust Christ to help us and look to the Divine Spirit to purge and cleanse us and make us truthful! And then all will be well. Let this, then, be our prayer—“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” The Lord grant His blessing to these words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 20, 1882.

*“They have refused to return.”*  
*Jeremiah 5:3.*

THERE is, in the heart of every one of us, the primary evil of sin. We have all transgressed against the Lord. So far, so bad, but that natural sin of ours may be greatly increased by a refusal to turn from it. It is bad enough to have violated God's righteous Law, but to refuse to repent and to continue presumptuously in our iniquity must greatly increase our guilt in the sight of God. This guilt may be still further increased if we refuse to return unto the Lord when we are earnestly and affectionately invited to yield submission to Him. If gracious terms of peace are presented to us and matchless promises of blessing are made to us on condition that we return—and if we are often warned, often entreated, often threatened and yet we still refuse to return, then we continue to pile sin upon sin, till we make our first transgression to be incredibly great.

If I were now to preach to men as simply sinners, it would be a weighty message for me to have to tell them that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” But, alas, I have to preach *to impenitent sinners*, to those who, as our text puts it, “have refused to return,” yes, and to some who have given that refusal with great deliberation, after having been long entreated and persuaded to turn from the error of their ways. Some have been addressed in such tender, pleading language as this, “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” Or this—“Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: 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.” If we have heard such language as that and yet have persisted in refusing to return, we have heaped guilt upon guilt—and the wrath of God will be in proportion to our sin!

I. My first objective, at this time, is to try to find out who are the persons to whom our text refers. And, to do so, I ask this question, WHO HAVE REFUSED TO RETURN? Perhaps I am addressing some persons who say, “You speak of those who have refused to return, who are they? We have done no such thing.” Listen and let conscience be at work while I am answering the question.



First, *there are some who have refused to return and who have said as much.* Perhaps not many of you, who are in this House of Prayer, have gone as far as that, but certainly many people in the great world have actually declared that they will not yield to God. Pharaoh said, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice?" And there are many who talk in the same fashion today. You may cry to them, "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?" But they will not turn, they would rather die. They will sooner burn than turn! They will rather perish in their iniquities than be pardoned after repenting of their sins! And some even accompany their refusal with many a jest and gibe—they sneer at the majesty of Divine Mercy and ridicule that which is their only hope of safety! Concerning sinners of this type, the Lord says, "They have refused to return."

Others there are *who have promised to return, but they have spoken falsely.* They have uttered fair words and pretty speeches, but there the matter has ended. When the Lord has said, "Go work today in My vineyard," they have promptly answered, "Yes, we will go," but they have not gone. In a very emphatic sense, "they have refused to return," because they have promised to do so and then have not done it. He who says, "I will repent," and then does not turn from his evil ways, is certainly no better than the man who said that he would not repent! As a matter of fact, he is even worse, for there is an honesty of outspokenness about the other man who says, "I will not," while there is the falseness of gross hypocrisy in the one who says, "I go, Sir," but who does not go. I fear I have a large number of this order of persons in my congregation—they have never flatly refused the Gospel invitation, as some have openly done, yet they have practically refused it.

There is many a man who has said to the preacher, by his actions if not in words, what Felix said to Paul, "Go your way for this time. When I have a convenient season, I will call for you." But the convenient season has not yet arrived and, in all probability it never will, for they have no more idea of receiving the Gospel message today than they had 10 years ago! With all their friendly appearance and flattering words, they must be put down among those who "have refused to return." I am sure that when I say this, I do but speak the words of truth and justice.

There are some others who "have refused to return" and who have tried to palliate their offense, and quiet their conscience by *offering something else to God instead of really returning to Him.* They will not turn from sin, but they will "take the sacrament," as they call the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. They will not leave their lusts, but they will go to a place of worship. They will not cease from their wicked ways, but they will go on giving to various charities. They will not leave off lying, or committing other offenses against God, but they will assume a pious appearance, they will sing a hymn, they will spend half an hour in reading the Scriptures and a form of prayer, though such an occupation is a great burden to them—but all that is utterly useless! The Lord has said that He will have mercy—not sacrifice. He desires us to turn from our wicked ways and to return to Him. And if we will not, any sacrifices that we may bring to Him will be but vain oblations and God will put them away from Him as things that are abhorred and detestable in His sight.

Solomon tells us of three things that are an abomination unto the Lord, “the sacrifice of the wicked,” “the way of the wicked” and even “the *thoughts* of the wicked.” We may do, or say, or give anything we like, but nothing will please God except our turning from our sin and trusting in the atoning Sacrifice of His dear Son. We may pray till our knees grow hard as iron and weep our eyes away till their sockets are empty, but we shall never obtain the great blessing of salvation while we link our arm with sin and go on delighting in iniquity! Alas, the Lord still has to say of many who make some sort of profession of being religious, “they have refused to return.” They are willing to do almost anything except that. They will repeat the creed, be confirmed, “take the sacrament,” go to chapel, go to church, go anywhere you like, but they will not leave their sin—they will not turn from their evil ways! They will be content to put upon themselves all manner of external religiousness, but they will not be cleansed from their iniquity.

There are others who, practically, “have refused to return” because *they have only returned in part*. They have given up some forms of sin, but their heart is not right in the sight of God. Yet a man cannot truly turn in part—he must turn altogether, or not at all. If I am walking along a certain road, I cannot send one of my legs backward and the other one forward and, in like manner, I cannot send half my soul in one direction and the other half another way, though a great many try to do so! They will give up the grosser sins to which they have been accustomed, but the smaller sins, the more respectable sort of sins, these they will keep on committing. Yet God is not pleased by their changing the form of their guilt. You say that you do not worship Baal but, if you bow down to Ash-taroath, or any other false god, you are an idolater! And if there is any sin to which you cling, you are a sinner in God’s sight!

You read, sometimes, a dreadful story of a man being entangled in machinery. Perhaps it was only one cog of a wheel that caught a corner of his coat, but it gradually drew him in between the works and tore him, limb from limb, till he was utterly destroyed. Oh, if that piece of cloth could have but given way so that man’s life might have been spared! But it did not and though he was only held by the tiniest part of his garment, yet that was sufficient to drag him in where the death-dealing wheels revolved. And it is just so with sin—you cannot get in between the wheels of iniquity and say, “I shall go just so far, but no farther.” No, if you once get in there, you will be ground to pieces as certainly as you are now alive! There is no way of escape but to turn yourself right away from the evil thing that God hates. There must be no union between our heart and that which God abhors! We must have a clean bill of divorcement separating us, once and for all, from the love of sin!

“Well,” says one, “I have given up strong drink. I am no longer a drunkard.” That is well, but you may go to Hell as a sober man. “I have given up Sabbath-breaking,” says another. I am very glad to hear it, my Friend, but you may perish by dishonesty. “Oh, but I am no thief! I am as honest as the day!” Yes, that may be true, and yet you may perish through pride. “But I am not proud,” you say. But you may go to Perdition through your lust, or even through your self-righteousness—any *one*

*sin* harbored and indulged in by the soul will be the means of your everlasting ruin! Any single poison may suffice to kill a man—he need not take 50 different drugs—one will be enough to destroy him. So, if there is but one sin that is loved, that one sin will be as deadly poison to the soul! And as long as you cling to even one sin, I lay this charge at your door, that you “have refused to return.” God grant that you may not continue any longer in this fatal folly and guilt!

I will only mention one more class of those who “have refused to return.” It is *those who return to God only in appearance, yet not in heart*. What a very long way a man may go towards being a Christian and yet miss the mark! He may give up all outward sin, such as his fellow men condemn, and yet he may be lost. Very solemnly would I say to you, my Friend, that you may even be a professed disciple of Christ, but so was Judas. You may preach—so did Judas. You may work miracles—so did Judas. And you may stay with Christ under much opposition and persecution—so did Judas. It was only at a certain point, when the glitter of the pieces of silver was too much for him, that he at last betrayed his Lord and Master. Many covetous persons are the most respectable people we know—yet covetousness is idolatry. They are not likely to give way to sinful lusts—that form of iniquity is too expensive for them. They are too stingy to spend anything on themselves. They are not, generally, the men who drink to excess and waste their substance in riotous living. Oh, no—they are in the shop from early morning till late at night. Look how they work in their shirtsleeves, doing all they can to make money and, perhaps, doing it all honestly. But, still, covetousness is the master-thought with them, and to be rich is the end and aim of their whole life! That is the one thing for which they are striving. If it is covetousness that remains in the soul, there may be great outward reformations even through that very covetousness, for one sin will often sweep away another. There are very many sins that are like sharks that swallow up other devouring monsters. A man may devote himself to some one evil in such a way that he denies himself all the rest—and yet that one will bore such a hole in the vessel of his life that the water will get in and sink it just as surely as if there had been a thousand augers doing their desperate work.

So, you see, dear Friends, that there are many, many persons who “have refused to return” to God. And in telling you about them, I have answered my first question.

**II.** Here is a second one. WHAT DOES THIS REFUSAL TO RETURN TO GOD UNVEIL?

Well, I think that it shows, first, that there is, in the heart of such a person, *an intense love of sin*. The man not only sins, but he loves to sin and, therefore, he will not return to the Lord. The paths of sin are pleasant to him so, if you cry to him, “Return, return, return,” he heeds you not because he loves both the way and the wages of iniquity.

This refusal to return also unveils *a great lack of love to God*. The prodigal son did, at last, return home because, with all his failings and wickedness, he remembered his father and his father’s house—and there was some sort of love still lingering in his heart, so he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” But many have no such love in their souls and,

consequently, the word, "Return," has no power over them. They love their sin, but they love not God, so "they have refused to return."

In many people, there can be no doubt whatever that this refusal to return unveils *a disbelief in God*—perhaps not a disbelief in the *existence* of God so much as a denial of the evil of sin. These refusers of God's mercy say to themselves, "Sin is not half as bad as God makes it out to be, and it will not bring such consequences as He threatens." When we read to them what the Apostle says about those who "obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power," they do not believe that such a sentence as that will ever be executed upon *them*, so they harden their faces like flints and go on in their sin—and absolutely refuse to return unto the Lord. Even when He tells them that unless they turn to Him, He will shut them out of Heaven, they seem to fancy that it does not matter much. Heaven is no very wonderful and desirable place, after all, so they dream and again they harden their hearts and continue in their evil ways. There is, in the heart of every unconverted man, a real atheism—he would be ashamed to be called an atheist, yet he acts like one, and he is one practically. He may not be such a fool as to say with his mouth, "There is no God," but in his *heart* he is all the while saying, "No God for me! I wish there were none. I would gladly escape from the belief even in His existence."

But, oh, this is a dreadful thing, for a man to love sin and not to love God—and not even believe that God speaks the truth! Yet there is a worse evil. This refusal to return *is really a despising of God*. It is as if a man said, "I will not submit to Him! I defy Him to do His worst! Let Him smite me if He can. I am not afraid of His Hell and I do not need His Heaven. I would sooner have the pleasures of sin for a season than dwell with God and behold the glory of Christ to all eternity." Perhaps you think that I am putting the matter too strongly, but I am not. I am only speaking the truth and I wish to speak it in love to the souls of those of you who are refusing to return unto the Lord. You have not that reverence and fear of God which He deserves from you, otherwise you would turn at His reproof and He would pour out His Spirit upon you.

Yet once more, I am afraid that this refusal to return shows that there is, in your heart, *a secret resolve to continue in sin*. If you "have refused to return," and done so for years, I fear that you are fixed in your evil course and that your mind is made up to remain as you are. I would to God that you would think a little of what the end of such a life must be! As you read of the eternal doom of others, you may hear the Lord saying to you, "Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish." There is no way of salvation for a man who perseveres in the way of evil. Then, "Turn you, turn you, from your evil ways," for only by turning from sin, and unto God, can you find salvation! Yet, alas, many have resolved not to turn unto the Lord.

There are some who regard their refusal to return *as a trifling matter*. They trifle with everything. Heaven and Hell seem to them to be of no more worth than a boy's tennis racket and balls—their soul appears to be, at least in their estimation—the merest trifle. I verily believe that

some people think more of their fingernails than they do of their souls, and there is many a man who spends more on the blacking of his boots than he does on the cleansing of his soul from sin. Thus are these all-important things despised by those who “have refused to return.” They make mirth about those matters which have been upon God’s heart from all eternity and, whereas He has given His well-beloved Son to be the Savior of sinners, many sinners act as if salvation were not worth the having, or as if it were merely a thing to be talked about for a while and then to be forgotten forever. O Sirs, surely, these are the mischiefs of the heart which the refusal to return manifestly sets before you!

**III.** I must not say more upon this point, for I want to answer a third question. WHAT IS IT THAT DEEPENS THE SIN OF REFUSING TO RETURN?

Well, first, it is *when correction does not lead to repentance*. Let me read the sentences that precede our text—“You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.” This passage may be applied to any of you who have been very ill and made promises of repentance, all of which you have forgotten. It may also be pressed home upon the consciences of some of you who, perhaps through your own fault, have been thrown out of a situation and cast adrift in the world. You have been corrected by poverty and, possibly, you have also been stricken by affliction, but all that has not touched your heart—you “have refused to return.” I have known some who have lost child after child, and friend after friend. Those bereavements have been God’s method of correcting them, so as to bring them to their senses, yet they have not turned to Him. No, they have even grown all the harder the more they have been chastened! They have stood out, like Pharaoh, against God’s sternest plagues, and still have said, “Who is Jehovah that we should obey His voice?” If they have not said so in words, they have said it in their acts, which have spoken louder than words.

This refusal to return also leads to deepening sin *when conscience is violated*. If I were to put the question to any one of you who have not turned to God, “Ought you not to repent of sin and trust the Savior?” I feel sure that your answer would be, “Of course I ought to! Do you think that I am so ignorant as not to know that it is right to forsake sin and to follow that which is good and holy?” Then, understand, if you know this, yet do it not, your doom will be terrible, according to our Lord’s words, “That servant which knew his lord’s will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.” It is an awful thing, a dreadful thing, to know what you ought to do—to feel that it is right that you should do it—and yet remain stubborn and disobedient!

All this adds greatly to a man’s guilt in refusing to return unto the Lord. And so it does *when he knows that it would be the best thing for him*. I have often heard a man say, “Oh, yes, Sir, I know that if I repented of sin, if I believed in Jesus, if I became right with God, I should be much happier than I am now. Indeed, I cannot rest as I am, I need to find

something better.” Then why do you not find it? You cannot have peace with God all the while that you keep your sin—then why do you not give them up? Why not turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart? When you know that it would be for your present and eternal good. When you know that you would be happier and holier, and yet you continue as you are, who shall be found to plead for you? Where is the advocate, in Heaven or on earth, who will take up the cause of a man who knows the right and yet will not do it—who is well aware that turning to God will save him—and yet acts in direct opposition to his own highest interests? It seems incredible that anyone should be so foolish, yet multitudes are!

It greatly adds to a man’s sin, also, *if this refusal to return to the Lord has been long continued*, and I am afraid, in the case of some here—and, oh, how tenderly would I grasp their hands if I could, and ask them whether it is not so—that this refusal has gone on for many years! Is it not so, my dear Friend? You had a tender conscience in your childhood and you have not quite lost it. You have often been moved to tears under earnest, faithful preaching and, tonight, you hardly know how to sit still. You are ready to cry out to me, “Leave off urging me thus, for I cannot bear it!” And do you expect that God will spare you for another 10 years, or another 20 years? You cannot tell that He will. You have no right to think that He will and, if He does, will you fling the sins of those additional years on to the heap of your past and present iniquities? Will you make the millstone of your guilt bigger and yet bigger until, at last, it sinks you into the lowest Hell?

Take heed, I pray you! It is a great blessing to turn to God in youth, for early piety often becomes eminent piety—but it is terrible to be living year after year without God, without Christ and without hope in the world. Turn unto the Lord speedily, I pray you! Let the time past suffice for you to have refused the mercy of your God and now, this very hour, I charge you, before you dare to go from under this roof, turn unto your God and seek and find pardon and salvation through the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son!

There is one other thing which sometimes makes this refusal to return to God become even greater sin, and that is, *when there is some evil reason at the bottom of it*. I cannot pry into the hearts of my hearers, but I did know a man, once, and he was very fair to look upon—and I often wondered why he did not become a decided Christian. He was respected by all who knew him until they found out his awful secret—he had another family in addition to his own family at home. How could he turn unto God when he was living in sin? I have known others who seemed to be sure of salvation, but they were drinking in private—I mean women as well as men—how could they turn to God when they were secretly indulging in excess? Perhaps it is a very mean and contemptible thing that is keeping you from the Savior. You would turn to God, but you have an old friend who would laugh at you if you became a Christian. Possibly, it is your own father who would despise you, or, perhaps, dear wife, it is your husband who would oppress you if you gave yourself up to the Lord. But shall any of these be allowed to ruin your souls?

They may laugh you into Hell, but they cannot laugh you out again! Men may put cruel pressure upon you till your fear of them drives you away from God, but it would be well if your fear of them could be slain by a greater fear, for it is infinitely better to dread the wrath of God than to fear the anger of man! For what can man do, after all, even if he should kill the body? Remember the words of our Lord Jesus upon this matter, "I say unto you My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him." Be not such cowards as to be lost forever through indulging your cowardice. Pluck up courage enough to seek your own salvation, for "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Oh, flee, flee from the wrath to come! Whatever the ribald crowd may say, what will it matter to you in the tremendous day when you stand before the Great White Throne? How can you, then, escape from the wrath of the Lamb if you do not fly to Him now that you are exposed to the wrath of ungodly men?

**IV.** Now I must close with my last question. WHAT IS THE REAL REASON OF THIS REFUSAL TO RETURN?

Well, first, it may be ignorance. I hope it is, for then Christ can pray, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Notice how the Prophet put it—"Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God." He hoped that it was downright ignorance that kept some of them from yielding their hearts to God, but he said that he would go and try the rich ones—"I will get me unto the great men, and will speak to them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God." But he fared no better there! "These have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds." It is still very much the same—rich and poor alike refuse to return unto the Lord their God.

Then, next, while there are some who are kept away from Christ through ignorance, there are many others who fail to come to Him *through self-conceit*. Perhaps—though it is but a choice of evils—it is better not to know the way of salvation than to know it, and yet not to walk in it. Some poor soul says, "I cannot come to Christ, for I do not know the way." HE is the way! Trust Him and you have already come to Him! But some great man says, "I do not want to go to Christ. I am good enough, I have always been religious." Ah, poor deluded creature! You are defying God by setting up your own righteousness in the place of Christ's righteousness—and so your "sacraments" and your hearing of sermons, and your few miserable good works are to stand instead of yonder amazing Sacrifice upon the Cross where there hangs the Son of God in agonies and blood? You set up your filthy rags to compete with the spotless robe of His matchless righteousness? This is an atrocity which, even if you had committed no other sin, would sink you to the lowest Hell!

But, to tell you the real reason of this refusal to return, I must say that *men do not turn to Christ because they do not want to be made holy*. An eminent man of God said, "To some sinners, the Gospel comes as a

threat from God that it will make them holy.” Is it not a dreadful thing, that men should actually turn what is the greatest of all blessings—the being made holy—into a thing of which they are afraid? They do not want to be true! They do not want to be good! They do not want to be right in God’s sight! They prefer their own ways, they choose to follow their own devices. That is the top and bottom of the mischief! Now I have laid my finger upon the very core of the evil. If you willed to be saved, you would be saved—if you really desired to be made holy, you would be made holy! It is because your heart’s longings still go after that which is evil that, therefore, you do not turn unto the Lord! O mighty Spirit of God, change the very nature of men and bring them to desire the holiness which they now despise, for then will You work it in them and they shall be saved!

The fact is and this is the last reason for refusing to return, *there is, in most men, a preference for present joy above future blessing.* “Heaven” they say—“well, Heaven—Heaven—we do not know where it is. It is a long way off and we cannot tell when we shall get there. But here is an opportunity of spending an evening in pleasurable sin and we prefer that! ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.’” O foolish men! Your poor little bird in the hand is not worth one of the birds in the Paradise of God!

Others cry, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” What? Are you no better than the brute beasts that perish—the cattle in the pasture fattening for the slaughter? What? Has God given us immortal souls and yet are we never to look beyond the present life? Has He adapted us to live with Him at His right hand and yet is the dim horizon of this little life to shut in all that we care to know? Is it so that when you are in your coffin, you will have had your all? “I have no fear,” says one. But have you any *hope*, Sir? That is the point, for many a man has so drugged his soul with the opiate of self-deception that fear, which was meant to be like a watchman, has been lulled into deadly slumber! So listen again—Have you any *hope*? “No,” you answer. Then you are in a desperate condition, but why are you without hope? Because you are without God! I would not change places with you even to get rid of all fear as you have done, for I have a good hope that, through Divine Grace, though my spirit must be parted for a while from this flesh, yet it will never be divided from Christ, my Lord, and it shall be my delight to be—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin  
With God eternally shut in.”***

God bless you, dear Friend! Believe in Jesus and you live at once! Believe in Him this moment and this moment you are saved! Trust Christ now, as soon as this word reaches your ears, and your sin is forgiven, you are justified and accepted and you may go your way, a sinner saved—saved to all eternity! God give you that blessed privilege, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
HEBREWS 2.**



**Verse 1.** *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.* It is well to give heed to what you are now hearing, but it is also important to give heed to what you have heard. Oh, how much have we heard, but have forgotten! How much have we heard which we still remember, but do not practice! Let us, therefore, listen to the words of the Apostle here—“We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip”—as it were, slipping through our fingers and flowing down the stream of time to be carried away into the ocean of oblivion!

**2.** *For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.* See, Brothers and Sisters, the punishment for disobeying the word spoken by angels was death. What, then, must be the penalty of neglecting the great salvation worked by the Divine Redeemer, Himself? He who does not give earnest heed to the Gospel treats with disdain the Lord Jesus Christ and he will have to answer for that sin when the King shall sit upon the Throne of Judgment. Trifle not, therefore, with that salvation which cost Christ so much and which He, Himself, brings to you with bleeding hands. And, oh, if you have hitherto trifled with it, and let it slip, may you now be brought to a better mind, lest haply, despising Christ, the “just recompense of reward” should come upon you! And what will that be? I know of no punishment that can be too severe for the man who treats with contempt the Son of God and tramples on His blood—and every individual who hears the Gospel and yet does not receive Christ as his Savior—is committing that atrocious crime.

**3.** *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?* If we neglect that salvation, is there any other way by which we can be rescued from destruction? Is there any other door of escape if we pass that one by? No, there is none.

**3, 4.** *Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?* This Gospel of ours is stamped with the seal of God! He has set His mark upon it to attest its genuineness and authority. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were the seal that the Gospel was no invention of man, but that it was, indeed, the message of God. Gifts of healing, gifts of tongues, gifts of miracles of divers kinds, were God’s solemn declaration to man, “This is the Gospel. This is My Gospel which I send to you; therefore, refuse it not.”

**5.** *For unto the angels He has not put the world to come in subjection, whereof we speak.* We have no angelic preachers. We sometimes speak of “the seraphic doctor,” but no seraph ever was a preacher of the Gospel of the Grace of God—that honor has been reserved for a lower order of beings!

**6.** *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him?* God speaks to men by men. He has made them to be the choice and chosen instruments of His wondrous works of Grace upon earth. Oh, what a solemn thing it is

to be a preacher of the everlasting Gospel! It is an office so high that an angel might covet it, but one that is so responsible that even an angel might tremble to undertake it! Brothers and Sisters, pray for us who preach, not merely to a few, but to many of our fellow creatures, that we may be the means, in the hand of God, of blessing to our hearers!

**7, 8.** *You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Your hands: You have put all things in subjection under his feet.* It was so with Adam in his measure. Before he fell through his disobedience, all the animals which God had made were inferior to him and acknowledged him as their lord and master. It is infinitely more so in that second Adam who has restored to humanity its lost dignity and, in His own Person, has again elevated man to the head of creation—"You have put all things in subjection under his feet."

**8.** *For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.* Man does not yet rule the world. Wild beasts defy him. Storms vanquish him. There are a thousand things not at present submissive to his control.

**9.** *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He, by the Grace of God, should taste death for every man.* Thus lifting man back into the place where he first stood so far as this matter of dominion is concerned.

**10.** *For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* Is it not amazing that the Christ, who is the Head over all things, could not be perfected for this work of ruling, or for the work of saving, except by sufferings? He stooped to conquer! Not because there was any sin in Him, but that He might be a sympathetic Ruler over His people, He must experience sufferings like those of His subjects. And that He might be a mighty Savior, He must be, Himself, compassed with infirmity, that He might "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." Brothers and Sisters, do you expect to be made perfect without sufferings? It will never be so with you—

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

We shall never be fit for the Heavenly Canaan unless we first pass through the wilderness! There are certain things about us which require this, so thus it must be.

**11.** *For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one.* One family. One by nature with Christ our glorious Head.

**11.** *For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.* Oh, this blessed condescension of Christ! We are often ashamed of ourselves. Alas, we are sometimes so base as to be ashamed of Him—but He is never ashamed to call us brethren.

**12.** *Saying, I will declare Your name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto You.* Christ, the center of the celestial

choirs, is also the center of all the bands of true singers that are yet here below.

**13.** *And again, I will put my trust in Him.* This is our Lord Jesus Christ putting His trust in the Father, overcoming by faith, even as we do. Oh, what a marvelous oneness there is, here, between Christ and His people! Well might the Apostle say that “both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one.”

**13, 14.** *And again, Behold I and the children which God has given Me. Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.* We know what it is to be partakers of flesh and blood. We often wish that we did not. It is the flesh that drags us down. It is the flesh that brings us a thousand sorrows. I have a converted soul, but an unconverted body. Christ has healed my soul, but He has left my body, to a large extent, still in bondage and, therefore, it still has to suffer. But the Lord will redeem even that! The redemption of the body is the adoption and that is to come at the day of the Resurrection. But think of Christ, who was a partaker of the Eternal Godhead, condescending to make Himself a partaker of flesh and blood—the Godhead linked with materialism! The Infinite, an Infant! The Eternal prepared to die and actually dying! Oh, wondrous mystery, this union of Deity with humanity in the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord! Why did He become a partaker of flesh and blood and die upon the Cross? Listen—

**14.** *That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.* That, through dying, He might overthrow Satan’s power for all who trust Him!

**15-18.** *And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Therefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.* Glory be to His holy name forever and ever! Amen.

## **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—587, 527, 521, 522.**

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## **END OF VOLUME 45**

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

# STORMING THE BATTLEMENTS

## NO. 38

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1855,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“Go up upon her walls and destroy; but make not a full end:  
take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord’s.”  
Jeremiah 5:10.***

WE have been talking very freely during this last week of “glorious victories,” of “brilliant successes,” of “sieges” and of “stormings.” We little know what the dread reality is of which we boast. Could our eyes once behold the storming of a city, the sacking of a town, the pillage of the soldiery, the barbarous deeds of fury when the blood is up and long delay has maddened souls—could we see the fields saturated with blood and soaked with gore—could we spend one hour among the corpses and the dying. Or if we could only let the din of battle and the noise of the guns reach our ears, we would not so much rejoice if we had anything of fellow feeling for others as well as for ourselves. The death of an enemy is to me a cause of regret as well as the death of a friend. Are not *all* my brethren? And does not Jesus tell me so? Are we not all made of one flesh? And has not God “made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth”? Let us, then, when we hear of slaughtered enemies and of thousands that have fallen, cease to rejoice in their death! It would betray a spirit utterly inconsistent with the Christian religion, more akin to Mohammedanism, or to the fierce doctrines of Buddha—but not in the least to be brought into compatibility with the truths of the Gospel of the glorious God. And yet with all that, far be it from me to check any gladness which this nation may experience, now that it hopes that the incubus of war may at last be removed. Clap your hands, O Britons! Rejoice, you sons of Albion! There is hope that your swords may yet be sheathed, that your men shall not be mown down as grass before the scythe, that the desolation of your hearths shall now be stayed. There is hope at last that the tyrant shall be humbled and that peace shall be restored! With this view of it, let our hearts leap for joy and let us sing unto God who has gotten us the victory! Let us now rejoice that earth’s wounds may be staunches—that her blood need not flow any longer and that peace may be established! We trust upon a lasting footing. This, I think, should be the Christian view of it. We should rejoice with the hope of better things. But we should lament over the awful death and terrible carnage—the extent of which we know not yet—but which history shall write among the black things. My earnest prayer is that our brave soldiers may honor

themselves as much by moderation in victory as by endurance of privation and valor in attack. I have nothing more to say upon that subject whatever. I am now about to turn to a different kind of siege, another kind of sacking of cities.

Jerusalem had sinned against God. She had rebelled against the Most High, had set up for herself false gods and bowed before them. And when God threatened her with chastisement, she built around herself strong battlements and bastions. She said, "I am safe and secure. What though Jehovah has gone away, I will trust in the gods of nations. Though the Temple is cast down, yet we will rely upon these bulwarks and strong fortifications that we have erected." "Ah," said God, "Jerusalem, I will punish you. You are My chosen one, therefore will I chastise you. I will gather together mighty men and will speak unto them. I will bid them come unto you and they shall visit you for these things. My soul shall be avenged on such a nation as this." And He calls together the Chaldeans and Babylonians and says to those fierce men who speak in uncouth language, "Go up upon her walls and destroy. But make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." Thus God used wicked men to be His scourge to chastise a still more wicked nation who were yet the objects of His affection and love!

This morning I shall take my text and address it in four ways to different classes of men. First I think this may be spoken by God of *His Church*. "Go up against her," says He to her enemies, "take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." This may also be spoken to *many a Christian*. God often bids troubles and enemies go up against Christians to take away their battlements that are not the Lord's. This, also, may be spoken to *the young convert* who is trusting in himself and has not yet been brought low. God says to doubts and fears and convictions and to the Law, "Go up against him; make not a full end: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's." And this also shall be spoken, at last, to the *impertinent sinner*, who, putting his trust in his own strength—he hopes by joining hand with hand to go unpunished—God shall say, at last, to His angels, "Go up against her." He will, however, in the last case, alter the next phrase—"make a full end; take away her battlements. For they are not the Lord's."

**I.** First, then, I shall regard this text as spoken concerning THE CHURCH. God frequently says to the Church's enemies, "Go up against her, but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." God's Church is very fond of building walls which her God has not sanctioned. She is not content to trust in the arm of God, but she will add thereto some extraneous help which God utterly abhors. "Beautiful for situation—the joy of the whole earth—is Mount Zion upon the sides of the north, the city of the great king. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, even so is God round about His people, from henceforth, forevermore." But His people are not content with God's be-

ing round about them—they seek some other protection. The Church has very often gone to king Jareb for help, or to the world for aid. And then God has said to her enemies, “Go up against her, but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s. She shall not have them. I am her battlement. She is to have none other.”

1. The first I may mention is this. *The Church of God has sometimes sought to make the government its battlements.* There was an ancient Church in Rome, a holy and pious Church of God whose members worshipped and bowed down before the God of Israel. But there was a certain wily monarch called Constantine who believed that should he turn Christian he should thus secure the empire more firmly to himself and put down sundry other commanders who were helped by the priests. In order to gain his own ends and promote his own honor, he pretends to see a vision in the skies and professes to become a Christian. He makes himself the head of the Church and leader of the faithful. The Church fell into his arms and then State and Church became allied. What was the consequence of the Church of Rome becoming allied with the State? Why she has become a corrupt mass of impurity—such a disgrace to the world that the sooner the last vestige of her shall be swept away, the better! This was because she built up bulwarks that are not the Lord’s and God has said to her enemies, “Go up upon her walls.” Yes, her apostasy is now so great that doubtless the Judge of all the earth shall make a “full end” of her and the prophecy of the Apocalypse shall be fulfilled—“Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.”

There are true Protestant churches standing now that have made unholy alliances with governments. Christ testified, “My Kingdom is not of this world,” and yet they have crouched at the feet of kings and monarchs. They have obtained State endowments and grants. And so they have become high and mighty and honorable and they laugh at those pure Churches who will not buckle and commit fornication with the kings of the earth, but who stand out for the royal supremacy of the Savior and look only to Christ as the Head of the Church! They apply to us the epithets of “schismatics,” “dissenters,” and such-like. But I believe that God shall yet say of every State church, whether it be the Church of England, Ireland, Scotland or of anywhere else, “Go up upon her walls and destroy. But make not a full end,” for there are thousands of pious men in her midst, “take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” Even now we see a stir throughout the world to take away these battlements. The holy and pious men in the Church of England have multiplied amazingly during the last few years. It is pleasing to see the great improvement in the Establishment. I think no class of Christians have made more speedy advances in reformation than they have. They have a stirring in their midst and are saying, “Why should we be under

the government any longer?” There are many clergymen who have said, “We have no wish whatever for this union—we would be glad to get away from all State control.” I wonder why they do not do it and follow their convictions? They are saying, “take away her battlements, they are not the Lord’s.” And if they do not take them away, themselves, we are advancing by slow degrees and, by the aid of Heaven, we will take away their battlements for them one of these fine days and they will wake and find that church taxes and tithes have ceased. They will find that they must stand or fall themselves—that God’s Church is strong enough to stand, herself, without government. It will be a happy day for the Church of England—God bless her!

I love her—when those battlements are taken down, when the last stone of State patronage is thrown down, when the unneeded help of kings and princes shall be refused—then she will come out a glorious church—like a sheep from the washing! She will be the honor of our land and we who now stand aloof from her will be far more likely to fall into her bosom, for her articles are the very marrow of Truth and many of her sons are the excellent of the earth. Oh, angel, soon blow your trumpet of war and give the command—“Go up upon her walls, make not a full end.” She is one of My Churches, “take away her battlements. They are not the Lord’s.” The Lord has nothing to do with such a battlement, He hates it altogether—State alliance is obnoxious to the God of Israel. And when kings shall become real nursing fathers, they will, in another mode, afford the gold of Sheba and the free will offering of their piety.

**2.** But there are other churches that are making battlements for themselves. These are to be found among us as well as other denominations. There are churches who make battlements out of *the wealth of their members*. It is a respectable congregation, a most respectable church—the members are, most of them, wealthy. They say within themselves, “We are a strong and wealthy church. Nothing can hurt us. We stand fast.” You will find wherever that idea possesses the mind, Prayer Meetings will be ill attended. They do not think it necessary to pray much to keep up the cause. “If a five pound note is needed,” says a brother, “we can give it.” They do not think it necessary to have a preacher to bring together the multitude—they are strong enough in themselves! They are a glorious corporation of quiet personages. They like to hear a drawing room preacher. They would think it beneath their dignity to enjoy anything which the populace could understand. That would be a degradation to their high and honorable position! We know some churches now—it would be invidious to point the finger at them—where wealth and rank are reckoned to be the first thing.

Now, we do love to have wealth and rank in our own midst—we always thank God when He has brought among us men who can do something for the cause of Truth. We bless God when we see Zaccheus, who had abundance of gold and silver, giving some of his gifts to the poor of the

Lord's family. We like to see the princes and kings bringing presents and bowing before the King of all the earth. But if any Church bows before the golden calf, there will go forth the mandate, "Go up upon her and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." And down the church will come! God shall humble it. He will bring it down from its high position. He will say, "Though you sit on the rocks and build your house among the stars of Heaven, even there will I pluck you down and this right hand shall reach you." God will not have His Church relying on man and putting trust in princes. "Cursed shall be such a one," He says. "He shall be like a shrub in the desert, he shall not see when good comes; his leaf shall wither and he shall bring forth no fruit unto perfection."

**3.** There are some other churches relying upon *learning and erudition*. The learning of their ministers seems to be a great fort, bastion and castle. They say, for instance, "Why have these uneducated and unrefined preachers? Of what use are they? We like men of sound argument, men who give a large amount of Biblical criticism, who can decide this, that, and the other." They rely upon their minister. He is their tower of strength. He is their all in all. He happens to be a learned man. They say, "What is the use for anyone to oppose him? See the amount of his learning! Why his enemies would be cut in pieces because he is so mighty and learned!"

Never let it be said that I have despised learning or true knowledge. Let us have as much as we can. We thank God when men of learning are brought into the Church, when God renders them useful. But the church nowadays is beginning to trust too much to learning, relying too much on philosophy and upon the understanding of man instead of the Word of God! I do believe a large proportion of professing Christians have their faith in the word of man and not in the Word of God! They say, "Such-and-Such a Divine said so. So-and-So beautifully explained that passage and it must be right." But whatever church shall do this, God will say, "Go up upon her walls and destroy; make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's."

**4.** But I think that the worst battlement the churches now have is an earthwork of *great and extreme caution*. It is held to be improper that certain obnoxious Truths in the Bible should be preached! Sundry reasons are given why they should be withheld. One is because it tends to discourage men from coming to Christ. Another is because certain persons will be offended on account of these rough edges of the Gospel. Some would say, "O keep them back! You need not preach such-and-such a Doctrine. Why preach Distinguishing Grace? Why Divine Sovereignty? Why Election? Why Perseverance? Why Effectual Calling—these are calculated to offend the people—they cannot endure such Truths of God!" If you tell them about the love of Christ and the vast mercy of God and such like it will always be pleasing and satisfying. But you must never



preach deep searching Law-work. You must not be cutting at the heart and sending the lancet into the soul—that would be dangerous!” Hence most churches are shielding themselves behind an ignominious bulwark of extreme caution. You never hear their ministers spoken against. They are quite safe behind the screen. You will be very much puzzled to tell what are the real doctrinal views of our modern Divines. I believe you will pick up in some poor humble chapel more doctrinal knowledge in half an hour than in some of your larger chapels in half a century!

God’s Church must be brought once more to rely upon the pure Truth, upon the simple Gospel, the unalloyed Doctrines of the Grace of God. O may this Church never have any bulwark but the promises of God! May He be her strength and shield! May His Aegis be over our head and be our constant guard! May we never depart from the simplicity of the faith! And whether men hear, or whether they forbear, may we say—

**“Should all the forms that men devise  
Assault my soul with treacherous art—  
I’ll call them vanities and lies  
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”**

**II.** We shall now address the text to THE CHRISTIAN—THE REAL CHILD OF GOD. The true Believer, also, has a proneness to do as the Church does—to build up sundry “battlements,” which “are not the Lord’s” and to put his hope, his confidence and his affection in something else besides the Word of the God of Israel.

**1.** The first thing, dearly Beloved, whereof we often make a fortress wherein to hide, is *the love of the creature*. The Christians’ happiness should be in God and God, alone. He should be able to say, “All my springs are in You. From You and You, alone, I always draw my bliss.” Christ in His Person, His Grace, His offices, His mercy, ought to be our only joy and our glory should be that “Christ is all.” But Beloved, we are too much inclined by nature to hew out for ourselves broken cisterns that hold no water! There is a drop or two of comfort somewhere in the bottom of the leaky pitcher and until it is dried up we do not believe it is broken at all. We trust in that sooner than in the fountain of living waters. Now whenever any of us foolishly make a battlement of the creature, God will say to afflictions—“Go up against her: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” There is a father—he has a son. That son is as dear to him as his own flesh and blood. Let him take heed lest that child become too much his darling, lest he sets *him* in the place of the Most High God! Let him take heed lest he makes an idol of him for as sure as ever he does, God, by affliction, will say to the enemy, “Go up against him: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” There is a husband. He dotes upon his wife, as he should do. The Scripture tells us that a man cannot love his wife too much—“Husbands love you wives, as Christ also loves the Church”—and that is infinitely. Yet this man has proceeded to a foolish fondness and idolatry. God says, “Go

up against him and destroy; make not a full end: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's." We fix our love and affection on some dear friend of ours and there is our hope and trust. God says, "What? Though you take counsel together, you have not taken counsel of Me and, therefore, I will take away your trust. What? Though you have walked in piety, you have not walked with Me as you should. Go up against her, O Death! Go against her, O Affliction! Take away that battlement, it is not the Lord's. You shall live on Me—you shall not feed, like Ephraim, on the wind. You shall lean on My arm. You shall not trust in the staff of these broken reeds. You shall set your affections on things above and not on things on earth. For I will blast the joy of earth. I will send a blight upon your fair harvest. I will make the clouds obscure your sun and you shall cry unto me, 'O God, You are my trust, my sun, my hope, my All.'"

Oh, what a mercy it is that He does not make a "full end," Beloved! It may sometimes seem to be an end, but it is not a *full* end. There may be at times an end of our hopes, an end of our faith, an end of our confidence—but it is not a full end. There is a little hope left. There is just a drop of oil in the cruse—there is the handful of meal in the barrel—it is not yet the full end. Though He has taken away many joys and blasted many hopes. Though many of our fair flowers have been blighted, He has left something. One star will twinkle in the sky, one faint lamp glimmers from yonder distant cottage—you are not quite lost, O wanderer of the night. He has not made a full end. But He may do so unless we come to Him!

**2.** Once more. Many of us are too prone to make battlements out of our *past experience* and to rely upon that instead of confiding in Jesus Christ. There is a sort of self-complacency which reviews the past and says, "there I fought Apollyon. There I climbed the Hill Difficulty. There I waded through the Slough of Despond." The next thought is, "And what a fine fellow I am! I have done all this. Why, there is nothing can hurt me. No, no! If I have done all this, I can do everything else that is to be accomplished. Am I not a great soldier? Shall any make me afraid? No. I have confidence in my own prowess, for my own arm has won many a victory. Surely I shall never be moved." Such a man cannot but think lightly of the present. He does not need communion with Christ every day. No, he lives on the past. He does not care to have further manifestations of Jesus. He does not need fresh evidence. He looks at the old musty evidences. He makes past Grace the bread of his soul, instead of using it as a seasoning to sweeten his meal. What does God say whenever His people do not need Him, but live on what they used to have of Him and are content with the love He once gave them? "Ah, I will take away your battlements." He calls out to doubts and fears—"Go up upon his walls and destroy; take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's."

**3.** Then, again, we sometimes get to trusting too much to *evidence and good works*. Ralph Erskine did not say amiss when he remarked, “I have got more hurt by my good works than my bad ones.” That seems something like Antinomianism, but it is true. We find it so by experience. “My bad works,” said Erskine, “always drove me to the Savior for mercy. My good works often kept me from Him and I began to trust in myself.” Is it not so with us? We often get a pleasing opinion of ourselves—we are preaching so many times a week, we attend so many Prayer Meetings. We are doing good in the Sunday school. We are valuable deacons, important members of the Church—we are giving away so much in charity. And we say, “Surely I am a child of God—I must be. I am an heir of Heaven. Look at me! See what robes I wear! Have I not, indeed, a righteousness about me that proves me to be a child of God?” Then we begin to trust in ourselves and say, “Surely I cannot be moved, my mountain stands firm and fast.” Do you know what is the usual rule of Heaven when we thus boast? Why the command is given to the foe—“Go up against him; make not a full end: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” And what is the consequence? Why, perhaps God allows us to fall into sin and down goes self-sufficiency! Many a Christian owes his falls to a presumptuous confidence in his Graces. I conceive that no outward sin is more abhorred by God than this most wicked sin of reliance on ourselves. May none of you ever learn your own weakness by reading a black book of your own backslidings.

More to be desired is the other method of God when He sends the light of the Spirit into the heart and exposes our corruption. Satan comes roaring there, conscience begins calling out, “Man you are not perfect.” All the corruptions burst up like a volcano that had slept for a little moment. We are taken into the dark chambers of imagery. We look at ourselves and say, “Where are my battlements gone?” We go to the hilltop and see the battlements are all gone. We go by the side of the city—they are all departed. Then we go again to Christ and say—

***“I, the chief of sinners am,  
Jesus died for me.  
Nothing in my hands I bring;  
Simply to your Cross I cling.”***

Heaven smiles again, for now the heart is right and the soul is in the most fitting position. Take care of your Graces, Christians!

**III.** Now to bring the text to the young CONVERT, to the man in that state of our religious history which we call conversion to God. All men by nature build battlements for themselves to hide behind. Our father Adam gave us as a portion of our inheritance when we were born—high battlements—very high ones! And we are so fond of them that it is hard to part from them. There are different lines of them—multiplied walls of fortifications. And when Christ comes to storm the heart, to carry the city by

storm, to take it for Himself, there is a tearing down of all these different walls which protect the city.

**1.** In the forefront of the city of Mansoul frowns the wall of *carelessness*—an erection of Satanic masonry. It is made of black granite and mortals cannot injure it. Bring Law, like a huge pickaxe, to break it—you cannot knock a single chip off. Fire your shells at it—send against it all the hot cannonballs that any of the ten great mortars of the Commandments can fire and you cannot move it in the least. Bring the great battering ram of powerful preaching against it. Speak with a voice that might wake the dead and almost make Satan tremble—the man sits careless and hardened. At last a gracious God cries out—“Take away her battlements, they are not the Lord’s.” And at a glance, down crumbles the battlement! The careless man becomes tender-hearted, the soul that was hard as iron has become soft as wax. The man who once could laugh at Gospel warnings and despise the preaching of the minister now sits down and trembles at every word. The Lord is in the whirlwind—now He is in the fire, yes, He is in the still small voice. Everything is now heard, for God has taken away the first battlement—the battlement of a hard heart and a careless life. Some of you have got as far as that—God has taken that away. I know many of you by the tears that glisten on your cheeks—those precious diamonds of Heaven testify that you are not careless!

**2.** The first wall is surmounted, but the city is not yet taken—the Christian minister, under the hand of God, has to storm the next wall—that is the wall of *self-righteousness*. Many poor sermons get their brains knocked out in the attack. Many of them are bayoneted by prejudice in trying to storm that bastion. Thousands of good sermons are spent all in vain in trying to make it totter and shake, especially among you good moral people, children of pious parents and godly relations. How strong that wall is with you! It does not seem to be made of separate stones, but it is all one great solid rock. But you are guilty—you are depraved—you are fallen. Yes, you believe it and you pay a compliment to Scripture in so doing. But you do not *feel* it. You are the humble ones that stoop down—as you must because you cannot sit upright. But you are not the humble ones who stoop willingly and feel that you are less than nothing. You say so. You call yourself a beggar, but you know that you are “rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing,” in your own opinion. How hard it is to storm this wall! It must be carried at the point of the bayonet of faithful warning. There is no taking it except by boldly climbing up with the shout of, “By Grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God!” We have to use very rough words to get your self-righteousness down. Yes, and when we think it is nearly overthrown, it is soon piled up again in the night. The devil appears and miners are soon out to repair all the breaches. We thought we had carried you by storm and proved you to be lost and ruined ones. But you

take heart and say, "I am not as bad as I seem. I think I am yet very good." We have, by the Grace of God, to destroy that wall before we can get at your hearts.

**3.** Thus the double rampart is passed, but another still opposes our progress—Christ's warriors know it by the name of *self-sufficiency*. "Ah," says the man, "I see I am a lost and ruined sinner—my hope has deceived me. But I have another wall. I can make myself better. I can build and repair." So he begins piling up the wall and sits down behind it. He makes the Covenant of Grace into a Covenant of Works. He thinks faith is a kind of work and that we are saved by it. He imagines we are to believe and repent and that we thus earn salvation. He denies that faith and repentance are God's gifts, only, and sits down behind his self-sufficiency, thinking, "I can do all that,"

Oh, blessed day when God directs His shots against that! It know I hugged that old idea a long while with my "cans," "cans," "cans." But I found my "cans" would hold no water and all I put in ran out. There came an Election sermon. But that did not please me. There came a Law sermon showing me my powerlessness. But I did not believe it. I thought it was the whim of some old experimental Christian, some dogma of ancient times that would not suit men now. Then there came another sermon, concerning death and sin. But I did not believe I was dead, for I knew I was alive enough and could repent and set myself right by-and-by. Then there came a strong exhortation sermon. But I felt I could set my house in order when I liked, that I could do it next Tuesday week as well as I could do it at once. So did I continually trust in my self-sufficiency. At last, however, when God really brought me to myself, He sent one great shot which shivered it all and, lo, I found myself utterly defenseless! I thought I was more than mighty angels and could accomplish all things. Then I found myself less than nothing. So, also, every truly convicted sinner finds that repentance and faith must come from God, that reliance must be placed alone on the Most High! And instead of looking to himself, he is forced to cast himself at the feet of Sovereign Mercy. I trust, with many of you, that two of the walls have been broken down. And now, may God in His Grace break down the other and say to his ministers, "Go up upon their walls: take away their battlements, for they are not the Lord's."

Perhaps there are some here who have had their battlements taken away, lately, and they think God is about to destroy them. You think you will perish, that you have no goodness, no hope, no help—nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Now hear you the last words, "make *not* a full end." God *would* make a "full end" of you if He did not take away your battlements, for you would then die inside the walls of self-sufficiency. But He says, "make *not* a full end." Rely, then, upon His power and Grace, for He will not destroy you!

**IV.** Now, lastly, I must take this passage as it respects the UNGODLY AND THE SINNER AT LAST. How many there shall be at the Last Great Day who will sit down very comfortably behind certain battlements that they have built! There is one man—a monarch—"I am irresponsible," he says. "Who shall ever bring anything to my charge? I am an autocrat—I give no account of my matters." Oh, he will find out at last that God is Master of emperors and Judge of princes when his battlements shall be taken away! Another says, "Cannot I do as I like with my own? What if God did make me, I shall not serve Him. I shall follow my own will. I have in my own nature everything that is good and I shall do as my nature dictates. I shall trust in that and if there is a higher power, He will exonerate me because I only followed my nature." But he will find his hopes to be visionary and his "reason" to be foolish when God shall say, "The soul that sins, it shall die"—and when His thundering voice shall pronounce the sentence—"Depart you cursed, into everlasting fire."

Again, there is a company of men joined hand in hand and they think they will resist the Eternal. Yes, they have a plan for subverting the Kingdom of Christ! They say, "We are wise and mighty. We have fortified ourselves. We have made a covenant with death and a league with Hell," Ah, they little think what will become of their battlements at the Last Great Day when they shall see them crumble and fall. With what fear and alarm will they then cry—"Rocks, hide us! Mountains, fall on us!"? What will they do when God's wrath goes forth as a fire in the day of His fierce anger, when He shall melt their hopes and make them pass away, when He shall blast all their joys and compel them to stand naked before His Presence? Then I picture to myself, in the Day of Judgment, a band of men who have said on earth, "We will trust in God's mercy. We do not believe in these religions at all—God is merciful and we will trust in mercy." Now suppose—it is impossible because their delusion will be dissipated at death—but suppose them, in the dread day of account, to be crouching in the fortress of uncovenanted mercy. The Judge opens His eyes upon their city and says, "Angels! Go up upon their walls—*make a full end*—take away their battlements, they are not the Lord's." Then the angels go and demolish every stone of the bulwarks. They utterly cut off all hope of mercy. Each time they lay on the blow, they cry, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord! Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins! You are saved by Grace through faith, but you trusted in naked mercy, you shall not have it, but you shall have naked justice and nothing else."

Then there is another party who have built a castle of rites and ceremonies. On one side they have a huge piece of granite called, "Baptism," and on another they have, "The Lord's Supper." And in the middle, they have, "Confirmation." They think what a glorious castle they have built! "We lost?—We paid tithe of mint, cummin and anise. We paid tithes of all we possessed. We know that Grace is in ceremonies." Out comes the Al-

mighty and with one Word blasts their castle, simply saying, "Take away their battlements, for they are not the Lord's." Ungodly men and women! What will you do at last without battlements, without a rock to hide yourselves, without a wall behind which to conceal yourselves, when the storm of the Terrible One shall be as a blast against the wall? How shall you stand when your hopes shall melt like airy dreams, like visions of the night that pass away when one awakes? What will you do when He despises your image and when all your hopes are utterly gone?

The Christian man can go away with the reflection that *his battlements can never be taken away because they ARE the Lord's*. We rely upon the electing love of Jehovah—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We trust in the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, the Everlasting Son. We depend wholly upon the merits, blood and righteousness of *Jehovah—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*. We are confiding in the Holy Spirit. We confess that we are nothing of ourselves—that it is not of him that wills, or of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. We do not acknowledge one scrap of the creature in our salvation nor one atom of self. We rely entirely upon Covenant love, upon Covenant mercy, Covenant oaths, Covenant faithfulness, Covenant immutability and, resting on these, we know our battlements cannot be taken away! Oh, Christian! Surrounded by these walls, we may laugh at all your foes! Can the devil touch us now? He shall only look upon us and despair. Can doubts and fears take away our battlements? No—they stand fast and firm and our poor fears are but as straws dashed against the wall by the wind. For, "though we believe not, yet He abides faithful"—and not all the temptations of a sinful world, or our own carnal hearts can separate us from the Savior's love! We have a city, the walls of which are mighty, the foundations of which are eternal. We have a God who says, "I the Lord do keep her and do water her every moment, lest any hurt her. I will keep her day and night." Trust here, Christian—salvation shall God appoint for walls and bulwarks! And surrounded by these, you may smile at all your foes. But take heed you add nothing to them, for if you do, the message will be, "Take away the battlements, they are not the Lord's."

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

# GOD'S BARRIERS AGAINST MAN'S SIN

## NO. 220

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 16, 1856,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“Fear you not Me? says the LORD: will you not tremble at My presence, which has placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people has a revolting and a rebellious heart. They are revolted and gone.”  
Jeremiah 5:22, 23.***

THE majesty of God, as displayed in creation and Providence, ought to stir up our hearts in adoring wonder and melt them down in willing obedience to His commands. The Almighty power of Jehovah so clearly manifest in the works of His hands should constrain us, His creatures, to fear His name and prostrate ourselves in humble reverence before His Throne. When we know that the sea, however tempestuous is entirely submissive to the behests of God. That when He says, “Hitherto shall you come, but no further,” it dares not encroach—“the pride of its waves is stayed.” When we know that God bridles the tempest, though “nature rocks beneath His tread,” and curbs the boisterous storm—He ought to be feared—verily, He is a God before whom it is no dishonor for us to bow ourselves in the very dust.

The contemplation of the marvelous works which He does upon “the great and wide sea,” where He tosses the waves to and fro and yet keeps them in their ordained courses, should draw forth our most devout emotions and I could almost say, inspire us with homage. Great are You, O Lord God! Greatly are You to be praised. Let the world which You have made and all that is therein, declare Your glory! I can scarcely conceive a heart so callous that it feels no awe, or a human mind so dull and destitute of understanding as fairly to view the tokens of God’s omnipotent power and then turn aside without some sense of the fitness of obedience. One might think the impression would be spontaneous in every breast and if not, only let reason do her office and by slower process every mind should yet be convinced.

Let your eyes behold the stars. God alone can tell their numbers, yet He calls them all by names—by Him they are marshaled in their spheres and travel through the aerial universe just as He gives them charge. They are all His *servants* who with cheerful haste perform the bidding of their Lord. You see how the stormy wind and tempest like *slaves* obey His will. And you know that the great pulse of the ocean throbs and vibrates with its ebb and flow entirely under His control. Have these great things of God,



these wondrous works of His, no lesson to teach us? Do they not while declaring His glory reveal our duty? Our poets, both the sacred and the uninspired, have feigned consciousness to those inanimate agents that they might the more truthfully represent their honorable service. But if because we are rational and intelligent beings, we withhold our allegiance from our rightful Sovereign, then our privileges are a curse and our glory is a shame.

Alas then, the instincts of men very often guide them to act by impulse more wisely than they commonly do by a settled conviction. Where is the man that will not bend the knee in time of trouble? Where is the man that does not acknowledge God when he hears the terrible voice of His deep-toned thunder and sees with alarm the shafts of His lightning fly abroad, cleaving the thick darkness of the atmosphere? In times of plague, famine and pestilence, men are prone to take refuge in religion—they will make confession, like Pharaoh, when he said, “I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous and I and my people are wicked.” But like he, when “the rain and the hail and the thunders have ceased,” when the plagues are removed, then they sin more and their hearts are hardened. Hence their sin becomes exceedingly sinful, since they sin against truths which even nature itself teaches us are most just.

We might learn, even without the written oracles of Scripture that we ought to obey God, if our foolish hearts were not so darkened. Thus unbelief of the Almighty Creator is a crime of the first magnitude. If it were a petty Sovereign against whom you rebelled, it might be pardonable. If He were a man like yourselves, you might expect that your faults would easily find forgiveness. But since He is the God who reigns alone where clouds and darkness are round about Him, the God to whom all nature is obedient and whose high behests are obeyed both in Heaven and in Hell, it becomes a crime, the terrible character of which words cannot portray, that you should ever sin against a God so marvelously great. The greatness of God enhances the greatness of our sin. I believe this is one lesson which the Prophet intended to teach us by the text. He asks us in the name of God, or rather, God asks us through him—“Fear you not Me? says the Lord—will you not tremble at My presence?”

But while it is *a* lesson, I do not think it is *the* lesson of the text. There is something else which we are to learn from it. God here contrasts the obedience of the strong, the mighty, the untamed sea, with the rebellious character of His own people. “The sea,” says He, “obeys Me. It never breaks its boundary. It never leaps from its channel. It obeys Me in all its movements. But man, poor puny man, the little creature whom I could crush as the moth, will not be obedient to Me. The sea obeys Me from shore to shore, without reluctance and its ebbing floods, as they retire from its bed, each of them says to Me, in the voices of the pebbles, ‘O Lord, we are obedient to You, for You are our Master.’ But My people,”

says God, "are a revolting and a rebellious people. They go astray from Me."

And is it not, my Brethren, a marvelous thing, that the whole earth is obedient to God, except man? Even the mighty Leviathan, who makes the deep to be hoary, sins not against God, but his course is ordered according to his Almighty Master's decree. Stars, those wondrous masses of light are easily directed by the very wish of God. Clouds, though they seem erratic in their movement, have God for their pilot. "He makes the clouds His chariot"—and the winds, though they seem restive beyond control, yet do they blow, or cease to blow just as God wills. In Heaven, on earth, even in the lower regions, I had almost said, we could scarcely find such a disobedience as that which is practiced by man—at least in Heaven there is a cheerful obedience. And in Hell there is constrained submission to God, while on earth man makes the base exception—he is continually revolting and rebelling against his Maker.

Still there is another thought in the text and this I shall endeavor to dilate upon. Let us read it again. "Fear you not Me? says the Lord: will you not tremble at My presence?" Now here is the essence of the matter—"Which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people has a revolting and a rebellious heart. They are revolted and gone." "The sea," says God, "is not only obedient, but it is rendered obedient by the restraint merely of sand." It is not the rock of adamant that restrains the sea one half so easily as just that little belt of sand and shingle which preserves the dry land from the inundations of the ocean. "The sea obeys Me and has for its only check the sand and yet," says He, "My people, though they have restraints the strongest that reason could imagine, are a revolting and a rebellious people and scarcely can My commands, My promises, My love, My judgment, My Providence or My Word restrain them from sin."

That is the point we shall dwell upon this morning. *The sea is restrained by a belt of sand. But we, notwithstanding all the restraints of God, are a people bent on revolting from Him.*

The doctrine of the text, seems to me to be this—that without supernatural means God can make all creatures obedient except man. But man is so disobedient in his heart, that only some supernatural agency can make him obedient to God, while the simple agency of sand can restrain the sea without any stupendous effort of Divine power more than He ordinarily puts out in nature. He can not thus make man obedient to His will.

Now, my Brethren, let us look back into history and see if it has not been so. What has been a greater problem, if we may so speak concerning the Divine mind, than that of restraining men from sin? How many restraints God has put upon man! Adam is in the garden, pure and holy. He has restraints that one would think strong enough to prevent his commit-

ting a sin so contemptible and apparently unprofitable as that by which he fell. He is to have the whole garden in perpetuity, if he will not eat of that tree of life. His God will walk with him and make him His friend. Moreover, in the cool of the day, he shall hold converse with angels and with the Lord, the Master of angels. And yet he dares eat of that holy fruit which God had set forth not to be touched by man. Then he must die.

One would think it was enough—to promise reward for obedience and punishment for sin—but no, the check fails. Man, left to his own free will, touches the fruit and he falls. Man cannot be restrained, even in his purity, so easily as the mighty sea. Since that time, mark what God has done by way of restraint. The world has become corrupt. It is altogether covered with iniquity. Forth comes a Prophet. Enoch prophesies of the coming of the Lord, declaring that he sees Him coming with ten thousand of His saints to judge the world. That world goes on, as profane and unheeding as before. Another Prophet is raised up, and cries, “Yet a little while and this earth shall be drowned in a flood of water.” Do men cease from sin? No—profligacy, crime, iniquities of the vilest class, are as prevalent as before.

Man rushes on to his destruction. The deluge comes and destroys all but a favored few. The new family goes out to people the earth—will not the world now be clean and holy? Wait a little and you shall see. One of these men will do a deed which shall render him a curse forever and his son Canaan shall in after years inherit his father's curse. Not long after that you see Sodom and Gomorrah devoured with fire which God rains out of Heaven. But what of this? What though in later years Pharaoh and his chariots are drowned in the Red sea? What though Sennacherib and his hosts perish at midnight by the blast of an archangel? What though the world reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, being drunken with the wine of God's wrath? What though the earth be scarred and burned by war? What though it be deluged with floods? What though it be oppressed with famines, pestilences and diseases?

She still goes on in the same manner. At this hour the world is a sinful, rebellious world and until God shall work a work in our day, such as we shall scarce believe, though a man tell it to us, the world shall never be pure and holy. The sea is restrained by sand. We admire the beautiful poetic fact. But man, being naturally more ungovernable than the storm and more impetuous than the ocean, is not to be tamed—he will not bend his neck to the Lord, nor will he be obedient to the God of the whole earth.

“But what of this fact?”—you say—“We know it is true, we do not doubt it.” Stay awhile. I am now coming to deal with your hearts and consciences and may the Holy Spirit help me in doing so! I shall divide, as God would divide them—*saints* and *sinner*s.

First of all, you *Saints*, I have a word to say to you. I want you to look at this as a doctrine not more evident in the history of mankind at large than abundantly verified in your own case. Come, now, I want to ask of

you this morning, whether it cannot be said of you truly—"The sea is bound by sand. But I am one of those people who are bent on revolting from God, neither can any of His restraints keep me from sin." Let us review, for a few moments, the various restraints which God has put upon His people to keep them from sins which, nevertheless, are altogether ineffectual, without the accompanying power of *irresistible grace*.

First, then, remember there is a restraint of gratitude which, to the lowly regenerated heart, must necessarily form a very strong motive to obedience. I can conceive of nothing that ought so much to prompt me to obedience as the thought that I owe so much to God. O Heir of Heaven, you can look back to eternity and see your name in life's fair Book of Life. You can sing of electing love. You believe that a Covenant was made with Christ in your behalf and that your salvation was made secure in that moment when the hands of the Eternal Son grasped the stylus and signed His name as the Representative of all the elect. You believe that on Calvary your sins were all atoned for. You have in your soul the conviction that your sins, past, present and to come were all numbered on the Scapegoat's head of old and carried away forever. You believe that neither death nor Hell can ever divide you from your Savior's breast. You know that there is laid up for you a crown of life which fades not away and your expectant soul anticipates that with branches of palms in your hands, with crowns of gold on your head and streets of gold beneath your feet, you shall be happy forever.

You believe yourself to be one of the favored of Heaven, a special object of Divine solicitation. You think that all things work together for your good, yes, you are persuaded that everything in Providence has a special regard to you and to your favored Brethren. I ask you, O Saint, is not this a bond strong enough to keep you from sin? If it were not for the desperate unstableness of your heart, would you not be restrained from sin by *this*? Is not your sin exceedingly sinful, because it is sin against electing love, against redeeming peace, against all-surpassing mercy, against matchless affection, against shoreless grace, against spotless love? Ah, sin has reached its climax when it dares to sin against such love as this! O Christian, your affection to your Lord and Master should restrain you from iniquity. And is it not a fearful proof of the terrible character of your heart, of your heart even now, for still you have evil remaining in it, that all the ties of gratitude are still incapable of keeping you from unholiness?

The sins of yesterday rise to your memory now. Oh, look back on them. Do they not tell you that you do sin most ungratefully? O Saint, did you not yesterday use your Master's name in vain and not your Master's only, but your Father's name? Had you not yesterday an unbelieving heart? Were you not petulant when girded with favors that ought to make a living man unwilling to complain? Were you not, when God has forgiven you ten thousand talents, angry with your neighbor, who owed you a hundred pence? Ah, Christian, you are not yet free from sin, nor will you be until

you have washed your garments in death's black stream and then you shall be holy, as holy as the glorified and pure and spotless, even as the angels around the Throne—but not till then. I ask you, O Saint, viewing your sins as sins against love and mercy, against Covenant promises, Covenant oaths, Covenant engagements, yes, and Covenant fulfillments—is not your sin a desperate thing and are not you yourself a rebellious and revolting being seeing that you can not be restrained by such a barrier of adamant as your soul acknowledges?

Next, notice that the saint has not only this barrier against sin, but many others. He has the whole of God's Word given him by way of warning. Its pages he is accustomed to read. He reads there that if he break the statutes and keep not the Commandments of the Lord, his Father will visit his transgressions with a rod and his iniquity with stripes. He has before him in God's Word abundant examples. He finds a David going with broken bones to his grave after his sin. He finds a Samson shorn of his locks and with his eyes put out. He sees proof upon proof that sin will find a man out—that the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Abundant warnings there are for the child of God, not of saints who have perished, for we have none such on record in Scripture and none ever shall finally perish—but we have many warnings of great and grievous damages sustained by God's own children when they have sailed out of their proper course. And yet, O Christian, against all warning and against all precept you dare to sin. Oh, are you not a rebellious creature and may you not this morning humble yourself at the thought of the greatness of your iniquity?

Again—the saint sins against his own experience. When he looks back upon his past life he finds that sin has always been a loss to him. He has never found any profit, but has always lost by it. He remembers such-and-such a transgression. It appeared sweet to him at the time, but oh, it made his Master withdraw His presence and hide His face. The saint can look back on the time when sin hung like a mill-stone round his neck and he felt the terrible flame of remorse burning in his soul and knew how evil a thing and bitter it is to sin against God. And yet the saint sins. Now, if the unconverted man sins, he does not sin against his own experience, for he has not had that true heartfelt experience that renders sin exceedingly sinful.

But every time you sin, O gray-headed Saint, you sin with a vengeance, for you have had all through your life so much proof of what sin has been to you. You have not been deceived about it, for you have felt its bitterness in your heart—and when you sip the accursed draught you are infatuated indeed, because you sin against experience. Yes, and the youngest of the saints, have you not been made to taste the bitterness of sin? I know you have, if you are saints—and will *you* go and dip your fingers in the nauseous cup? Will you put the poisoned goblet to your lips again? Yes, you will. But because you do so in the teeth of your experience, it

ought to make you weep that you should be such desperate rebels against such a loving God—who has put not merely a barrier of sand, but a barrier of tried steel to keep in your lusts—and yet they still break forth. Verily you are a rebellious and revolting people.

Then again, God guards all His children with Providence in order to keep them from sin. I could tell you even from the little experience I have had of spiritual things, many cases in which I feel I have been kept from sin by Divine Providence. There have been seasons when the strong hand of sin has appeared for a while to get the mastery over us and we have been dragged along by some strong inherent lust, which we were prone to practice before our regeneracy. We were intoxicated with the lust—we remember how pleasurable it was to us in the days of our iniquity—how we reveled in it, till we were on a sudden dragged to the very edge of the precipice and we looked down—our brain reeled, we could not stand. And do we not remember how just then some striking Providence came in our way and saved us, or else we should have been excommunicated from the Church for violating the rules of propriety.

Ah, strange things happen to some of us. Strange things have happened to some of you. It was only a Providence which on some sad and solemn occasion to which you never look back without regret, saved you from sin which would have been a scab on your character. Bless God for that! But remember, notwithstanding the girdling of His Providence, how many times you have offended. And let the frequency of your sin remind you that you must indeed be a rebellious creature. Though He has afflicted you, you have sinned. Though He has given you chastisement, you have sinned. Though He has put you in the furnace, yet the dross has not departed from you. Oh, how corrupt your hearts are and how prone you are still to wander, notwithstanding all the barriers God has given you to encompass you!

Yet, once more let me remind you, Beloved, that the ordinances of God's House are all intended to be checks to sin. He girds us by the worship of the sanctuary. He girds us by the remembrance of our holy Baptism. And all else that is connected with Christianity is intended to check us from sin. And great are the effects which these produce. Yet all are insufficient, without the preserving grace of God, given to us day by day. Let us think, Beloved, too, that God has given to us a tender conscience, more tender than the conscience of worldly men because He has given us living consciences, whereas theirs are often seared and dead. And yet, against this living conscience, against the warnings of the Spirit, against precept, against promise, against experience, against the honor of God and against the gratitude we owe Him, the saints of God have dared to sin! And they must confess before Him that they are rebellious and have revolted from Him. Bow down your heads with shame while you consider your ways and then lift up your hearts, Christians, in adoring love, that He has kept you when your feet were making haste to Hell, where you would have gone,

but for His preserving grace. Shall not this longsuffering of your God, this tender compassion, be your theme every day—

***“While life and thought and being last,  
Or immortality endures?”***

Will you not pray that God should not cast you away, nor take His Holy Spirit from you, though you are a rebellious creature and though you have revolted against Him? This is for the saints.

And now may the Spirit help me, while I strive to apply it to *sinner*! Sinner, I have solemn things to say to you this morning. Lend me for a few minutes your very closest attention. I will speak to you as though this were the last message I should ever deliver in your ear. I have asked my God that I may so speak to you, O Sinner—if I win not your heart may I at least be free from your blood. And if I am not able to convince you of your sin, I may at any rate make you without excuse in that day “when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.” Come, then, Sinner—in the first place, I bid you consider your guilt. You have heard what I have said. The mighty ocean is kept in obedience by God and restrained within its channel by simple sand. And you, a pitiful worm, the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour, you are a rebel against God.

The sea obeys Him, you do not. Consider, I beseech you how many restraints God has put on you—He has not checked your lusts with sand but with cliffs. And yet you have burst through every bound in the violence of your transgressions. Perhaps He has checked your soul by the remembrance of your guilt. You have this morning felt yourself a despiser of God. Or if not a despiser, you are a mere hearer and have no part nor lot in this matter. Do you not remember your sins in the face of your mother's counsels and your father's strong admonitions? Do they never check you? Do you never think you see a mother's tears coming after you? Have you never heard a father's prayer for you? When you have been spending your nights in dissipation and have gone home late to your bed, have you never thought you have seen your father's spirit at your bed side, offering one more prayer for an Absalom, his son or for an Ishmael, his rebellious child?

Consider what you have learned, child. Baptized with a mother's tears—almost immersed in them. You were early taught to know something of God. Then you went from your mother's knees, to those of a pious teacher. You were trained in a Sunday-School, or at any rate you were taught to read the Bible. You know the threats of God—it is no new tale to you when I warn you that sinners must be condemned. It is no new story when I tell you that saints shall wear the starry crown. You knows all that. Consider, then, how great is your guilt. You have sinned against light and knowledge. You are not the Hottentot sinner, who sins in darkness, but you are a sinner before high Heaven in the full light of day. You have not sinned ignorantly—you have done it when you knew better. And when you come to be judged, you shall have an additional doom—because

you knew your duty—but you did it not. I charge that home upon you, I charge it solemnly upon your conscience—is it true, or is it not?

Some of you have had other things. Don't you remember, some little time ago, when sickness was rife and you were stretched on your bed? One night you will never forget—sickness had got strong hold of you and the strong man bowed himself. Do you not remember what a sight you had then of the regions of the damned. Not with your eyes, but with your conscience? You thought you heard their shrieks. You thought you would be among them, yourself, soon. Methinks I see you—you turned your face to the wall and you cried—"O God, if You will save my life I will give myself to You!" Perhaps it was an accident. You did fear that death was very near, the terrors of death laid hold of you and you did cry, "Oh! God, let me but reach home in safety, and my bended knees and my tears pouring in torrents, shall prove that I am sincere in the vow I make."

But did you perform that vow? No, you have sinned against God. Your broken vows have gone before you to judgment. Do you think it a little thing to make a promise to your fellow creature and break it? It may be so in your estimation, but not so in that of honest men. But do you think it a little thing to promise to your Maker and to break your promise? That is no light penalty—sinning against the Almighty God. It will cost you your soul, Man, and your soul's blood forever if you go on in this fashion. Vow and pay, or if you pay not, vow not. For God shall visit those vows upon you in the day when He makes inquisition for blood and destroys your soul. You have been guarded thus—remember that you have had extraordinary deliverances, the disease did not kill you—your broken bones were healed. You did not die. When the jaws of death were uplifted, they did not close upon you—here you are still. Your life is spared.

Oh, my dear Hearers, some of you are the worst. You have regularly sat in these pews—God is my witness how earnestly I have longed for you all in the heart of Christ. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God to you. If I had been a time-server and kept back part of the Truth of God, much more honor would I have received from men than I have received. But I have cleared my conscience, I trust, from your blood. How many times have I seen men and women cry, the hot tears falling down their cheeks in quick succession and expected that I should have seen a change in some of your lives? But how many of you there are, who have gone on sinning against warnings, which, I am sure, though they may have been excelled in eloquence, have never been exceeded in heartiness!

Do you think it a little thing to sin against God's Ambassador? It is no little sin—every time we sin against the warnings we have received, we sin so much the more heinously. But there are some—I had hope for you—but you have gone back to the ways of perdition. I have cried, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" But I have been obliged to go to my Master with that exclamation, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Woe unto you Bethsaida. It were better for you



that you had been Tyre and Sidon than that you should have been left in the midst of privileges, if you should perish at last! Woe unto you Hearers of New Park Street! Woe unto you that listen not to the voice of the minister here! If you perish beneath our warnings, you shall perish in a horrible manner!

“Woe unto you, Capernaum! You are exalted unto Heaven, but you shall be cast down to Hell.” Woe unto you, young woman! You have had a pious mother and you have had many warnings. Woe unto you, young man! You have been a profligate youth, you have been brought to this house of prayer from your infancy and you are sitting there even now—often does your conscience prick you—often your heart has told you that you are wrong. And yet you are still unchanged! Woe unto you! Woe unto you! And yet will I cry unto my God that He would avert that woe and pardon you. That He would not let you die, but bring you unto Himself lest now you perish in your sins. You Sinners! God has a controversy with you. He tames the sea, but you will not be tamed. Nothing but His marvelous Grace exerted in you will ever check you in your lusts. You have sinned against warnings and reproofs, against providences, mercies and judgments—and still you sin.

Oh, my Hearers, when you sin, you do not sin so cheaply as others. For when you sin, you sin in the very teeth of Hell. There is not a man or woman in this place, I am sure, who, when he or she sins, does not know that Hell is the inevitable consequence! Sirs, you do not sin in the dark. When God shall give you the wages of your iniquity, you shall not be able to say, to God, “I did not know this would be the pay for my labor.” When you did sow tares, you could not expect that you should reap wheat. You knew “that they who sow carnal things shall reap carnal things.” You are sowing to the flesh, but not with the hope that you will reap salvation. For you know that “He who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.”

Sinner, it is a dreadful thing to sin when God puts Hell before you! What? Sin when He has given out His threat? Sin? While Sinai is thundering, while Hell is blazing? That is to sin, indeed. But how many of you, my dear Hearers, have sinned like this? I would to God that He would turn this house into a Bochim, that you might weep over your guilt. It is the hardest thing in the world to make men believe their guilt. If we could once get them to do that, we should find that Christ would reveal to them His salvation. I cannot, with my poor voice and my weak utterance, even bring you to think that it is Christ Jesus in the ministry of His Spirit who can give you a true and real sense of your sin. Has He done so? Has He blessed my words to any of you? Do any of you feel your sins? Do any of you know that you are rebellious? Do you say from this time forth you will mend your ways?

Sirs, let me tell you, you cannot do that. Are you better than the mightiest of men? The best of men are but men at the best and they are

convinced that they cannot tame their own turbulent passions. God says that the sea can be tamed with sand, but the heart of man cannot be restrained, it is still revolting. Do you think you can do that which God says is impossible? Do you suppose yourself stronger than God Almighty? What? Can you change your own heart, when God declares that we must be born again from above, or else we cannot see the kingdom of Heaven? Others have tried to do it, but they cannot. I beseech you, do not try to do it with your own strength. I am glad you know your guilt. But O, do not increase that guilt by seeking to wash it out in the foul stream of your own resolutions. Go and tell God that you know your sin and confess it before Him and ask Him to create in you a clean heart and renew in you a right spirit. Tell Him you know that you are rebellious and you are sure that you always will be, unless He changes your heart. And I beseech you, rest not satisfied until you have a new heart.

My Hearer, be not content with Baptism. Be not content with the Lord's Supper. Be not content with shutting up your shop on Sunday. Be not content with leaving off drunkenness. Be not content with giving up swearing. Remember, you may do all that and be damned. It is a *new heart* and a right spirit you want! Begin with that and when you have that, all the rest will come right. Think, my Hearer! You may varnish and gild yourself, but you can never *change* yourself. You may moralize, but you can never spiritualize your heart. Think! You are this morning lost and think of this—you can do nothing whatever to save yourself. Let that thought rise in your soul and lay you very low. And when you go to God, cry, "O Lord, do what I cannot do—save me, O my God—for Your mercy's sake."

My dear Hearers, have I spoken harshly to you or will you rather take it in love? You who have sinned thus terribly against God, do you feel it? Well, *I* have no grace *to offer* to you, *I* have no Christ *to offer* to you but *I* have Christ *to preach* to you. Oh, what shall I say? This—you are a sinner. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." Are you a sinner? Then He came to save you. Oh, joyful sound! I am ready to leap in the pulpit for very joy, to have this to preach to you. I can clap my hands with ecstasy of heart that I am allowed again to tell you—"It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Let me tell you that when He came into this world He was nailed to the Cross and that there He expired in desperate grief and agony and there He shrieked, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" There the blood ran from His hands and feet and because He suffered He is able to forgive. Sinner, do you believe that? You are black in sin—do you believe, in the face of your vileness, that Christ's blood can make you clean? What do you say, Sinner? God has convinced you of your sin—are you willing to be

saved in God's way this morning? If you are willing, you shall be saved. It is written—Whosoever will, let him come.”

Are you thirsty this morning? Come here and drink. Are you hungry? Come and eat. Are you dying? Come and live. My Master bids me tell you, all you who feel your sins, that you are forgiven. All you who know your transgressions, He bids me tell you this—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions, for My name's sake.” Have you been an adulterer, have you been a whoremonger, a thief, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, a swearer? I find no exception in this proclamation—“Whosoever will, let him come.” I find no exception in this—“Him that comes I will in nowise cast out.” Do you know your guilt? Then I do not ask you what your guilt is. Though you are the vilest creature, again, I tell you, if you know your guilt, Christ will forgive you. Believe it and you are saved!

And now—will you go away and forget all this? Some of you have wept this morning. No wonder. The wonder is that we do not all weep until we find ourselves saved! You will go away tomorrow to your farms and to your merchandize, to your shops and to your offices. And the impression that may have been produced on you this Sabbath morning will pass away like the morning cloud. My Hearers, I would not weep—though you should call me all the names you can think of—but I will weep because you will not weep for yourselves. Sinners, why will you be damned? Is it a pleasant thing to revolt in the flames of Hell? Sirs, what profit is there in your death! What? Is it an honorable thing to rebel against God? Is it an honor to stand and be the scorn of God's universe? Do you say you shall not die? You will put it off a little while?

Sinner, you will never have a more convenient season. If today is inconvenient, tomorrow will be more so. Put it off today, wipe away the tears from your eyes and the day may come when you would give a million worlds for a tear—but you shall not be able to get *one*. Many a man has had a soft heart. It has passed away and in later years he has said, “Oh that I could but shed a tear!” O God! Make Your Word like a hammer this morning that it may break the rocky heart in pieces! You who know your sins—as God's Ambassador—I beseech you, “be you reconciled unto God.” “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

Remember, once lost, you are lost forever. But if you are once saved, you are certainly saved forever. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” said Paul of old. Jesus Himself has said “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved but he that believes not shall be damned.” I will not finish with a curse. “He that believes shall be saved.” God give you all an interest in that eternal blessing, for the Lord Jesus' sake! Amen and amen!

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# THE FORMER AND THE LATTER RAIN

## NO. 880

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 11, 1869,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Let us now fear the Lord our God, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest.”  
Jeremiah 5:24.*

SUCH are the climate and soil of Palestine, that all agricultural operations are most manifestly dependent upon the periodical rainfall. Hence the people speak of the weather and the crops with a more immediate reference to God than is usual with us. It is said that the common expressions of the peasantry are such as quite strike travelers with their apparently devout recognition of the Almighty agency. Certainly we may account for a very large number of what may be called the agricultural promises of the Old Testament from the fact that little of the food of the people was gained by manufacture or commerce. The whole population depended upon the field and the field upon the rain.

Palestine is the very opposite of Egypt, which is so well irrigated by its river. And it is equally different from our own land, in which seasons of comparative drought may yet prove to be years of plenty. In Palestine, the agriculturalist *must* have the rain. He must receive the first rain soon after the corn is put into the ground, otherwise it will rot or be blown away with the dust as his fields become turned into a kind of impalpable powder by the summer's sun. He must have the latter rain just before the time of harvest, otherwise the ears lacking the moisture that should fill them out, will become thin and lean, barely worth the ingathering—in fact, they will yield no flour for the food of man. The farmer depends entirely upon the early and the latter rain, and if these do not fall pretty plenteously in their season, a time of famine will ensue.

Although our climate does not so immediately remind us of our dependence upon God, yet it would be well if we remembered from where *all* our blessings come and look up to the hand from which our daily bread is distributed. In these herbless miles of pavement and these dreary wildernesses of brick, we scarcely perceive the lapse of the seasons. In vain for us the violet of spring sheds its perfume, or the last rose of summer blushes with beauty—seed time and harvest come and go all unobserved—yet are citizens and merchants as much dependent upon the fruit of the field as the young lads who reap and mow.

Therefore let us lift up our eyes to the Lord who gives rain and in so doing drops bread from Heaven! When He gives seasons favorable for the harvest, let us thank Him for it. And if at any time He restrains the blessings of the elements and loads the air with blight and mildew, let us fear and tremble before Him and humble ourselves before His chastening hand—

***“The harvest-song we would repeat,  
You give us the finest wheat.  
The joys of harvest we have known,  
The praise, O Lord, is all Your own.”***

Gratitude for Providential mercies is not, however, the subject of this morning’s discourse. I intend to use the text rather in a *spiritual* sense.

As it is in the outward world, so is it in the inward. As it is in the physical, so is it in the spiritual—man is a microcosm, a little world—and all weather and seasons find their image in him. The earth is dependent upon the rain shower from Heaven—so are the souls of men. And so are their holy works dependent upon the Grace shower which comes from the great Father of light, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. A famine would surely follow in the East if the rain were withheld—so would spiritual disasters of the worse kind be sure to ensue if the Grace of God were restrained. We shall consider this great Truth of God in its bearing upon two important matters—first, as it respects the work of God which we carry on outside us. And, secondly, as it respects the work of God as it is carried on *within* us.

**I.** First, then, THE WORK OF GOD AS IT IS CARRIED ON OUTSIDE US. It is necessary, whenever any holy enterprise is commenced, that it should be early watered by the helpful Spirit of God. Nothing begins well unless it begins in God. It cannot take root, it cannot spring up in hopefulness unless the Holy Spirit shall descend upon it. It will wither like the grass upon the housetops if the celestial dew of the morning falls not early upon it. The like Grace is equally necessary after years of growth. There is urgent need of the latter rain, the shower of revival, in which the old work shall be freshened and the first verdure shall be restored. Without this latter rain, the period of harvest which is the end aimed at will be disappointing.

My Brothers and Sisters, members of this Church, it will make my discourse more practical if I apply it to the Church of which we are members. You who are members of other Churches can readily, in a like case, apply the Truth to your spiritual homes. Years ago we were diminished and brought low. Dark was the hour and pale were the faces. The numbers who gathered for sacred worship in connection with this Church might almost be counted upon the fingers. Our Zion was all but utterly forsaken.

Yet there was a living band of men whose hearts the Lord had touched, who ceased not to pray day and night that He would be pleased to remember us. To these entreaties Heaven sent a gracious answer and now

for these 16 years God has been pleased to look in mercy upon us as a Church and congregation and in continued prosperity we have rejoiced day by day. Many of you are the fruits, this day, of the blessing which came to us in the first years of the early rain. How soon the congregation was multiplied! Place after place was found to be too small for us—still the blessing of God was with us and multitudes thronged to hear the Word of God!

Blessed be His name, we had not only *hearers*, but we had converts! We heard on every side the cry of repenting sinners and multitudes said, “What must we do to be saved?” Our Church grew exceedingly, so that we realized the blessing of the Apostolic times—“The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.” We were as wet as Gideon’s fleece with the dew of Heaven! And what prayers we then put up! Have we not been present, some of us, in Prayer Meetings when we were all moved by the breath of God’s Spirit, as the growing wheat is moved by the wind? How often were our souls within us bowed to the very dust in admiring wonder to see how the Lord worked!

As we saw the crowds, we stood still and cried in amazement, “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?” Then, being baptized of the Holy Spirit, we walked together in holy unity of love, in earnestness of endeavor, in the generosity which spared no expense for Christ. We shared in the love which thought no evil, in the zeal which dared all things, in the courage that defied opposition! Our Graces flourished and our communion was sweet and unbroken. And now, as pastor of this Church, having seen what God has done for us, I can gratefully add, “the Lord has not withdrawn His hand, lo, these well-near 16 years, from our midst.”

Conversions have never become less numerous. There has been, so far as I can judge, little or no flagging in the earnestness of your endeavors, and though more might have been done, and *should* have been done, yet still for what has been done let God have all the praise! But my fear is—a fear which haunts me often, a fear which springs, I trust, out of zeal for God’s Glory—lest having had the early rain we should become contented to forego the latter rain. But ah, this must not be! Any Church that dreams that it is established by the lapse of years and can stand alone because of its acquired strength. Any Church that imagines that prayer need not be so humble and vehement. Any Church that conceives that its ministry has in it a natural power which guarantees its efficiency. Any Church that dreams that its membership has become so influential that it can support its own work. The hour of peril is come and the day of its downfall is near at hand of any Church that relies in *any* respect upon an arm of *flesh*!

Let not the Church say, “We have done enough.” Let it not boast that it has reached the *Ultima Thule* of industry and liberality. The end of progress is come when we have reached self-contentment! When we glory in

the multitude of goods laid up for many years, we are already naked and poor and miserable! I, therefore, beseech my Brothers and Sisters joined with me in Church fellowship here, earnestly to entreat that we now may have the latter rain as we before received the early rain! May renewed Grace be to us a token that the God who blessed us in the past has not turned away from doing us good.

We have the unconverted in our midst. They sit by our side in these pews—we need Divine Grace for these. A number of our hearers who were unconverted 15 years ago are still *with* us but yet not *of* us! Alas, in that space of time a large number have passed into eternity unsaved. The crowds still gather to listen to the Word and we need, still, the blessing upon the preacher in delivering, and the people in hearing the Truth of God. We cannot do without it! O members of this Church, let no man take our crown! The crown of this Church has been the souls converted unto God by the Holy Spirit in this place! Let us struggle to retain this crown! Let us incessantly pray that instead of losing this glory we may increase in it to the Glory of God!

I know not how to speak to you for the very reason that I need to speak infinitely better than I can. For it seems to me that if God should leave us, our own sadness and our own shame will be the *least* part of the evil. Those who have watched our growth and been encouraged in similar efforts will be discouraged and the kingdom of the Master will in that measure decline. Others of His servants will hang their harps upon the willows and return to that dull, dead, cold monotony, long so common to our churches. My Brethren, you began the battle well! You rushed to the encounter and swept all before you! Servants of the living God! The day is hot and long, the struggle still continues! The enemy still holds the ground—can you keep your line, can you stand in your phalanx, can you endure to the end and march on with still greater ardor to the fray until the field is won and the shout goes up that the King eternal, immortal, has won the victory? Thus in connection with any one Church.

The same is true in connection with any sphere of labor in which any individual among us may happen to be engaged. I will trust that every Believer here has found something to do for his Lord and Master. In commencing any Christian work, novelty greatly assists enthusiasm and it is very natural that under first impulses the beginner should achieve an easy success. The difficulty of the Christian is very seldom the *commencement* of the work. The true labor lies in the *perseverance* which alone can win the victory. I address some Christians here who have now been for years occupied with a service which the Holy Spirit laid upon them. I would remind them of the early rain of their youthful labors, the moisture of which still lingers on their memories, although it has been succeeded by long years of drought.

Brothers, be encouraged! A latter rain is yet possible. Seek it! That you need it so much is a cause for sorrow, but if you really feel your need of it,

be glad that the Lord works in you such sacred desires. If you did not feel a need for more Divine Grace it would be a reason for alarm. But to be conscious that all that God did by you in the past has not qualified you to do anything without Him now—to feel that you lean entirely upon *His strength* now, as much as ever—is to be in a condition in which it shall be right and proper for God to bless you abundantly.

Wait upon Him, then, for the latter rain. Ask that if He has given you a little of blessing in past years, He would return and give you 10 times as much now, even now, so that, at the last, if you have sown in tears, you may come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you! Alas, the danger of every Christian worker is that of falling into routine and self-sufficiency. We are most apt to do what we have been accustomed to do and to do it half asleep. One of the hardest tasks in all the world is to keep the Christian awake on the enchanted ground. The tendencies of this present time and of all times, is to put us to sleep! The life, the power of our public services and private devotion speedily evaporates. We pray as in a dream and praise and preach like sleepwalkers!

May God be pleased to stir us up, to awaken and quicken us by sending us the latter rain to refresh His weary heritage. Thus much upon the first point.

**II.** Let us turn to the second, which will more concern each one of us and come closer home to our hearts. Spirit of God, help us in dispensing Your Truth! We shall apply the text to OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE WITHIN US. Here note, first, that *usually the spiritual life, as soon as it is commenced, experiences a former rain*, or a delightful visitation of Divine Grace. Suffer me to speak to your memories for a little while. You remember when you were converted to God. Some of us remember the day and the hour and the very spot, to a yard! Others cannot remember, but they need not, therefore, be discouraged, for if they are alive unto God, it is a small matter about when they were born. They may rest assured, if their faith is resting upon Christ, alone, it is well with them whether their conversion was gradual or sudden.

But I say, many of you remember when you were converted, or thereabouts. Now, was not the period after you had believed in Jesus the happiest that you ever spent? Yes, though there have been times of joy since then, yet in some respects must not that period bear the palm? So blessed was our first conversion, to some of us, that those first days are as green and fragrant in our memories as if they were but yesterday! They are as fresh and fair as if they had but just budded in the garden of time. Other days, like withered flowers, are no longer sweet and lovely to gaze upon, but these are as well-bedewed with the freshness of the morning as though they were of the present rather than the past.

What bliss it was to feel that we were saved! Our hearts danced at the very *thought* of full salvation. The only fear was that it was too good to be true! Our faith was exceedingly strong—Christ upon the Cross was always



in our view. We had no experience, then, to set in the place of Christ—no sanctification to mix up with His righteousness in our justification. Our belief in Jesus was very simple and childlike, and consequently was very comforting and we were very, very happy. Oh, how blessed prayer was, then! Then we did *really* talk with God! Then we did not need to whip ourselves up to our closets to pray—we only wished we could stay upon our knees all day long and talk our hearts out to God!

We little cared, then, whether the place of worship was hot or cold. Whether we were seated or standing. We cared only for the Gospel! We would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon! It did not matter what was the style of the preacher—if he were eloquent, we did not hear him for his eloquence—we loved the Gospel too well to care about oratory! If a plain-speaking man told us of our Master and His love, we liked it all the better for his plainness of speech so long as we could but see our Master! To hear *anyone* talk of a precious Christ, and of pardon bought with blood, and of full and free salvation was Heaven to us!

If, in those days we had to suffer anything for Jesus, we only regretted we could not suffer more. We did not run out of the way of reproaches in those days, but were almost prepared to court them for His dear name's sake—

***“What peaceful hours we then enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still!”***

That was the early rain. The seed had just been sown and the Master, to make it take deeper root and spring up faster into the green blade, gave us the sacred shower of His loving Presence. There was much tender wisdom in this gentleness, for the new-born soul is very weak at first. Looking back to those days, we can clearly see what helpless infants we were. In knowledge we were very babes to whom many things could not be revealed because we could not have borne them. We fancied that our souls' battle was over, that we were out of gunshot of the devil and doubt—whereas the fight was just commencing—a fight never to cease until death and Heaven reveal the victory!

The Lord was pleased to restrain the enemy from tormenting us because we could not, then, have fought it out with him. The great and good Lord tempered the wind to the shorn lamb. He covered the little bird with His feathers. He carried the baby in His arms. He watered the tender plants and set a hedge about them in love. The Great Farmer knew how much our tender and weak roots required the dew of Heaven and therefore He liberally provided it. Moreover, many of us, before our conversion, passed through fire and through water—conviction of sin frowned on us by the year together. We laid in Doubting Castle and were beaten with the crab tree club of despair, fearing lest we were reprobates and past hope.

It was tenderly wise on our Lord's part that when we came out at last and rejoiced in a crucified Savior, we should enjoy a time of repose—for our bones were broken, our moisture was turned into the drought of

summer and we were ready to die. It was kindness on God's part when our terrors had aggravated our weakness and depression of spirits, that He should give us a time of great delight, when the love of our espousals would make us forget our fears. Besides, our Master at that time gave us the early rain, as it were, to give our young plant a start in commencing our heavenly growth—a growth to which we might look back in later years. How often have we been refreshed, since then, in our times of sorrow, by remembering the months past when the candle of the Lord shone round about our head!

Those early, happy days! Could it have all been a delusion? Was it all a mistake? What? When our sinful companions were all given up? When our darling lusts were all torn away? When the right eye was plucked out and the right arm cut off? Could it all have been a sham? When the head was leaned upon the Savior's bosom and the promise was so sweet—was it all excitement? No, our memory says it was not so—it was real, it was true! And He that gave us thus the foretaste, certainly has not changed—

***“His love in times past forbids us to think,  
He'll leave us at last in trouble to sink.”***

I do not give much for the faith which lives on past experiences, for the precious faith of God's elect feeds on fresh manna day by day. But, at the same time, there are dark and dreary moments when past experience serves us well.

Beloved Christian, if you are now this day in the dark, pluck a torch from the altars of yesterday with which to kindle the lights of today! The faithful Promiser was with you, then. You had His love to cheer you, then—go to Him yet once more and you shall receive the *latter* rain of renewed Grace from Him who gives Grace upon Grace! Before I leave this point, let me say one word of encouragement to any who are seeking my Lord and Master. I trust some of you are doing so. You have long been hearers of the Word of God, but you are not converted yet, and perhaps you are sad because, after much seeking, you have not been found by Him.

Let me assure you, when you have found the Lord, your waiting will be richly recompensed. I would have lingered at His door for 80 years if He would for a recompense give me but the one kiss of His lips. I would gladly lie at His pool of mercy, yes, a whole natural life, if but at the last my crimson sins might be washed away and my soul be made whiter than snow. “Oh, but,” you say, “if He comes not soon, I shall die of despair before His coming!” But He will bring such cordials to you, such wines on the lees well refined, that your despair shall take wings and fly away! And instead of the black raven of doubt, you shall receive the dove of consolation bringing the olive branch of peace in her mouth!

Hope in God, for you shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance. If you would have the early rain soon, do not wait any longer. Obey the Gospel precept at once, for simple obedience will bring the early rain

at once. That precept is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Oh, the hundreds of times I have proclaimed this to you and others have proclaimed it in your ears, also, and yet you will not yield your hearts to it! You continue, still, to say, "I *feel*," or, "I *do not feel*," "I *am*," or "I *am not*." You have 50,000 excuses why you should not comply with the Master's message. No comfort, however, can be yours, till, sink or swim, you cast yourself on Christ! If you will but trust Christ to save you, you shall be saved at this very hour!

Now shall the burden of your guilt fall from your shoulders and your peace be like a river and you shall go on your way rejoicing that you are saved! O why will you not obey this? May the Holy Spirit constrain you! May you now do what I am sure, if God has chosen you, you will have to do before long, namely, have done with *yourself* and close in with Christ! Have done with *feelings* or *need* of feelings! Have done with your *works*, bad or good! Have done with *self* and all that grows out of self and come to that Cross where hangs a bleeding Savior, the world's *only* hope! O that you could say, "My hope is there alone"! It shall be well with you if you will now cast yourself upon Him. You shall then have a happy season, such as only Believers know.

It is very usual in the life of Grace for the soul to receive in later years, *a second very remarkable visitation of the Holy Spirit*, which may be compared to the latter rain. As I told you, the latter rain was sent to plump out the wheat and make it full and mature, ready for the after-harvest ripening. So there is a time of special Grace granted to saints, to prepare them for Heaven, to make them completely meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. To some, this is given in the form of what has very commonly, and I think correctly, been called a second conversion. "When you are converted, strengthen your Brethren," was Christ's remark to Peter, who was even then a converted man.

My Brothers and Sisters, there is a point in Grace as much above the ordinary Christian, as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling. Believe me, the life of Divine Grace is no dead level, it is not a low country, a vast flat. There are mountains and there are valleys. There are tribes of Christians who live in the valleys, like the poor Swiss of the Valais, who live in the midst of the mist, where fever has its lair and the frame is languid and enfeebled. Such dwellers in the lowlands of unbelief are forever doubting, fearing, troubled about their interest in Christ and tossed to and fro. But there are other Believers, who, by God's Grace, have climbed the mountain of full assurance and near communion. Their place is with the eagle in his eyrie, high aloft.

They are like the strong mountaineer who has trod the virgin snow, who has breathed the fresh, free air of the Alpine regions and therefore his sinews are braced and limbs are vigorous. These are they who do great exploits, being mighty men, men of renown. The saints who dwell on high in the clear atmosphere of faith are rejoicing Christians, holy and devout

men, doing service for the Master all over the world and everywhere conquerors through Him that loved them. And I desire—oh, how earnestly I desire you to be such men and women! My craving is that all of you, my Beloved, who have been watered by the former rain, may also be refreshed by a more than ordinary latter rain which shall make you more than ordinary Christians—bringing you beyond the blade period and the ear period—into the full corn in the ear!

The great policy of Satan of late with the Church has been this—not so much to attack her with open infidelity—for really all the infidelity there is in England does not materially affect Churches worthy of the name except to an almost infinitesimal extent. There is a deal more made of skepticism in certain quarters than there is any need for. Skeptics seldom get among our Christian people. At least I do not meet with them in my enquiries, nor do I see them associating with Christians of my association. The plan Satan seems to have adopted is not that of attacking our doctrine, but that of preventing, as far as he can, our raising in our midst a race of eminent and advanced Christians. Pharaoh said, “Destroy the male children.” Satan seems to say, “Stop the male children from fulfilling their growth.”

We are well enough in our way after the common run of manhood. We believe in Christ. We love Him and contribute something to His cause, We preach and we pray. We are a respectable sort of people, but we do not grow to maturity or attain “unto the first three.” We have in this age but few giants in Divine Grace who rise head and shoulders above the common height—men to lead us on in deeds of heroism and efforts of unshattering faith. After all, the work of the Christian Church, though it must be done by *all*, often owes its being done to single individuals of remarkable Grace. In this degenerate time we are very much in need of what Israel had in the days of the Judges—there were raised up among them *leaders* who judged Israel and were the terror of her foes.

Oh, if the Church, today, had in her midst a race of heroes! If only our missionary operations could be attended with the holy chivalry which marked the Church in the early days! If only we could have back Apostles and martyrs, or even such as Carey and Judson, what wonders would be worked! We have fallen upon a race of dwarfs and are content, to a great extent, to have it so. There was once in London a club of small men whose qualification for membership lay in their not exceeding five feet in height. These dwarfs held, or pretended to hold, the opinion that they were nearer the perfection of manhood than others, for they argued that primeval men had been far more gigantic than the present race and consequently the way of progress was to grow less and less, and that the human race, as it perfected itself, would become as diminutive as themselves.

Such a club of Christians might be established in London and without any difficulty might attain to an enormously numerous membership—for the notion is common that our dwarfish Christianity is, after all, the stan-

dard! And many even imagine that nobler Christians are enthusiasts, fanatical and hot-blooded—while we are cool because we are wise and indifferent—because we are intelligent. We must get rid of all this nonsense! The fact is, the most of us are vastly inferior to the early Christians, who, as I take it, were persecuted because they were thoroughly Christians and we are *not* persecuted because we hardly are Christians at all! They were so earnest in the propagation of the Redeemer's kingdom, that they became the nuisance of the age in which they lived.

They would not let errors alone. They had not conceived the opinion that they were to hold the Truth of God and leave other people to hold error without trying to intrude their opinions upon them. They preached Christ Jesus right and left and delivered their testimony against every sin. They denounced the idols and cried out against superstition until the world, fearful of being turned upside down, demanded of them, "Is that what you mean? Then we will burn you, lock you up in prison and exterminate you." To which the Church replied, "We will accept the challenge and will not depart from our resolve to conquer the world for Christ." At last the fire in the Christian Church burned out the persecution of an ungodly world.

But we are so gentle and quiet. We do not use strong language about other people's opinions, but let men go to Hell out of charity to them! We are not at all fanatical and for all we do to disturb him, the old manslayer has a very comfortable time of it! We would not wish to save any sinner who does not particularly wish to be saved! If persons choose to attend our ministry, we shall be pleased to say a word to them in a *mild* way, but we do not speak with tears streaming down our cheeks, groaning and agonizing with God for them. Neither would we thrust our opinions upon them, though we know they are being lost for lack of the knowledge of Christ crucified! May God send the latter rain to His Church—to me and to you—and may we begin to bestir ourselves and seek after the highest form of earnestness for the kingdom of King Jesus! May the days come in which we shall no longer have to complain that we sow much and reap little, but may we receive a hundredfold reward through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Very feebly, but still with the most earnest intentions, I have endeavored to excite in you an ambition after a higher life and the setting up of a higher standard. Seek to love your Master more. Pray to be filled with His Spirit. Do not be mere trades people who are Christian, but be Christians everywhere—not plated goods, but solid metal. Be servants of Jesus Christ, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do. Serve Him with both your hands and all your heart. Get your manhood strung to the utmost tension and throw its whole force into your Redeemer's service. Live while you live! Drive not away your existence upon baser ends, but count the Glory of Christ to be the only object worthy of your manhood's strength—

the spread of the Truth of God the only pursuit worthy of your mental powers—spend and be spent in your Master's service.

I must draw to a close by noticing that the text speaks of a third thing. There is the former rain and the latter rain and then he says, "He reserves for us *the appointed weeks of harvest.*" Yes, if we shall get this latter rain—and may we have it!—it will then be time to be looking forward to our harvest. Consider well that the harvest begins in the field, though it ends in the garner. Going to Heaven begins upon earth, and as the text tell us of weeks, so may I add that going to Glory is often a long work. I believe God takes months and years in getting in His sheaves. We call it dying, do we not? But it is not dying I am talking of now—that is but the work of an *instant*—I refer to going Home, and that is a longer process.

When the sickle cuts away the wheat from the earth, the harvest is begun. The grain is not garnered yet, but still that is separated from earth and that is half the harvest. Even so in the process of getting a soul to Heaven, it must be detached from the earth where it grew. The sickle has cut many of our earth-bonds already for some of us and no doubt the gash at the time has been very deep and sharp—but how could we, as God's wheat, be carried into the garner without first of all being separated from the earth? How could our immortal spirits enter into the everlasting rest without first of all being dissociated from everything in which we tried to find a rest below? It is a sign of getting near to Heaven when we gradually bid adieu to those things that we hoped at one time to dwell with forever—when the almost idolized comforts are readily resigned—when absorbing aims and engrossing objects are thrust back into the rear ranks and the things *eternal* fill the foreground of our souls.

It is a glorious thing to become indifferent to the visible and only earnest about the invisible. We are like a balloon while it is tied to the earth—it cannot mount. Even so our ascent to Heaven is delayed by a thousand detaining cords and bands and the process of setting us free is cutting the ropes one by one. Some of you are conscious of getting older and weaker—God is evidently loosening the ties of earth. You have already more relatives in Heaven than on earth. If you count over the names of dear companions on earth, they make but a slender list. But count over the names of dear saints which have gone before and with whom you have had fellowship, and then the roll is long. Be thankful that you have so many ties upward and so few bonds to earth! Prepare to mount to the majority! The wheat may well rejoice for the sharp cuts of the sickle because it is the sign of going home to the garner.

After the wheat is cut it stands in shocks, shocks of corn fully ripe, not growing out of the earth, but merely standing on it. The shock is quite disconnected from the soil. How happy is the state of a Christian when he is in the world but is not linked to it! His ripeness drops here and there a grain into the soil, for he is still ready to do good, but he has no longer any vital connection with anything below. He is waiting to be in Heaven.

Here comes the wagon. The corn is put into it and with shouts it is carried home. Soon will our heavenly Father send His chariot and we who have been ripened by the latter rain and separated from earth by His Spirit's sickle, shall be borne in the chariot of triumph amidst the shouts of the angels and the songs of thrice blessed spirits, up to the eternal garner!

Oh, how it overcomes one to think that we shall be there forever! Here we are like the wheat that is under the snow, or bitten by the frost, or nibbled by the sheep—subject to blight and blast and mildew—but up there we shall be as the wheat in the garner beyond the reach of danger! We shall be our Lord and Master's everlasting portion, the dear reward of all His sufferings and griefs which were His plowings and sowings for us. Shall it always be so? Shall our heads always wear the starry crown? Shall our hands always strike celestial harp strings? Oh, yes! It must be so, for we have believed in Jesus and faith in Jesus secures a portion among the blessed!

Pluck up courage, you faint-hearted ones! And gathering courage, gather also strong desire! Pray for your own maturity and perfection. Seek this day, in earnest, secret prayer the latter rain because you know it shall have the best results. It shall not be wasted drops, but it shall fall to be repaid by you in increasing faith, love and holiness and heavenliness—that Christ's wheat, when gathered in, may be worthy of the labor He has spent upon it. May God bless you, dear Brothers and Sisters and lead you on from strength to strength.

And if any of you, my Hearers, are not Christians, may the Lord, the Spirit, lead you to the Cross of Jesus Christ, and His shall be the Glory.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Colossians 3.***

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# A BLAST OF THE TRUMPET AGAINST FALSE PEACE NO. 301

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 26, 1860,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”  
Jeremiah 6:14.***

MINISTERS are fearfully guilty if they intentionally build up men in a false peace. I cannot imagine any man more greatly guilty of blood than he who plays jackal to the lion of Hell by pandering to the depraved tastes of vain, rebellious man. The physician who should pamper a man in his disease—who should feed his cancer, or inject continual poison into the system—while at the same time he promised sound health and long life—such a physician would not be one half so hideous a monster of cruelty as the professed minister of Christ who should bid his people take comfort, when, instead thereof, he ought to be crying, “Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion—be troubled, you careless ones.”

The work of the ministry is no child’s play. It is a labor which might fill an angel’s hands—*did* fill the Savior’s heart. Much prayer we need that we may be kept honest and much grace that we may not mislead the souls whom we are bound to guide. The pilot who should pretend to steer a ship toward its proper haven, but who should meanwhile occupy himself below with boring holes in her keel that she might sink, would not be a worse traitor than the man who takes the helm of a Church—professes to be steering it towards Christ—while all the while ruining it by diluting the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, concealing unpalatable truths and lulling men into security with soft and flattering words.

We might sooner pardon the assassin who stretches forth his hand under the guise of friendship and then stabs us to the heart, than we could forgive the man who comes towards us with smooth words, telling us that he is God’s ambassador, but all the while foments rebellion in our hearts and pacifies us while we are living in revolt against the majesty of Heaven. In the great day when Jehovah shall launch His thunderbolts, methinks He will reserve one more dread and terrible than the rest for some arch-traitor to the Cross of Christ, who has not only destroyed himself, but led others into Hell.



The motive with these false prophets is an abominable one. Jeremiah tells us it was an evil covetousness. They preached smooth things because the people would have it so, because they thus brought grist to their own mill and glory to their own names. Their design was abominable and without doubt their end shall be desperate—cast away with the refuse of mankind. These who professed to be the precious sons of God, comparable to fine gold, shall be esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter.

But, my dear Hearers, it is a lamentable fact that without any hireling shepherd to cry, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace,” men will cry that for themselves. They need not the siren song to entice them to the rocks of presumption and rash confidence. There is a tendency in their own hearts to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—to think well of their evil estate and foster themselves in proud conceit. No man is ever too severe with himself. We hold the scales of justice with a very unsteady hand when our character is in the balance. We are too ready to say, “I am rich and increased in goods,” when at the same time we are naked and poor and miserable. Let men alone, let no deluder seek to deceive them—hush forever every false and tempting voice—they will themselves, impelled by their own pride, run to an evil conceit and make themselves at ease, though God Himself is in arms against them.

My solemn business this morning shall be, and O may God help me in it, drag forth to the light some of you who have been pacifying your own consciences and have been crying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” It is no uncommon thing with me to meet with people who say, “Well, I am happy enough. My conscience never troubles me. I believe if I were to die I should go to Heaven as well as anybody else.” I know that those men are living in the commission of glaring acts of sin and I am sure they could not prove their innocence even before the bar of man. Yet will these men look you in the face and tell you that they are not at all disturbed at the prospect of dying. They laugh at death as though it were but a scene in a comedy and joke at the grave as if they could leap in and out of it at their pleasure.

Well, gentlemen, I will take you at your word, though I don't believe you. I will suppose you have this peace and I will endeavor to account for it on certain grounds which may render it somewhat more difficult for you to remain in it. I do pray that God the Holy Spirit may destroy these foundations and pull up these bulwarks of yours and make you feel uneasy in your consciences and troubled in your minds. For unease is the road to ease and disquiet in the soul is the road to the true quiet. To be tormented on account of sin is the path to peace and happy shall I be if I

can hurl a fire-brand into your hearts this morning. Or, like Samson, to turn at least some little foxes loose into the standing corn of your self-conceit and set your heart in a blaze.

1. The first person I shall have to deal with this morning, is the man who has peace because he spends his life in a ceaseless round of gaiety and frivolity. You have scarcely come from one place of amusement before you enter another. You are always planning some excursion and dividing the day between one entertainment and another. You know that you are never happy except you are in what you call gay society, where the frivolous conversation will prevent you from hearing the voice of your conscience. In the morning you will be asleep while God's sun is shining, but at night you will be spending precious time in some place of foolish, if not lascivious mirth.

Like Saul, the deserted king, you have an unquiet spirit and therefore you call for music and it has its charms, doubtless, charms not only to soothe the stubborn breast, but to still a stubborn conscience. But while its notes are carrying you upwards towards Heaven, in some grand composition of a master author, I beseech you never to forget that your sins are carrying you down to Hell. If the harp should fail you, then you call for Nabal's feast. There shall be a sheep shearing and you shall be drunk with wine, until your souls becomes as stolid as a stone. And then you wonder that you have peace.

What wonder! Surely any man would have peace when his heart has become as hard as a stone. What weathers shall it feel? What tempests shall move the stubborn heart of granite rock? You sear your consciences and then marvel that they feel not. Perhaps, too, when both wine and the viol fail you, you will call for the dance and the daughter of Herodias shall please Herod, even though John the Baptist's head should pay its deadly price. Well, well, if you go from one of these scenes to another, I am at no loss to solve the riddle that there should be with you, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

And now sit for your portraits and I will paint you to the life. A company of idolaters are gathered together around an hideous image. There sits the blood-delighting Moloch. He is heated hot. The fire blazes in his brazen center and a child is about to be put into his arms to be burnt to ashes. The mother and father are present when the offspring of their own loins is to be immolated. The little one shrieks with terror. Its little body begins to consume in this desperate heat. Will not the parents hear the cry of their own flesh and listen to the wailings of the fruit of their own hearts?

Ah, no, the priests of Moloch will prevent the appeal of nature! Sounding their drums and blowing their trumpets with all their might they drown the cries of this poor immolated victim. It is what *you* are doing! Your soul is the victim to Satan! It is being destroyed now. And if you would but listen to its cries—if you would give yourself a little quiet—you might hear your poor soul shrieking, “Oh, do not destroy me! Put not away from me the hope of mercy—damn me not—send me not down to Hell.” These are shrieks that might penetrate your spirit and startle you into wisdom. But no, you beat your drums and sound your trumpets and you have your dance and your merriment, that the noise of your poor soul may be hushed.

Ah, Sirs! There will be a day when you will *have* to hear your spirit speak. When your cups are empty and not a drop of water can be given to your burning tongue—when your music has ceased and the doleful “Miserere” of wailing souls shall be your Black Sanctus—when you shall be launched forever into a place where merriment and mirth are strangers—then you will hear the cries of your soul, but hear too late. Then shall each voice be as a dagger sticking in your souls. When your conscience shall hear, “Remember, you had your day of mercy. You had your day of the proclamation of the Gospel, but you did reject it.” Then you will wish, but wish in vain, for thunders to come and drown that still small voice, which shall be more terrible in the ears than even the rumbling of the earthquake or the fury of the storm.

Oh that you would be wise and not fritter away your souls for gaiety. Poor Sirs, poor Sirs! There are nobler things for souls to do than to kill time—a soul immortal spending all its powers on these frivolities. Well might Young say of it, it resembles oceans into tempests tossed, to waft a feather or to drown a fly. These things are beneath you. They do no honor to you. Oh that you would begin to live! What a price you are paying for your mirth—eternal torment for an hour of jollity—separation from God for a brief day or two of sin! Be wise, men, I beseech you. Open your eyes and look about you. Be not forever madmen. Dance not forever on this precipice, but stop and think. O Spirit of the loving God! Stop the frivolous and dart a burning thought into his soul that will not let him rest until he has tasted the solid joy, the lasting pleasure which none but Zion’s children know.

**2.** Well, now I turn to another class of men. Finding that amusement at last has lost all its zest. Having drained the cup of worldly pleasure till they find first satiety and then disgust lying at the bottom, they want some stronger stimulus. And Satan who has drugged them once, has stronger opiates than mere merriment for the man who chooses to use

them. If the frivolity of this world will not suffice to rock a soul to sleep, he has a yet more hellish cradle for the soul. He will take you up to his own breast and bid you suck from there his own devilish and Satanic nature that you may then be still and calm. I mean that he will lead you to imbibe infidel notions and when this is fully accomplished, you can have “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

When I hear a man saying, “Well, I am peaceful enough, because I am not fool enough to believe in the existence of a God, or in a world to come. I cannot imagine that this old story book of yours—this Bible—is true.” I feel two thoughts within my soul—first, a disgust of the man for his dishonesty—and secondly, a pity for the sad disquietude that needs such dishonesty to cover it. Do not suspect the man of being honest. There are two sorts of infidels. One sort are such fools that they know they never could distinguish themselves by anything that was right—so they try and get a little fictitious glory by pretending to believe and defend a lie.

There are another set of men who are unquiet in their consciences. They do not like the Bible because it does not like them. It will not let them be comfortable in their sins, it is such an uneasy book to them. They did put their heads upon it once, but it was like a pillow stuffed with thorns, so they have one with it and they would be very glad if they could actually prove it to be untrue, which they know they cannot. I say then, I at once despise his falsehood and pity the uneasiness of his conscience that could drive him to such a paltry shift as this to cover his terrors from the eyes of others. The more the man brags, the more I feel he does not mean it. The louder he is in his blasphemies, the more he curses. The better he argues, the more sure I am that he is not sincere, except in his desire to stifle the groans of his uneasy spirit.

Ah, you remind me with your fine arguments, of the Chinese soldiers. When they go out to battle, they carry on their arm a shield with hideous monsters depicted upon it and making the loudest noise they can, they imagine their opponents will run away instantly, alarmed by these amazing manifestations. And so you arm yourself with blasphemies and come out to attack God’s ministers and think we will run away because of your sophistries. No, we smile upon them contemptuously. Once, we are told, the Chinese hung across their harbor, when the English were coming to attack them, a string of tigers’ heads. They said—“These barbarians will never dare to pass these ferocious heads.” So do these men hang a string of old, worn-out blasphemies and impieties and then they imagine that conscience will not be able to attack them and that God Himself will let them live at peace.

Ah Sir, you shall find the red-hot bullets of Divine justice too many and too terrible for your sophisms. When you shall fall under the arm of the Eternal God, vain will be your logic then. Dashed to shivers, you *will* believe in the Omnipotence, when you are *made* to feel it. You will know His justice when it is too late to escape from its terror. Oh, be wise, cast away these daydreams. Cease to shut your soul out of Heaven. Be wise, turn unto God whom you have abused. For “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto man.” He is ready to forgive you, ready to receive you and Christ is ready to wash your blasphemy away. Now, today, if grace enables you, you may be an accepted child of that God whom you have hated and pressed to the bosom of that Jehovah whose very existence you have dared to deny.

God bless these words to you—if they have seemed hard, they were only meant to come home to your conscience. An affectionate heart has led me to utter them. Oh, do not do this evil thing. Suck not in these infidel notions. Destroy not your soul for the sake of seeming to be wise. Stop not the voice of your conscience by those arguments which you know in your inmost soul are not true—which you only repeat in order to keep up a semblance of consistency.

**3.** I shall come now to a third class of men. These are people not particularly addicted to gaiety, nor especially given to infidel notions. But they are a sort of folk who are careless and determined to let well enough alone. Their motto is, “Let tomorrow take care of the things of itself. Let us live while we live. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” If their conscience cries out at all, they bid it lie still. When the minister disturbs them, instead of listening to what he says and so being brought into a state of real peace, they cry, “Hush! Be quiet! There is time enough yet. I will not disturb myself with these childish fears—be still, Sir and lie down.”

Ah, and you have been doing this for years, have you? Whenever you have heard an earnest, powerful sermon, you have gone home and labored to get rid of it. A tear has stolen down your cheek now and then and you have despised yourself for it. “Oh,” you say, “it is not manly for me to think of these things.” There have been a few twitches at times which you could not help, but the moment after you have your heart like a flint, impenetrably hard and stony. Well Sir, I will give you a picture of yourself. There is a foolish farmer yonder in his house. It is the dead of night—the burglars are breaking in—men who will neither spare his life nor his treasure. There is a dog down below chained in the yard, it barks and barks and howls again. “I cannot be quiet,” says the farmer, “my dog makes too much noise.”

Another howl and yet another yell. He creeps out of bed, gets his loaded gun, opens the window, fires it and kills the dog. "Ah, it is all right now," he mutters. He goes to bed, lies down and quietly rests. "No hurt will come," he says, "now. For I have made that dog quiet." Ah, but would that he could have listened to the warning of the faithful creature. Before long he shall feel the knife and rue his fatal folly. So you, when God is warning you—when your faithful conscience is doing its best to save you—you try to kill your only friend, while Satan and Sin are stealing up to the bedside of your slothfulness and are ready to destroy your soul forever and ever.

What should we think of the sailor at sea who should seek to kill all the stormy petrels, that there might be an end to all storms? Would you not say, "Poor foolish man! Why those birds are sent by a kind Providence to warn him of the tempest. Why needs he injure them? They cause not the tumult. It is the raging sea." So it is not your conscience that is guilty of the disturbance in your heart—it is your sin—and your conscience, acting true to its character, as God's index in your soul, tells you that all is wrong. Would that you would arise and take the warning and fly to Jesus while the hour of mercy lasts.

To use another picture. A man sees his enemy before him. By the light of his candle he marks his insidious approach. His enemy looks fierce and black upon him and is seeking his life. The man puts out the candle and then exclaims, "I am now quite at peace." This is what you do. Conscience is the candle of the Lord, it shows you your enemy. You try to put it out by saying, "Peace, peace." Put the enemy out, Sir! Put the enemy out! God give you grace to thrust sin out! Oh may the Holy Spirit enable you to thrust your lusts out of doors! Then let the candle burn. And the more brightly its light shall shine, the better for your soul, now and hereafter.

Oh, up you sleepers, you gagers of conscience, what is wrong with you? Why are you sleeping when death is hastening on, when eternity is near, when the Great White Throne is even now coming on the clouds of Heaven when the trumpet of the resurrection is now being set to the mouth of the archangel—why do you sleep? Why will you slumber? Oh that the voice of Jehovah might speak and make you wake, that you may escape from the wrath to come!

**4.** A fourth set of men have a kind of peace that is the result of resolutions which they have made, but which they will never carry into effect. "Oh," says one, "I am quite easy enough in my mind, for when I have got a little more money I shall retire from business and then I shall begin to think about eternal things." Ah, but I would remind you that when you

were an apprentice, you said you would reform when you became a journeyman. And when you were a journeyman, you used to say you would give good heed when you became a master.

But up to now these bills have never been paid when they became due. They have, every one of them, been dishonored as yet and take my word for it, this new accommodation bill will be dishonored, too. So you think to stifle conscience by what you will do by-and-by. Ah, but will that by-and-by ever come? And should it come, what reason is there to expect that you will then be any more ready than you are now? Hearts grow harder, sin grows stronger, vice becomes more deeply rooted by the lapse of years. You will find it certainly no easier to turn to God then than now. Now it is impossible for you, apart from Divine Grace. Then it shall be quite as impossible and if I might say so, there shall be more difficulties in the way then than even there are now.

What do you think is the value of these promises which you have made in the court of Heaven? Will God take your word again and again and again, when you have broken it just as often as you have given it? Not long ago you were lying on your bed with fever and if you lived you vowed you would repent. Have you repented? And yet you are fool enough to believe that you will repent by-and-by and on the strength of this promise, which is not worth a single straw, you are crying to yourself “peace, peace when there is no peace.”

A man that waits for a more convenient season for thinking about the affairs of his soul, is like the countryman in Aesop’s fable. He sat down by a flowing river, saying, “If this stream continues to flow as it does now for a little while it will empty itself and then I shall walk over dry shod.” Ah, but the stream was just as deep when he had waited day after day as it was before. And so shall it be with you. You remind me by your procrastination of the ludicrous position of a man who should sit upon a lofty branch of some tree with a saw in his hand, cutting away the branch on which he was sitting. This is what you are doing. Your delay is cutting away your branch of life. No doubt you intend to cover the well when the child is drowned and to lock the stable door after the horse is stolen. These birds in the hand you are losing, because their may be some better hour, some better bird in the bush. You are thus getting a little quiet, but oh, at what a fatal cost!

Paul was troublesome to you and so you played the part of Felix and said, “Go your way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” Conscience was unquiet, so you stopped his mouth with this sop for Cerberus. And you have gone to your bed with this lie under your pillow, with this falsehood in your right hand—that you will

be better by-and-by. Ah, Sir, let me tell you once and for all—you live to grow worse and worse. While you are procrastinating, time is not staying, nor is Satan resting. While you are saying, “Let things abide,” things are not abiding, but they are hastening on. You are ripening for the dread harvest. The sickle is being sharpened that shall cut you down, and the fire is even now blazing into which your spirit shall be cast forever.

**5.** Now I turn to another class of men, in order that I may miss none here who are saying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” I do not doubt but that many of the people of London enjoy peace in their hearts because they are ignorant of the things of God. It would positively alarm many of our sober orthodox Christians if they could once have an idea of the utter ignorance of spiritual things that reigns throughout this land. Some of us, when moving about here and there, in all classes of society, have often been led to remark, that there is less known of the truths of religion than of any science, however mysterious that science may be.

Take as a lamentable instance, the ordinary effusions of the secular press and who can avoid remarking the ignorance they manifest as to true religion. Let the papers speak on politics, it is a matter they understand and their ability is astonishing. But once let them touch religion and our Sunday-School children could convict them of absolute ignorance. The statements they put forth are so crude, so remote from the fact, that we are led to imagine that the presentation of a four-penny testament to special correspondents should be one of the first efforts of our societies for spreading the Gospel among the heathen.

As to theology, some of our great writers seem to be as little versed in it as a horse or a cow. Go among all ranks and classes of men and since the day we gave up our catechism and old Dr. Watts’ and the Assemblies ceased to be used, people have not a clear idea of what is meant by the Gospel of Christ. I have frequently heard it asserted, by those who have judged the modern pulpit without severity, that if a man attended a course of thirteen lectures on geology, he would get a pretty clear idea of the system. But you must hear not merely *thirteen* sermons, but thirteen hundred sermons and you would not have a clear idea of the system of divinity that was meant to be taught. I believe that to a large extent that has been true.

But a great change which has passed over the pulpit within the last two years and is a cause of the greatest thankfulness to God and we believe will be a blessing to the Church and to the world at large is that ministers preach more boldly than they did. There is more evangelical doctrine, I believe, preached in London, on any one Sunday, than there was



in a month before. But still there is in many quarters a profound ignorance as to the things of Christ.

Our old Puritans—what masters they were in divinity! They knew the difference between the old covenant and the new. They did not mingle works and grace together. They penetrated into the recesses of Gospel Truth. They were always studying the Scriptures and meditating on them both by day and night. They shed a light upon the villages in which they preached, until you might have found in those days as profound theologians working upon stone heaps, as you can find in colleges and universities now-a-days. How few discern the spirituality of the Law, the glory of the atonement, the perfection of justification, the beauty of sanctification and the preciousness of real union to Christ. I do not marvel that we have a multitude of men who are mere professors and mere formalists, who are nevertheless quite as comfortable in their minds as though they were possessors of vital godliness and really walked in the true fear of God.

There was not—I speak of things that were—there was not in the pulpit a little while ago, a discernment between things that differ. There was not a separating between the precious and the vile. The grand cardinal points of the Gospel, if not denied, were ignored. We began to think that the thinkers would overwhelm the Believers, that intellectuality and philosophy would overthrow the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. It is not so now. I do, therefore, hope, that as the Gospel shall be more fully preached, that as the words of Jesus shall be better understood, that as the things of the kingdom of Heaven shall be set in a clearer light, this stronghold of a false peace—namely, ignorance of Gospel doctrines—shall be battered to its foundations and the foundation stones themselves dug up and cast away forever.

If you have a peace that is grounded on ignorance, get rid of it. Ignorance is a thing, remember, that you are accountable for. You are not accountable for the exercise of your judgment to man, but you are accountable for it to God. There is no such thing as toleration of your sentiments with Jehovah. I have no right to judge you. I am your fellow creature. No State has any right to dictate what religion I will believe. But nevertheless, there is a true Gospel and there are thousands of false ones. God has given you judgment—use it. Search the Scriptures and remember that if you neglect the Word of God and remain ignorant, your sins of ignorance will be sins of *willful* ignorance and therefore ignorance shall be no excuse. There is the Bible, you have it in your houses. You can read it. God the Holy Spirit will instruct you in its meaning. And if

you remain ignorant, charge it no more on the minister. Charge it on no one but yourself and make it no cloak for your sin.

**6.** I now pass to another and more dangerous form of this false peace. I may have missed some of you probably. I shall come closer home to you now. Alas, alas, let us weep and weep again, for there is a plague among us. There are members of our Churches who are saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." It is the part of candor to admit that with all the exercise of judgment and the most rigorous discipline, we cannot keep our Churches free from hypocrisy.

I have had to hear, to the very breaking of my heart, stories of men and women who have believed the doctrines of election and other truths of the Gospel and have made them a sort of cover for the most frightful iniquity. I could, without uncharitableness, point to Churches that are hotbeds of hypocrisy, because men are taught that it is the belief of a certain set of sentiments that will save them and not warned that this is all in vain without a real living faith in Christ. The preacher does as good as say, if not in so many words—"If you are orthodox, if you believe what I tell you, you are saved. If you for a moment turn aside from that line which I have chalked out for you, I cannot be accountable for you. But if you will give me your whole heart and believe precisely what I say, whether it is Scripture or not, then you are a saved man."

And we know persons of that cast who can have their shop open on a Sunday and then go to enjoy what they call a savory sermon in the evening. Men who mix up with drunkards and yet say they are God's elect. Men who live as others live and yet they come before you and with brazen impudence tell you that they are redeemed by the blood of Christ. It is true they have had a deep experience, as they say. God save us from such a muddied experience as that! They have had, they say, a great manifestation of the depravity of their hearts, but still they are the precious children of God. Precious, indeed! Dear at any price that any man should give for them. If they are precious to anybody, I am sure I wish they were taken to their own place, for they are not precious to anyone here below and they are not of the slightest use to either religion or morality.

Oh, I do not know of a more thoroughly damnable delusion than for a man to get a conceit into his head that he is a child of God and yet live in sin—to talk to you about grace, while he is living in sovereign lust—to stand up and make himself the arbiter of what is the Truth of God, while he himself despises the precept of God and tramples the commandment under foot. Hard was Paul on such men in his time—when he said their damnation is just—he spoke a most righteous sentence. Surely, the devil gloats over men of this kind. A Calvinist I am, but John Calvin never

taught immoral doctrine. A more consistent expositor of Scripture than that great reformer I believe never lived, but his doctrine is not the Hyper-Calvinism of these modern times—it is as diametrically opposed to it as light to darkness.

There is not a word in any of his writings that would justify any man in going on in iniquity that grace might abound. If you do not hate sin, it is all the same what doctrine you may believe. You may go to perdition as rapidly with High-Calvinistic doctrine as with any other. You are just as surely destroyed in an orthodox as in a heterodox Church unless your life manifests that you have been “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

**7.** I have but one other class of persons to describe and then I shall have done when I have addressed a few solemn sentences of warning to you all. There remains yet another class of beings who surpass all these in their utter indifference to everything that might arouse them. They are men that are given up by God, justly *given up*. They have passed the boundary of His longsuffering. He has said, “My Spirit shall no more strive with them.” “Ephraim is given unto idols, let him alone.” As a judicial punishment for their impenitence, God has given them up to pride and hardness of heart. I will not say that there is such an one here—God grant there may not be such a man—but there have been such to whom there has been given a strong delusion, that they might believe a lie, that they might be damned because they received not the Gospel of Christ.

Brought up by a holy mother, they perhaps learned the Gospel when they were almost in the cradle. Trained by the example of a holy father, they went aside to wantonness and brought a mother’s gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Nevertheless, conscience still pursued them. At the funeral of that mother, the young man paused and asked himself the question, “Have I killed her! Have I brought her here?” He went home—was sober for a day, was tempted by a companion and became as bad as ever. Another warning came. He was seized with sickness. He lay in the jaws of the grave. He woke up—he lived and lived as vilely as he had lived before. Often did he hear his mother’s voice—though she was in the grave, she being dead yet spoke to him.

He put the Bible on the top shelf—hid it away. Still, sometimes a text he had learned in infancy used to thrust itself in on his mind. One night as he was going to some haunt of vice, something arrested him, conscience seemed to say to him, “Remember all that you have learned of her.” He stood still, bit his lip a moment, considered, weighed chances. At last he said, “I will go if I am lost.” He went and from that moment it has often been a source of wonder to him that he has never thought of

his mother nor of the Bible. He hears a sermon, which he does not heed. It is all the same to him. He is never troubled. He says, "I don't know how it is. I am glad of it. I am as easy now and as frolicsome as ever a young fellow could be."

Oh, I tremble to explain this quietude. But it may be—God grant I may not be a true prophet—it may be that God has thrown the reins on your neck and said, "Let him go, let him go, I will warn him no more. He shall be filled with his own ways. He shall go the length of his chain. I will never stop him." Mark—if it is so, your damnation is as sure as if you were in the pit now. O may God grant that I may not have such a hearer here. But that dread thought may well make you search yourselves, for it may be so. There is that possibility. Search and look and God grant that you may no more say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

Now for these last few solemn words. I will not be guilty this morning of speaking any smooth falsehoods to you. I would be faithful with each man—as I believe I shall have to face you all at God's great day—even though you heard me but once in your lives. Well, then, let me tell you that if you have a peace today which enables you to be at peace with your sins as well as with God, that peace is a false peace. Unless you hate sin of every sort, with all your heart, you are not a child of God, you are not reconciled to God by the death of His Son. You will not be perfect. I cannot expect you will live without sin, but if you are a Christian you will hate the very sin into which you have been betrayed and hate yourself because you should have grieved your Savior thus. But if you love sin, the love of the Father is not in you. Be you who you may, or what you may—minister, deacon, elder, professor, or non-professor—the love of sin is utterly inconsistent with the love of Christ. Take that home and remember it.

Another solemn thought. If you are at peace today through a belief that you are righteous in yourself, you are not at peace with God. If you are wrapping yourself up in your own righteousness and saying, "I am as good as other people. I have kept God's Law and have no need for mercy," you are not at peace with God. You are treasuring up in your impenitent heart wrath against the day of wrath. And you will as surely be lost if you trust to your good works, as if you had trusted to your sins. There is a clean path to Hell as well as a dirty one. There is as sure a road to perdition along the highway of morality, as down the slough of vice. Take heed that you build on nothing else but Christ. For if you do, your house will tumble about your ears, when most you need its protection.

And, yet again, my Hearer, if you are out of Christ, however profound may be your peace, it is a false one. For out of Christ there is no true

peace to the conscience and no reconciliation to God. Ask yourself this question, “Do I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart? Is He my only trust, the simple, solitary rock of my refuge?” If not, as the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. And dying as you are, out of Christ, you will be shut out of Heaven. Where God and bliss are found, your soul can never come.

And now, finally, let me beseech you, if you are at peace in your own mind this morning, weigh your peace thus—“Will my peace stand me on a sick bed?” There are many that are peaceful enough when they are well, but when their bones begin to ache and their flesh is sore vexed, then they find they want something more substantial than this dreamy quietness into which their souls had fallen. If a little sickness makes you shake, if the thought that your heart is affected, or that you may drop down dead in a fit on a sudden—if that startles you, then put that question of Jeremy to yourself, “If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, what will you do when you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein you had trusted they have wearied you, what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? If sickness makes you shake what will destruction make you do?”

Then again, put the question in another light. If your peace is good for anything, it is one that will bear you up in a dying hour. Are you ready to go home to your bed now—to lie there and never rise again? For remember, that which will not stand a dying bed will never stand the day of judgment. If my hope begins to quiver, even when the skeleton hand of Death begins to touch me, how will it shake, “When God’s right arm is nerved for war and thunders clothe His cloudy ear”? If death makes me startle, what will the glory of God do? How shall I shrink into nothing and fly away from Him in despair! Then often put to yourself this question, “Will my peace last me when the heavens are in a blaze and when the trembling universe stands to be judged?”

Oh my dear Hearers, I know I have spoken feebly to you this morning. Not as I could have wished—but I do entreat you—if what I have said is not an idle dream, if it is not a mere myth of my imagination—if it is true—lay it to heart and may God enable you to prepare to meet Him. Do not be wrapping yourselves up and slumbering and sleeping. Awake, you Sleepers, awake! Oh, that I had a trumpet voice to warn you! Oh, while you are dying, while you are sinking into perdition, may I not cry to you? May not these eyes weep for you? I cannot be extravagant here, I am acquitted of being enthusiastic or fanatical on such a matter as this. Take

heart, I beseech you, the realities of eternity. Do not forever waste your time.

“Oh, turn you, turn you! Why will you die, O house of Israel?” Listen, now, to the words of the Gospel, which are sent to you. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” For “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” while the solemn sentence remains, “He that believes not shall be damned.”

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.**

# REST AS A TEST

## NO. 2748

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 13, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1879.**

***“Ask for the old path, where the good way is, and walk in it,  
and you shall find rest for your souls.”  
Jeremiah 6:16.***

A VERY short time ago, I gave you, in print, [See *The Sword and the Trowel*, March, 1879, “Incidents of Travel Clustering Round a Text”—contact Pilgrim Publications, Pasadena, TX, [www.pilgrimpublications.com](http://www.pilgrimpublications.com) for availability and prices.] a sermon upon this text which, I daresay many of you well remember. I am not now going to pursue the same line of thought as I then followed. I have taken this text again, not to preach from all its words so much as from one single Truth of God which is clear in it, namely, that you may judge which is the old path and which is the good way in which you ought to walk, by this test—if you are in the old path, the good way—you find rest for your soul. You may, therefore, judge of your position at the present moment and test the quality of your religion—for there are many false faiths, erroneous creeds, man-made religions and evil spirits that have gone out into the world. But you may try them all by this test if you are, indeed, in the old path, the good way—in God's own way—you find rest for your soul!

I need not have taken the same text again, for this Truth is clearly taught in many other passages of Scripture. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in that memorable soul-saving invitation of His, says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” From these words it is clear that if I have *really* come to Christ, He has given me rest. And if I have, in very deed, taken His yoke upon me and learned of Him, I have found a still further rest. But if I neither have rest given to me, nor have a rest which I find, I am led to the conclusion that I have not come to Christ and am not wearing His easy yoke. Is not that clear reasoning and should we not thus judge ourselves by what is so manifestly true?

Moreover, we have not only the words of Christ to support us in this reasoning, but we know that it is the distinguishing feature of His Gospel that it does give this rest of heart. The types and sacrifices under the Law never gave any permanent rest, for, although he who brought a sin-offering found peace for the moment, by-and-by he had to bring another sacrifice. The great Day of Atonement, when it was duly observed with all

its holy pomp and ceremony, brought a blessing on the people, but there had to be another Day of Atonement the next year. Now, if the consciences of those who presented the various victims had been cleansed from dead works, there would have been no need that there should be a further remembrance made of sin. But none of these things could make the comers thereunto perfect—rest of conscience was not possible under the *shadows*—it is only to be found in the Substance. Every morning had its bleeding lamb and every evening had another bleeding lamb—blood was perpetually being shed—

**“Fresh blood as constant as the day,  
Was on their altar spilt”—**

but our Lord Jesus Christ has this testimony for His Glory alone, “this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God,” for all His sacrificial work was done!

In the Atonement of Christ, there is a real and effectual expiation which there was not in all the types of the Law of God—and the man who has once received that expiation is forever absolved before the Judgment Seat of God from all his sin. Having believed in Jesus, he sees in his Savior’s Sacrifice a full Atonement for the whole of his guiltiness and realizes that he is delivered from it! And, therefore, he has peace and rest of heart, for Jesus makes us perfect in the things that appertain to the conscience. Walking in the Light of God as He is in the Light, His blood cleanses us from all sin and we understand what Paul meant when he wrote, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

If you have not found rest of heart, dear Friend, you have missed that blessing which is peculiar to the Gospel dispensation. If you have not found in Christ perfect quiet for your soul, you put Him on a level with Moses and you seem to make out that you will need either another sacrifice, or another something to make you clear of guilt in the sight of God. This would be casting Christ down from His priestly throne and robbing Him of the brightest jewel in His crown—and this we must never do! So, if we have found the right way and are walking in it, we must have rest for our soul, for this is the peculiar mark of it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the parable of the prodigal son, pictured to us the result of returning to God in the right way. I need scarcely quote our Savior’s words, for you are probably all familiar with them. That younger son had no rest while he joined himself to a citizen of the far country who sent him into his fields to feed his swine. He hungered and he thirsted all the while he was there—but he had no sooner come home and confessed his faults in his father’s ear, and received his father’s kisses and words of welcome, than where do we see him? Toiling to gain acceptance with his father? Working in his father’s fields until he has earned the right to be again called a son? No, but received with music and dancing, in the best room of his father’s house, to be fed upon the daintiest fare that his father’s household could afford, and to be welcomed back to his father’s heart, to go no more out forever! Well, now, if



you have never heard any music and dancing—if your soul has never partaken of the fatted calf—if the Father’s kiss has never breathed peace to your troubled spirit, then, I think you cannot have come home to the great Father, for, had you done so, there would have been peace in your heart and conscience!

Further, we find that this rest which is spoken of in the text has come to those who have trodden the good old way. There are plenty of instances in the Word of God, but one will suffice us as a specimen of many more. How restful is the Apostle Paul even amid much that might perplex him! When he is writing his letters, he seems as if he wrote poetry rather than prose when he begins to touch upon the condition of a justified man. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” You know that there are many other passages to the same effect which I need not quote, all of which prove that he had true peace of heart. Think, too, of his behavior under trying circumstances—what wonderful calmness he exhibited in times of trial! Before Nero, the cruel lion, on board ship when the vessel was driven upon the rocks, or in the prison where he and Silas sang the praises of God at midnight—wherever you find him—even when he becomes “such an one as Paul the Aged” and he needs his cloak, for the Mamertine Prison is cold, still he is always calm, quiet, happy, peaceful!

Yet I need not quote the case of the Apostle Paul—there are multitudes of Christian men and women alive who are equally witnesses that the good old way is the way of peace! They are disturbed, sometimes, yet their heart is not troubled. I know, perhaps, as well as anyone here, what deep depression of spirit means—and what it is to feel myself sinking lower and lower—yet, at the worst, when I reach the lowest depths, I have an inward peace which no pain or depression of spirit can in the least disturb! Trusting in Jesus Christ, my Savior, there is still a blessed quietness in the deep caverns of my soul though, upon the surface, a rough tempest may be raging and there may be but little apparent calm. Many of you also know that it is so with you. If you have come to terms with God, through Jesus Christ, the great Reconciler, then there is for you, “the peace of God, which passes all understanding,” which, “shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

**I.** This, then, is the kind of plumb line that we are going to use to see whether our soul is upright, whether the foundation of our spiritual building is well and truly laid—IF WE ARE REALLY IN THE GOOD OLD WAY, WE HAVE FOUND REST UNTO OUR SOULS.

This rule proves the rightness of *the way of salvation by Grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ*, for, if you examine all the ways that are opposed to this, you will find that they bring no rest whatever. All the other ways are only different forms of seeking salvation by our own works. The Roman Catholic church has embodied to the very full the doctrine of salvation by works with which, indeed, is our great quarrel—the same that Martin Luther took up. The Papists would have it that works justify a

sinner, but Luther rightly maintained, according to the teaching of Scripture, that faith alone justifies in the sight of God.

Well, now, according to this way of justification by works, they tell us that a man is accounted just before God because of his good works, especially such as his attendances at the various ceremonies of the church, his reception of “sacraments” and the like. But I am bold enough to say that no one in the church of Rome has ever or ever could have, legitimately, any rest of heart through his own good deeds, either living or dying! I have purposely added the word, “dying,” because I want you to note what is the highest state of blessing to which the best Catholics hope to attain at death. When I was in Rome I stood in the church of St. John Lateran and I saw there a notice that there was to be “a mass for the repose of the soul of his eminence, Cardinal Wiseman.” “Well,” I thought to myself, “if there ever was a man who served his church well, and who was distinguished, not only as a saint, but as a prince of the church, surely this was the man—yet when the cardinal dies, he goes somewhere or other—I do not know where—but it is somewhere where he has not any repose because there are to be masses for the repose of his soul! As there were for the repose of the soul of the late pope. Now, if even popes and cardinals go where they do not have any repose, where do ordinary Catholics go? It must be a very poor outlook for them! If I were in their place, I would turn Protestant, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and go to Heaven when I die! There is nothing to be had, you see, for money. The best thing that man can do is not worth anything in the sight of God—so let no one of us place the slightest reliance upon it.

Take any other form of this error and you will find that there is no rest in it. The common, somewhat diluted, Protestantized doctrine of salvation by works has the same flaw in it. If I am to be saved by my own works, when may I know that I have done enough? Never! Never! Even if I *could* have ever done enough in quantity, I shall soon undo it all by some sin or mistake which would make it valueless! And if I should persevere in well-doing even to the end of my life and do the best I can all the while, have I not reason to fear that I might still fall short of the Divine standard because my motive or my spirit is faulty and so, at the last, I would not have the quantity of good works necessary to make me a Christian? Unless you lessen the requirements of the Law of God, salvation by works can only be possible upon the condition of absolute perfection—but absolute perfection is beyond any man’s reach, seeing that he has already sinned!

If, however, you lower the standard and say that sincere obedience will avail instead of perfect obedience, who is to decide as to the sincerity? How is a man to be certain, even then, he is always sincere? May he not, sometime or other, have a mixture of insincerity with his love? And if so, may not that, like a little leaven, sour the whole lump? So unsatisfactory and unreliable is this doctrine of salvation by works that Cardinal Bellarmine, who was one of the greatest of the Romish theologians, towards his latter end used words something like these—“that, while it is right to

tell the people that they must be saved by their works, yet, inasmuch as few persons can ever tell that they have done sufficient good works to merit salvation, it is, probably, upon the whole, safer to trust in the blood of Jesus Christ than in our own works." And I hope that the cardinal himself did so!

If you put your trust in the blood of Jesus and rely for salvation upon what Christ has done, you may not only say that it is, upon the whole, safer than trusting in what you do, yourself, but you may be *sure* that it is altogether the better, the more Divine, the truer way—for among many other blessings, it gives you peace and rest—which the other system never does and never can! To be continually flogged, like the galley slave tugging at the oar and to have your conscience always crying, "Do, do, do this and you shall live! Fail in doing this and you shall die," is to live a dog's life, a slave's life—no, it is to remain dead in trespasses and sins! But when you come to the Gospel plan of salvation—"Believe and live! Trust Christ and you are both accounted righteous and made righteous! Rely upon what Jesus Christ has done and suffered and is still doing"—then you have God's Word to rely upon! More—"he that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." When I have complied with the conditions God lays down, that is, when I have believed in Jesus and have been baptized, I say, "It is enough, my Lord! Your servant is saved—here I find rest unto my soul." O Beloved, ask for the old path of pardon through the Savior's Sacrifice, and walk in it, and you shall find rest unto your souls!

Another old way that I want you to walk in is *the way of believing the Word Of God like a little child*. Here is this blessed Book and I can honestly declare that, as a rule, I see only one meaning to it. Yet, as I read it, I find that there are some difficult passages which I cannot understand. I try all I can, but if I fail, I rejoice that my Heavenly Father will not condemn me if I do not understand them. How can a little child understand all that his father knows? I am glad that there are some difficult passages, because they are a trial to my faith! Yet all that is essential for me to know, it seems to me, is as plain as possible when I just read it as I would read another book. But there are some people who always read the Bible through red or green spectacles—and they see there some wonderful system of theology which I have never yet discovered. In fact, they can find in a text of Scripture what no ordinary person ever would see. I think they must put it there before they find it, though I suppose they do not think so. Then there are others who read the Bible philosophically. I do not know, often, what they mean, nor can I make heads or tails of what they say—one needs to have been born in Germany in order to understand some of their remarks. They seem to enshroud the Bible with a cloud of smoke, so that they do not see in it what I perceive, but they see something very wonderful, indeed! Ah, well, Brothers and Sisters! I believe that you do not get any peace for your soul out of God's Word either by trying to clip it down to fit in with some system of your own making,

or by spiriting it away in some metaphysical incomprehensibility. But if you just take the Bible in its plain sense and say, "That seems to me to be what my Heavenly Father means by this passage. It looks very simple and clear to me. I, an unsophisticated person, reading it after seeking the Holy Spirit's instruction and guidance, think it is so and I believe it, and I act upon it," you will find peace and rest of heart in that way of studying the Scriptures.

Everybody wants to have an anchorage somewhere or other. Many have gone over to Rome because they foolishly imagined that they would find there an Infallible church, but if you believe in an Infallible Bible and in an Infallible Spirit explaining it, you have all the Infallibility that is necessary for mental and spiritual rest! And let me assure you that if you will but determine that you will believe whatever God says simply because He says it, whether you understand it or not, and if this Book becomes to you the standard of appeal on all disputed points, you shall find rest unto your souls instead of the disquietude which is bred so abundantly by so-called "thinking" gentlemen, in these modern times, and which is fed by the articles in Reviews which spread all sorts of doubt on every hand! If you will just come to the Bible and say—

***"This is the Judge that ends the strife,  
Where wit and reason fail"***—

you will find rest unto your souls! That is another good old way in which I urge you to walk.

A third way I can recommend to you for giving peace of mind and heart is *the way of living daily by faith in God*. A great many persons fall into the idea that life is to be divided into two parts—so much is secular and so much is religious. That is a gross error! The whole of a Christian's life should be religious. It should be just as much a part of his religion to deal honestly in trade as to be orthodox in his creed. We are to live unto Christ! We are, as an old saint expressed it, to eat and drink and sleep eternal life. "We are Christians," would have been the answer of the first disciples of Christ if you had asked them what they were. Are you a tent-maker, Paul? "I am a Christian." But you make tents, do you not? "Yes, but I do it all for Christ." How so? You take the money for the tents and live upon it. "That is in order that I may not be chargeable unto any, that thereby the Gospel of Jesus Christ may be freely proclaimed among the heathen. Every stitch I take through the hard canvas is done for Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. While I live, I live unto Him and when I die, I shall go to be with Him forever." Well, now, Beloved, your whole life should be like that—you should spend it all for Christ!

See that the whole of it comes under the governance of faith in God. Have faith in God about everything—even about that little child that is evidently sickening—trust the child with God. Have faith about that doubtful customer whose bill is running up so high—I do not mean have faith in *him*, but trust in God, and then use the right means to prevent the man from robbing you. Bring everything to God by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving. It is wonderful how differently the days roll

round when they are prayed over, to what they do when you enter upon them entirely by yourself. If you ask God's guidance even about little things and especially about the things in which you think you do not need any guidance—for that is, often, where you need it most—your days shall be spent in peace and restfulness. If you have learned to bring every burden to the Lord, every care, every trial and every loss—yes, and every joy—then you shall find rest unto your souls, for this is the good old way of living by faith in which Abraham walked—and it is the way of peace and rest.

Another good old way is *the way of obedience to the Divine commands*. You can be your own master if you like, but that is not the way of peace. If God is your Master and you consult His will in everything and say, "I might have preferred to do that, but instead, I shall do this because I see that it is in agreement with the command of God," you will have peace of mind and heart in doing it. But you would have found no peace in doing the other thing. Suppose that doing right should involve you in trouble? You will be able to bear it very cheerfully because you will say, "this comes through no fault of mine, and it is a pleasure to suffer for doing right." I saw, the other day, a picture of John Bradford, the martyr, kissing the stake. He was represented as standing against the stake by which he was to be burnt alive and he was embracing it and kissing it! How could he do that? It is no joyous matter to be burned to death, but he felt that as he must die for the Truth of God, and for faithfulness to his God, it was a sweet thing so to die! There is not much stake-kissing, I am afraid, among us now, but it ought to come to that—and it does when a man, conscientiously, and at all hazards, resolves, "I will say the right and do the right, whatever happens."

If you begin to tuck about and to be guided by policy, not by principle. If you say, "I shall make just a little nick in my conscience here, and another nick there, but I shall make it right, by-and-by," you will lose rest. When you get to bed at night, you will not look back upon the day's proceedings with pleasure. When trial comes, you will have nobody to help you. But, on the other hand, if you can say, "In the name of God I have gone forward in all simple honesty, resting and confiding in Him," you shall find that the Lord will not let you be a loser through trusting Him. You shall be borne up and brought through—and you shall bless and praise the gracious Master who is such a good Paymaster and who so well rewards those who diligently seek Him! That is another good old way in which I advise you to walk.

I will mention one other good old way and that is, *the way of close communion with Jesus Christ*. Oh, what a blessed way that is! If you walk in it, you will say, from your inmost soul, unto the Lord, "If You go not with me, carry me not up hence." You will cry, "I must have Jesus with me or I dare not leave my chamber in the morning!" I must have the assurance of His gracious company, or I shall fear to fall asleep at night." You will sing that delicious hymn, "Sun of my soul," and you will pray to Him and get the prayer answered—

***“When the soft dews of kindly sleep  
My wearied eyelids gently steep,  
Be my last thought, how sweet to rest  
Forever on my Savior’s breast!  
Abide with me from morn till eve,  
For without You I cannot live:  
Abide with me when night is nigh,  
For without You I dare not die.”***

So you will find such rest for your soul as you could never have known in any other way! The sheep must rest when the shepherd is near. The spouse must rest when her Beloved brings her to the banqueting house and waves the banner of His love over her. So, keep near to Jesus, for you may be certain that there you will be in the good old way where you will find rest unto your souls!

I wish I had the tongue of the eloquent that I might worthily describe the rest which belongs to the people of God. Do not tell me that there is no rest for us till we get to Heaven! We who have believed in Jesus enter into rest even now—why should we not do so? Our salvation is complete! The robe of righteousness, in which we are clad, is finished! The Atonement for our sins is fully made! We are reconciled to God, we are beloved of the Father, we are preserved by His Grace and supplied by His Providence with all that we need! We carry all our burdens to Him and leave them at His feet! We spend our lives in His service and we find His ways to be ways of pleasantness, and His paths to be paths of peace. Oh, yes, we have found rest unto our souls! I remember the first day that I ever rested in Christ and I did rest that day, and so will all of you who trust in Jesus as I trusted in Him! To a laboring man, rest is indeed sweet. Suppose a man is called, through some sudden emergency, to work for 24 hours at a stretch? Oh, how every bone in his body seems to bless God when he, at last, is able to rest! It does not matter much if his bed is only the hard floor—he throws himself down and every limb, as he stretches out, seems to say, “Thank God, thank God. Now I can rest!” That is just how a poor burdened one feels when he comes to Christ! Till he gets to Him the bed is shorter than a man may stretch himself upon it—but when once he trusts in Jesus, he may stretch as much as he likes and he shall find that he can satisfy his soul in the abundance of peace and rest that he finds laid up for him in Christ!

**II.** Now, secondly, I want to speak upon this theme—REST FOUND BY WALKING IN “THE GOOD OLD WAY” IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL.

Possibly, somebody says, “I can understand that you Christian people, who believe that you are saved through faith, and who sing, as you often do—

***‘Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is given!  
More happy but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in Heaven’—***

I can understand that you enjoy rest, but is that rest good for you, because, you know, that rest very soon degenerates into laziness?” I have known a man who said that it would take a great deal of rest to knock

him out and I am fully aware that there are some who, spiritually, like the idea of rest because, as they misinterpret the term, it means downright laziness to them. Nothing to do precisely suits their constitution! So, let me just show you that no evil consequences ever flow from the rest which God gives to our soul when we walk in the good old way!

For, first, *it brings satisfaction, but not self-satisfaction.* Somebody says, "If I knew that I were saved, I would feel as proud as Lucifer. I would say then, 'That is quite enough for me! I do not need to go any further, for I am all I ought to be.'" Yes, my dear Sir, I do not controvert your statement that, very likely, you would say that. While you are what you are, I believe you *would* talk so—but when God makes a man a new creature, such an idea as that does not enter his head! When he says, "I am saved from condemnation," he also says, "Now I desire to be saved from every propensity to go back to be what I was before! Now that I am clear of guilt, I desire to be saved from ever again living as I formerly did. God has given me salvation, but He means me to work it out—that is to say, He has worked it *in* me by His gracious Spirit—and I am to work it *out* in my life and so let others see, by my walk and conversation, that I am really saved."

If you were to proclaim liberty to a man who was in prison—if you went and opened the door and said to him, "Now, my good fellow, out of pure grace, Her Majesty freely pardons you, and orders you to be set at liberty"—according to your theory, that man would sit still, and say, "Well, I have got my pardon, I do not need anything more." You know that he would not talk like that! The first thing he would do would be to want to get out and go home and see his wife and family. And the very first thing that we feel, when we are saved, is that we want to see our Father who is in Heaven. We want to know our dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ and we want to do something to show the gratitude which we feel towards God for His abounding mercy towards us! I tell you that the Grace of God breeds no self-satisfaction, for we think less of ourselves after we are saved than we ever did before! Yes, and the more sure we are that we are saved, the deeper is our sense of our own unworthiness, and the more we groan out, "O God, deliver me from the sin that still dwells within me!" He who has to work out his salvation by his own merits and good deeds may be content to live in sin—but he who is saved feels that he must no longer be the slave of sin, yet he groans that he is often under bondage and he cries to God for something better, higher, nobler!

"Yes" says another objector, "but if a man knew he were saved, *it would breed sloth in him*, he would not want to do anything." Again I reply that if the man was what men are by nature, that *is* what would happen. But when a man gets changed by Divine Grace, it is very different. You think, you sons of Hagar, children after the flesh that are under the Law, that nobody will do anything unless he is paid for it. You suppose that there is no motive in the world but self-interest—to escape from Hell and to win Heaven. That is the only argument that can have any effect upon you, for you are slaves—you are bond-servants and that, probably,

is all the argument we can use with you at present. But if you ever become children of God, you will find better arguments than these—nobler and more worthy of men redeemed by the precious blood of Christ! You will, each one, then say, “I am saved. I have nothing to do in order to be saved, that is all done. I am saved to a certainty. Now, for the love I bear my Savior’s name, I will do a hundred times as much as I ever could have done under the threat of damnation, or the offer of entrance into Heaven! Now, by His Grace, I am going to live according to the Law of Love which—

**‘Makes my willing feet,  
In swift obedience move’—**

and I will prove to all mankind, by my life, that the impulse of love can produce greater results than the impulse of fear, threat, and self-interest!” Oh, yes, we get a new set of motives! The old ones cease to influence us and we get other and higher motives which enable us to overcome the sloth to which, by nature, we are all too prone.

“But,” says yet another friend, “if I believed that I was really saved, I would say, ‘Now I may live as I like.’” Ah, my Friend! There is nothing I should like better than to live as I like—and do you know how I would live if I could live as I liked? I would never sin again! If I could live as I liked, you would be able to call me a strait-laced old Puritan with whom you could not find a fault except that I was too strict! That is what I would be if I could live as I liked. But if you, as an unconverted man, live as *you* like, I should not like to read the record of your life! But we are not talking about men in general, but about *renewed men*—those who have been changed by Divine Grace and who have become children of God—and who like to live after a very different fashion!

“Well,” you say, “but if I thought that God never could and never would cast me into Hell, and that I was eternally saved, I should go and live in sin.” No, no, no! Come now, you are quite bad enough, I am sure, but I will not believe even that to be true of you! I cannot think so badly of you as that. There was a little boy who had a very kind father. And there were some bad boys, living on the same street, whose father used to horsewhip them and treat them very cruelly. But this boy’s father was the soul of love and kindness. There was an orchard that the bad boys wanted to rob, so they proposed to this other lad that he should go with them. “No,” he replied, “I shall not go, for I do not want to grieve my father.” “Oh!” they said, “you know that if *we* are caught, we shall catch it! But your father is so fond of you that he will not beat you, so you may freely go and do it.” “What?” he exclaimed, “Do you think because my father loves me, that therefore I will go and do wrong because of that! No, I will do nothing of the kind.”

You sympathize at once with the boy, and say, “That is right.” Very well, I hope you will sympathize with him so much that you will feel that this is the way a Christian acts. He has received so much love from God that he cannot do that which would grieve the One who has been so good and so kind to him! Our God forgives our transgressions and blots out



the sin of His people because He delights in mercy! Therefore that love of His has more influence over His redeemed ones than all the thunders and threats of the Law will ever have over the ungodly! We enjoy this blessed rest, but we shall always be ready for service, still be watchful against sin and constantly be pressing forward towards growth in Grace. It is a rest which a man may safely have and come to no harm thereby!

Beloved, the *man who has rest in his own soul is the man who can best serve God*. Queen Elizabeth once said to a great London merchant, "I want you to attend to some important business for me at the Hague." "Your Majesty," he said, "I am your humble servant, but I have a large business here at home and, while I have that to attend to, I am afraid I could not discharge Your Majesty's business." She said, "You go to the Hague and see to my business there, and I will attend to your business here." Well, now, that was enough said by the Queen that allowed the man to go, with a free mind, to attend to Her Majesty's business! And the Lord Jesus Christ seems to say to us, "You go and serve Me in the world, and I will see to the matter of your salvation." The man to whom He thus speaks can give all his thought and care to living to the Glory of God and to His service!

More than that—I will venture on a strong assertion—*no man is capable of virtue, in its highest sense, until he knows that he is saved*. Just think, if a man simply does that which is right because he expects to be rewarded by God for it, whom is he serving? Why, himself! Are you in the habit of taking your hat off to your employees at night and saying to them, "Much obliged to you, Gentlemen"? Do they work out of pure love to you? Well, not many of them, I reckon. I do not think there are many masters who are so specially attractive that anybody wants to serve them without a thought of salary or wages! No, I know that you thank no man for what he does if he is to be paid for it. Suppose you try to live a good life in order to get to Heaven by it? You are simply serving *yourself*—it is selfishness at the top, and at the bottom, and throughout it all!

But the man who comes, and says, "I am a saved man. Eternal Love has brought me to Jesus' feet, washed me in His blood and clothed me with His righteousness. No condemnation do I dread for this day, or for all the days that are to come—for none can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord." He begins to serve God with all his might, he loves his fellow men and seeks to promote everything that is pure and holy and good. What is his motive? Gratitude, not self-interest! Love to God, not love to himself! No longer is the slave-driver's whip cracked in his ear! No bribe of a glorious Heaven to be won by merit is held before him. It is already his! Now he is capable of the highest virtue! Oh, that you all knew this blessed rest, for then I am sure you would serve God! You may have it, for Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Why will you not have it? "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And labor for that which satisfies not?"

I have only time for just this final word to you who have this rest. ENJOY IT. Enjoy it now. You are coming to the Communion Table—this place of sacred feasting and holy joy. You are not coming to kneel at it as if you were to adore the bread—you are to sit around the table, like persons at a common meal—yet all the while to be feasting with the great King of Kings! So be sure that you enjoy Christ, who is your Rest. Are you satisfied with Christ? If you are not, you do not really have Him. If you have Him, He is everything to you. “Ah,” you say, “*satisfied* with Him? Satisfied with Him? That is a very cold word—I am *charmed* with Him! No music is like His charming name. My soul is overflowing with love to Him.”

The other day I saw a little cup suspended under a flowing fountain, so that the stream came right into it. The cup was quite full and as the stream kept flowing, the cup remained brimming over. And as I stood and looked at it, I thought, “That is very much like myself beneath the flowing of the Savior’s love. I cannot hold much, so it soon fills me, but I can pour it out to others as fast as it comes into me!” O come, Beloved, come all of you who know the Lord, and put yourselves, like little cups, under the flowing fountain and be filled with all the fullness of God! What a word that is! I do not know whether you understand it—I don’t—“filled with all the fullness of God.” Why, you cannot get all the fullness of God into you, can you? Suppose that a bottle were taken and held down into the sea till the water had filled it—then, when it is quite full, of course it sinks down to the bottom of the ocean. Now think that the sea is in the bottle and the bottle is in the sea, and that the bottle is full of all the fullness of the sea—it contains all it can hold and then it has all the rest to hold it! Now, just so, get as full as you can of the love of Christ and then sink into the Godhead’s deepest sea—be plunged into His immensity and dwell there, filled with all the fullness of the ever-blessed God! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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# THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT

## NO. 3257

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 6, 1911.

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

*“The fruit of their thoughts.”  
Jeremiah 6:19.*

Do you observe here, my Brothers and Sisters, how God declares that He would not only punish Israel for gross overt acts of sin, but that He would also bring upon the nation terrible chastisements for their thoughts? A solemn warning, full of instruction to us.

It has almost passed into a proverb, that “thought is free.” Whether this is true or false, an axiom or a gaffe, must depend on the sphere in which thought moves. It is true in the sense of thought being free before men, since none of us can judge our neighbor’s thoughts, nor have we any right to attempt the task. Religious opinion, for instance, is not a thing of which the law can justly take cognizance. As far as the civil government is concerned, whether a man’s sentiments are those of a Christian or an idolater, a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Mormon, he is entitled to all civil rights. Be he who he may, he is oppressed if he is deprived of his liberty, or of any privilege because of his thoughts! Be he who he may, he is injured if any one sect is rendered dominant, or is supported by a forced taxation drawn from the whole. Thought must be free and it shall be acknowledged, by God’s help, perfectly free as between man and man! Whatever tyrants may decree, they have never yet been able to stop the progress of opinion! When they have used all their prisons and their racks, their dungeons and their blazing stakes, they have never been able to turn a sound man from a truth which he has embraced, nor, I may add, have they been able to confirm a wavering man in the lies which they have tried to thrust upon him. Thought, in that sense, is free by natural right.

Yet there is another side to the same question, by reason of which we are bound to make this solemn protest—thought is not free before God. I have no more authority to think of God as I please than I have to act before Him as I please! In either case, the charge of licentiousness would lie against me, for the God who is supreme over the outward actions of my body is likewise the only Lord and Governor of the inward motions of my spirit. All the provinces of the little isle of man’s soul belong to God, the Great Governor. Over body, soul and spirit He is Legislator and Lord!

That thought in this sense is not free is to be proved very clearly, for *some of the Commandments of God contained in the Decalogue particularly relate to thought.* Such, for instance, “You shall not covet your neigh-

bor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife," and so on. That Commandment is clearly, particularly and peculiarly one relating to *thought*. God's Law, therefore, takes cognizance of thought. Moreover, we know that God has told us, as we read in the 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm, that *He is constantly watching our thoughts*. He knows them before they are known to us—"You understand my thought afar off." To what end, do you think, does God watch our thoughts but with this view—to bring us into judgment at the Last Great Day for every idle word and for every idle imagination and thought of our hearts? And, my Brothers and Sisters, we have it upon record that God not only puts His Law to work on our thoughts, and watches our thoughts, but that *He is also angry on account of evil thoughts*. Remember what we read in Genesis 6:5, 6—"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." Do not, therefore, make light of evil thoughts! If your conscience is awakened, truly awakened, you never will. A steeled and seared conscience may look upon them with indifference—those whose hearts are not right toward God may sneer at the idea of any evil consequences coming from what they simply turn over in their minds—but if you have a tender heart, if God has been pleased to take the callousness from off your conscience, and to make it sensitive, you will say at once, "Oh, save my soul from base and wicked thoughts!"

That thoughts are of the utmost importance may likewise be inferred from the fact that *God makes them here the ground of punishing His people*. He speaks of "the fruit of their thoughts." The thought in itself may not be a very great thing, but what will it come to? It may even be a very little thing, but what will be the end of it? *Thoughts of evil are in themselves evil thoughts!* It is questionable whether we can even read the report of our neighbor's sin without producing some sinful thoughts in ourselves. It is debatable whether a person can have much to do with speaking or hearing of the offenses of others without in some degree defiling himself, for as pitch sticks, and soot and things black and dirty defile one by the slightest contact, so does sin in any shape passing over the mind! Touched by the hand, it might scarcely leave any discernible mark behind, but there is a distinct impression left upon the *mind*, so that every picture of evil which passes through the soul remains there to do that soul injury. The thought of evil is in itself sin.

And what is more, *the thought of evil paralyzes the finer faculties of the soul*. The more we think of sin and become familiar with it, the less terrible does it become to our apprehension. I am sure this is the result where men habituate their reveries with any form of evil. Could the minds of men who have become murderers be analyzed, I doubt not it would be found that they had been a long time in schooling themselves to the commission of the horrible crime. They have thought upon it, meditated and deliberated about it until, at last, it has seemed to them but a mere trifle—and then they have gone forth to do it without misgiving. I

do not believe that a man becomes a villain all at once. He puts his soul to school—his thoughts are his teachers—or, rather, they are the school-books in which his soul reads and, at last, he becomes capable of transacting the deeds of a scoundrel. If you think long upon any sin, the probability is that as soon as the temptation to that sin comes, you will commit it.

I have known persons produce a pathological obsession by constant brooding. I knew a man, once, who was constantly apprehensive that he was being poisoned by people—and I always stood in trepidation for that man lest he should poison himself! If you will harbor the evil thought—if you will ponder on any sin, turn it over and talk with it on your pillow, your familiarity will disarm your fear and the traitor you have harbored will betray you before your suspicions are awakened! Beware, then, of all thoughts of sin! If you show a thief all the locks, bolts and bars in your house—and tell him how the cellar window could be opened, or the backdoor lock be made to give way—do not be surprised if one of these nights you should find all your goods stolen! If you do this and introduce these evil things into your habitation, you cannot wonder at the consequence, however startled your friends may be at the detection!

*It is certain that thoughts are the eggs of sin.* These are the embryo out of which sins spring—the spawn from which every form of iniquity is developed. We sometimes hear of fever lairs and of pest dens—evil thoughts are just like these. They are the jungles where the monsters of sin fatten and grow. Thoughts of sin are the dark woods that harbor all sorts of evil—they are the evil birds of prey that destroy all sorts of good!

Therefore, as God takes cognizance of our thoughts, let us be mindful of the responsibility they entail upon us. Let us no longer despise them, but look into the nursery where they are reared and begin to search our hearts—and to judge ourselves as in the sight of Him who searches all hearts.

**I. BAD THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT EXHIBIT A VERY LARGE VARIETY.** I shall, however, but refer you to the 20<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Book of Exodus, where the Ten Commandments will help us to a list of thoughts, all of which are horribly mischievous.

The First Commandment God gives to us is, “*You shall have no other gods before Me.*” That is, in fact, “*You shall have no other god but Me,*” since God is everywhere. This precept is easily broken in our thoughts. If I say to myself, “This is God’s Law, but the contrary action will be most to my profit,” then I make myself, or my money, my god. If on any occasion I say within myself, “I clearly perceive that I ought not to indulge in that sin, but then it will give me great pleasure”—should I indulge in it, then I make my pleasure, that is to say, *myself*, my god—I worship myself instead of God! This is a sin, the essence of which must lie in the thoughts, in the judgment, in the affections. You need not make an image of gold, or of wood and bow down before it—you can become a thorough-paced idolater in the temple of your heart by offering homage to your own self-will!

The Second Commandment contains a further prohibition, “*You shall not make unto you any graven image,*” and so on. That is, “You shall not worship God under any *symbol*—you shall not worship God through any symbol,” or, in spirit, “You shall not worship God in any way which God has not commanded.” “You shall not invent to yourself methods and modes of worship, but you shall do as God commands you.” Now, we can very easily, in our thoughts, fabricate an image. This is what most of us do. We say and think that God is altogether such an one as we are and, having formed to ourselves an idea of God, we bow down before it and say, “These are your gods, O Israel!” Brothers and Sisters, you may be idolaters as much by worshipping a god whom your fancy has made as by worshipping a block of stone! That Incomprehensible One who has proclaimed Himself in Scripture according to the mysterious attributes of His Being, and has further revealed Himself so sweetly and gloriously in the Person of the Lord Jesus—this is the God we must worship! We must not make a god, but take the God whom the Scripture reveals! We are not to fashion in our thoughts a god such as we should like him to be—a god who is pure benevolence, but who has no justice—but we must take the God of Scripture—grandly stern, severely dreadful in His wrath while He is unbounded in His compassion and is always gracious and full of mercy! We must acknowledge the God of the Bible and not make a deity to ourselves, or else in our thoughts we have broken the Divine Law and the fruit of that thought will be that we shall be idolaters and sin will be laid at our door!

The Third Commandment, as you will clearly perceive, can be broken without saying a word—“*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.*” Light thoughts of God, irreverence of soul towards Him is a violation of the solemn interdict. You have but to think lightly of His name and you have blasphemed it! Before your mouth has been opened to utter the rash expression, the rebellious thought is a profanation of the Most High.

As for the *Law of the Sabbath* in the Fourth Commandment which binds our race, that is readily enough violated by us all. Do not suppose that you are a keeper of the Sabbath because you do no work with your hands—you are just as guilty if you work with your brain! You are to rest on that day from all your own works. Do as much as you please for God on that day, but your mind should lay aside its care. You must not bring your shop here—you might almost as well stay at home and carry on your trade. You must not bring your burden in here! No, my Brothers and Sisters, leave that at the door and ask God’s Grace that you may rise this day from all these things and give your heart and mind entirely to the worship of Him who has sanctified the day unto Himself. You see, then, that this Commandment may readily be broken without any overt act—and the breach destroys the validity of the Sabbath to you. It yields you no comfortable rest while your mind is toiling, tugging and straining about a thousand troubles and difficulties! But if you kept the Commandment in your spirit, it would be a sweet and blessed rest to you.

We turn now to the second table, the Commandments which relate to men. "*Honor your father and your mother.*" Ah, when we were children and since then, unkind and unhallowed thoughts of our parents have been quite sufficient to convict us of offenses against the Law. Without a disobedient action, without a rebellious word, the child may in thought be a rebel to his parents.

"*You shall not kill.*" But Christ tells us that he that is angry with his brother without a cause is virtually a murderer! So that *thought* can slay and kill and, indeed, it is the angry thought that lays the foundation of the deadly stroke! There would be no murdering and slaying if there were no enmity. Men would not march to slay each other, surely, or waylay their hapless victims and do desperate deeds of violence unless, first of all, their souls were set on the fire of Hell.

"*You shall not commit adultery.*" Little will I say on this Commandment, but here is our Lord's own exposition of it, "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." Fornication may thus abound in us to our defilement—and our souls' ruin—even though we may still be kept back by fear, perhaps, from the commission of the evil deed. Beware, then, you who can gloat over evil, you who can suck the forbidden sweet behind the door, you who can roll the sweet morsel under your tongue—beware lest you shall have your portion with those who fall into the sin! I say not that the thought of the sin is as bad as the sin, itself—it cannot be so, certainly, in its result to others—but it is still a sin—and a sin to be answered for in that tremendous Day when the Judge of all the earth shall allot their portions unto men!

"*You shall not steal.*" Every envious thought of another man, every desire to possess myself of what is not mine. Everything of this sort, in which I would grasp that which does not belong to me, is a constructive theft! The thief does not so much steal when he puts out his hand to take his neighbor's purse, as in the thought which led him to do it, for the hand may sometimes take the purse without offense—it may be to protect the property of one who is disabled and incapable of guarding it himself. Such a thing is supposable—that one man might legitimately take another's purse and have a right to do so. It is not the act, but the *motive* when he deliberately ventures to take that which is not his own and would possess himself of his neighbor's goods to his neighbor's injury—this constitutes the very virus and soul of the theft.

"*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*" If I think harshly of my neighbor without a cause. If I conceive an unjust prejudice against him. If I look coldly upon him when he really does not deserve it. If I make up my mind out of some whim or fancy that he is a bad fellow, and shrug my shoulders, and I know not what, besides—though I have never said a word—yet still in thought I have injured my neighbor! Above all things, Brothers and Sisters, avoid that shoulder-shrugging—it is an abomination! We sometimes see it in company. Ah, they will not dare to say what it means, the cowards! You might suppose that the man

against whom it is directed had killed his mother if you liked, for you are sure to suppose the worst. Be brave enough, if it must be spoken, to speak it! And if it must not be spoken, well then, do not say it in that mysterious language which may ruin a man in the estimation of others. Avoid any false witnessing in your thoughts and you will not bear it in your words.

To the last precept of the catalog I have already referred. It is especially a thought-command—“*You shall not covet.*” All greedy desires which make us wish to get our neighbor’s goods to the injury of others, are sins—and the fruits of such thoughts are guilt, punishment and the wrath to come!

Let me now conduct you a step further to another set of evil thoughts which could not be very easily comprised in the Decalogue.

There are *self-righteous thoughts*—the supposition that we are not as sinful as God says we are! The conceit that we may, perhaps, work ourselves out of our difficulties and force our way to Heaven! Now, the fruit of such a thought as this will be amazement in the day when God will strip us of our self-righteousness and make us stand naked to our eternal shame! Beware of self-righteous thoughts, my Hearers! They are the Tarpeian Rock from which Satan has hurled thousands of souls! It were better for you that a millstone were fasten about your neck and that you were cast into the midst of the sea, than that you should thank God that you are not as other men when, after all, you are as corrupt as other men and will perish as they do! Self-righteousness keeps you from coming to Christ and certainly it excludes you from eternal life and will close the gates of Heaven against you. God deliver us from the fruit of such thoughts!

Then, again, *proud, boastful, vainglorious self-seeking thoughts* are, alike, obnoxious. How highly some people think of themselves! You can see it in their gait and their speech betrays them. Yet their wine is all froth and their gold is all counterfeit. Their speech, when they begin to tell of what they have, and what they can do, and what they *did* do upon such-and-such occasion—all this is an abomination to honest men—and their thoughts must be very abominable to God! It is one of the things which He says He hates—a proud look. God grant us Grace to be rid of every proud thought, for we have nothing to be proud of! A proud man is nothing but a windbag and when either the ills of life, or the crisis of death shall put a pin into it, what a collapse there will be! How the haughty one will discover himself to be nothing but emptiness and vanity! Get rid of proud thoughts, for oh, what will they do? Pride dragged an angel from Heaven and made a devil of him—and pride will drag any of us down to the level of the devil if we fall into its snare.

Another still more common set of thoughts, but not much decried, are *murmuring thoughts*. Ah, me, how full some people are of these! They can hardly speak but what they have something to grumble about. Trade with them is always bad. Ever since I have been in London, trade has been bad, but it is even worse now! It never was so bad as it is now, ex-



cept that it was just as bad last year and, as far as I know, has always been at the worst! Farmers never have, to the best of my recollection, had more than “an average crop.” And most years there has been a failure. If the wheat has been good, the turnips have always gone bad, or *something* has! I notice murmuring to be a very common thing with many people—and you no sooner sit down in the cottage than, instead of telling you that someone has been there to help them a little, and give them some assistance—they say they have only the parish allowance—a miserable pittance! So it is—but they forget the mercies that they have. Why should I always be telling how often I have rheumatic pains and how many times I find that there is something wrong with my constitution? Why should I make it my constant habit to compel everybody to be miserable wherever I go? “Well,” says one, “but you know we cannot help it!” My dear Friend, if you do not help it, then I will tell you what will be the fruit of it—*you will make yourself incorrigibly miserable*. You will bring yourself into a desperate state in which nothing will comfort you! I believe that in this respect, we are very much our own masters. Not all bounties of Providence can make us happy if we have a thankless, ungrateful heart! You may have all that the world can give you, and yet be wretched—or you may be very, very poor, and yet be cheerful! A thankful heart is the thing we need and, oh, may God be pleased to give us that thankful heart! But what I want you to remember is that murmuring is a great sin. They murmured against God in the wilderness and He sent fiery serpents among them. God thinks much of our complaints against His Providential dealings with us—let us not think so little of the sin of provoking Him with our thoughts.

How prone we are likewise to cherish *unbelieving thoughts*! Oh, that we were all rid of these! But I suppose if I went round these galleries, I would find in every pew somebody who has unbelieving thoughts. We fancy that God will forsake us, that Providence will turn against us. We get like old Jacob when he said, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.” Whereas *everything* is working for us, only we cannot see it. Be gone, unbelief, for the fruit of unbelieving thoughts is weakness, sorrow, rebellion against God and I know not what else of rashness and presumption! God save us from these thoughts!

*Procrastinating thoughts* have been the fruitful source of mischief to full many of you. You have good thoughts and good resolves, but you always put things off and think that better times will come for leaving off your sins and seeking Christ! Even though the least evil would be a fearful waste of time—worse than which you run a perilous risk—it is yet to be dreaded that your souls will be lost at the last.

Others of us have to complain of *wandering thoughts when we are worshipping God*—and the fruit of these is to spoil the golden seasons which, well used, might yield great profit. Oftentimes, when the service has been fitted enough to minister refreshment and instruction—and others have been nourished by the Word—some poor soul goes out and

says, "I have not enjoyed it at all." Why, of course not, for your thoughts have been elsewhere! These are the birds that come down upon the sacrifice. If, like Abraham, we drive them away, we shall be able to worship in peace. But if not, the fruit of wandering thoughts in the House of God is that the service is spoiled. So, too, in the closet, whether ostensibly engaged in private devotion, or the reading of Scripture—unless the thoughts are centered upon the subject in hand—there can be no spiritual gain in drawing near unto God.

**II.** For a few minutes, now, let us think of brighter things while I mention A FEW GOOD THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT.

"Of which," says an Apostle, "we cannot now speak particularly," when he had a long list and little space, so I must say now. If you would have good faith in your soul, *cultivate humble thoughts*. No man was ever injured by having too lowly a view of himself. The best definition of humility I ever heard was this—"to think light of ourselves." To think of ourselves as below the standard is lowliness—to think of ourselves as above the standard is pride. But to form a right estimation of ourselves is true humility! Avoid the counterfeit which is in the world—that is mock humility. Be truly humble. Have low thoughts of yourselves, especially before God! Penitent thoughts of sin, humble views with regard to Divine Grace and a close account of your own responsibility are indispensable—so, you will find that humility will sweep out the chamber of your soul and prepare it for the incoming of the Great Prince.

Cultivate very much *forgiving thoughts towards your fellow men*. Never be hard to be persuaded to pardon an offense. He that takes his brother by the throat will be sure to be taken by the throat himself. Evil for evil, it is said, is beast-like. Good for good is man-like. Evil for good is devil-like, but good for evil is God-like! Try to do it and if anything can make the bells ring in your heart, it will be to forgive one who has very greatly and wantonly injured you. The worse the offense, if you can overlook it, the greater will be your own joy and the better proof will you have that you are a child of God.

Go to bed each night and wake up each morning with *admiring thoughts of God's goodness and with adoring thoughts towards God's greatness*. You will find these thoughts to be like bees that will come home to you laden with honey. Let your soul be a hive of them! Worship the Lord. Think much of Him. Let every blessing you receive make you think of Him. Do not sit at the table and offer what we call, "Grace," because it is the custom to do so, but let your soul really see God's hand in the gift of everything that is on the table! We need not fear worldly thoughts if we were to sanctify those worldly thoughts. Said one, "The road on which I tread makes me think of Christ—the Way. The door through which I pass makes me think of Christ—the Door. I cannot handle money but what I think that I am not my own, but am bought with a price. I do not receipt a bill without recollecting that He has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against me. I cannot talk to my fellow man and receive his answer without thinking how I talk with God

and how He answers me.” In such manner, with many thoughts of God, you will find the fruit of heavenly-mindedness in your spirit. Angels will come and go to and fro between you and the courts of the Most High if you have many of these admiring and adoring thoughts of God!

*Thankful thoughts* are well deserving your high encouragement. Get a cage full of these birds of paradise and let them fly about in the groves of your soul and sing there at all times! Oh, there is no better companion than cheerful gratitude! If a man can but see the mercy of God in everything, instead of looking always at the black side of the picture, you will be happy, indeed! The fruit of thankful thoughts will be summer in your soul even when it is the depth of winter outside! Cultivate thankful thoughts as you cultivate sweet flowers in your garden!

Yet again, dear Friends, get *many and abundant believing thoughts*. When you cannot see your way, still trust in your Lord. Believe in Him. Though everything should give the lie to the promise, still believe the promise to be true.

Abound much in *thoughts of submission* to God. Every morning exercise such thoughts. Put your soul into God’s hands that He may deal with you according to His will all the day. And each night, when you review the day, thank God for it all, whatever it may have been—knowing that it must be good—no, must be *best* if God has ordered it!

I will finally say, seek, Believer, to have many longing thoughts after Christ. Have longing thoughts to be with Him where He is! Let Christ have the best thoughts—the cream of them. Let Him have the first growth of your spirit. Be with Him in waking. Say to Him in the evening, “Abide with us, for the day is far spent.” And if you lie awake at night, still seek to have some precious thought of Christ, like a wafer made with honey, to put under your tongue. Oh, we can bring Heaven down to earth if we can take our thoughts up to Heaven! If thoughts are the wings and the Spirit is the wind, we will fly away to the celestial Paradise!

Be much, then, in such thoughts as these, and may the fruit of your thoughts be such as God, Himself, may delight in, to Jesus Christ’s praise! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JEREMIAH 7:1-15; 17:1-14**

**Jeremiah 7:1-3.** *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD’S house and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings; and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Many of them thought that if they went up to the Temple, it was all right with them. If they did but go through the outward ritual, they would certainly be accepted. They must have been astonished when Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet, met them at the Temple door and told them that the best worship of God was holiness—not the mere outward*

ceremony but the renewal of the life, the cleansing of the heart before Him.

**4-7.** *Trust you not in lying words, saying The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD. The Temple of the LORD, are these. For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if you oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.* The blessing is not to the Temple and the Temple worshippers—the blessing is to holy men, to such as love righteousness, to such as obey the living God and do justice between man and man—and especially between themselves and the poor and needy of the earth. It is necessary to say this even now, for there are some who talk of being regenerated by baptism, of being saved by sacraments—they trust in their priests and rely upon their performances. “Trust you not in lying words”—that is the Scriptural description of all that kind of thing—just lying words and nothing better!

**8-10.** *Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom you know not; and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Will you quote the very decree of God as an excuse for your sin? Will you make it out that even He is partaker in your criminality? That will never do! Only a lying heart could conceive of such an abomination!*

**11-16.** *Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, says the LORD. But go you now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all the works, says the LORD, and I spoke unto you, rising up early and speaking, but you heard not; and I called you, but you answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by My name, wherein you trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your father, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore pray not you for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make interception to Me: for I will not hear you.* You know how, through the sin of Eli’s sons, God forsook Shiloh—and the tent of His House and the Ark of His Covenant were removed—and Shiloh became an utter desolation. So will God do to any Church that becomes unfaithful to Him! Go to Rome and see what she is today—mother of harlots, though once she seemed to be the chaste spouse of Christ. Her idolatries are as many as those of the heathen, for she forsook the Truth of God and turned aside from the Most High! Think not that God is tied to any place, or to any ministry. If we walk not before Him aright, He may take the candlestick out of its place! He may take the talent away and

give it to others and then, “Ichabod,” shall be written on the walls whether it is of Shiloh or of Jerusalem! Jeremiah has thus shown us clearly that no confidence can be placed in holy places or outward ceremonies—the state of the heart and the life is the all-important matter!

**Jeremiah 17:1.** *The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.* [See Sermon #812, Volume 14—THE DEEP-SEATED CHARACTER OF SIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is so ingrained in their very nature that you might as well try to erase an inscription that is written upon steel with the point of a diamond as hope to get this perversity out of the nation! It is engraved upon the tablets of their heart. What is mere habit can be altered, but what is ingrained in the heart cannot be taken away except by a miracle of Grace! It was the heart that was wrong—the fountainhead was polluted—so what could the streams be, but foul?

**1.** *It is engraved upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;* Their holiest things were defiled. They wrote up the names of their idol gods even upon God’s altar and so they bore a written testimony against themselves!

**2.** *While their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.* God forbade the setting up of altars. There was one altar at Jerusalem and there were to be no more—but they selected spots where great trees had long grown—they chose the tops of the hills—and they built shrines for their idols there! And therefore God was angry with them. Oh, how readily we may turn anything into sin! How easily our choicest mercies may be made into occasions of iniquity!

**3-8.** *O My mountain in the field, I will give your substance and all your treasures to the spoil, and your high places for sin, throughout all your border. And you, even yourself, shall discontinue from your heritage that I gave you and I will cause you to serve your enemies in the land which you know not: for you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever. Thus says the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes ; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes , but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.* Oh, the blessedness of confidence in God! You see it here set out in contrast with the misery of trusting in men! Drought comes even to this tree and times of trouble come to the Believer—but the drought does not affect the tree, for it has secret, underground sources from which it sucks up its life! It spreads out its roots by the river and blessed is that man who has a secret life, a secret strength, a secret comfort which sustains him in the trying hour! The world cannot perceive it, but he drinks it in and lives upon it.

**9.** *The heart.* That is the principal matter, it was the heart of the nation which had gone astray from God. “The heart—

**9-11.** *Is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? 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. As the partridge sits on eggs, and hatches them not; so he that gets riches, and is not right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.* The Prophet likens the man who gets riches by falsehood and oppression to a bird which has many eggs, too many for her to cover and, consequently, though she sits on them, there is such a heap of eggs that they are, none of them, hatched—they come to nothing. I think I know some men who are very much like that partridge. It would be a great mercy for them if they had only half of the eggs that they have, for all they get is the care and trouble of covering them, but no living joy comes out of them—the eggs are worthless. He that has not the Grace of God in his heart is just like a bird sitting upon worthless eggs. Poor soul! “At his end he shall be a fool.” He must therefore be something of a fool, now, for he that pursues an end which shall end in folly is a fool to have such an end before him!

**12-14.** *A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake You shall be ashamed and they that depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for You are my praise.* [See Sermon #1786, Volume 30—OUR SANCTUARY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON  
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# THE BELLOWS BURNED

## NO. 890

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1869,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The bellows are burned.”  
Jeremiah 6:29.***

THE Prophets frequently spoke in parables. They did this partly to excite the attention of their hearers. Those to whom they spoke might not have listened to didactic truth expressed in abstract terms, but when they heard mention of common things, such as bellows and lead and brass, they turned aside and asked, “What is this which this man has to say?” Moreover, metaphors often convey to the mind truth which otherwise would not have reached the understanding, for men frequently see under the guise and form of an illustration a doctrine which, if it had been nakedly stated, they could not have comprehended.

Illustrations, like windows, let light into the chambers of the mind. There is this use also in a metaphor, that even if it is not understood at first, it excites thought and men exercise their minds upon it as children upon an enigma and so they learn, perhaps, more through a dark saying than through a sentence at first sight transparent. Yet further, metaphoric speech is apt to abide upon the memory—it retains its hold, even upon the unwilling mind—like a lion which has leaped upon a giraffe in the desert. Mere bald statements are soon forgotten, but illustrations stick in the soul like hooks in a fish’s mouth.

Therefore I thought it right, this morning, to take the simple and homely illustration of the text, which Jeremiah before had so well used, and see if we cannot impart thereby some arousing Truths of God to your minds. Perhaps you may with more pleasure attend to them, exercise more thought upon them and embrace them more earnestly in your memory because they come in homely pictorial garb.

**I.** “The bellows are burned.” This short sentence, as Jeremiah used it, was intended to apply to THE PROPHET HIMSELF. He likens the people of Israel to a mass of metal. This mass of metal claimed to be precious ore, such as gold or silver. It was put into the furnace, the object being to fuse it, so that the pure metal should be extracted from the dross. Lead was put in with the ore to act as a flux (that being relied upon by the ancient smelters, as quicksilver now is in these more instructed days). A fire was kindled and then the bellows were used to create an intense heat, the bellows being the Prophet himself.

He complains that he spoke with such pathos, such energy, such force of heart, that he exhausted himself without being able to melt the people’s hearts—so hard was the ore that the *bellows* were burned before the

metal was melted—the Prophet was exhausted before the people were impressed! He had worn out his lungs, his powers of utterance. He had exhausted his mind, his powers of thought. He had broken his heart, his powers of emotion. But he could not divide the people from their sins and separate the precious from the vile. Now, alas, this is no solitary case, for throughout the whole history of the line of Heaven-sent ambassadors, this has been the rule and not the exception! The bellows have in almost every case been burnt, but the metal has not been melted.

It was so with Noah. For 120 years that preacher of righteousness continued to warn the people of the coming deluge. He added to his words the more powerful eloquence of deeds, for, moved with fear, he prepared an ark so that his preaching and his practice agreed. And yet by the space of 120 years he labored on, but not one single person was led to find a shelter in the ark which he prepared. And, with the exception of himself and family, the whole of his hearers perished in the judgment against which he warned mankind! In later times God's servants seldom fared better—the most of them were despitely persecuted and at best they were treated with neglect.

Listen to the mournful question of Isaiah, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?...All day long," he says, "I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." As for Jeremiah, from whom we borrow our text today, he was, indeed, like the bellows burned in the fire, for you hear him crying, "O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people." And that famous lament of Jeremy, at the end of his prophecy, remains on record as one of the most amazing utterances of woe that could be poured out by a patriot and a Prophet over a captive people. Need I add that even to the days of John the Baptist, the servants of God wearied themselves in vain with a graceless people?

Say, it was not so with Prophets only, for He, our Lord and King, the chief of all teachers, fared no less cruelly at the hands of men! Never man spoke like that Man. He was, indeed, a bellows that might well, with His vehement force, have created a heat that might melt an adamant stone—but yet, after one of His most mighty sermons, His hearers would have cast Him down headlong from the brow of the hill where their city was built! And at the end of His life's sermon you know how the Cross and the crown of thorns were the honors meted out to Him. Sooner than the people would repent and become as molten metal, the Messiah, Himself, was made like the bellows which are burnt by long use at the fire.

Nor has this ceased to be the fact. Since the days of Christ, civilization, with all its progress, has not softened the human heart. Men are no mere amenable to the jurisdiction of God than they used to be. That heart which, in prophetic times, was like the nether millstone, is not today like wax. Looking down the list of the Apostles and of the confessors who followed them, we perceive what were the rewards accorded to the messengers of the Lord—they were stoned, were burned, were cast to beasts or



drowned in the sea. The faithful servants of God and Truth were housed only in desert caves or sepulchral catacombs or loathsome dungeons. The comforts afforded them were the stocks, the fetter and the rack.

Their dying honors were the illuminations of the stake or the glitter of the headsman's axe. And as for burial, full often they found no sextons but the dogs. The world was not worthy of them and yet it cast them out as too vile to live. Instead of the nations returning to their God, they took the messengers of the King, one by one, and treated them despitefully and slew them and cast them out of the vineyard. This iron-hearted world could not be melted—let the preachers of righteousness blow their vital breath upon the coals, the fire would burn the bellows—but not melt the ore.

Now, what does this say to us? Does it not tell the preacher and each one of us, who are laboring for Christ, that we ought never to be discouraged when we meet with little rebuffs from those whom we seek to bless? You have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin! What if you have been ridiculed? What if your best endeavors have been misrepresented? What is this compared with the sufferings of those who have gone before you? Do you run with the footmen and do they weary you? What would you have done if you had been destined to contend with horses? If these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, make you cry, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord," of what coward blood are you?

How little worthy are you to be written in the same muster-roll with those who counted not their lives dear unto them that they might be with Christ and gather in His redeemed! If you try to be like the bellows to melt these hard hearts and make them flow into the mold of Christ's Gospel, you must *expect* to be burned in the fire! And because you encounter a little persecution, or disrespect, or difficulty, do you flee to your chamber and cry, "I will give it up"? Shame upon you! Rather, *redouble* your efforts and pray God to give you a greater blessing by way of success, or if not, greater patience to bear His will. For mark you, Brethren, though the bellows were burnt and the metal was not molten, the work was only lost so far as the *metal* was concerned, the Great Founder was not confounded!

Men shall glorify God one way or the other whenever the Gospel is preached to them. If they reject that message of love, yet they have made manifest in them the longsuffering of God in having borne with their hardheartedness. They show the mercy of God in having sent the Gospel to such unworthy persons. They cast all slurs away from the severity of God, for clearly it cannot be too severe to visit with vengeance those who have willfully rejected mercy. Those who weary the preacher, who brings them nothing but good news, deserve to be left in misery! It can by no means be complained of that, by-and-by, another preacher with heavier tidings is sent to summon them to judgment! The damned in Hell who heard the Gospel—oh, say not that the minister's toil was lost because they rejected his entreaties!

May we labor not in vain and spend not our strength for nothing, for God's honor is vindicated and His justice cleared from all manner of accu-

sation, since the lost from among these, our cities, perished not without the opportunities of mercy! And they went not down to the Pit because relentless justice would not accept repentance! They had space for repentance—they had invitations to return—but they resolved on daring the wrath of God. The wooing of mercy was used and the entreaties of love were spent upon them, but inasmuch as they would not come, their blood is upon their own heads and even in the terrible wrath of God His rejected mercy is honored!

The preacher must not suppose that if men are not converted, he has lost his work. We are unto God a sweet savor as well in them that perish as in them that are saved—though in them that perish we are unto the men, themselves, a savor of death unto death—yet we are still a sweet savor unto God. If we do but proclaim the Gospel and are willing to wear ourselves out in so doing, if the bellows are burned, yet, verily I say unto you, we shall not lack our reward! If we receive no recompense in the conversion of souls, we shall have it from the lips of Him who shall say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! If you have not been successful, yet you have been *faithful*—enter into the joy of your Lord!”

We must not pass from this first meaning of the text without noticing that while it is the preacher’s business to continue to labor till he is worn out like the bellows that are burnt, yet his so doing involves many solemn consequences upon those for whom he labors so unsuccessfully. O my Hearers, this is the great test that discerns between the precious and the vile, between the chosen and the reprobate! The Gospel is the infallible test! If it comes to you being preached affectionately and with the Holy Spirit, if it does not save you, it confirms you in your ruin! If it does not lift you up to Heaven, it will be like a millstone about your neck to sink you to the lowest Hell! I know of none who are in a more hopeless case than those who have long listened to the Gospel preached to them with all affection and earnestness and yet have resolved to continue in the error of their ways.

We cannot tell what the metal is till we get it in the fire. But the fire tries it and if you have lain long in the white heat of an impressive Gospel ministry—the love of Jesus being like coals of juniper—and yet you have never been melted, if you do not tremble for yourself, I take leave to tremble for you! If a mother has pleaded with you. If she has even gone to her grave with sorrow because of the hardness of your heart, oh, surely this will testify against you in the day of reckoning! This marks you, even today, as hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. If you have worn out one after another of faithful friends who would gladly have conducted you to the Cross. If you have made your God to be, as Amos says, like a cart that is loaded with sheaves and pressed down, beware, O Man, beware! You are filling up the measure of the Almighty’s wrath! It is almost full and when it is filled, beware! Beware! Beware!

God is long in being provoked, but when His anger is at last stirred within Him, woe unto those against whom He lifts up Himself! Oil is a smooth and gentle thing, but once set it on a blaze and how it burns! And

love, that tender thing, if once it turns to jealousy, how terrible its flame! Christ is the Lamb today, but tomorrow He may be a lion to you if you reject Him. That face which wept over Jerusalem—that dear face which is the very mirror of everything that is compassionate—will, if you continue hardened in heart, become the image of everything that is terrible, so that you shall call to the rocks, “Hide us,” and to the mountains, “Cover us! Hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne.”

I wish that I had power to plead with you with the pathetic earnestness of Jeremiah. I fall far short of that, but I can at least speak with all his sincerity. I pray you do not wear us out with entreaties. Turn unto God while yet He gives you space. I pray you, if you have long rejected, harden no more your neck lest you suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. It may seem a slight thing to reject the preacher, but what if he is God’s ambassador! An insult to the Lord’s ambassador may be avenged by the Lord Himself! Since we come to you with nothing but terms of love and invitations of mercy and say to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” we pray you, in Christ’s place, put not away our invitations, lest while *we* are exhausted *you* also should be condemned!

God bless this gentle word of admonition to many of you, and Christ shall have Glory by it.

**II.** We turn now to a second interpretation of the text. This does not materially vary from the first. The bellows may be here meant, and according to many expositors it is so meant, THE AFFLICTIONS WHICH GOD SENDS UPON UNGODLY MEN. These afflictions are sent with the design of seeing whether they will melt in the furnace or not. If words of admonition have not been successful with them, God often, in His great mercy, tries with the ungodly the judgments of Providence, if perhaps by humbling them in their estate, or paining them in their bodies, or bereaving them of their friends, they may be brought into a humbler and better mind and may then seek the favor of God.

Now where Divine Grace comes with these afflictions, it often happens that this good result is answered and like Manasseh, the sinner being taken among thorns, seeks unto the Lord and finds salvation. But without Grace, without the Holy Spirit’s softening power, all the afflictions in the world are but like bellows that blow the fire but they are sooner burnt—I mean the afflictions themselves are sooner exhausted—than the sinner’s heart is made to melt under the heat caused. It is clear enough in history that many men have been utterly insensible under Divine judgments. Chief and foremost among these was Pharaoh.

God sent upon him plague upon plague—the great bellows poured in a terrific blast upon the furnace into which the Egyptian was cast! Ten great and vehement tempests of wrath followed each other. The huge furnace might well have melted granite, but Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he would not let the people go. In the full blast of the bellows he did, for a moment, relent and he said, “Entreat the Lord for me,” but it was all false repentance, for no sooner were the flogs or flies taken away, than once more he said, “Who is Jehovah? I will not let the people go.” He was raised

up for this very purpose—to show forth the power of God to break those whom His mercy could not melt. There have been others like he. There are others like he, I fear, in this congregation this morning!

Like Israel, given up to successive afflictions, they have, for awhile, repented, but then have returned, again, to their idols as fast as the judgments have been removed. They are like Ahaz, afflicted again and again, of whom it is written, “When he was afflicted, he sinned yet more and more: this is that king Ahaz.” Jerusalem was often chastened for her sins with siege and famine, plague and pestilence—but all this refining fire refined her not and at last the incorrigible city was given over to her doom. Her streets became rivers of blood, her palaces became a heap of ashes and her very site was sown with salt and her doom a theme of horror, making both the ears of him that heard it to tingle. Metal that will not melt must be cast away.

I say there have been and there still are sinners upon whom the judgments of God seem to exert no melting power—they only grow harder the more severe the judgments of God become. Ah, my Hearers, I fear there are some such among you! You have now suffered a long series of trials, one after another they have come upon you. Your heavenly Father will not let you perish without at least, by His Providence, giving you line upon line, warning upon warning. He has not left you like Moab to be settled on your lees, but He has emptied you from vessel to vessel.

Now, if all this has not brought you to His feet, you may expect to endure still more trials. If slight strokes will not suffice, they shall grow thicker and heavier, or mark, you, the Lord may say, “Let him alone, he is given unto idols.” And then if He never strike you again, it shall be worse with you still, for whom God gives up, Hell shall swallow up and where God’s Providence and Grace leave off, there God’s Justice and His Wrath begin—never to leave off—world without end!

O you that have just escaped from a sick bed, saved as by the skin of your teeth from the jaws of death! O you that have lost your property and have been brought down from opulence to penury! O you that have suffered bereavements following each other, whose scars are fresh upon your soul—throw yourselves into the arms of Him who strikes you and yield to Him at once! It is far too unequal a combat! Let not the stubble contend with the fire! Let not the straw defy the flame! You shall be utterly consumed in the day of His terrors when He lays bare His arm to deal with you! If His rod makes you smart, what will His sword do? And if the hidings of His power have been so terrible, what will it be when He puts on His armor and comes forth to fight against you?

Let not God exhaust His afflictions on you. O let not the Lord be made to say, “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you?” Behold, He has dug about you. He has done for His vineyard all that could be done, yet if there is no more to be done in *mercy*, there will be *much* more to be done in vengeance! If the bellows are burned, yet the fire is not quenched and that fire shall burn even to the hottest Hell. God save you from it for His mercy’s sake.

**III.** A third application of the text may be allowed. The bellows are burned. This may be an allusion to THE CHASTISEMENTS WHICH GOD SENDS UPON HIS OWN PEOPLE which are not always as successful as they ought to be, by reason of the hardness of His *servants'* hearts. In such cases it seems as if affliction, itself, would be exhausted before they would be purified—the bellows would be burned before the metal would be melted. My dear fellow Christians, you and I, if we are walking very near to God, ought to know and *do* know, that God gives us much instruction by little hints. When two persons perfectly understand each other, they can say almost as much with their *eyes* as others can with their tongues.

Now, you who are the King's favorites will sometimes suffer a little twitch of bodily pain, or a little trial in business, or some slight relative affliction—that little trouble may be the Lord speaking to you with, as it were, a shake of the head or a lifting of the finger. There is something in you which your loving Lord would have you purge out, something displeasing to Him or dangerous to you. Now search and look for this upon the faintest hint. He has said, "I will guide you with My eyes," but He has added, "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding"—for mark, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you do not observe those motions of God's eyes—He loves you too well to let you sin and therefore the hints will become stronger, and they will be more painful.

Notice how the Psalmist proceeds—"Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you." God does not wish to bit and bridle you. He would have you guided with the gentle warnings of His eyes. But if you will not accept the more tender guidance, why, then, it must come to the bit and the whip. If you will not be melted at a common heat, you shall find the temperature rising higher and higher! And if one severe trial is not sanctified to you, you may expect another of a still hotter sort, for the Great Refiner will have His gold pure and will utterly remove our tin.

I do *not* lay down the doctrine that all our afflictions are indications of indwelling sin! On the contrary, I believe that some afflictions may be Sovereign, that other afflictions are sent for a trial of our Graces that God may be glorified by our victories, and yet a third class are intended to promote our advance in Grace. But yet I am persuaded that the rod in God's house is principally used because of the offences of the children, and I am persuaded that if you would be spared that rod, so far as it is a *chastening* rod, you can only escape it by obedience and by a very careful observance of the gentle motions of your Father's eyes.

Why, a dear child, when he is living obediently and lovingly with his father, does not need, in order to repentance, to have done so much amiss as to cause his father to speak—he is grieved if he has done enough to make his father shake his head! That shake of the head cuts him to the quick. And should he unhappily provoke a sharp word from his father, why then his tender heart communicates with his weeping eyes and he

cannot forgive himself. Yet there are unloving children who will even rebel until they draw down blows upon themselves and, even then, hold out till the strokes are multiplied and the father proceeds from chastening to repeated chastening.

I am afraid the most of us are such children. We cause our Father to chasten us very frequently and if we have to mourn amid many tribulations, we may well say, "Why does a living man complain—a man for the punishment of his sins?" Brothers and Sisters, do not let it be said of us that the bellows are used till they are worn out before our afflictions melt us to repentance and cause us to let go our sins! But let us seek of the Lord a spirit that is amenable to His rod, a filial heart, a sensitive nature. O that the breath of His Word may make fire enough to melt our hearts to repentance and that we may never provoke trials which shall even *burn* the bellows!

**IV.** Fourthly, I may, without violence to propriety, use the text as if it taught that the time is coming when THE EXCITEMENT OF UNGODLY MEN, which now keeps the fire of their activity vigorously burning, will be taken away from them and then they will flag and die out in sorrow. The fire in the smithy burns gaily and merrily and sends forth troops of leaping sparks dancing into the air like stars—but no sooner do the bellows cease to blow than there remains only a little fire, and by-and-by only cold coals and dead ashes—for everything depends on the bellows.

Perhaps, my Hearer, this morning you are like a furnace excited by the bellows and your excitement is the pursuit of wealth. You can rise early, you can sit up late, you can work, you can bear a deal of exertion and mental strain because you are bent on accumulating a fortune. Yes, but what would you do, what have some done when sudden reverses have swept away the accumulations of a life, or when a panic has blown down their speculations like card houses? Oh, what tears have strong men shed in this city, tears which fell not outside the cheek, these had been harmless—but they dropped within the soul to scald and sear it with ever-abiding melancholy! That which cheered and comforted them—the gain of wealth—has gone and the busy merchants have been ready for the lunatic asylum or for suicide.

How these golden bellows will cease to blow when men come to die! Ah, how little will wealth stimulate the joys of the last moment! Fool, you have only bought yourself a marble tomb and what is that to your poor dust-red ashes? You are now to leave all you have—you are as the partridge that sits on the eggs but hatches them not. Your joys are all for another and not for you. Oh, how often do men that have been happy enough in the accumulation of riches, die in utter misery with all their gold and silver about them because their bellows of avaricious acquisition have been burned by their very success and the flame of hope and ambition has hopelessly died out!

Many activities are kept up by the love of fame. Men have climbed step by step the ladder of public esteem and loved the dizzy height. How men will flame and blaze while fame blows the bellows! How content men are to

burn away their lives for the approbation of their fellow creatures, yet many of them have lost all joy in honor long before they have departed this life! And certainly those who have nothing else to inspire the flame of hope in the last article of death but the approbation of men will find their fires dwindling sadly low and dark—dark, dark must be their departure! How sad for a soul to know that the clangor of fame's trumpet is dying away from its ears to be superseded by the blast of that awful trumpet ordained to wake the dead and call them to their last account! Dear Hearers, live not with such aims as these or your bellows will be burned.

Often, alas, conspicuously often, men live for pleasure and for pleasure they destroy body and soul. But after awhile satiety follows lust, enjoyment palls and the man's vigor decays and his mirth is gone. The last days of the votary of fleshly pleasure are like that dwindling fire which, despite its temporary blaze, is a poor dying thing when the bellows foster it no longer. Alas for the wretch who is dead while he lives, standing amid his fellows like a blasted tree amid the forest that has been split by lightning—a little lingering verdure proves that life is yet there—but the decaying trunk and sapless branches show how near it is to death. Make not pleasure the bellows of your life, lest these bellows be burned in the fire and the flame of your joy go out.

Others have made the great bellows of their life hypocrisy. They have been religious that they might be esteemed. They have frequented God's House that they might be thought respectable. But at last they have been unmasked, or if not, in the last hour Death has knocked off their mask and let the man see in the looking glass of truth what he really is. The silver veil has been taken from the pretender's leprous brow and he has seen himself to be accursed and then, poor wretch, how the bellows have been burned in the fire—no longer could he keep up his reigned zeal and pretended joy—his hopes turn to ashes and his consolations die out in despair!

My dear Hearers, have nothing for your stimulus but that which will last as long as *you* last! Have nothing for your master motive but than which you can take with you *beyond* the grave! Seek nothing as the grand object of your existence but that which may be suitable for an immortal's pursuit. Remember, this life is not all and the grave is not the goal of being. You are not dumb driven cattle—going to the shambles of death, there to be slaughtered and forgotten—you are about to enter through the porch of this life into the palace of eternity, or, if you will dare to make it so, the *dungeon* of eternity.

Your future shall be as this life foretells it. O that you may be helped by Divine Grace to spend this life in a way that from it you may pass into the better and not to waste the present that from it you may descend into that worst of ills which has no end.

**V.** The last use we shall make of the text, "The bellows are burned," is this—this may be applied to THOSE EXCITEMENTS WHICH KEEP ALIVE THE CHRISTIAN'S ZEAL. The mercy is that I can only apply this negatively, for I trust we are well assured that the bellows which maintains our

spirit's ardor are not burned. My dear Friends, we have, in our time, seen in certain Churches great blazes of enthusiasm, as if Vesuvius and Etna had both taken to work. These outbursts of flame have been misnamed revivals, but might just as well have been called agitations.

I have known, in my short time, certain Churches in the paroxysms of delirium, meeting houses crowded, aisles filled, preachers stamping and thundering, hearers intoxicated with excitement and persons converted wholesale—even children converted by hundreds—they said *thousands*. Well, and a month or two after, where were the congregations? Where were the converts? Echo has answered, "Where, where?" Why, the converts were worse sinners than they were before! Or they were mere professors, puffed up into a superficial religion from which they soon fell into a hopeless coldness which has rendered it difficult ever to stir them again.

I love all *genuine* revivals—with all my heart I would aid and support them—but I now speak of certain spurious things which I have seen and which are not uncommon, even now, where there has not been God's Holy Spirit, but mere excitement, loudness of talk, big words, fanaticism and rant and nothing more. Now, in such cases, why was it the fire went out? Why, the man who blew the bellows went away to use his lungs elsewhere! And as soon as ever the good man, who, by his remarkable manner and telling style, had created this stir, was gone, the fire went out! I have known quiet Churches in which the same thing has happened in a manner equally grievous. The people have been very earnest and much good work has been done, but the departure to Heaven of their excellent minister has been to this people what the death of a judge was to the children of Israel.

O may God spare those valued lives which in our Churches promote the earnestness of God's people and may it be long before the bellows are burned! But, still, mark you, our zeal ought no to be so sustained. The fervor of the Church ought never to be dependent upon the eloquence of any *man*. Our reason for earnestness should not depend on the ministrations of any particular individual. Principle ought to sway us and not passion—real fervor and not the excitement which may be gathered from vehement speech and crowded assemblies. Brothers and Sisters, I shall not enlarge upon this except to come home to you.

There may be those here who in years now past were very earnest, and the fire in their soul was burning very vehemently. To you I speak. You were generous in your gifts. You were constant in your attendance upon the means of Divine Grace. You were always at the Prayer Meetings. You were diligent in pious labors, you were happy and useful—but now you have subsided into a state of lethargy. You give but little, you pray but little, you work less and feel scarcely anything. You have grown colder and colder, and colder by degrees, till you are now as cold as the North Pole itself! Now, Brother, how is it that your bellows are burned? How is it that the excitements which kept you alive are gone?

Ought they to have departed? Am I not right in saying that your obligations remain the same as ever they did? Ten years ago you owed your sal-



vation to the precious blood of Jesus Christ—to what do you owe it now? Ten years ago you were nothing but a sinner looking up to the crucified Savior—what are you now? How much of your debt to Christ Jesus have you paid? Can you boast of not being as much in debt as then? I frankly confess that if I owed my Lord much 20 years ago, I owe Him far more today. Instead of rising out of His debt, I sink the deeper and the deeper in it, for I am all over in debt to Him.

Your obligations, my Brother, my Sister, remain. If they made you zealous 10 years ago, why not now? If it was but right and just that you should live for Christ, who bought you then, in the name of right and justice what shall excuse you now? As your obligations remain the same, so your Master abides the same. If you loved Jesus, then, and for the Glory of His name you sprang into the forefront of the battle, is He less worthy now? Is Christ less lovely? Does He love you less? Has He been less faithful? Is He today less kind? Is His intercession failing? Is His precious blood losing its cleansing power? Can you afford, therefore, to treat Him worse when He is still the same yesterday, today and forever? Why, if it really was obligation to Christ and attachment to His Person that acted as the bellows to keep your zeal blazing, there are the same bellows today! So why not be just as earnest, or even more so?

My dear Friend, surely at this moment the strength that keeps your soul alive is the same as it used to be. You were sustained in the past by the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit has grown old and His power is palsied, I can understand your zeal becoming feeble and your being excused for it. But since the Holy Spirit is always the same, ought not the fruits to be the same? If you only had your native strength, I can understand your decaying, as we all must, by the lapse of years. But the Immortal Life within you is not affected by the decay of the body—it ought to bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright. Since your Strength is still the same, the bellows are not burned—so let the fire flame up afresh today.

Moreover, you that served God in your youth should remember that the objects for which you served God remain the same. Souls are as precious today as they were when you, as a lad, gave your heart to Christ. Ah, you thought, then, you could do anything to win a soul! But men are damned today as they were then. Hell is as hot now as it was then. Death is as terrible a thing, today, as it was 20 years ago, and therefore let not the bellows be burned, but return to the fullness of your zeal and serve your Master as you did in the days of your espousals. My dear Friend, for you to decline as you grow older will be to make the world say, “That man gets wiser, and the wiser he gets the less he loves God. Therefore,” say they, “it is foolish to love God at all.”

Will you put such pleas into the mouths of blasphemers? Will you be an advocate for the devil? Will you thus practically help the ungodly to sleep on in their careless disregard of God? I pray you now to do so! As you grow in Divine Grace, and I trust you do so if you are, indeed, a Christian, is it consistent that the stronger the tree grows the less it should bear? Is it consistent that if the child worked, the man should

sleep? If the boy carried his burden, is the full grown man to carry none? Are you, because you progress in the Divine life, to be gradually excused of all Christian service? Shall only the recruits march to battle and the veterans never bear the banner nor wave the sword? Oh, it must not be!

Besides, you are drawing nearer Heaven and are you to be less heavenly as you get nearer to the New Jerusalem? Are you to serve God less as you approach nearer to the place where you are to serve Him day and night without weariness? Are you to be *less* like Christ as you approach nearer to the place where you are to be altogether like He is? No! Scorn such insinuations—

***“Let every flying hour confess  
We bring Your Gospel fresh renown!  
And when our lives and labors cease  
May we possess the promised crown.”***

Suspect, dear Brothers and Sisters, that if your zeal is flagging there must have been some other motive than a heavenly one that made it so lively at first, for heavenly motives never cease and neither do they lose their reasonableness, or their efficacy. Ask yourselves if you were genuinely converted. Examine yourselves whether you are really in the faith, for if you are not, it is no wonder that your piety declines!

But if you are true converts, your faith must be as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day. Instead of bellows burned in the fire, Brethren, may it be yours and mine to go to our grave in a hale old age with more earnestness within than our bodies can execute! May we serve our Master till the last minute! If the scabbard is worn out, let the sword be sharp. God grant us every day we live to serve Him better! May every hour that He gives us here be getting more and more spiritually-minded, more and more anxious to tell abroad the glories of His name. God bless you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 6.***

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# “WHAT HAVE I DONE?”

## NO. 169

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 27, 1857,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

**“What have I done?”  
Jeremiah 8:6.**

PERHAPS no figure represents God in a more gracious light than those figures of speech which represent Him as stooping from His throne and as coming down from Heaven to attend to the wants and to behold the woes of mankind. We must have love for that God, who, when Sodom and Gomorrah were reeking with iniquity, would not destroy those cities—although He knew their guilt and their wickedness, until He had made an actual visitation to them and had sojourned for awhile in their streets. Methinks we cannot help pouring out our heart in affection to that God of whom we are told that He inclines His ear from the highest glory and puts it to the lip of the faintest that breathes out the true desire. How can we resist feeling that He is a God whom we must love, when we know that He regards everything that concerns us, numbers the very hairs of our heads, bids His angels protect our footsteps lest we dash our feet against stones, marks our path and orders our ways?

But especially is this great truth brought near to man’s heart when we remember how attentive God is, not merely to the temporal interests of His creatures, but to their *spiritual* concerns. God is represented in Scripture as waiting to be gracious, or, in the language of the parable, when His prodigals are yet a great way off He sees them. He runs and falls upon their neck and kisses them. He is so attentive to everything that is good, even in the poor sinner’s heart, that to Him there is music in a sigh and beauty in a tear. And in this verse that I have just read, He represents Himself as looking upon man’s heart and listening—listening, if possibly He may hear something that is good. “I hearkened and heard. I listened. I stood still and I attended to them.” And how amiable does God appear, when He is represented as turning aside, as it were, with grief in His heart, exclaiming “I *did* listen, I *did* hearken, but they spoke not aright; no man repented of his wickedness, saying, ‘What shall I do?’ ”

Ah, my Hearer, you never have a desire towards God which does not excite God’s hope. You never breathe a prayer towards Heaven which He does not notice. And though you have very often uttered prayers which have been as the morning cloud and as the early dew that soon passes away, yet all these things have moved Jehovah’s heart—for He has been hearkening to your cry and noticing the breathing of your soul. And though it all has passed away, yet it did not pass away unnoticed, for He

remembers it even now. And oh, you that are this day seeking a Savior, remember—that Savior’s eyes are on your seeking souls today. You are not looking after one who cannot see you—you are coming to your Father, but your Father sees you even in the distance. It was but one tear that trickled down your cheek, but your Father noticed that as a hopeful sign—it was but one throb that went through your heart just now during the singing of the hymn, but God, the Loving, noticed even that and thought upon it as at least some omen that you were not yet quite hardened by sin nor yet given up by love and mercy.

The text is “What have I done?” I shall just introduce that by a *few words of affectionate persuasion*, urging all now present to ask that question. Secondly, I shall give them a *few words of assistance in trying to answer it*. And when I have done so, I shall finish by a *few sentences of solemn admonition to those who have had to answer the question against themselves*.

I. First, then, a few words of EARNEST PERSUASION, requesting everyone now present and more especially every unconverted person, to ask this question of himself and answer it solemnly: “What have I done?” Few men like to take the trouble to review their own lives. Most men are so near bankruptcy that they are ashamed to look at their own books. The great masses of mankind are like the silly ostrich, which, when hard pressed by the hunters, buries its head in the sand and shuts its eyes and then thinks because it does not see its pursuers, it is safe. The great masses of mankind, I repeat, are ashamed to review their own biographies. And if conscience and memory together could turn joint authors of a history of their lives throughout, they would buy a huge iron clasp and a padlock to it and lock the volume up, for they dare not read it.

They know it to be a book full of lamentation and woe which they dare not read and still go on in their iniquities. I have, therefore, a hard task in endeavoring to persuade you one and all to take down that book and be its pages few or many, be they white or be they black, I have some difficulty in getting you to read them through. But may the Holy Spirit persuade you now, so that you may answer this question, “What have I done?” For remember, my dear Friends, that searching yourself can do you no harm. No tradesman ever gets the poorer by looking to his books. He may find himself to be poorer than he thought he was, but it is not the looking to the books that has hurt him. He has hurt himself by some ill trading before. Better, my Friends, for you to know the past while there is yet time for repairing it, than that you should go blindfolded, hoping to enter the gates of Paradise and find out your mistake when alas, it is too late, because the door is shut.

There is nothing to be lost by taking stock. You cannot be any the worse off for a little self examination. This of itself shall be one strong argument to induce you to do it. But remember you may be a great deal the better. For suppose your affairs are all right with God—why then you may

make good cheer and comfort yourself. He that is right with his God has no cause to be sad. But ah, remember there are many probabilities that you are wrong. There are so many in this world that are deceived that there are many chances that you are deceived, too. You may have a name to live and yet be dead. You may be like John Bunyan's tree, of which He said, "twas fair to look upon and green outside, but the inside of it was rotten enough to be tinder for the devil's tinder box." You may this day thus stand before yourself and fellow creatures well white-washed and exceeding fair, but you may be like that Pharisee of whom Christ said, "You are a white-washed sepulcher, for inwardly you are full of rottenness and dead men's bones."

Now, Man, however you may wish to be self-deceived, for my own part I feel that I would a thousand times rather know my own state really than have the most pleasing conceptions about it and find myself deceived. Many a time have I solemnly prayed that prayer, "Lord, help me to know the worst of my own case. If I am still an apostate from You, without God and without Christ, at least let me be honest to myself and know what I am." Remember, my Friends, that the time you have for self-examination is, after all, very short. Soon you will know the great secret. I perhaps may not say words rough enough to rend off the mask which you now have upon you, but there is one called Death who will stand no compliment.

You may masquerade it out today in the dress of the saint, but death will soon strip you and you must stand before the Judgment Seat after death has discovered you in all your nakedness, be that naked innocence or naked guilt. Remember, too, though you may deceive yourself, you will not deceive your God. You may have light weights and the beam of the scale in which you weigh yourself may not be honest and may not therefore tell the truth. But when God shall try you He will make no allowances. When the everlasting Jehovah grasps the balances of justice and puts His Law into one scale, ah, Sinner, how will you tremble when He shall put you into the other. For unless Christ is *your* Christ you will be found light weight—you will be weighed in the balances and found wanting and be cast away forever.

Oh, what words shall I adopt to induce everyone of you now to search yourselves? I know the various excuses that some of you will make. Some of you will plead that you are members of Churches and that, therefore, all is right with you. Perhaps you look across from the gallery and you say to me, "Spurgeon, your hands baptized me but this year into the Lord Jesus and you have often passed to me the sacramental bread and wine." Ah, my Hearer, I know that and I have baptized, I fear, many of you that the Lord has never baptized and some of you have been received into Church fellowship on earth who were never received by God. If Jesus Christ had one hypocrite in His twelve, how many hypocrites must I have here in nearly twelve hundred?

Ah, my Hearers, in this age it is a very easy thing to make a profession of religion. Many Churches receive candidates into their fellowship without examination at all. I have had such come to me and I have told them, “I must treat you just the same as if you came from the world,” because they said, “I never saw the minister, I wrote a note to the Church and they took me in.” Verily, in this age of profession, a man may make the highest profession in the world and yet be at last found with damned apostates. Do not put off the question for that. And do not say, “I am too busy to attend to my spiritual concerns. There is time enough yet.” Many have said that and before their “time enough” has come, they have found themselves where time shall be no more. Oh, you that say you have time enough, how little do you know how near death is to you! There are some present that will not see New Year’s Day. There is every probability that a very large number will never see another year. Oh, may the Lord our God prepare us each for death and for judgment and bless this morning’s exhortation to our preparation, by leading us to ask the question—“What have I done?”

**II.** Now, then, I am to help you to answer the question—“What have I done?” Christian, true Christian, I have little to say to you this morning. I will not multiply words, but leave the enquiry with your own conscience. What have you done? I hear you reply, “I have done nothing to save myself, for that was done for me in the Everlasting Covenant, from before the foundation of the world. I have done nothing to make a righteousness for myself, for Christ said, ‘It is finished.’ I have done nothing to procure Heaven by my merits, for all that Jesus did for me before I was born.” But say, Brother, what have you done for Him who died to save your wretched soul? What have you done for His Church? What have you done for the salvation of the world? What have you done to promote your own spiritual growth in grace?

Ah, I might hit some of you that are true Christians very hard here. But I will leave you with your God. God will chastise His own children. I will, however, put a pointed question. Are there not many Christians now present who cannot remember that they have been the means of the salvation of one soul during this year? Come, now. Think—have you any reason to believe that directly or indirectly you have been made the means this year of the salvation of a soul? I will go further. There are some of you who are old Christians and I will ask you this question—have you any reason to believe that ever since you were converted you have ever been the means of the salvation of a soul? It was reckoned in the past, in the times of the Patriarchs, to be a disgrace to a woman that she had no children. But what a disgrace it is to a Christian to have no *spiritual* children—to have none born unto God by his instrumentality!

And yet there are some of you here that have been spiritually barren and have never brought one convert to Christ. You have not one star in your crown of glory and must wear a starless crown in Heaven. Oh, I think I see the joy and gladness with which a good child of God looked

upon me last week, when we had heard someone who had been converted to God by her instrumentality. I took her by the hand and said, “Well, now, you have reason to thank God.” “Yes, Sir,” she said, “I feel a happy and an honored woman now. I have never, that I know of before, been the means of bringing a soul to Christ.” And the good woman looked so happy the tears were in her eyes for gladness. How many have you brought during this year? Come, Christian, what have you done? Alas! Alas, you have not been a barren fig tree, but still your fruit is such that it cannot be seen. You may be alive unto God. But how many of you have been very unprofitable and exceedingly unfruitful?

And do not think that while I thus deal hardly with you I would escape myself? No, I ask myself the question, “What have I done?” And when I think of the zeal of Whitfield and of the earnestness of many of those great evangelists of former times, I stand here astounded at myself and I ask myself the question, “What have I done?” And I can only answer it with some confusion of face. How often have I preached to you, my Hearers, the Word of God and yet how seldom have I wept over you as a pastor should! How often ought I to have warned you of the wrath to come, when I have forgotten to be so earnest as I might have been. I fear lest the blood of souls should lie at my door, when I shall come to be judged of my God at last. I beseech you, pray for your minister in this thing, that he may be forgiven, if there has ever been a lack of earnestness and energy and prayerfulness. And pray that during the next year I may always preach as though I never might preach again—

**“A dying man to dying men.”**

I heard the moralist while I was questioning the Christian, say, “What have I done? Sir, I have done all I ought to have done. You may, as a Gospeller, stand there and talk to me about sins. But I tell you Sir, I have done all that was my duty. I have always attended my Church or Chapel regularly every Sunday as ever a man or woman could. I have always read prayers in the family and I always say prayers before I go to bed and when I get up in the morning. I don’t know that I owe anybody anything, or that I have been unkind to anybody. I give a fair share to the poor and I think if good works have any merit I certainly have done a great deal.”

Quite right, my Friend. Very right indeed—if good works have any merit. But then it is very unfortunate that they have not any. For our good works, if we do them to save ourselves by them, are no better than our sins. You might as well hope to go to Heaven by cursing and swearing as by the merits of your own good works. For although good works are infinitely preferable to cursing and swearing in a moral point of view, yet there is no more merit in one than there is in the other, though there is less sin in one than in the other. Will you please to remember, then, that all you have been doing all these years is good for nothing?

“Well, but, Sir, I have trusted in Christ.” Now, stop! Let me ask you a question. Do you mean to say, that you have trusted partly in Christ and

partly in your own good works? "Yes, Sir." Well, then, let me tell you, the Lord Jesus Christ will never be a make-weight. You must take Christ wholly, or else no Christ at all—Christ will never go halves with you in the work of salvation. So, I repeat, all you have ever done is good for nothing. You have been building a card house and the tempest will blow it down. You have been building a house upon the sand and when the rains descend and the floods come, the last vestige of it will be swept away forever. Hear the word of the Lord! "By the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified." "Cursed is everyone that continues not in *all* things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them." And in as much as you have not continued in all things that are written in the Law you are transgressors of the Law and you are under the curse. All that the Law has to say to you is, "Cursed, cursed, cursed! Your morality is of no help to you whatever, as to eternal things."

I turn to another character. He says, "Well, I don't trust in my morality nor in anything else. I say—

***'Be gone, dull care, I pray you be gone from me.'***

I have nothing to do with talking about eternity, as you would have me. But, Sir, I am not a bad fellow after all. It is a very little that I ever do amiss. Now and then a peccadillo, just a little folly, but neither my country, nor my friends, nor my own conscience can say anything against me. True, I am none of your saints. I don't profess to be too strict. I may go a little too far sometimes, but it is only a little and I dare say we shall be able to set all matters straight before the end comes." Well, Friend, but I wish you had asked yourself the question, "What have I done?"—it strikes me that if each of you would just take off that film that covers your heart and your life, you might see a grievous leprosy lurking behind what you have done.

"Well, for the matter of that" says one, "perhaps I may have taken a glass or two too much sometimes." Stop a bit! What is the name of that? Stutter as much as you like! Out with it! What is the name of it? "Why, it is just a little mirth, Sir." Stop. Let us have the right name of it! What do you call it in anyone else? "Drunkenness, I suppose." Says another, "I have been a little loose in my talk sometimes." What is that? "It has been just a merry spree." Yes, but please call it what it ought to be called—lascivious conversation. Write that down. "Oh, no, Sir. Things are looking serious." Yes, they are indeed. But they do not look any more serious than they really are. Sometimes you have been out on the Sabbath-Day, haven't you? "Oh, yes. But that has been only now and then—just sometimes." Yes, but let us put it down what it is and we will see what the list comes to—Sabbath-breaking!

"Stop," you say, "I have gone no further, Sir, certainly I have gone no further." I suppose in your conversation, sometime, during your life, you have quoted texts of Scripture to make jokes of them haven't you? And sometimes you have cried out, when you have been a little surprised,



“Lord have mercy upon me!” and such things. I don’t venture to say you swear—though there is a Christian way of swearing that some people get into and they think it is not quite swearing, but what it is nobody knows and so we will put it down as swearing—cursing and swearing.

“Oh, Sir, it was only when somebody trod on my toes, or I was angry.” Never mind, put it down by its right name. We shall get a pretty good list against you by-and-by. I suppose that in trade you never adulterate your articles. “Well that is a matter of business in which you ought not to interfere.” Well, it so happens I am going to interfere—and if you please, we will call it by its right name—*stealing*. We will put that down. I suppose you have never been hard with a debtor, have you? You have never at any time wished that you were richer and sometimes half wished that your opposite neighbor would lose part of his custom, so that you might have it? Well, we will call it by its right name—that is “covetousness, which is idolatry.” Now, the list seems to be getting black indeed.

Besides that, how have you spent all this year? And though you have pretended sometimes to say prayers, have you ever really prayed? No, you have not. Well, then there is *prayerlessness* to put down. You have *sometimes* read the Bible, you have *sometimes* listened to the ministry. But have you not, after all, let all these things pass away? Then I want to know whether that is not despising God and whether we must not put it down under that name? Truly, we need go but very little further. For the list already, when summed up, is most fearful and few of us can escape from sins so great as these, if our conscience is but a little awake.

But there is one man here who has grown very careless and indifferent to every point of morality—and he says, “Ah, young man, I could tell you what I have done during the year.” Stop, Sir, I don’t particularly wish to know just now. You may as well tell it to yourself when you get home. There are young people here. It would not do them much good to know what you have done, perhaps. You are no better than you should be, some people say—which means you are so bad they would not like to say what you are. Do you suppose in all this congregation we have no debauched men—none that indulge in the vilest sin and lust? Why, God’s angel seems even now to be flying through our midst and touching the conscience of some, to let them know in what iniquities they have indulged during the year. I pray God that my just simply alluding to them may be the means of startling your conscience.

Ah, you may hide your sins. The coverlet of darkness may be your shelter. You may think they shall never be discovered. But remember, every sin that you have done shall be read before the sun—and men and angels shall hear it in the day of final account. Ah, my Hearer, be you moral or be you dissolute, I beseech you, answer this question solemnly today—“What have I done?” It would be as well if you took a piece of paper when you went home and just wrote down what you have done from last January to December. And if some of you do not get frightened at it I must say

you have got pretty strong nerves and are not likely to be frightened at much yet.

Now I specially address myself to the unconverted man and I would help him to answer this question in another point of view. "What have I done?" Ah, Man, you that live in sin! You that are a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God—what have you done? Do you not know that one sin is enough to damn a soul forever? Have you never read in Holy Scripture that cursed is he that sins but once? How damned then, are you by the myriad sins of this one year? Recall, I beseech you, the sins of your youth and your former transgressions up till now. And if one sin would ruin you forever, how ruined are you now? Why Man, one wave of sin may swamp you. What will these oceans of your guilt do? One witness against you will be enough to condemn you!

Behold the crowds of follies and of crimes now gathered round the Judgment Seat that have gone before you into judgment. How will you escape from their testimonies when God shall call you to His bar? What have you done? Come, Man, answer this question. There are many consequences involved in your sin and in order to answer this question rightly you must reply to every consequence. What have you done to your own soul? Why, you have destroyed it. You have done your best to ruin it forever. For your own poor soul you have been digging dungeons. You have been piling fire wood, you have been forging chains of iron—fire wood with which to burn it—and fetters with which to bind it forever.

Remember, your sins are like sowing for a harvest. What a harvest is that which you have sown for your poor soul! You have sown the wind, you shall reap the whirlwind. You have sown iniquity, you shall reap damnation. But what have you done against the Gospel? Remember how many times this year you have heard it preached? Why since your birth there have been wagon loads of sermons wasted on you! Your parents prayed for you in your youth, your friends instructed you till you did come to manhood. Since then how many a tear has been wept by the minister for you? How many an earnest appeal has been shot into your heart? But you have rent out the arrow. Ministers have been concerned to save you and you have never been concerned about yourself. What have you done against Christ? Remember, Christ has been a good Christ to sinners here. But as there is nothing that burns so well as that soft substance oil, so there is nothing that will be so furious as that gentle-hearted Savior when He comes to be your Judge. Fiercer than a lion on His prey is rejected love. Despise Christ on the Cross and it will be a terrible thing to be judged by Christ on His Throne.

But again—what have you done for your children this year? Oh, there are some here present that have been doing all they could to ruin their children's souls. 'Tis solemn what responsibility rests upon a father. And what shall be said of a *drunken* father?—the father that sets his children an example of drunkenness. Swearer, what have you done for your fam-

ily? Haven't you, too, been twisting the rope for their eternal destruction? Will they not be sure to do as you do? Mother, you have several children, but this year you have never prayed for one of them—never put your arms round their necks as they kneeled at their little chair at night and said, “Our Father.” You have never told them of Jesus that loved children and once became a child like they.

Ah, then, you, too, have neglected your children. I remember a mother who was converted to God in her old age and she said to me—and I shall never forget the woman's grief—“God has forgiven me, but I shall never forgive myself. For, Sir,” she said, “I have nourished and brought up children, but I have done it without any respect to religion.” And then she burst into tears and said, “I have been a cruel mother, Sir. I have been a wretch!” “Why,” said I, “my good woman, you have brought your children up.” “Yes,” said she, “my husband died when they were young and left me with six of them and these hands have earned their bread and found them clothes. No one,” she said, “can accuse me of being unkind to them in anything but this. But this is the worst of all, I have been a cruel mother to them, for while I fed their bodies I neglected their souls.”

But some have gone further than this. Ah, young man, you have not only done your best this year to damn yourself, but you have done your best to damn others! Remember last January when you took that young man into the tavern for the first time and laughed at all his boyish scruples, as you called them, and told him to drink away as you did? Remember, when in the darkness of night you first led astray one young man whose principles were virtuous and who had not known lust until you had revealed it to him? You said at the time, “Come with me, I'll show you London life, I'll let you see pleasure!” That young man, when he first came to your shop, used to go to the house of God on Sunday and seemed to bid fair for Heaven—“Ah,” you say, “I have laughed religion out of Jackson. He doesn't go anywhere on a Sunday now except for a spree and he is just as merry as any of us.” Ah, Sir, and you will have two Hells when you are damned. You will have your own Hell and his, too, for he will look through the lurid flames upon you and say, “Maybe I had never been here if you had not brought me here!”

And ah, seducer, what eyes will be those that will glare at you through Hell's horror?—The eyes of one whom you led into iniquity! What double Hells they will be to you as they glare on you like two stars whose light is fury and wither your blood forever! Pause you that have led others astray and tremble now. I paused myself and prayed to God when first I knew a Savior that He would help me to lead those to Christ that I had ever in any way led astray. And I remember George Whitfield said when he began to pray, his first prayer was that God would convert those with whom he used to play at cards and wasted his Sundays. “And blessed be God,” he says, “I got every one of them.”

O my God, can I not detect in some face here astonishment and terror? Does no man's knees knock together? Does no man's heart quail within him because of his iniquity? Surely it cannot be so, else were your hearts turned to steel and your hearts become as iron in the midst of you. Surely, if it is so, the Words of God are most certainly true, wherein He says in the seventh verse of this chapter—“The stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times. And the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the Lord.” And certainly that Prophet was true who said, “The ox knows its owner and the ass his master's crib, but My people do not know, Israel does not consider.” Oh, are you so brutish as to let the reflections of that guilt pass over you without causing astonishment and terror? Then, surely, we who feel our guilt have need to bend our knees for you and pray that God might yet bring you to know yourselves. For, living and dying as you are—hardened and without hope—your lot must be horrible in the extreme.

How happy should I be if I might hope that the great mass of you could accompany me in this humble confession of our faith. May I speak as if I were speaking for each one of you? It shall be at your option, either to accept what I say, or to reject it. But I trust the great multitude of you will follow me. “Oh, Lord! I this morning confess that my sins are greater than I can bear. I have deserved Your hottest wrath and Your infinite displeasure. And I hardly dare to hope that You can have mercy upon me. But inasmuch as You did give Your Son to die upon the Cross for sinners, You have also said, ‘Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth.’ Lord I look to You this morning, though I never looked before, yet I look now. Though I have been a slave of sin to this moment, yet Lord accept me, sinner though I am, through the blood and righteousness of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Oh Father, frown not on me, You may well do so, but I plead that promise which says, ‘Whosoever comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.’ Lord, I come—

***“Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Your blood was shed for me,  
And that You bid me come to You  
O Lamb of God, I come.’  
My faith does lay its hand,  
On that dear head of Yours,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.”***

“Lord accept me. Lord pardon me and take me as I am, from this time forth and forever, to be Your servant while I live, to be Your redeemed when I die.” Can you say that? Did not many a heart say it? Did I not hear many a lip in silence utter it? Be of good cheer, my Brother, my Sister. If that came from your heart you are as safe as the angels of Heaven, for you are a child of God and you shall never perish.

**III.** Now I have to address a few words of AFFECTIONATE ADMONITION and then I have done. It is a very solemn thing to think how years roll away. I never spent a shorter year in my life than this one and the older I grow the shorter the years get. And you, old men, I dare say, look back on your sixty and seventy years and you say, "Ah, young Man, they will seem shorter soon."

No doubt they will. "So teach us to number our days, O God, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." But is it not a solemn thing that there is another year nearly gone? And yet many of you are unsaved. You are just where you were last year. No, you are not, you are nearer death and you are nearer Hell unless you repent. And perhaps even what I have said this morning will have no effect upon you. You are not altogether hardened, for you have had many serious impressions. Scores of times you have wept under discourses and yet all has been in vain, for you are what you were. I beseech you answer this question, "What have I done?" for remember there will be a time when you will ask this question, but it will be too late. When is that—say you—on the deathbed? No, it is not too late there—

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

But it will be too late to ask, "What have I done?" when the breath has gone out of your body.

Just suppose the monument as it used to be, before they caged it round. Suppose a man going up the winding staircase to the top, with a full determination to destroy himself. He has got on the outside of the railings. Can you imagine him for a moment saying, "What have I done?" just after he has taken his leap? Why, methinks some spirit in the air might whisper, "Done? You have done what you can never undo. You are lost—lost—lost!" Now remember that you that have not Christ, are today going up that spiral staircase. Perhaps tomorrow you will be standing in the article of death upon the palisade and when death has gotten you and you are just leaping from that monument of life down to the gulf of despair, that question will be full of horror to you. "What have you done?"

But the answer for it will not be profitable, but full of terror. Methinks I see a spirit launched upon the sea of eternity. I hear it say "What have I done?" It is plunged in flaming waves and cries, "What have I done?" It sees before it a long eternity. But it asks the question again, "What have I done?" The dread answer comes—"You have earned all this for yourself. You knew your duty, but you did it not. You were warned, but you did despise the warning." Ah, hear the doleful soliloquy of such a spirit. The last great day is come—the flaming Throne is set and the great Book is opened. I hear the leaves as with terrible rustle they are turned over. I see men motioned to the right or to the left, according to the result of that great Book.

And what have I done? I know that to me sin will be destruction for I have never sought a Savior. What is that? The Judge has fixed His eye on

me. Now it is on me turned. Will He say, "Depart you cursed," unto me? Oh, let me be crushed forever rather than bear that sight. There is no noise, but the finger is lifted and I am dragged out of the crowd and singly I stand before the Judge. He turns to my page and before He reads it, my heart quakes within me. "Be it so," says He, "it has never been blotted with My blood. You despised My calls. You laughed at My people. You would have none of My mercy. You said that you would take the wages of unrighteousness. You shall have them, the wages of sin is death." Ah, me, and is He about to say, "Depart, you cursed?" Yes, with a voice louder than a thousand thunders, He says, "Depart, you cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

"Ah, it is all true now. I laughed at the minister because he preached about Hell. And here am I in Hell myself. Ah, I used to wonder why he wanted to frighten us so. Ah, I would to God he had frightened me more, if he might but have frightened me out of this place. But now here am I lost and there is no escape. I am in darkness so dark there is not a ray of light can ever reach me. I am shut up so close, that not one of the bolts and bars can ever be removed. I am damned forever. Ah, that is a dreary soliloquy. I cannot tell it to you. Oh, if you were there yourselves, if you could only know what they feel and see what they endure, then would you wonder that I am not more earnest in preaching the Gospel and you would marvel—not that I wish to make you weep—but that I did not weep far more myself and preach more solemnly.

Ah, my Hearers, as the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, I shall one day stand acknowledged by your conscience as having been a true witness unto you this morning. For there is not one of you here today but will be without excuse if you perish. You have been warned. I have warned you as earnestly as I can. I have no more powers to spend, no more arts to try, no more persuasion that I can use. I can only conclude by saying, I beseech you—fly to Jesus. I entreat you, as immortal spirits that are bound for endless weal or woe—fly to Christ! Seek for mercy at His hands. Trust in Him and be saved. And at your peril reject my solemn warning.

Remember you may reject it but you reject not me, but Him that sent me. You may despise it, but you despise not me, but a greater than Moses—even Jesus Christ the Lord. And when you come before His bar, piercing will be His language and terrible His Words when He condemns you forever, forever, forever, without hope, forever, forever, forever. May God deliver us from that, for Jesus' sake Amen.

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# MIGRATORY BIRDS

## NO. 2858

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1903.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 28, 1870.

*“Yes, the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times, and the turtledove and crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the Lord.”*  
*Jeremiah 8:7.*

IN our text the Prophet makes use of the flight of migratory birds to teach a valuable lesson. He mentions the swallow, which is the most prominent among the summer visitors to our own country, but he also names the stork, the crane and the turtledove, all of them familiar instances of birds that came, at a certain season, to Palestine and, punctual to the hour, at given changes of the weather, winged their way back again to warmer climates. Too many careless observers, like the peasant of whom Wordsworth writes—

*“A primrose by a river’s brim  
A yellow primrose was to him  
And it was nothing more,”*

would have seen those birds and soon forgotten all about them. But the Prophet, observing the wisdom of these wanderers of the air, contrasts it with the folly of man who knows not “the judgment of the Lord,” and obeys not so readily the monitions of his God as the birds do the instinct by which He guides them to and fro. We shall mark these migratory birds and set the wisdom of their instinct in contrast with the folly of mankind.

**I.** The first thing that strikes us is the fact that the stork, the swallow, the crane and the turtledove know WHEN TO COME AND GO.

So far as we know, *no audible command is given to them.* You and I might forget, in the beginning of summer, that then is the period when the swallow will put in an appearance in our land. And that towards autumn he must take himself away, across the purple sea, to the African strand, or wherever he can find a suitable climate. But these birds know when to come or go—they tell, by some mysterious means, exactly when to start on their long flight. They were never known to go too soon. They are never known to stay too late. The bulk of them depart at one period and the rest a few days later. If we are living in the suburbs, we hear a twittering congregation gathering around the gables of the houses and, in the evening we miss the swift-winged hawks who had, during the summer, found their evening meal among the dancing insects. Their shrill, joyous twittering is hushed, for they have perceived that the heavy dews

of autumn and the long nights of winter are coming to strew the earth with fading flowers and falling leaves and, by-and-by, with frost and snow and, therefore, they have flown off to fairer lands where other summers await them! They will come back again in due time, true as the calendar. Whether we look for them, or not, they will be punctual to Nature's appointment. As sure as the summer's sun will be their return! They know, without any special instruction, when to come, and when to go.

It is worthy of observation that *the young birds* which have been born in this country and have never made the long journey before, yet *set forth with the older ones at the appointed time*. They are novices in the art of travelling, yet they try their callow wings and away they fly to the far-off land where the sun shines as it does not in this higher latitude. I wish that our young people were all as wise as the young swallows are—that they knew their appointed time, that they understood that there is no period in life which has so much of hopefulness about it as the period of childhood and youth—that it is the best time in which to seek the Savior, for it has a special promise attached to it. "Those that seek Me early shall find Me." I would that they could hear the Lord Jesus Christ's peculiarly sweet and tender message concerning them—"Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Yet, alas, young storks, swallows, cranes and turtledoves fly at the appointed season—but many young men and maidens delay and waste the joyous hours of the morning of their lives in the ways of sin and folly! Yes, they waste the hours which, if consecrated to Christ and to His service, would have brought them a rich return in this life and, in the life to come, would have tended to increase and intensify their everlasting happiness.

Further, *the parent birds, also, go their way at the right time*. They can, and doubtless do, help to guide the young. They may have made that journey but once before, but they know all about it—they remember how long and how weary a way it was to them, but when the hour has struck, away they go, attended by their little ones! I would that all you who are parents among mankind were as wise as these parent fowls of the air. You have your children around you, but where are you leading them? Your example, if not your precept, is guiding them somewhere—you are influencing them for good or evil. You cannot help doing so. I think you would hardly wish to help it, for a child of yours, over whom you had no influence whatever, would be a strange occupant of your home! Oh, that you would be as wise as these migratory birds! May God's own wisdom make you so, that your own flight to Heaven may be an impulse to your child to take flight there, also! May your faith help his faith! May your holiness check him from sin! May your consecration to God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, induce him to give his heart to God while he is yet young!

I speak to you who are in middle life and remind you that these birds which have come to the prime of their days, take their flight at the appointed time—and if ever there is a set time for turning unto God, with



you who have come so far on life's journey without seeking the Lord, it surely is now! You who have reached the full strength of your manhood and have your households about you and yet are not saved, be not like the rich man whom God called a fool because he had much of this world's goods stored up and yet had not thought of making provision for his soul! Do not set your affections upon those well-feathered nests which you are so soon to leave, but seek an enduring portion in that better land where joy maintains eternal Spring! Stretch your wings for the flight Christ-ward and heavenward, and may you have the happiness of seeing your sons and daughters following in the same blessed track!

Some of the migratory birds are growing old. Their wings are somewhat worn and their flight is a very weary one. Life, to them, has lost its early brilliance, yet, when the time comes, they too, the veterans of the sea passage, are measuring the leagues of ocean waves when the waters are calm, or in times of storm when favoring gales may better serve their purpose. These birds add experience to instinct and rightly follow the guidance of Nature—yet there are old men and old women who are not as wise as the old swallows are! They linger in the plains of sin though the harvest is past and the summer is ended—and the winter is coming fast upon them. I see the first flakes of snow on their frost-crowned heads. Already their leaf begins to wither. The light of their day is darkening, the flower of their beauty fading and the shadows of their weakness lengthening. What? Not away yet, old graybeard? Not away yet, when the killing frost is already upon you? Stretch your soul's wings at once! 'Tis late, 'tis very late! The sere leaf of autumn warns you. The white rime of the early frost chides you! Oh, that you would know the seasons and the judgments of God, even as the birds of the air do, and that you would seek Him, now, before it be too late! It is the eleventh hour with you, Man! You have reached your three-score years and ten, yet you are unsaved! May Divine Grace visit you and make you wise—and if it does, you will not sleep till you have found the Savior, lest your couch should become your tomb! You will not dare to go into another week of work-days until you have made this first day of the week the appointed Sabbath, a day of rest unto your soul in the bosom of your Savior!

Observe well that these birds—the young, the parents and the older birds, all go at the right time. Perhaps the bright days linger a while—our autumns sometimes are protracted and tempting. When the winter months have come, we may have some almost summer days in this changeful climate of ours, but no bright second-summer tempts the swallow to linger! That interesting bird may have an eye for fair scenes and lovely views and, I think wherever he may fly, he will see no fairer land than this, and no greener dells and fresher woodlands than those that adorn our happy isle. Yet he lingers not for them. Though it is Africa's brown unattractive sand that calls him, on he goes, for he must go or die! His food will fail him here, the damp will be deadly to him—so away he must go. He has built his nest and birds love their nests as we love our homes. He has formed associations and acquaintances, it may be, for birds have friendships. But the time has come when, with his

companions, or without them, he must without fail proceed on his long voyage to the sunny shore! He performs his predestined journey at the ordained time.

And let nothing tempt anyone to linger in love of sin and love of this world when he ought to be seeking those things which are above! Let not the world's pleasures, nor its gains, nor its most tender associations beguile you. You, O Man, like the swallow, must go or die! It is with you as it was with Lot in Sodom—the city of your habitation is soon to be destroyed—this world, in a little while, must meet destruction. Up, and away! The fiery hail is ready to descend! The angel of God comes to warn you, saying, "Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." So, let nothing hinder you, but speed on till you reach God, your Father, and Christ, your Brother, and are washed in His precious blood and made meet to dwell with Him in Heaven forever!

But alas, alas, it is still true that men "know not the judgment of the Lord." They know not, as the birds do, their "appointed times." There have been, with some of you, times of very gracious visitation—when your heart has been made soft and impressible. I beseech you, "know" that time and avail yourself of it! You know that the preacher's word is not always with equal power. Even the Inspired Word of God has not always the same effect when it is read. Therefore, cherish every tender emotion that you feel. You know what was said to David, "And let it be, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out before you." So, when there is a movement within the spirit. When there is a revival in the Church. When there are manifest tokens of earnestness in the assembly, then, I pray you, know your appointed time and "bestir yourself."

There are other times, also, which should not be forgotten. For instance, times of sickness. Have you been laid aside lately and are you able again to come out of doors? This is a loud call to you, an admonition, a very kind and tender one, yet one that ought to say to you, "Prepare to meet your God." If sicknesses do not soften, they harden. If we get no good from our chastisements, we are sure to get harm from them. So, my afflicted but restored Friend, know your time, recognize that you have been smitten by your God and turn not away from the hand that smites you! Sometimes the visitation comes in the form of death. Possibly death has come into your home and carried off your child. O mother, follow your dear babe to the skies! Or, is it your husband who has been called away? Then, O widow, take your Maker for your Husband! Is it your Christian father who has been taken from you and yet you, his child, are still unsaved? Your father beckons to you from the skies and bids you seek his Savior! Is it your brother who is gone? It might have been yourself, so let the tolling of the knell for him have a message for you—let it say to you, "Consider your ways, for your soul shall soon be required of you." Make this period, when God is summoning others to Himself, to be the time when you, also, take flight to the better land—I

mean not Heaven, but I mean the heart of Christ—that is the true Heaven of this life, and makes this life to be the foretaste of the unending life that is yet to come!

It is very sad that seasons like these, of which I have been speaking, are often the very times when people become more hardened than before. Death itself may grow so familiar that it loses all its impressiveness. The grave digger is often the last man to be affected by the thought of dying. It must have been a grim spectacle when, during the French Revolution, a certain cemetery was leveled and turned into a saloon—and there, with the tombstones still in sight, they danced and sang a song in which part of the refrain was, “We dance among the tombs.” Their hair was made up in the same way as those had their hair combed who were prepared for execution by the guillotine—and no one was admitted to the dance unless he or she had lost a father, or brother, or some other relative by the guillotine! And knowing that they, themselves, would, in all probability, die in the same terrible fashion, they gathered in the place of the graves and whirled in the merry dance among the tombs! It was a strange sight. Surely, none would have dared to act like that had they not been carried away by the madness of that awful period. Literally, of course, we do not act as they did, but, spiritually, this is just what many are doing—they are dancing and singing among the tombs! In utter carelessness and wantonness of spirit they dance within the very jaws of death and, unless God shall cure their madness and teach them wisdom, even as He has taught the birds of Heaven—they will dance themselves into Hell!

**II.** But, next, it is very remarkable—indeed, it is one of the wonders of Nature that **THEY KNOW WHERE TO GO.**

Many of them—those newly-hatched birds—have never seen the land towards which they speed. Yet they go there and go to the very place where their parents went before them! They have never seen that sunny shore, yet onward they fly towards it, straight to the mark as if they were arrows shot from a bow! They have no swift-winged messenger to proclaim the time of going and to describe the country so temptingly as to induce them to go, but feeling the motion of a mysterious impulse within them, they fly at the appointed time to the far-off land where they may dwell, through the winter, in a more genial climate. Why do they go south? Why don't they fly north, east, or west? If we were left to seek other shores and we knew nothing of geography, we could not find a suitable place. But these birds, untaught, find the exact spot where it is best for them to spend the many months until they can return to this more northerly land!

The pity concerning poor foolish man is that *by nature, he does not know where to go.* When our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, “Where I go you know, and the way you know,” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we know not where You go, and how can we know the way?” The cry of many aroused souls is, “Where shall we go? We know not the way.” Men want happiness, where shall they go for it? If the swallow were to fly straight for the north pole in the hope of finding a genial climate, he would not be more foolish than most men are in their supposed pursuit

of happiness! Some fly to unchastity and lasciviousness and, in this way both wreck their bodies and damn their souls! Some fly to money-grubbing, raking up their gold and silver till they fancy that they are wealthy, whereas, often the more a man has of these things the more he craves and it is a poor thing that makes us want more than we have any need of. Some fancy that they shall find pleasure in the approbation of their fellow men, but before long they discover that the breath of man's nostrils can never fill an immortal soul.

We need something better than the blasts of fame's trumpet to satisfy the spirit which is to live forever and ever—in raptures or in woe. Some fly to strong drink, some to one thing and some to another, all alike fools! There is but one kind of true happiness and only one place where it can be found. Solid satisfaction can only come from reconciliation to God and that reconciliation can only come to us through Jesus Christ, His Son! Man is never right till he is right with God. And never happy till he is happy in the happy God. Man needs peace and rest—every man needs these blessings. In these feverish days, rest is the great need of the age and, to find it, man sometimes flies to superstition and sometimes to unbelief. He must be quiet, he says, for there are thoughts that vex and perturb his spirit. And Jesus stands and says again, as He said of old, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” But, to a sadly terrible extent, man heeds not His gracious invitation and flies anywhere *but* to the true place of rest!

When man is spiritually awakened, he sees that he needs pardon. And pardon is to be obtained nowhere but in the precious blood that flowed from the wounds of the crucified Son of God! Yet many men try to get it by almsgiving, penances and outward reformations—they will even look to priestly lips for absolution, though none can forgive sins but God! They fly here and there—anywhere except to God and to the one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus! O men, as I look upon you, I see the contrast between you and the stork, and the turtledove, and the crane, and the swallow, for, when the time comes for these birds to fly, they stretch their wings and away they go as though they could even see the far-off land! They never stop until they have reached the goal for which they started. But you fly here, there, anywhere—and nowhere, in the long run, and you drop down, faint and weary—drop, ah, where?—but into the devouring jaws of the old dragon who has long sought your destruction and who will achieve it unless you listen to the voice of wisdom which said, “turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?” “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.”

**II.** Thirdly, dear Friends, these migratory birds not only know the time for them to come or go, and the place to which they should go, but, BY SOME STRANGE INSTINCT, THEY ALSO KNOW THE WAY.

There is no road that they can follow. Our swallows, I suppose, fly across the English Channel—sometimes across France and Spain—but they are often met with far, far out at sea and have been known to rest upon the rigging, the masts, and even the decks of vessels when they have grown weary. Their flights are very long and rapid, but they can have no landmarks. They usually fly far across the sea, yet they never miss their way and, in due time, they reach their desired end. No convoy is by their side, no wings of angels are heard rustling around them as they speed upon their way. There may be no favoring wind, but if it should be contrary to them, they fly against it. They must reach the sunnier climate, or die in the attempt and, therefore, though the wind should, at times, keep them back, and impede their flight, yet onward they go!

Now, there are many, many men who can say with the Apostle I quoted before, “Lord, we know not where You go, and how can we know the way?” They say this concerning the way to salvation, the way to safety, the way to Heaven. They do not know the way. Some of you who have heard the Gospel preached for years do not know the way. That is not through our lack of plain speaking, nor through our lack of reiterating—

***“The old, old story,  
Of Jesus and His love.”***

I always feel that I have not done my duty as a preacher of the Gospel if I go out of this pulpit without having clearly set before sinners the way of salvation. I sometimes think that you have so often and so long heard me tell this story that you will get weary of it, but I cannot help it if you do. I had better weary you than in any way be false to my charge. Yet, with all this telling over and over, and over again the simple message of, “Believe, and live,” though the outward ears hear it and the mind catches some idea of it, yet the soul embraces it not.

Let me tell it to you yet once more. The way for a soul to fly to the place of safety lies in this direction alone—God’s only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who is Himself “very God of very God,” came down from Heaven and became Man. He lived upon this earth a life of perfect obedience to His Father’s Law, and a life of holy service on behalf of sinful men. On the Cross of Calvary, the sin of all those who will ever trust in Him were laid upon Him and, on the accursed tree, He endured all that they ought to have suffered for their sins. God bruised Christ, His own Son, in the place of as many sinners as believe on Him. God was perfectly just in acting thus. The payment of our enormous debt of guilt was demanded—and Christ paid it in full. So, all who trust in Jesus may rest assured that their sin was laid upon Christ, put away by Christ and so completely blotted out that it has ceased to be! We are accounted just through our faith in Jesus Christ, the great Sin-Bearer. “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” “He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” The way of safety, then, is the way of Substitution, the way of Atonement, the way of Jesus Christ’s blood! And the way to travel in that road is by simply trusting—believing with the heart in Jesus Christ, relying upon Him, depending upon Him, leaning on Him, resting on Him, be-

lieving His Word—and accepting Him to be to us what God has set Him forth to be to the trusting sons and daughters of men!

**IV.** My last remark about these migratory birds the stork, the turtle-dove, the crane and the swallow is that they not only know the time for their flight and the place they need to reach, and the way they have to go, but **THEY SHOW THEIR WISDOM BY ACTUALLY GOING TO THE SUNNY LAND.**

It would not profit them, in the least, to know when to go if they did not really go at the appointed time. It would not serve them an atom to know where to go, if they did not go—nor to know how to go if they still loitered here. But the wisdom of these fowls of the air is proved by the fact that they do go. They practice what they know. They yield to the instinct which guides them, the impulse which moves them! But, alas, in contrast with these birds, sinners are often very foolish. *They have long heard the Gospel, but they have not yet obeyed it.* They have never practiced what they know, at least in a sense. There are many who profess to believe all that we preach, who prove, by their actions, that they have never really received our message. How foolish it is to say that they believe there is a Hell and yet seek not to escape from it—to talk of believing that there is a Heaven and yet never begin in the way that leads to it—and to pretend to believe in the only Savior of sinners and yet really not to trust in Him!

Then *there are many who know their danger, yet do not escape from it.* They are fully aware of the terrible place where their sin is carrying them. They are quite conscious that they are without hope of entering Heaven and that, when they die, there will be nothing for them but “the blackness of darkness forever.” Yet all this knowledge is of no avail to them, for they do not seek to escape from their impending doom! Where shall I find language strong enough to describe such folly as this? There are some who even say, as that son said to his father, “I go, Sir,” yet they do not go. They vow yet break their vow again and again. They are at times moved, but it is only with temporary regrets, for they turn again to the sin they said they had left. Alas! Alas! Alas! Yet these people are not idiots—they are not fools in other matters. See them at their business—they are sharp enough there. They want to see the latest telegram, for it may affect the stocks and shares in which they are so deeply interested. They are very anxious to be on time about their temporal affairs. They are punctual in their payments and they are glad to be equally prompt in their receipts.

They look after their own interests in everything except the greatest and most important of them all! They carefully examine the title-deeds relating to their estates. They will not set their signature to any document till they have thoroughly understood it and seen that it is all right. They make everything as secure as they can except their immortal souls! To take care of the garment, but to neglect the body it covers, is folly! To give all our time to our houses and lands, to our money and our worldly estate—and to leave our soul to be lost—is the most supreme folly of which we can be capable! I know not what to say to those who know

what they should be, what they should do—and yet hesitate, debate and delay to do it! Is there such folly anywhere else under Heaven? The birds of the air and the beasts of the field are not so stupid as that! Surely the very stones in our streets have as much reason in them as those men have who know that there is a Savior for sinners and who yet lose Him by neglecting to trust in Him! Vain is it for me to appeal to you! Instead of doing so, I make my appeal to God! Holy Spirit, save these fools from themselves and from their sins, and lead them to faith in Christ, the only Savior! O fools, and slow of heart to believe, I call Heaven and earth to witness that I have warned you of the consequences of your fatal folly! If you will perish in your sins, remember that I have warned you—not with such a voice as I would use if I had it, nor in such language as I would wish to speak if it were possible—but using the best I have, that which my heart prompts me to use!

“Why will you die?” Why will you be lost to all eternity? You must live forever, for you are immortal! God has made you so and He will never let your soul die. Then, will you deliberately choose to make that endless life of yours to be forever wretched, forever without hope? You do not mean to do so! I cannot think that you are so insane as that! You desire to have peace here and hereafter? Then seek the Savior this very hour! None are as happy as true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you have joy forever? Then trust in Him! But if you do not, no joy can ever be yours. The inexorable decree of God concerning Heaven is, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” Therefore, if your names are not in that Book—that is to say, if you believe not in Jesus Christ as your Savior, if you are not trusting in the blood of the Lamb—you will go to that dread place where hope can never dawn—but where the midnight despair shall darken over the lost souls that will be imprisoned there forever and forevermore!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 8; 9:1.**

**Jeremiah 8:1.** *At that time, says the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the Prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves.* The Prophet Jeremiah had to foretell terrible judgments upon the guilty people who had been often warned, but who had, at last, gone beyond all bearing and were about to be destroyed by the Chaldeans. Here we have the picture of Judah and Jerusalem invaded by the Chaldeans and Babylonians, just before the city was utterly destroyed. It was a very common practice to bury treasure with the bodies of kings, hence when any land was invaded by foreign foes, they broke open the tombs and searched for hidden valuables and it was a sign of the special detestation of the enemy, and of their fury against the people when they dragged the carcasses out of the graves and scattered the bones to the four winds of Heaven. In this case, it was fore-

told that this desecration would not only take place with regard to the bones of the kings, in whose tombs the greatest treasure might be expected to be found, but the bones of princes, priests, Prophets and people were all to be alike brought forth!

**2.** *And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of Heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.* What a striking and appropriate judgment that was! As they had worshipped the sun, that very sun was to dry their bones. As they had worshipped the moon, that moon's rays should fall upon their relics and the stars, which they had adored, would also be quite unable to help them.

**3.** *And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family which remain in all the places where I have driven them, said the LORD of Hosts.* There was to be stern treatment for the dead, but it would be worse with the living, for the Chaldeans were strong, fierce, cruel and most ingenious in the torments which they inflicted upon their captives. It was an awful thing to be living in such times as those—and it is always a terrible thing to be living when God's judgments are abroad in the earth—and sinners are hardened in their sin.

**4, 5.** *Moreover you shall say unto them, Thus says the LORD, Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slid back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.* Perseverance in sin is a great aggravation of it. There are some who fall into sin, but, by God's Grace, they are raised out of it and they turn away from iniquity and are restored to God's favor. Where there is true Grace in the heart, where there is spiritual life, there will be restoration sooner or later. But there are others, like the people of Jerusalem, who have "slid back by a perpetual backsliding." Day after day they grow more outrageous in their wickedness.

**6.** *I hearkened and heard, but they spoke not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turned to his course as the horse rushes into the battle.* God listened. He waited to be gracious. He was eager to hear one penitent cry and to observe one tear of genuine repentance, but, as the war-horse is eager for the fray, and, at the first blast of the trumpet, seeks to dash into the very center of the fight, so did these ungodly people! Instead of turning to God, they turned more desperately to sin.

**7.** *Yes, the stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times; and the turtledove and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the LORD.* When God's judgments are being experienced, it is high time to repent! But these people did not think of such a thing—they were not half as sensible as migratory birds which come and go as the seasons guide them.

**8.** *Why do you say, We are wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us? Certainly in vain he made it. The pen of the scribes is in vain.* What? Do



they talk like that, the people who do not know and do not regard God's judgments—do they talk in such a style as that? Ah, yes! Some of the most wicked of them have a so-called "religion" upon which they still pride themselves. Their hands are red with blood, yet they keep a Bible handy. They say, "We are wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us." All the while that they are sinning against the Lord and His Law. Scribes multiplied copies of the Law and some of these very people who were most hardened in guilt possessed a copy. But, says God, "certainly in vain he made it. The pen of the scribes is in vain." And our own Bible Societies may go on printing Bibles by the millions but, as long as men do not obey what is taught in the Bible, the work of the printing press, like that of the copyist, will be in vain! We need more than the letter of the Word, valuable as that is! We need to know, in spirit and in truth, what the Spirit teaches *through* the letter, and also to practice it! God grant that even our Bibles may not rise up in judgment against us!

**9.** *The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD, and what wisdom is in them? See God's judgment upon a man wise in his own conceit? You hear, every now and then, of some wonderfully learned philosophic, scientific man—and many folk are frightened because he is an infidel. He does not possess true wisdom. God's description of such a man is this, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God."*

**10-11.** *Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them; for everyone from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace—when there is no peace. It is a dreadful thing when those who ought to warn the people simply flatter them. When, instead of speaking sharp, stern, honest, faithful words, they cry, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. Such false teachers say, "Do not trouble yourself. All will be right at last. You may live as you like, for there is no hereafter that need alarm you. In another state you may get set right, whatever God's Word declares as to the punishment of the impenitent." There are far too many of these smooth-tongued deceivers now living! God deliver this land from them, lest they become an occasion of judgment against the people!*

**12.** *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, says the LORD. They had gone so far that they could not blush. It is a dreadful thing when a man has lost the very sense of shame—there will be no repentance where that is the case!*

**13.** *I will surely consume them, says the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. They would not recognize the Giver, so the gifts would be taken away from them. Now the people dwelling in the country villages begin to be alarmed because of the Chaldeans—and they say—*

**14-16.** *Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defended cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God has put us to silence and given us water of gall to drink because we have sinned against the LORD. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of His horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of His strong ones, for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.* Dan was the northernmost tribe, bordering on Phoenicia. And after Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Phoenicians, he began to march through the territory of Daniel. The mighty horses of the Chaldeans can be seen represented upon the slabs brought home by Mr. Layard. They are a very prominent part of the Chaldean force—so the poet-Prophet pictures them as being heard as far as from Dan as all the way to Jerusalem, so terrible was their snorting. This, of course, is the imagery of poetry, but there was terrible reality behind it.

**17.** *For, behold, I will send serpents among you, vipers which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, says the LORD.* Such were the Chaldeans—crafty as serpents, full of the venom of cruelty wherever they came! There was no way of charming them as a serpent may be charmed. They came on a deadly errand and thoroughly did they perform it.

**18-21.** *When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her king in her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me.* The weeping Prophet sorrows over the desolation of his land in words that have seldom been surpassed for sublime sympathy and pathos—

**22.** *Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

**Jeremiah 9:1.** *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!* Matthew Henry well observes that, in the Hebrew, the same word signifies, “eye,” and, “fountain,” as if God had as much given us eyes to weep with as to see with, as if there were as much cause to sorrow over sin as to look out upon the beauties of the world. Magnificent in its poetry and most touching in its pathos is this verse which ought never to have been cut off from the previous chapter—“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!”

—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.**

# HEALED OR DELUDED? WHICH?

## NO. 1658

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 7, 1882,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly,  
saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”  
Jeremiah 8:11.*

*“Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall  
be saved: for You are my praise.”  
Jeremiah 17:14.*

THE people among whom Jeremiah dwelt had received a grievous hurt and they felt it, for they were invaded by cruel enemies. Their goods were plundered, their children were slain and their cities burned. Jeremiah, with true love to his nation, warned them that the cause of all their trouble was that they had forsaken their God. They had turned aside from the living God and had made gods of the idols of the nations round about them, and so had provoked Jehovah to jealousy. Therefore He chastened them sorely and plagued them again and again, even as He had threatened them from of old. He took up the quarrel of His Covenant and He made them smart, indeed.

Jeremiah tried to show them that the only way to be healed of their hurt was to be healed of their sin—that if they would give up their idolatry and all the infamous wickedness that grew out of it—and turn to the true God and obey His Commandments, then brighter days would come. Their conscience must have told them that all this was true but, alas, Jeremiah preached to them in vain! As the old classic prophetess Cassandra was doomed forever to speak the truth and never to be believed, so was Jeremiah—the people heard him, but they regarded him not. Meanwhile, certain pretenders to prophecy opposed Jeremiah and sought to win the confidence of the nation. They came with, “Thus says the Lord,” upon their lips, blasphemously pretending to be speaking in the name of Jehovah when Jehovah had not sent them. Nor did they seek His Glory.

These suggested to the people easier remedies than repentance—they should make an alliance with Egypt and in that way beat off the Assyrians. They should send a certain amount of tribute to the great king and thus buy off his armies. They buoyed up the people's hopes with vain confidences and took them away from repenting and returning to God. No good came of their teachings—they did but film the wound of the nation and left the deadly venom still within. The hopes which they excited lasted but for a little time and then died out in blank despair. They had not touched the root which bore the wormwood. They had made light of the national sin. They had healed the hurt of Judah slightly, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there was no peace.

God's servants, today, who are the true successors of the Prophets, have a task before them sterner, even, than that of the ancient Seers! It is not ours to point to smoking ruins and the carcasses of the unburied dead—plain evidences of a grievous hurt—but our work is to deal with *spiritual* sickness and to come among a people who confess *no* hurt. Great multitudes of our hearers do not welcome the news of a heavenly remedy because they are not aware that they are sick! They are not only sound in wind and limb, but in head and heart. From the crown of their head to the sole of their feet they have scarcely a blemish on them! Or if they have some little spot here and there, yet they are much superior to the general run of mankind and need no special spiritual surgery.

A physician who has to commence his practice by convincing his neighbors that they are sick has not a very hopeful sphere before him. Such is our work—we have, first of all, to declare in the name of the God, the Truth that man is fallen; that his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; that he is a sinner doomed to die—and such a sinner that there is no reclaiming him unless the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard his spots! Truths so humiliating to human pride are by no means popular! Men prefer to hear the smooth periods of those who parade the dignity of human nature. The very phrase grates on my ears—talk of the dignity of a dunghill and you are as near the mark!

Man, viewed as fallen, descends below the level of the beast which perishes, for the beast has not offended its Creator. Look how Adam's proud descendants rage against this Truth of God! To persuade them of it is a work so hard as to be utterly hopeless unless the Spirit of God, Himself, shall undertake it! It is a divinely wise arrangement that He has undertaken it—as it is written, "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall convince the world of sin." When that great labor is accomplished, we have yet another, remaining, namely, to excite in men a desire *to seek* healing! Many there are who confess their disease, but the disease of sin has worked in them a spiritual lethargy so that they find a horrible rest in their lost estate! They have no longing to rise to spiritual health, of which, indeed, they know nothing. They are guilty and willing to remain guilty—inclined to evil and content with the inclination!

Hundreds live and die in this condition. They know that there is a wrath to come on account of sin, but they put far from them the evil day and amuse themselves with the mirth of the present. They do not deny that a great change must be undergone by them before they can enter Heaven, but then there is time enough for this, for even at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour they may be called by Divine Grace! They are willing to run the risk of gasping out a last penitential prayer—and so they give Mercy a denial, refusing the Good Physician because they are afraid of being well too soon. Ah, me! We must bring them out of this. They will perish unless they are quickened out of this indifference—they will sleep themselves into Hell unless we can find an antidote to the opiates of sin. Like the rich man, of whom we read that in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, they will dream on till their awakening will be too late. Would to God they

might lift up their eyes while there is yet a hope of their beholding Christ upon the Cross and finding everlasting life in Him!

After these things are done, we have but stormed the outworks of the castle, for there still remains another difficulty. Convinced that they need healing and made, in a measure, anxious to find it, the danger with the awakened is lest they should rest content with an apparent cure and miss the real work of Grace! We are perilously likely to rest satisfied with a slight healing and, by this means, to miss the great and complete salvation which comes from God, alone. I wish to speak in deep earnestness to everyone here present upon this subject, for I have felt the power of it in my own soul. To deliver this message I have made a desperate effort—quitting my sick bed without due permit—and moved by a restless pining to warn you against the counterfeits of the day.

I have taken two texts. First, that I may show how easy it is for us to be deluded into a *slight* healing and, secondly, that I may plead with you to seek *real* healing. And, lastly, that I may plainly show *where* the true healing is to be had according to the teaching of our second text, “Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.”

**I.** First, then, we sorrowfully assert that IT IS VERY EASY FOR US TO BE THE SUBJECTS OF A FALSE HEALING. You will kindly understand that I am *not* going to talk about the inhabitants of the Island of Laputa—I am now speaking straight to every one of you and I am setting myself in the middle pew that my keenest sentence may enter my own heart as well as yours! I say, we are, *all of us*, in danger of being the subjects of a false healing—ministers, deacons, elders, Church members, aged professors and young beginners—all alike! We might infer this from the fact that, no doubt, a large number of persons are deceived.

If a large number of persons are so, then why should not we be? The tendency of other men is probably also in us. Why not? Are there not many persons who consider that all is well with themselves because they have been observant of Church ordinances from their youth up? And their parents were observant for them before they actually came upon the stage of responsibility? Were they not duly christened and correctly confirmed? Have they not taken the sacrament? Have they not gone through every form that is required by the sect to which they belong? What more can be needed? They do not, in so many words, assert that these *ceremonies* have given them perfect wholeness before God, but secretly they pour this flattering unction upon their souls and lie down in quietness! If *they* are not all right, where will you find any who are?

On the other hand, it may be that some now present are thankful that they *never were* christened nor confirmed and they think a good deal of not having undergone those ceremonies. Let them not err in the same way as those they are judging! They have been attentive to religion from their own point of view—they are never absent from their pew; they like to be at Prayer Meetings—they enjoy everything that has the stamp of Christianity upon it and, therefore, they enquire no further, but take their safety for granted! They are afraid of digging too deep and so they are satisfied with having a *form* of godliness. Though they have felt no change of heart and

no renewal of spirit, they, nevertheless, believe that all is well with them—at least they hope so—and, therefore, they are at ease in Zion.

This is a poor, slovenly soul-surgery which will end in eternal death! Beware of it, I pray you, while yet a work of Grace may be worked upon you! Too many are reliant entirely upon external religion. If that is attended to, carefully, they conclude that all is right. To sing a hymn is, in their minds, a good thing, though their heart never praises God! To join in the posture of prayer is, to them, an excellent thing, though their heart never cries to God for mercy! Alas, that men should dream that the hollow hypocrisy which insults God with empty forms should have a magical virtue in it! Oh, that men should be so mad as to conceive that the bringing of the mere husks and bran of external devotion to God can be anything to Him but sheer mockery, provoking Him to greater wrath!

And yet they mock God with pretended prayers and feel pleased with their crime. They chant a heartless hymn and so vex His Spirit—and they are pacified by their empty song! The very deeds that will be mentioned against them, to condemnation, they quote to their darkened mind as hopeful grounds of justification! Outward religion is a slight and pretended healing, being, in fact, no healing at all, but a cry of, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace! I am afraid, too, that many who do not rely upon religious forms yet confide in doctrinal beliefs. They are sound in the faith—Orthodox, Evangelical and Calvinistic! They heartily detest any doctrine that is not Scriptural. I am glad to find that it is so with them—but let them not rest in this! To cover a wound with a royal garment is not to heal it and to conceal a sinful disposition beneath a sound creed is not salvation! Believe what you may, even though you should know the whole Truth of God, yet if your faith never changes your *heart* nor affects your *life*, you will in no way be superior to the devil who believes—no, you may not be quite so good as he, for devils believe and tremble—and to believe without trembling is a stage lower down!

Oh, my dear Hearer, I implore you, do not rest content with such a slight healing as this! I have heard of one who changed from a Churchman to a Dissenter, and another who changed from a Dissenter to a Churchman—but I long to hear of you that you have turned from *sin* to *righteousness*, from *self* to *Jesus*! Conversions may be no better than perversions unless they are conversions to Christ! We must know the Truth of God in the heart or we do not know it at all. Dry doctrine may kill—it is only the living Truth of God, worked in us by the Spirit of God, that can make us alive! Many are the quackeries of the spiritual world. And multiplied are the nostrums of the physicians of no value—yielding to men a slight and transient hope.

If others are deceived, may not we be? Depend upon this, that if there is a chance of our being deceived at all, we are always ready to aid in the deception! As a rule, we are all inclined to think too well of ourselves. I dare say that if any cautious flatterer will assure me that I am a very wise person, I shall, before long, come to the conclusion that he is a remarkably sensible and far-seeing individual! If anyone should accuse you of a virtue which you never possessed, if he would but persevere long enough

with his pleasing insinuation, you will begin to smile inwardly and hint to your conscience that there are latent excellencies about you which this man with the prophetic glance has discovered! The devil, who knows the exact bait for poor human nature, finds it easy to pacify an anxious mind by presenting a false salvation and persuading the heart that all is well, while in fact *nothing* is well!

A little feeling of natural regret flits over the mind and the false fiend whispers, "It is repentance." "Oh, yes," says the ready dupe, "I am a penitent!" A little presumptuous puffing up of ourselves into comfort is indulged and the deceiver sings, "Hail, precious faith!" How pleased we are when we jump to the conclusion that we have passed from death unto life and are, indeed, the servants of the living God! We do not look back to see whether there was any new birth; whether there was any change of heart; whether there was any giving up of sin; whether there was any laying hold on righteousness; whether there was any severance from self and union to Christ! Those enquiries may be troublesome and, therefore, the irksome duty of self-examination is cried down as unbelief and we are bid to shut our eyes and make up our minds that all is right.

"Believe that you are well and you are well" seems to be the Gospel of many, but it is not the Gospel of Jesus! But it is so easy to jump into fancied security that many take to it. We are, almost all of us, on the side of that which is most easy and comfortable to ourselves—the exceptions to this rule are a few morbid spirits who habitually write bitter things against themselves—and a few gracious souls whom the Holy Spirit has convinced of sin who would comfort themselves if they could, but dare not do so. They are dying for need and yet their soul abhors all manner of meat. I do not suppose I shall do any good this morning except to this last class—and they are few. But the words I shall speak will reach their ears, I know, and I pray God it may drop into their hearts to comfort them.

Take this, then, for granted, that there are many ways of being slightly healed and we are, most of us, likely to be pleased with one or other of them. Besides, flatterers are not yet an extinct race. False prophets abounded in Jeremiah's day and they still may be met with. I could indicate where they are, but I advise you not to go after them. They are to be found in several places of worship in London, but you had better leave them alone. There is a flatterer in your own bosom, namely, proud Self! Another flatterer often crosses your path and is eager to destroy your soul—I mean Satan. If by any possibility you can be beguiled to put up with something which looks like healing, but which is not, you shall have all the art and craft of Hell to help you in it!

If it is possible, the very elect shall be thus deceived! Instead of faith, they shall have presumption; for regeneration, they shall have reformation; for holiness, morality; for purity, censoriousness; for zeal, fanaticism; for Grace, fancy—and for Christ and His Cross—human works and their merit. Many who profess to love you will aid the general deceit and puff you up with the idea of being what you are not. Slight healing is sure to be fashionable among a great many because it requires so little thought. People will do anything but *think* according to the Word of God. They will

both think and speak against the revealed will and Truth of God, but to consider what the Lord has said is not at all to their mind. They bring forward philosophical notions which read like passages of a comedy! He seems to be most honored, nowadays, who will invent the most monstrous theory and stand to it!

The more absurd it is the better, so long as it is opposed to the Bible and to the accepted beliefs. I do not hesitate to say that any ordinary person, who would dethrone his reason and enthrone his imagination, could dream up as many good theories in a day as have been invented during the last 50 years by our vain-glorious philosophers! Give him sufficient liquor to make him half drunk and he might invent many more—and those far more philosophical than the folly which rules the wisdom of the present hour! The more the philosophies stagger, the more they will suit this present age, for that which is really reasonable and solid is rejected.

Sober thought about one's own soul and its destiny is, by no means, a favorite occupation with men. How few sit down and answer the question, "How much do I owe unto my Lord?" They would sooner hear a thunder-clap than be asked to consider their ways. They would sooner be flogged than sit down and say to their soul—"How have you dealt towards your Creator? What is your state towards your Redeemer? What of love, what of fear, what of holy confidence, what of consecration have you ever given to Jesus Christ, your Lord? How will it go with you when you come to die? How will you fare in the swellings of Jordan? How will you meet the Judge of all the earth in the Judgment Day?" Such questions as these they put back as only fit for women and for priests! Yet were they truly manly, they would be eager to look such enquiries in the face. O Sirs, it is a grievous pity that men should be lost for lack of *thought*! I would gladly hold you by the sleeve and beg you to remember and consider!

Superficial religion only requires so much church-going, or attendance at a sermon, or so many half-guineas, so much repeating of pious phrases and listening to pious periods—it suits the thoughtless—but as to seeking after God by meditation, prayer, confession, faith, they cannot! Away with it! Superficial religion will always be fashionable because it does not require self-denial. A man may be outwardly religious and yet be a private tippler, but he cannot be a true Christian at that rate. Such secret defilement he must abandon. That, however, is a blow too near the root for many—they like not so sharp an axe as that! Or perhaps he has enmity towards his brother. Now he can go to "mass" or attend early communion and yet hate his brother—but he cannot go to Heaven and do that! He cannot be a regenerate man and do that! He may be following, all the while, some secret lust and yet be a great man in his church so long as he can keep his wantonness hidden away from prying eyes.

A superficial religion suits the unclean gentleman, but genuine godliness will not allow a darling lust to live. Do you wonder that vital godliness is at a discount when it proclaims war to the knife against a lifelong indulgence? It is with Christ as it might be in surgery! Two eminent practitioners profess to deal with the disease called polypus. The first declares that he can work an effectual cure, but it must be understood that he



uses the knife freely. He believes no cure to be possible unless all the roots of the growth are taken away. He will not pretend to half measures—the whole thing must be eliminated, or he can work no cure. On the other side of the street another surgeon of great name depends upon an *outward* application which, in quite a painless manner, acts upon the diseased part and, according to his statements, secures the desired result. He says, “My friend goes too deep and makes too much of the matter. Come in here! The disease is a mere trifle. I will end the mischief without cutting and hacking.”

You can readily guess how popular this last gentleman will be if he can gain public confidence! But what will be the end of it? That is the point! If the sharp and deep cut of the first surgeon ministers to ultimate health and is absolutely necessary to a cure, is it not best? If, in the second case, the end of all those honeyed words is but the covering up of a foul loathsomeness which will breed corruption and hasten death—is it not a wicked deception? Yet most men are so foolish as to choose the worse of the two in the affairs of their *souls*. Slight healing, also, is sought by men, because it does not require *spirituality*. There are multitudes of men who, if the Kingdom of Heaven were to be had by outward actions—no matter how difficult—would at once commence the task! Say, “You must save so many hundreds of pounds and buy Heaven,” and they would starve themselves until they had hoarded up the money! Anything that could be done by the body would be cheerfully attempted!

But true religion is *spiritual* and carnal men cannot get at it—it is high above and out of their sight. They ask us “How can we be saved?” We tell them. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Then they reply, “But what is this, *believing*?” and they try and make believing into a kind of hard mechanical action of the understanding by which it receives certain facts about Christ, just as it believes in Roman or Grecian history. They do not grip at the idea that it is the *heart’s* resting upon Christ. When we begin to preach repentance and faith, they appear to be in a fog—they cannot get at our meaning because they are prejudiced by other modes of thought. Hence it is that the slight healing which comes of formalism and ceremonies, seeing it deals with outward manipulations, at once attracts them.

But, my dear Hearers, let me warn you with all the energy I possess against ever being satisfied with any of the slight healings that are cried up nowadays! They will all end in disappointment, as sure as you are living men! I could wish that they might speedily end so you could begin again and begin aright. Believe me, sickness is often a time when a man is led to turn over the pages of his past life, to see whether they will bear inspection. It will be a fearful thing when you are racked with pain and depressed in spirit to see all your evidences blotted and blurred—and all your hopes of Heaven cancelled by the hand of the Truth of God before your sight! Suffering times call for realities, solid facts, eternal verities—for then it is that dark thoughts crowd in upon the soul and anxious questions which must and will have an answer!

Then Conscience talks in this fashion—"You must be born again." Are you born again? "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." Has that blood-shedding ever come near to you? Such thoughts as these gather around the spirit in the dead of night and haunt the soul in the weary watches, when you toss to and fro and cannot sleep. Unless you fix your eyes upon the Cross and can answer, "I have believed in Jesus for salvation and I still believe in Him. I have forsaken every evil way and I am still striving against sin. I am a renewed man. I am struggling to the Light of God and struggling up to purity and to my God"—unless, I say, you can give such firm and solid answers, there will be hard times for you and deep depressions far more grievous than physical pain could possibly bring to you. I pray you, therefore, do not put off making sure work for eternity. Remember that if you pass through this life deceived, there will await you an awful undeceiving in the next world!

I will not try to depict the man who finds himself lost forever, though he died in the odor of sanctity. What will be his horror, when he finds himself cast out and hears the Lord Jesus say, "I never knew you." Your minister knew you! The deacons knew you! The members knew you, but the Lord Jesus never did, for you had no heart-fellowship with Him and were not in *heart* a believer in Him! O Brothers and Sisters, if there is any error about your profession, get it *right* at once! Do not go on under a delusion! Surely you cannot wish to be puffed up with vain imaginations of hopes which are fallacious! Search, then, and see. Beg the Lord to search you and let your state before Him be in all things according to His Truth. Time flies, and so does my strength, and therefore we must hasten to the second point.

**II. BE IT OURS TO SEEK TRUE HEALING.** But then, as we have already said, this true healing must be radical. Oh, pray to have it so! The healing which we need must go to the root of the business and work a thorough change. Such a work is described in Scripture as a creation—"created anew in Christ Jesus"—it must be a resurrection. "And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Now I ask you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, whether you can undertake this? Creation and resurrection—do these lie in your power? You can do nothing of the kind! And so you are driven to my second text, "O Lord, heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved."

Be it known unto every one of you, men and women, that you must be the subjects of a Divine Power by which you must be as totally changed as if you had been annihilated and then created anew! By this Divine agency you must be as really changed as if you were dead and buried and then were raised again from the dead. There is no soul-healing, no soul-saving apart from this! Does this strike you with despair? I am glad of it, for this kind of despair is next door to eternal hope. When a man despairs of himself, he will begin to trust in his God, Oh that we might each one lie at Christ's feet as dead till He shall touch us and say, "Live." Truly, I desire no life but that which He gives. I would be quickened by His Spirit and find in Him my life, my all!

Now go a step further. The healing we need must be a healing from the *guilt of sin*. My anxious Friend, you must no longer be guilty—you must be free from fault. Every offense you have ever committed must be washed right out, even the least stain of it must vanish and it must be as though it had never been! And *you* must be as though you never had offended at all! “How can that be?” you ask. It is clear it cannot be by anything that *you* can do and this, again, drives you to the prayer of my text, “Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.” How can it be? Only by the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Savior! He took the sin of His people upon Him. He became their Substitute and Representative. He bore their iniquity and was made a curse for them—and in consequence they are set free, cleared and justified!

What a word was that, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts.” Beneath that sword, our Shepherd offered up His life, a ransom for the flock! By one tremendous Sacrifice which He offered unto the Father, the Lord Jesus delivered all His redeemed! Look to Jesus Christ and in a moment your sins have ceased to be! “With His stripes we are healed.” Hallelujah! The day comes when the sins of Jacob shall be sought for and they shall not be found! Yes, they shall not be, says the Lord. Blessed healing this! Who but a Divine Physician could work such a cure? This is pardon worthy of a God!

But you must not only be free from sin, you must be freed from *sinfulness*—a work must be worked in you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and in me, by which we shall be clean rid of every tendency to do evil. We cannot enter into Heaven with sinful *tendencies*—corruption and depravity cannot be endured before the Throne of the thrice holy Jehovah! The very roots and rootlets of sin must come out of the nature which is to share the abode of God. Does not this drive you to despair? Does not this make you cry, “Heal me, O God, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved”? It ought to do so and, in doing so it will work your safety! In answer to your cry, the eternal Spirit shall come upon you, creating you anew in Christ Jesus! He shall come and dwell in you and shall break down the reigning power of sin, putting it beneath your feet.

Though this defeated foe shall strive and struggle like a serpent with his back broken, yet it has its death wound and cannot regain its former dominion. It will struggle so long as you are in this life, but it must ultimately die, and you shall attain perfection—

**“Sin, my worst enemy before,  
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more!  
My inward foes shall all be slain,  
Nor Satan break my peace again.”**

No tendency to sin, no affection towards evil, no fear of relapse, nor danger of apostasy shall remain, but there shall be in us the living and incorruptible Seed and we shall be the members of Christ’s body! We shall be as pure as Adam when he was first created—we shall have about us a purity superior to that of mere creation—a purity produced by the infusion of the Divine life. We came into this world defiled by original sin, but every trace of this will vanish through the work of the Spirit of God and the

washing in the precious blood! This is a work which can only be worked in us by God, Himself. Oh to be so saved that we can survive Divine inspection, a Divine inspection by which every spot would be revealed if spots were there—but we shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! It is most desirable to be so healed in soul as to stand the test of this present life.

I have known friends discharged from the hospital as healed of disease who were bitterly disappointed when they came into everyday life—a little exertion made them as ill as ever. A person had a piece of diseased bone in her wrist. It was taken out by the hospital surgeon and the arm seemed perfectly healed. But when she began to work, the old pain returned and it was evident that the old mischief was still there and that a part of the decayed bone remained. Thus some are saved, so they think, but it is only in *seeming*, for when they get into the world and are tried with temptation, they are just the same as they used to be. They have not received a practical salvation—and nothing but practical salvation is worth having.

A sham cure is worse than none. If a bone is ill set it is often necessary to break it, again, and it sometimes seems to me that certain converts need their hearts to be broken again, that they may be truly comforted. If any man here has been healed, but his arm will not work for Jesus and for righteousness, it needs breaking again! And I should not mind if my sermon should break it, so long as he was driven to Christ to get it set in the right fashion. If you cannot resist the temptations of this life, depend upon it, your salvation is a mere myth! We need a salvation that will bear the test of sickness and the strain of death, so that a man may lie back on his bed and say, “I do not fear to die. Jesus Christ has made me perfectly whole and among the healed ones before His Throne I shall shortly stand and sing His praises world without end.”

Oh, my dear Hearers, could you die like that? Have you a hope which will bear the light of your last hours? If you have not, do not let this day close until you have found it! I beseech you, cry to Jesus, at once to save you in His own effectual way.

**III.** I close by saying, LET US GO WHERE TRUE HEALING IS TO BE HAD. It is quite certain that God is able to heal us of all our sins, for He who created can restore. Whatever our diseases, nothing can surpass the power of Omnipotent Love. Blessed be the name of the Lord, no work of Grace can be beyond His will, for He delights in mercy. His name is Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord That Heals You, and He has given us a sweet word, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.” You remember how David sang, “He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions”? The Lord is so fond of healing sin-sick souls that He had but one Son and He made a Physician of Him that He might come and heal mankind of their deadly wounds!

And He, being made a Physician, came down among us, and sought out for His patients, not the good and excellent, but the most guilty, for He said, “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Jesus, then, the Beloved Physician, is able and willing to meet the case of every one of

us! His wounds are an unfailing remedy. Oh, that you were willing to come to Him and spread your case before Him! Come at once! Even at this instant! Jesus certainly can meet your condition, though apart from Him it may be utterly hopeless.

As I turned over my text while coming here, I was charmed with the encouragement which it offers to the very chief of sinners, for these may say to themselves, "Is it, after all, God's work to save? Well, then, He can save a great sinner as well as a little sinner!" If salvation were of works or of merits, then many persons would evidently be excluded from hope. But if it is entirely of Grace, then *none* are excluded! And if the power is found in God, and not in us, then the same power which can save the most moral young man can save the most dissolute and debauched person—and the same Grace which can save the godly matron can save the impious harlot! The power of God is equal to any miracle! The mercy of God can go any length!

Tell it! Tell it that Jesus Christ is able to have compassion on the ignorant and to save those who are out of the way! Out of the way sinners, outrageous sinners, black sinners, scarlet sinners—they, too, may pray the prayer, "Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved." If it is of Grace, then surely hope is encouraged where otherwise despair might reign supreme! If it is of pure mercy, then the utmost guilt need not shut out a soul from Heaven. Would God, dear Friends, you would come and try the unfailing Grace of God in Christ Jesus, which is *unto* all and *upon* all them that believe!

I know that while I am preaching, certain of you say, "He does not mean *me*: I am too great a sinner." On the other hand, another class imagines that they are not sinful *enough*, so they, also, fancy that the discourse is not meant for them. Oh that you would give up this wicked perversity and know that all the Truth of God that applies to you is meant for you! I have heard of Robert Burns, that, on one occasion when at church, he sat in a pew with a young lady whom he observed to be much affected by certain terrible passages of Scripture which the minister quoted in his sermon. The wicked wag scribbled on a piece of paper a verse which he passed to her. I fear that the substance of that verse has been whispered into many of your ears full often—

***"Fair maid, you need not take the hint,  
Nor idle texts pursue;  
'Twas only sinners that he meant,  
Not angels such as you."***

This sermon is meant for those who think themselves angels as well as for those who know themselves to be sinners! Cease from all dreamy confidences! Awaken yourselves from proud self-content and come to Jesus, the Savior, who alone can save from sin and death!

I love my text because it gives security for the future. "Heal me, and I *shall* be healed." Certain theologians appear to doubt the lasting nature of the Divine cure and fancy that Christ's patients may die, after all. Would they have us pray, "Lord, heal me, and I shall *not* be healed"? Yet that would be the way to pray if we may fall from Grace and perish! We do not believe in this questionable healing, but we pray, "Heal me, and I *shall* be

healed.” If you are saved by a priest or by yourself, you may be lost—but if God saves you—you never will be lost! That which God does, He does forever. The Lord never puts His hand to a creation which He leaves unfinished. He that is born again cannot be unborn! We may unravel all that is of Nature’s weaving, but that which is *God’s* workmanship defies the infernal powers! There stands the promise, sure forever— “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.”

Dear Friends, if you are saved, pray the Lord that you may be saved, indeed! And if you are *not* saved, get to Him and pray Him to begin His good work within your souls. I am often anxious about this congregation. I do not want to build up, in this place, a host of hopes that are ill-founded. I felt that I must come and deliver this message at this time, though I am quite unfit to be among you. I have not delivered it as I hoped to—still there it is—and unto God I commend it. I was told if I preached, this morning, I should suffer a month’s relapse as the consequence of it. But I ran the risk because I could not be quiet till I had delivered my soul! Oh that the careless might be disquieted! Oh that the penitent might be encouraged! Let none of us excuse ourselves from self-examination!

Do not let the preacher, or the deacons, or the workers in this Church deceive themselves! Let us get on the Rock and know that we are on it! Let us be true men—true to the core—sincere right through and through. Let us pray God that there may be a work of Grace in us and not the mere outgrowth of human will, fancy and self-flattery! If there are any who have not even felt the slight healing, I am glad they have not. May their wounds never be bound up till Jesus binds them! May none of us ever think of health unless it comes from beneath the wings of the Sun of Righteousness! May we all stand together and gaze with tearful eyes upon the Cross of our Lord! He is all my salvation, all my desire and all my praise! If I perish, it shall be at His feet! If I live, it shall be in His service. Amen!

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# A DISCOURSE FOR A REVIVAL SEASON NO. 608

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 8TH, 1865,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people because of them that dwell in a far country, Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.”  
Jeremiah 8:19, 20.*

THESE words, as they stand in the book of Jeremiah, were probably meant to set forth the sin of Israel. The Prophet’s heart is very full of sadness—he can hear the shrieks and cries of the people in the streets of Jerusalem. They are moaning for sorrow because of the oppression of the Chaldeans—the nation that dwelt afar off. And in the midst of their bitterness and woe they remember the God whom they had forgotten in their prosperity—but this remembrance is not a gracious one. They do not remember Him to humble themselves before Him, but to bring accusations against Him!

They enquire, “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?” As if they felt, “The people of the Lord, the people of the Lord are we, and therefore He is bound to send us a deliverance.” They question the faithfulness of Jehovah because He justly suffers them to be downtrodden for their sins. Then the Lord, speaking by the Prophet, tells them the reason why, although present among them, He did not help them—“Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?”

If they believed Him to be present, why did they set up false gods? If they considered Him to be their God, why did they turn aside to the vanities of the heathen? His Presence among them had been the occasion of greater provocation since they had mocked Him to His face and set up idols in His own temple! In the twentieth verse the Prophet represents the people as breaking forth into another dolorous and lamentable cry, “We thought that God would help us in the days of harvest—but the harvest is past. We dreamed that He would chase away our enemies when the summer months had come—but the summer is ended and still Chaldea has her foot upon Judea’s neck—still we drink the wormwood and the gall and our enemies open their mouths at us. The harvest is past and the summer is ended and we are not saved.”

We find in the New Testament that sometimes the Apostles used the language of the Prophets in other than the original sense. Finding the Prophetic words to be expressive of a sense which they themselves wished to convey to the people, they did, as it were, take the horses and chariot of the Prophet and drive them in another direction. So I intend to do this morning. It strikes me that there is no text in Scripture more applicable to

our present condition than this. “Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people because of them that dwell in a far country.”

We have been crying and pleading with God for the multitude of far-off sinners who know nothing of Him. We will begin, therefore, by dwelling upon the cry. Then comes a question, a question much requiring earnest thought at present—“Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?” Then we have another question which may cause searching of heart both among saints and sinners—“Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” And our text concludes with another cry, not the cry of gracious souls for others, but the cry of graceless sinners for themselves, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.”

**I.** At the outset we have in the text A CRY. Observe the word, “Behold.” I have told you many times that wherever the word, “behold,” occurs in Scripture, it is a sort of signpost to show that there is good entertainment within. God puts this, “N.B.,” in the margin that we may observe well what it is that He is saying to us. The “behold” here is the mark of astonishment. We are to “Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people” as an unusual thing. So seldom does Israel cry unto the Lord—she is so negligent of prayer, she is so silent when she ought to be incessant in her petitions—that when at last she does cry, her voice is a wonder in God’s ears!

I have felt, this week, in the state of mind which is indicated by that interjection, “Behold!” When I sat on this platform on Monday night and marked your sobs and tears and heard the suppressed sighs and groans of the great multitude then assembled, I could not but say, “Behold!” And yet it ought not to be a wonder, it ought not to be a strange thing for God’s people to be in earnest, or for sinners to feel brokenness of heart! If prayer is the Christian’s breath, why then, to see a multitude breathing should never be a spectacle! If to pray unto God is the Christian’s daily privilege, then to approach the Throne of God with prevalent earnestness should never be looked upon with astonishment!

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, we must frankly confess that it is so. True prayer is an astonishing thing! Prevalent intercession is an amazing thing—and if you want to see something that will really thrill you with a holy wonder, attend a Prayer Meeting where the Holy Spirit is present in the fullness of His power and where the Brethren pray not as a mere matter of form, but as if filled with all the fullness of God!

Such meetings as we have had during the past week are things to marvel at! Behold! It has become a wonder for God’s people to really cry. Ah, there are some of you to whom weeping over sinners would be a novelty. To some of you professors *agonizing* for souls would be a new thing—you pray for sinners in your usual prayers—but you do not know what it is to travail in birth for souls. You never feel as if your hearts would break if souls are not saved. You do not feel the burden of the Lord laid upon you till you are crushed in the dust and made to groan out, “God have mercy upon these poor perishing souls.”

With some of you it would be a great wonder to be really on fire in prayer. And if we heard you cry, we should be compelled to say, “Behold



the voice of the cry of My people.” Notice how this prayer is described. It is a cry—“Behold the cry.” A cry is the most natural form of utterance. It is a natural expression made up of pain and desire for relief. A cry is the first sign of human life—as if to indicate that we are most alive when most we cry. As if a cry were the way to life and the path to higher life ever afterwards. A cry! There is something cutting and piercing in it. It cleaves its way up to the Throne of God. A spiritual cry! It is born in the heart, down deep in the inner recesses of regenerate nature. It is not a mere lip-worship, it is not a thing of the tongue and of the jaw.

A cry! It comes from the very soul and therefore it reaches to God’s ear and God’s heart. A cry! It is a plaintive, bitter, painful thing—and, mark you—God’s people seldom get a blessing in the conversion of souls till their prayer turns into a cry mingled with weeping. And if there is sobbing and groaning, it is none the worse. Do you know, dear Friends, the difference between the prayers which are not cries and those which are? When a Brother merely prays what we call prayer, he stands up and utters very proper words, very edifying, very suitable, no doubt, and then he is done.

Another Brother comes forward—he wants a blessing—he tells the Lord what he desires. He takes the promises. He wrestles with God and then he seems to say, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” He cannot be satisfied till, with the cry of, “Abba, Father,” he has come before the Throne of God and really obtained an audience with the Most High. Note again, for every word of our text is suggestive—it is, “Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people.” It is not enough to be earnest! You must know what you are earnest about! The cry must have a voice which is as far as possible understood by yourself and a voice which has a meaning in it before God.

I am afraid there have been some meetings against which the charge of fanaticism might be very fairly brought, because, while there was an admirable earnestness which it were well for colder Christians to copy, there was a lack of understanding—a want of really knowing what they wanted. Beloved, we must be clear when we come before God that we really are asking for something. Our soul must prepare itself by meditation upon its own needs and upon the needs of the people to express an intelligent desire before God.

Cry! Cry aloud as much as you will! But remember, when the voice said cry, the Prophet said, “What shall I cry?” And so when I come before God in prayer, I must ask Him, “What shall I cry?” And I must get a clear sense of what it is at which I am driving. For if an archer takes no aim, he may pull his bow with all his might, but he certainly is not likely to succeed. I must direct my prayer unto God as David says—pull my bow, direct the arrow, take aim at the center of the target—and then when the arrow flies it is likely to reach its place. “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You and will look up.”

What a mercy it is that our cries have a voice with God! Why sometimes, when our cries have no voice for us, they have a voice with God. “The Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” When my desires are such that there are no words in any human language which could possibly express them, my heart does but

let fall a tear, or lift a glance to Heaven and there is a voice in my cry. "Lord, take the meaning, take the meaning," said a poor man in an earnest prayer, to which I remember to have once listened—"I cannot tell You, Lord, what I want, but take the meaning, take the meaning of my poor stammering words."

There is a voice in our prayers as a Church and I think it is, "Father, have mercy upon souls! Father, arise and let Your kingdom come, and let the name of Your Son Jesus be honored in the hearts of many! Father, let the Spirit who dwells in His Church, now work mightily and get to Your name great renown in the midst of the dense crowd among whom we dwell." O God, this is the voice of the cry of Your people! Further, study the matter of the voice—it was, "for them that dwell in a far country." In what a far country does every sinner dwell! "He took his journey into a far country and there wasted his substance with riotous living."

The sinner who is nearest to God is still in a far country. You moralists, how far off you are from God! Dear Mr. Offord said the other night, "Can any of you tell how far off God is from the unpardoned sinner? Remember, you are on this side of sin and God is on the other side of it—but can anyone tell how far God is from the other side of sin! His pure and holy eyes cannot even look on it! Then how far must He be from it! You are just so far off from God as God is from sin, added to the breadth and length of sin itself. See your sin towering like a stupendous Alp! You cannot cross that barrier and God is far away on the other side of that mountain. This is your wretched position afar off from God."

Now, the prayers, I hope, of God's people have been going up for all the far-off ones, that infinite mercy would make them near by the blood of Christ. There are certain special far-off ones whom we ought to mention in our prayers and whom we ought to labor after in our Christian efforts. Do not forget the harlot when you pray—illustrious trophies of Divine Grace have been snatched from the kennel and the pavement. Do not forget the poorest of the poor, the vilest of the vile—and those who dwell in haunts where theft, ignorance and crime do fester. Pray for these most. They most need your entreaties—and let your prayer be a cry—a cry like that of Jesus when He wept over Jerusalem.

It would be one of the healthiest things in all the world for you Christian people, if you were to spend a day with City Missionaries and Bible Women in the very worst of our back slums. If your cry did not come up, then, for those who dwell in a far country, I despair of your knowing what true religion means! The fact is we do not face the sin of London. We, like the ostrich, bury our heads and shut our eyes so as to avoid seeing the evil. We can so easily get to our places of worship along the front streets in which there is a fringe of respectability and order and so on, that we forget the dark lanes, the blind alleys, the dingy courts, the places where poverty, suffering, sin and ignorance abound.

O dear Friends, if we do not go further, if we do not think of foreign lands, we have still reason enough for putting up the voice of our cry for those who are, "in a far country," and yet dwell at home in England! Still, I must have you remark another word in the text—for, "those that dwell in a far country"—there are some of you who make a long abode in a far

country. You were afar off from God eleven years ago. I preached at you then. You were afar off from God five or six years ago, when revivals were frequent. When this Tabernacle was opened you came here and took your seat and you were afar off from God then—and you are afar off now.

The fact is, you have taken up your dwellings—you have made a settlement in one of the parishes of the City of Destruction! You are making out a claim to be enrolled in the devil's register. You dwell in the far-off land. If you were uneasy and felt yourselves to be strangers and foreigners in the land of destruction, how would I clap my hands for joy, for you would soon be rid of your old master if you once felt sick of him. But no! You dwell in that country and I suppose some of you always will, till you are taken from it to make your lodging place in the flames of Hell forever! O, may God prevent it! But I fear it of some of you.

There are some who listen to my words who are made to feel under them. I heard but the other day of one who was set a trembling and shivering under the Gospel. He could not but come and hear though it was always like a great hammer to him. His friends and companions, by much persevering effort, laughed him out of coming here. They could not bear that he should come to hear the despised preacher. Though he had been a dreadful drunkard and swearer before and was then sober, yet they preferred his drunkenness to his coming here! Bitterly have they had to regret it—for he went back to his sins and became as gross a sinner as before.

And then when he was killing himself with sin, they began to wish him to come here again—but it was too late—he would not come again. Perhaps he dared not. A dreadful remorse settled upon him and under its influence he put an end to his own existence. Take care, any of you who hate the Gospel, that you do not laugh at other men's convictions. And when the Gospel does come home with power to any, do not be the devil's advocate and stand up and plead against God. God forgive those who do this and may none of us be guilty of it!

But oh, you dwell in this far country, some of you. You are in a state of danger and condemnation. It was only the other night, when we met at St. John's Wood, that a man came into the vestry made broken-hearted through the address of the evening. My dear Brother Stott soon had him on his knees and began to pray with him. And to my grief this man said he used to hear me at Exeter Hall and was much better in his outward life. While hearing me he thought of religion and lived soberly—but the Tabernacle was too far for him to come to and he would not go anywhere else—and therefore he went back to the world and what seemed to be like a work of Divine Grace proved to be only a work of nature.

Let us be anxious concerning those who dwell in the far country and are only, for a time, as it were, taken out as on an excursion into the land of light. They still have their parish settlement in the far country and are numbered among the citizens of the City of Destruction and are not among the people of God. O, for a cry this morning, another cry from God's people for those who dwell in a far country! One very consoling thought is in the text. I must only hint at it. The cry is, "The cry of the daughter of My people." O beloved, it is so sweet to think that our prayers,

poor as they are, are the prayers of God's own people, and therefore they must be heard.

You will say, "Is that a right argument?" Oh, yes it is! "If you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children." Remember that is how Christ puts it. You are the Lord's children, therefore He will hear you. If you were strangers it might be a different thing. Our prayers might very readily be pulled to pieces by critics, but our Father will not criticize them because they are the cries of His own children. I do not think we set such store by Believer's prayers as we ought to do. Would you let your child constantly cry to you and not answer him? I know you would not.

Put it differently—would you let your Brother in Christ plead with you and not grant him his desire if you could grant it? You have not a Christian's heart if you would. Or I will touch you more closely. We love our wives—if your wife should ask for anything that would be for her good and you could give it, would you refuse it? Husband, would you refuse it? You are no husband if you did! Look at Christ, the Husband of the Church—do you think He will refuse the cry of His own spouse?

What? Shall His own dear bride come before Him and embrace His feet and say, "I will not let You go except You bless me"—and shall He who has espoused her unto Himself in faithfulness, say to her, "I have bid you seek Me, but I will not be found of you. I have commanded you to knock, but the door shall not be opened. I have told you to ask, but you shall not receive"? O, slander not my loving Lord like this—

***"He feels at His heart all our sighs and our groans,  
For we are most near Him, His flesh and His bones."***

Let us rejoice together in the spirit of prayer which God has given us. Let us try to foster it. Let us be much in the exercise of it. During the coming week let us still continue to meet together to intercede at the Throne of Grace.

And this is my reason for urging it upon you—God has promised that when we cry, He will hear us—"He shall call upon Me and I will answer him." "Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." "With long life will I satisfy him and show him My salvation."

**II.** We will now turn to the QUESTION—"Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?" I will answer that question at once in the affirmative. "The Lord is in Zion. Her king is in the midst of her." Having answered this question, it suggests many more. Let me put them to you. If the Lord is, indeed, in Zion and the king is in the midst of her, why do we pray as if He were not? I find no fault with the prayers of my Brothers and Sisters when they ask for an outpouring of the Spirit—what they mean by their prayers is a very proper thing. But I am not certain that the expression is altogether the best that might be used.

The Spirit of God is with His people. I could not, last Monday night, ask to have the Spirit of God poured out, for He was there. If at any time the Holy Spirit was with any men on earth, even at Pentecost, He was here last Monday night, as those present must have felt. We had not so much to ask for it as to be *thankful* for it. When two or three of you meet together in Christ's name, do not meet unbelievably. Remember that He has said, "There am I in the midst of you." Be content with that assurance. You have not, as it were, to mount up to Heaven, that is, to bring

Christ *down*—nor to descend into the earth, that is, to bring Him *up* from the depths—He is with you! “Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?” “God dwells in you.”

The Holy Spirit is given to the Church as a perpetual and abiding Comforter. And in the Church the Spirit of God always dwells. Do not pray, therefore, dear friends, as if God were not with you. “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?” Do not pray, therefore, like the priests of Baal, as though your God were on a journey or needed to be awakened out of sleep. He is with you, ready to answer by fire, if, like Elijah, you have but faith with which to challenge His promise and His power. Is the Lord with you? Then in the next place, let me ask you this question. Why do you despond because of your own weakness? “We have not a sufficient number of ministers. We have little wealth. We have few places of public worship. We have few gifted members,” and so on.

So some unbelievably talk. “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?” What more do you want? “Oh, we would like to be strong.” Why would you be strong? That you must be disqualified to be used by God? “No,” you say. Well, but you would be! What did the Lord say by the mouth of His servant Gideon? “The people are too many for Me.” I never heard that the Lord said, “The people are too few”—never! “The people are too many.” If Samson had the choice of weapons with which to rout his enemies—if he wished to do it in such a way as to make the feat illustrious, if there were before him a cannon, a fifty-pounder and the jawbone of an ass—which would he take? Why, any fool can kill the enemy with a cannon, but it takes a Samson to smite them with the jawbone of an ass!

And so, when God has the choice of weapons and He always has, He chooses the weaker weapon that He may get for Himself the greater renown. My Brothers and Sisters, glory in your infirmities—thank God for your weaknesses! There is room for God when you are empty! But when you are so full and so strong and have such excellent machinery and can do the work so well, why then you will attempt to do without your God and a failure will be the result. But, O Beloved—

***“When I am weak, then am I strong,  
Grace is my shield and Christ my song.”***

Let this silence forever all your raving about weakness in Christian duty! “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?” Did I hear you say, “I am a feeble woman and I have too much work to do for God. I had better, perhaps, curtail it, or give it up”? My Sister, now that you are weaker, try to do more! Now there is more room for your God. “Oh, I am a trembling, humble, unknown man with but little talent and what I have done has been about as much as I can do—I am afraid to venture more.” My Brother, venture more! Get onto the ground of, “I cannot, but God can.” That is safe ground. “I can” is like the ice on which the boy tries to slide and it swallows him up. “I cannot, but God can,” is terra firma—stand there and you stand safely.

There can never come a shock to the man who rests on the Eternal Rock—God all-sufficient. Rest on that and be glad. Again, this question provokes another one. If God IS with us, why these great fears about the prosperity of the Church? “Dr. Colenso becomes an Infidel. Stanley becomes something very suspicious. Multitudes of ministers, so called, be-

come Puseyites—what will become of the Church of Christ?” What will become of her? She will nestle where she always did nestle—beneath the eternal wings! And the more she gets rid of all her carnal confidences the better for her!

“Oh what will become of true religion?” Beloved, become of true religion? It will go on winning and conquering, and with Christ upon the white horse of victory, riding in her forefront, the Truth of God shall march on conquering and to conquer till He shall come whose right it is to reign. Be not discouraged, “Is not her King in the midst of her?” Every now and then, when we try a new scheme, certain prudent Brethren come and pull our ears a bit and they say, “It is more than you can do. You must be prudent.”

Yes, we are prudent. We claim to be prudent. We claim to have the highest prudence. For we reckon it always prudent to believe God and always prudent to act upon God’s promise and not according to carnal policy, nor the judgments of our proud, self-conceited, ignorant flesh. Brethren, if the King is in the midst of her, let us go on and conquer! You think you will never see such days as Pentecost? Why not? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?” You fear you will never see such wonders as were worked by Whitfield and Wesley? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?”

You fancy that Ireland will never receive the Gospel? You think that heathen nations will never lay aside their idolatry? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?” You conceive that this is not the age of miracles and you condemn us to go on in the everlasting jog-trot of propriety, in the do-nothing style of prescription, keeping in the perpetual cart-rut of conventionality and never daring to blaze out a path for ourselves? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?” You do not believe there will be a thousand souls converted under one sermon? You do not think it is likely that the Church will be increased by hundreds in a day, or in a month? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?”

Dear brethren, the God of Zion is here! The King of Zion is here! I grant you, we do not sufficiently recognize His Presence. We are not, as we should be, obedient to His commands. But I charge you, O you soldiers of the Cross, believe in the Presence of your Captain and press where you see His helmet amidst the din of war! His Cross is the great emblazoned banner which leads you on to Glory. Press forward to suffer, to deny yourselves, to bear witness for Christ—the battle is the Lord’s and the King Himself fights in the van. “Her King is in the midst of her.”

I want to see you trying deeds of daring! Noble deeds of consecration, generous gifts of liberality! I want you to be more earnest in prayer, more incessant in supplication—but, at the same time—more venturesome in your actions, more daring in your devotedness to Christ. The King is in the midst of her! The Lord is in Zion still! Sinner, I must leave this point, but there is one word of encouragement for you—

***“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill,  
He receives poor sinners still.”***

He is in Zion, not on Sinai. Come to Him just as you are! Come to Him for He is ready to accept you. The King with the silver scepter in His hand

holds it out to every broken-hearted sinner. Come and touch it—He will give you perfect pardon in an instant, if your soul does but touch the silver scepter of His Grace presented to you in Christ Jesus.

**III.** Time, however, will not stop for me and therefore let us go on to the third point. That is, ANOTHER QUESTION. “Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” Here is a question for the Lord’s people. It becomes a very solemn thing when God is in His Church how that Church behaves herself. Suppose that Church to set up false principles—if her King were not there she might take the kings of the earth to be her head. But dare she do that when her King Himself is there?

She might begin to lean upon the civil arm if her God were not in her! But if her God is in her—will she venture to do that in the face of the Presence of God? Will she build up with untempered mortar the walls of human confidence and rest upon an arm of flesh when Jehovah is looking on? In the matter of Gospel ordinances it is a very important thing that we keep these ordinances as they were delivered. If the King were not in Zion it would not matter whether I practiced Believers’ Baptism or unbelievers’ Baptism! But if He has commanded Believers’ Baptism how *dare* I baptize unbelievers in the Presence of the King in Zion?

How dare I profane His own ordinance to what it was never intended? It therefore becomes a solemn question. If the King is in Zion, I must mind what doctrines I preach. The king is there to hear me. God is there to observe me. If God is in Zion, again, we must take care no wrong principles are let in. What? Shall I allow the King’s enemies to eat and drink before the King’s own Throne? Shall I wait upon the King’s foes and treat them as my friends when He is looking upon me with eyes of love?

Let me take heed lest I prove a hypocrite and receive anger instead of love! Certainly He will look upon my sins with increased wrath if I indulge them in His Presence. Is God in Zion? Beloved Christian Brothers and Sisters, how dare you set up that idol in your heart? Is it your child? Your spouse? What is it? Can you worship idols when the King is in Zion—when God is in the midst of her? My dear Friend, how can you be so worldly, so money-grasping? How is it that you can make wealth the main object of your life when the King is in Zion? If He did not know about your worldliness. If He did not know about your coldness of heart. If He did not mark your inconsistency—if He could not see you in the path of sin—then I might not plead with you!

But, O Christian men and women, when God is present, how careful should we be! And He *is* present in His Church! Judas, where are you this morning? The Lord Jehovah is here in Zion! He has come to search Jerusalem with candles and to punish the men who are settled upon their lees! What will He do with you? You think it a good thing to have God in Zion, but you have desired in this, as far as you are concerned, a day of darkness and not of light—for when He comes, He shall be as a consuming fire and as fullers’ soap! The Lord’s special Presence in His Church always involves a season of purification.

A Church may go on with dead members for twenty years, but when the Lord comes, as soon as the wind sweeps through the forest, the dead

branches crack and fall from the tree. A visitation from God to this Church will try you—it is all a blessing, but partly a trial. I believe that in every society and every Church where the Presence of God comes, instead of the dead calm which they formerly enjoyed, there usually comes some outbreak on the part of the flesh against the powers or the Spirit. And they are discovered to be hypocrites who otherwise might have gone on the whole of their lives with their vain profession—boasting in what they did not possess. Well, we must prepare for this ordeal. If God is in Zion, let us not provoke Him to anger with our idolatry, nor with our strange vanities. Let us purge and humble ourselves before Him!

But this text has a particular voice to sinners. I want you to listen to me, you who are unconverted, while I just read this text slowly. You have been saying, “God is in the midst of His people—how is it I have not had a blessing?” I will ask you this question, “Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” I will turn that enquiry into English—it is in Hebrew now—“Why have you provoked Me to anger with your drunkenness and with your mixing with vain companions? Do not ask why I have not called you by My Divine Grace—do not ask why you are not among the people of God. Answer My question—Why have you provoked Me to anger by indulging the lusts of the flesh—by leaving the paths of chastity and virtue—when you knew the right and chose the wrong?”

“Do not ask why the Word is not blessed to you! Do not ask why you do not enjoy the Prayer Meeting—answer My question first. Why have you provoked Me to anger with your tricks in trade, with your Sabbath-breaking, with your lying, with your loose songs, with your mixing up with worldly company, with your profanity? Do not ask Me why the holy dew has not dropped on you! Do not ask Me why the Holy Spirit has not come to quicken you, but answer this, ‘Why have you provoked Me to anger with your sins?’”

Why, some of you have provoked God to anger these twenty or thirty years! I hear of you every now and then. You love me, I know you do and you dare not leave my ministry! You cannot leave it though it is often a heart-searching ministry to you. God make it more so! But every now and then there comes an outbreak with you undecided ones. You must have the drink again, or you must go forth to lechery or sin. So it is with you—you would be saved, but you must be damned! You would have Christ, but you must have your sins! You would like to go to Heaven, but you want to taste the sweets of damnation’s dainties on the road!

How is it you will be such fools as to keep your filthy idols? My God, take the hammer and break their idols! O my God, be the great Iconoclast and dash down the altars of their lusts and clear a temple for Yourself! You say, “Amen,” to that—I hope you do. Then God hear your cry this morning! Through the eternal Savior who drove the buyers and the sellers out of the temple with a scourge of small cords and overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves and said, “Take these things away”—this day may He come into your heart and overturn your sins!



And may He say, "Take these things away—I have bought that man with blood! I have loved him with an everlasting love! I have brought him under the sound of the ministry! I purpose to bring him to Myself! I have ordained him to wear a crown and wave a palm and be wrapped about with the fair white linen of the righteousness of saints! He shall be Mine when I make up My jewels. Out with you, intruders! Away, you devils! Away, you lusts! You may be called Legion, but I, Jehovah-Jesus, cast you out, for this man is Mine."

Lord, do it! Do it this morning! The voice of the cry of Your people comes up for those who are afar off, that their vanities may be given up and their sins may be dashed in pieces—that they may be Yours forever and ever.

**IV.** The last point is, ANOTHER CRY. I wish I might hear this cry this morning, for then I should not hear it in the world to come, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved." I have been talking to you. Now I want you to talk for yourselves in your heart to God. There came a harvest of souls to this Church, by His Grace, from the very day when first we began to preach the Gospel here. And we have gathered such numbers into the Church as probably never were received into any one Church in Europe in any age at one time except in the days of the Apostles.

That harvest is only past so far as the blessing which we have received has been received—for the harvest still continues in all its fullness. But, ah, the harvest has missed *you*! Some of you have had to move away, or the Word ceases to be a blessing to you as it once was. This voice has grown stale to you, has no trumpet-ringing clang about it as it once had—"The harvest is past." Very blessed times have passed over this Church. We have had a summer—oh, what Divine warmth has been felt! The sun has shone strong in upon us and every plant has breathed forth its perfume—every plant that the Lord has planted.

But many a Monday night—many a Prayer Meeting night has gone—the summer has ended and you are not saved! You are not saved! Do you remember, some of you, that sermon in the Music Hall, from the text, "Compel them to come in"? Then we had a harvest and then we had a summer—but you were not compelled to come in. You were not saved! You remember some Monday nights when we have been bowed down and broken in heart before God in prayer? We have then had harvests and summers—but you are not saved! And now, last Monday night what a visitation we had! What a harvest! What a summer! But you are not saved!

I wish you would put up that cry, "Now, Lord, I am not saved! Lord I am not saved! I am not saved from my hard heart! I am not saved from my love of sin! I am not saved from the guilt of sin! I am without God, without Christ and a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel! I am not saved!" There are some of you I could speak to very specifically—we pray for you—but you are not saved! You have a brother who prays for you, a sister who prays for you, a father and mother who have prayed for you—but still you are not saved!

Husband! You have a wife who never ceases to intercede for you—but you are not saved! We thought you would have been converted long ago!

There have been many hopeful signs about you, but you have disappointed us—you are not saved! Take heed, take heed! There may be more in the words that I now speak than if they were my words, for, to this day, God sometimes speaks to men prophetically by His truly sent ministers. The day is near with some of you, if you do not repent, when, tossing upon the bed of sickness you will have to cry in the sight of the approach of death, “the harvest is past, the summer is ended and I am not saved!”

You will look back upon these Sunday gatherings with a very different eye from that with which you look upon them now. You will remember your Gospel privileges and value them very differently from what you do now. When you seem to hear the tolling of your own death knell, then you will value the Sunday chime! And take heed yet a little further! There will come a day when you will lift up your eyes in Hell, some of you, being in torments—and then, as you look up and see the people of God glorified at God’s right hand—you will have to say, “The harvest is past, and the summer is ended and I am not saved!”

And let me tell you, those words will ring very differently then from what they do now, when you have—

***“To linger in eternal pain, yet death forever fly,”***

to have to say, “I am not saved,” will be dreadful. Then the Lord will come. We are looking for His coming. And when He comes His people shall reign with Him. They shall rise from the dead in triumph. And when their days of earthly reign shall be over the great archangel shall sound the trumpet for the second resurrection—and when you wake up and find that the righteous have all risen before you and have received their crowns and their rewards—then, as you see the harvest of God borne by the angelic reapers up to the sky—as you see the brightness of the Glory of the new Jerusalem taken up into the clouds to be withdrawn from the place where men shall stand to be judged, you will say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved!”

Oh, then you will cry, “Rocks, hide us! Mountains, fall upon us! We are not saved!” Those mountains shall have no ears for you—those rocks shall have no heart of compassion for you—there shall only be a dread reverberation of your awful cry, “We are not saved! We are not saved!” And when Hell opens wide her jaws and her tongue of fire shall lick up the ungodly, then, “We are not saved! We are not saved! We are not saved!” will be in dolorous contrast to that ever-swelling, ever-increasing song, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!”

Shall it be “Hallelujah,” Sinner, or shall it be, “We are not saved”? May God’s eternal Grace work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure and so make you to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. And then may the question be decided and may you not have to say forever, “We are not saved.” May God bless these words for Christ Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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# HARVEST PAST, SUMMER ENDED AND MEN UNSAVED

NO. 1562

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1880,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved."  
Jeremiah 8:20.*

THIS is a very mournful chapter, especially if we include in it, as we rightly should, the first verse of the ninth chapter: "O that my head were waters." The passage is full of lamentation and woe and yet it is somewhat amazing that the chief mourner is not one who was likely to be in trouble. Jeremiah was under the special protection of God and he escaped in the evil day. Even when Nebuchadnezzar was exercising his utmost rage, Jeremiah was in no danger, for the heart of the fierce monarch was kindly towards him. "Now Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, take him and look well to him and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto you."

The man of God who had least cause, personally, to mourn, was filled with heavy grief—while the people who were about to lose their all and to lose their lives, remained but half awakened—complaining, but not repenting—afraid, but not yet humbled before God. None of them uttered such a grievous lament as that which came from the heart and mouth of the Prophet. Their heads were full of idle dreams, while his had become waters. Their eyes were full of wantonness, while his were a fountain of tears. He loved them better than they loved themselves. Is it not strange that it should be so—that the physician should be more anxious than the sick?

Perhaps, however, it is not so amazing that the shepherd should care more for the flock than the sheep care for themselves. When the sheep are *men*, it is certainly an unreasonable thing! The weeping Prophet cries, "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt!" He was more hurt than they were. A preacher whom God sends will often feel more care for the souls of men than men feel for themselves or their own salvation. Is it not sad that there should be an anxious pain in the heart of one who is himself saved, while those who are unsaved and are obliged to acknowledge it, feel little or no concern? To see a man in jeopardy of his life and all around him alarmed for *his* danger while he, himself, is half asleep, is a sad sight.

See yonder man, about to be condemned to die, standing at the bar? The judge putting on the black cap is scarcely able to pronounce the sentence for emotion and all around him in the court break down with distress on his account—while the condemned is bronze-faced and feels no more than the floor he stands upon! How hardened he has become! Pity

is lost upon him, if pity ever can be lost. Such a sad sight we constantly see in our congregations—those who are “condemned already” on account of sin are altogether indifferent to their awful peril—while their godly parents are greatly distressed for them! Christian people are pleading with them and earnest messengers from God expostulating with them! Heaven and earth are moved for them and yet they are unaffected!

Oh that it might not be so here this morning! May none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. May God in His infinite mercy strike the rock and make the waters of penitence to gush out from it! May His transforming hand turn stone into flesh and cause a holy tenderness to banish all stubbornness and insensibility! Such is my agonizing cry to the Holy Spirit. Certainly there ought to be dismay and even terror in the heart of any who are compelled to use my text in reference to themselves. Those few words, “We are not saved!” sound like a peal of thunder! They should cut the soul as with a case of knives—“We are not saved!” What worse thing can men say of themselves? We are now under the abiding wrath of God, for “we are not saved!”

We must soon stand before the Judgment Seat of God and then we shall be condemned by the great Judge, for “we are not saved!” We shall, before long, be driven from His Presence and from the glory of His power, for “we are not saved!” We shall then be shut out in outer darkness where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, for “we are not saved!” Had men but reason, or having reason would they but use it upon the most important of all subjects, surely they would cry out in the bitterness of their souls, “Oh that our heads were water and our eyes fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night till we had found our Savior and He had washed away our sins and saved us!” How saddening to see the loaded wagons of harvest bearing no real blessing to us and to watch the clusters on the vine ripen all unblessed! Alas for that summer which amid all its flowers yields us no perfume of peace or joy!

On the other hand, my Brothers and Sisters, how blessed to feel that the harvest is past and the summer is ended and, blessed be God, we *are* saved! Now let winter come with all its blasts—we have nothing to fear—for wrapped in our Savior’s righteousness and hidden in the cleft of His side, we shall outlive every storm! I earnestly pray the Lord to bless the words I am about to speak, that they may be rendered useful to many undecided persons to lead them to decision and induce them to give themselves up to Christ at once. May the Holy Spirit work this blessed result in thousands! I have so long been silent that I am hungering to speak with power. Come Holy Spirit! Come!

First, I shall look at the text as a complaint—“We are not saved.” And, secondly, I shall suggest that out of it ought to come consideration—those who utter the complaint should be led, thereby, to solemn consideration.

**I.** First, we have before us the language of COMPLAINT. These Jews said, “The seasons are going by, the year is spending itself, the harvest is past, the vintage, also, is ended and yet we are not saved.” Some of them were captives in Babylon and they fondly expected to be brought back from the distant land, but they were disappointed. They hoped that when

the produce of the Nile had been reaped, Egyptian troops would march against Nebuchadnezzar and break his power. Others of them had fled into the defended cities and taken refuge behind the walls of Jerusalem and they, also, dreamed that the march of the Chaldeans would be stopped and the land would be delivered from their invasion as soon as the summer heat was over. The rescue did not come.

Indeed, they could hear from Jerusalem the neighing of the Babylonian horses—"The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come and have devoured the land and all that is in it; the city and those that dwell therein." Therefore they complained that their hopes had failed. In effect they complained of *God*—that He had not saved them—as if He was under some obligation to have done so! They complained as if they had a kind of claim upon Him to interpose and so they spoke as if they were an ill-used people, a nation that had been neglected by their Protector. The farmers had gathered in the harvest and vinedressers had gleaned the grapes, yet they had not been cared for, but left to suffer—in spite of all their hopes, they were not saved.

Certain persons fall into the same state of mind in these days. They know that they are not saved, but they do not blame themselves for it! The fault lies—they would not like to say where it lies—but they will not admit that it lies in *themselves*. They are not saved and *somebody* should be blamed for it, or perhaps *nobody*, but they mention the fact, not as a confession of which they are ashamed, but as a misfortune for which they are to be pitied! This complaint was a very unjust one of the Jews, for there were many reasons why they were not saved and why God had not delivered them. The first was they had looked to the wrong quarter—they expected that the *Egyptians* would deliver them.

You remember that in the reign of Zedekiah the Jews revolted from their subjection to the Babylonians because they hoped that the king of Egypt would come up and fight with the Babylonian power. Those who were captives hoped that the great armies of the Pharaohs might break down the might of Chaldea and so they looked to Egypt for help—an old fault with Israel and a gross folly—for why should they look to the house of bondage for succor? The same folly dwells in multitudes of men. They are not saved and they never will be while they continue to look where they look! All dependence upon ourselves is looking to Egypt for help and leaning our weight upon a broken reed.

Whether that dependence upon self takes the form of relying upon ceremonies, or depending upon prayers, or trusting in our own attempts to improve ourselves morally, it is still the same proud folly of self-dependence. Vain is all searching for legal righteousness, hoping to *merit* something from God, or to do something without help from on high—for the Lord, Himself, has assured us that by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified! My Friend, you may have been very earnest and serious about Divine things, but if you have looked, in any measure or degree, to what *you are*, or can *do*, or what *any man* can do for you, it is no wonder that you are not saved, for there is no salvation except in Christ!

I am afraid some think that it is a great thing to sit under a faithful minister—that if the Gospel is thoroughly preached they may, naturally, expect that if they take a seat at the place they will be saved. But all dependence upon ministers is only another form of superstitious confidence in priestcraft! All trust but that which is found in Jesus is a delusion and a falsehood! No man can help you. Though Noah, Samuel and Moses prayed for you, their prayers could not avail unless you believed in the blood of Jesus—there is salvation nowhere else! Though the whole Church were to unite in one protracted intercession and determine that all its ministers should preach to only you for the next seven years, there would be no more hope of your being saved, then, than now, unless you would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is the salvation of the sons of men.

The most fruitful of harvests may pass and the most genial of summers may smile upon you, but while you look to yourself, no sunshine from God shall cause you to flourish. Eternal barrenness is the portion of those who trust in man and make flesh their arm. While men go about to establish their own righteousness and will not submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ, they shall be like the woman who spent all her living upon physicians and was no better, but rather grew worse. Those people had prided themselves upon their outward privileges—they had presumed upon their favored position, for they say in the 19<sup>th</sup> verse, “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?” Because they belonged to the chosen *nation*; because the Lord had entrusted them with the sacred Oracles and manifested Himself to their fathers, therefore they thought that they might sin with impunity and reckoned upon being delivered in the day of danger.

I do not know how many of you, here, may be depending upon outward religiousness, or indulging some kind of thought that apart from your personal faith in Christ, you will be saved by your pious connections and hallowed relationships. But if that *is* what you are depending upon, rest assured you will be deceived! Vain are the baptism or the confirmation of your youth—faith in Jesus is the one thing necessary! Vain is the fact that you were born of Christian parents—you must be born again! Vain is your sitting as God’s people sit and standing as they stand in the solemn service of the sanctuary—your *heart* must be changed! Vain is your observance of the Lord’s Day and vain your Bible reading and your form of night and morning prayer unless you are washed in Jesus’ blood! Vain are *all* things without living faith in the living Jesus!

Though you had been descended from an unbroken line of saints; though you had no unconverted relatives, your ancestry and lineage would not do you any good—the sons of God are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. All the external privileges that can be heaped upon you, though you had sermons piled up and Gospel services heaped on them—as the giants piled mountain upon mountain, Pelion upon Ossa that they might climb to Heaven, would be useless—there is no reaching to salvation by such means. If your reliance is upon external ordinances, or professions, or privileges in any measure or degree—no wonder that the harvest is past and the

summer is ended and you are not saved—you will *never* be saved till doomsday while you look in that direction. Look like sinners to your Savior and you shall be saved, but no other way.

Thirdly, there was another and very powerful reason why these people were not saved, for, with all their religiousness and their national boast as to God's being among them, they had continued in provoking the Lord. He says in the 19<sup>th</sup> verse, "Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?" They lived in sin, disobeying God to His face! They set up new idols and imported false deities from foreign lands and yet they said, "We are not saved." Would they have the Lord sanction their degrading idolatry by sending them deliverance? Do you know a man who goes frequently into ill company and gets intoxicated and yet comes to hear the Gospel and murmurs that he is not saved? Is he not mad? Let me speak plainly to him. Do you think that you are going to Heaven to reel about the holy streets? Shall the pure heavens be polluted by your profanities? You are dreadfully mistaken if you fancy so!

Another person indulges lust, lives an unclean life and yet he comes in and listens to the Word of God as one who has a loving ear for it and he, also, complains that he is not saved. O unclean man, how can you dream of salvation while you are defiled with filthiness? What? You and your harlot, members of Christ! Oh, Sir, you know not my pure and holy Master! He receives sinners, but He rejects those who delight in their iniquities. You must have done with the indulgence of sin if you would be cleansed from the guilt of it! There is no going on in transgression and yet obtaining salvation—it is a licentious supposition! Christ comes to save us from our sins, not to make it safe to do evil! That blood which washes out the stain brings with it a hatred of the thing which made the stain! Sin must be relinquished or salvation cannot be received.

I spoke very plainly, just now, but some here of pure heart little know how plainly we must speak if we are to reach some men's consciences, for it shames me when I think of some who, year after year, indulge in secret sin and yet they are regular frequenters of the House of God. You would think they surely were already converted, or soon would be, when you saw them here. But if you followed them home, you would quite despair of them. O lovers of sin, do not deceive yourselves! You will surely reap that which you sow! How can Grace reign in you while you are the slaves of your own passions? How can it be, while you are anchored to a secret sin, that you should be borne along by the current of Grace towards the desired haven of safety? Either you must leave your sin or leave all hope of Heaven!

If you hold your sin, Hell will, before long, hold you! Jesus was not sent to be the minister of sin! He never came into the world to bleed and die to make the way of the transgressors easy by enabling them to be vicious without risk. The Friend of sinners is the Enemy of sin! There is a religion that will let you pay a shilling or two and purchase priestly absolution, but this we protest against. Such a faith may well breed iniquity! What can it be but like Egypt's Nile, when in the days of Moses it became the fruitful mother of 10,000 unclean frogs? Under the religion of Christ,

absolution for the past is only to be obtained through faith in Jesus—and that faith brings with it repentance for former offenses and a change of life for days to come. Why do men say, “We are not saved,” when they are still hugging their iniquities? They may as well hope to gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles as to find salvation while they abide in sin! May God deliver us all from the love of sin, for such a deliverance is salvation.

Again, there was another reason why they were not saved and that was because they made being saved from trouble the principal matter. Many make a great mistake about salvation. They mistake the meaning of the term and to them, salvation means being delivered from going down into the pit of Hell—just as to these Jews it meant rescue from Nebuchadnezzar. Now, the right meaning of salvation is *purification from evil*. These people never thought of this. They never said, “We are not cleansed, we are not made holy,” but, “we are not saved.” If their cry had been, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we have not yet conquered sin,” *that* would have been a mark of something good and true. But they showed no trace of it. There is not much in a man’s desiring to be saved if he means by that, an escape from the punishment of his offenses!

Was there ever a murderer who did not wish to be saved from the gallows? When a man is tied up to be flogged for a deed of brutal violence and his back is bared for the lash, depend upon it, he repents of what he did—that is to say, he repents that he has to *suffer* for it—but that is all and a sorry all, too. He has no sorrow for the agony which he inflicted on his innocent victim. He has no regret for maiming him for life. What is the value of such a repentance? Here is the point, my Hearers—do you wish to have new hearts? If you do, you shall have them! Do you wish to leave the sins you have loved? Do you desire to live as Christ lived? Do you wish to keep the Commandments of God? Do you sigh for purity of life? Do you wish, from now on, to be as God would have you be—just, loving, kind, chaste—after the example of the great Redeemer? If so, then truly the desire you have comes from God!

But if all you want is to be able to die without dread that you may wake up in the next world and not be driven down to the bottomless Pit—if that is all—there is nothing gracious in it and it is no wonder that you should say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and I am not saved.” You do not know what being saved means! May God teach you to love holiness and there shall not pass another harvest, no, not another *day* before you shall be saved! Indeed, that very love is the dawn of salvation! Seek salvation as the kingdom of God within you. Seek it first and seek it now and you shall not be denied.

Again, there was another reason why these people were not saved and could not be. Read the ninth verse and see their fault and folly—“Lo, they have rejected the Word of the Lord and what wisdom is in them?” We hear persons complain that they are not saved though they neglect the saving Word of God. They go to a place of worship and, therefore, wonder that they are not saved—how can they be when that which they hear is not the object of their heart’s attention? Do you read your Bible *private-*



*ly*? Did you ever read it with an earnest prayer that God would teach you what you really are and make you to be a true believer in Christ? Have you done that just as earnestly as you studied a book when you were trying to pass an examination?

I do not know what calling you follow, but I will suppose, for instance, that you wish to be a chemist. If so, you go through a course of studies and you acquaint yourself with certain books in order that you may pass an examination. You stick to your work, for you know that you will not pass unless you are well informed as to the matters necessary to your profession. Do you show the same diligence in reference to your soul and your God? Have you ever read your Bible with anything like the same intensity with which a man must study a class book in order to pass his examinations? Have you read it with regard to *yourself*, asking God to teach you its meaning and to make the sense of it press upon your conscience? Do you reply, "I have not done that"? Why, then, do you wonder that you are not saved?

To put a slighter test than the former—when you hear the Gospel, do you always inquire—"What has this to do with me?" Or do you listen to it as a general Truth of God with which you have no peculiar concern? What a difference is perceptible in hearers! Numbers of persons have come here at this time merely to hear Spurgeon preach and form an estimate of him. Is this a fit errand for God's Day and for an assembly gathered for *worship*? Do not imagine that we are flattered by such attention! We do not covet such hearers! What do I care about their estimate? A poor soul that desires to find Christ is a diamond in my eyes, but he who comes to hear me because of public talk is a common pebble that one might sling away—only it is well that even *he* should hear the Word of God if, perhaps, God might bless him.

Many of you Christian people hear sermons that you may remember—well-turned sentences and pithy sayings—or that you may gauge the preacher's earnestness and judge whether he is likely to be useful. Hearing for others is a very common amusement. There is a great deal of difference between walking through a baker's shop when you are well-filled and counting the loaves upon the shelves and rushing in the door to get a bit of bread at once, for fear of dying of starvation! Water seen as a picturesque object by a traveler is one thing, but a living draught swallowed by one dying of thirst is quite a different matter. O that men would treat the Gospel as a necessity of life which they must, each one, feed upon or perish! That is the style of hearing when a man prays that the Word of God may search him and try him!

It is well when the hearer bares his bosom and cries, "Lord, cut this cancer out of my soul, I pray You. I beseech You, let me live!" That kind of hearing ends in saving. "Incline your ears," says the great Lord, "and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live." "Hearken diligently unto Me," He says, again and, in so doing, He certifies that diligent listening shall bring a blessing with it. Alas, with the bulk of hearers, even the Word of God goes in one ear and out the other! The noise of God's voice is drowned by the din of the world's traffic. The six days crush the influence of the seventh and it is no wonder that January comes and Decem-

ber goes and yet worldlings are not saved! They never will be while they slumber as they do.

There is another reason why some men are not saved and that is because they have a great preference for slight measures. They love to hear the flattering voice whispering—"Peace, peace," where there is no peace and they choose those for leaders who will heal their hurt with the least pain. They wish for something very comfortable and, in their folly, they prefer poisoned sweets to healthful salts. "I felt so miserable," said one, "when I left that place, that I said I would never enter it again." It was a foolish vow. He who is wise will go where the Word of God has the most power—both to kill and to make alive. Do you want a physician, when you call upon him, to please you with a flattering opinion? Must he say, "My dear Friend, it is a very small matter—you need nothing but pleasant diet and you will soon be all right"?

If he talks thus, smoothly, when he knows that a deadly disease is commencing its work upon you, is he not a deceiver? Do you not think you are very foolish if you pay such a man your guinea and denounce his neighbor who tells you the plain truth? Do you *want* to be deluded? Are you eager to be duped? Do you want to dream of Heaven and then wake up in Hell? Have I such an idiot here? May Heaven save him from his ruinous folly! For my part, I would like to know the worst of my case! Things must be very bad with any of you who cannot say the same. When a merchant dares not face his books, you know where he is! When he says to his clerk, "No, no, I do not want to know on which side the balance stands! I cannot bear to be worried. I dare say money will come in as well as go out and my credit will raise me another loan. Things will come round and the less we dive into difficulties the better."

I think we shall hear of that gentleman very speedily in the Bankruptcy Court. He is in the same condition, spiritually, who does not dare to face himself, but would rather not be troubled with questions and examinations. What? Do you dare not look yourself in the face? Have you covered up the mirror? Have you hid the Word of God from yourselves and dare not see how you look? Yes? Then be sure you are in an evil plight! While men will not have the thorough-going Truth of God preached to them. While they prefer some siren strain. While they would gladly listen to soft music and float upon gentle streams that bear them down to destruction, there is little hope but what harvests and summers will come and go and they will not be saved! All this while these people have wondered that they were not saved and yet they never repented of their sins!

The Lord Himself witnesses against them—"I hearkened and heard, but they spoke not aright: no man repented of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turned to his course, as the horse rushes into battle." "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." Repentance was a jest with them—they had not Grace enough, even, to feel shame and yet they made a complaint against God, saying, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved." What monstrous folly was this! Where has the Lord given half a promise to those who will

not confess and forsake their sins? How can impenitent sinners hope that they should be forgiven? We have said enough upon this unjustifiable complaint!

**II.** Now, may the Spirit of God help us while we try to lead unconverted persons, for a few minutes, into the CONSIDERATION of this matter. First consideration, “we are not saved.” I do not want to talk, I want *you* to *think*. “We are not saved.” Put it in the personal, first person singular. Will everyone here do me the favor of saying to himself if it is true, “I am not saved! I am not saved! I am not saved from sin, I love it still! I am not saved from guilt, I am condemned for my failure to keep the Law of God. I am not saved from wrath, I am not saved from judgment, I am not saved from the eternal curse. I am not saved! My dear child in Heaven is forever happy, but I am not saved.

“My dear wife is a happy Christian, but I am not saved. I am one of a family where many have been converted, but I am not saved! I am a gray-headed old man and I am not saved. I am beloved in my family by my dear mother, for I am yet a child, but though she prays for me I am not saved. I am a member of a Church and am not saved.” Are you obliged to say that, any of you? Be honest! Do not cover up the truth, however terrible it may be—better far to face it. What if someone must confess, “I am a preacher of the Gospel, but I am not saved”? Oh, my Heart, what terror is here! It is an awful thing if anybody here has to say, “I am a teacher in a Sunday school and this afternoon the little ones will gather round me, but I am not saved. People respect me. They say I have all things good about me, but I have not the one thing necessary, I am not saved.”

Teachers, does this touch any of you? I pray you, let it have its due influence. Now you down here in this area and you in these galleries, will you do one of two things? Either say, “By God’s Grace I have believed in Jesus and I am saved,” or else just sigh out silently in your soul, “I am not saved.” It will do you good to end all questions and know, once and for all, whether you are in Christ or not. Furthermore, not only am I not saved, but I have been a long time not saved. Let me put language into the mouths of those who are ruining themselves by delay. “Time flies. How quickly it is gone! I was a young man a very little while ago. Now I am getting into middle age, getting a little bald, gray hairs are upon me here and there. Why, dear me, here are grandchildren—it seems but yesterday that I was married! Yes, harvests have passed, vintages have been gathered and I am not saved.

“Twenty years ago I sat listening to this same preacher and I was not saved then. And I remember how he touched my conscience, but all those years have gone and I am not saved! The world has had its opportunities and used them—they sowed and they reaped their harvests. The vinedresser used the knife and the vine was pruned and in due season he gathered the clusters, but I have had no harvest—I have known no vintage. I have made money. I have got on in business, or at least I have paid my way and supported my family, but I have had no spiritual harvest. No, for I never sowed. I have had no spiritual vintage, for I was never pruned. I never went to the great Farmer and asked Him to dig about me and make me fruitful to His name. What opportunities I had! I have been

through revivals, but the sacred power passed over me. I remember several wonderful occasions when the Spirit of God was poured out and yet I am not saved.”

Worse, still, habits harden. “If I was not saved during the last 20 or 30 years I am less likely to be impressed now. I do not feel as I once did. Sometimes the vile unbelief which now taints the very air creeps over me and I am half a skeptic. Considerations that used to thrill me and make my flesh creep are now put before me, but I seem like a piece of steel—no, I do not even rust under the Word of God—I am unimpressible. Harvests have dried me, summers have parched me, age has shriveled my soul—my moisture is turned into the drought of summer—I am getting to be old hay, or as withered weeds fit for the burning.”

It is a dreadful consideration for a man to turn over in his mind, but it is a very necessary one, for it is an undoubted fact that every year fixes the character and engraves the lines of evil deeper in the nature. Harvests and summers leave us worse if they do not see us mend. As true as you are alive, unless the God of Infinite Mercy awakens you out of your present condition to seek and immediately find Christ and obtain everlasting life, some of you will settle down into a condition which will be the eternal state of your hearts! O for Grace to repent at once, before yet the wax has cooled and the seal is set forever! The last summer will soon come and the last harvest will soon be reaped and you, dear Friend, must go to your last and final home.

I will apply it mainly to myself—I must go upstairs for the last time and I must lay down upon the bed from which I shall never rise again! If I am unsaved, my room will be a prison chamber to me and the bed will be hard as a plank. If, unsaved, I have to lie there and know that I must die—that a few more days or hours must end this struggle for existence and I am bound to stand before God—O my God, save me from an unready deathbed! Save these people from dying and passing into Hell! You will have no doubts about it then, you know. You will see clearly that you are bound to stand before God. This naked spirit of mine, disrobed of its body, must appear before the Judge! What shall I do? What shall I say? Before my Maker’s burning eyes—stripped naked to my shame—what shall I do? And when I, speechless, stand before Him—by my silence acknowledging my guilt—what shall I do?

The gate of Heaven is shut, I cannot enter there! I have not the password. I have rejected the way there. I have rejected Christ, who is the King of the place. Oh where must I go? I will not paint the picture. Souls, I charge you by everything that is rational within you, escape for your lives and seek to find eternal salvation for your undying spirits! You are not dogs nor cats, nor horses nor cattle as men tell you! You are nobler things and an immortality awaits you! And today you shall make that immortality the most awful *curse* that can fall upon you, or an infinite, unutterable *privilege*! It is a grand alternative! God help us, by His infinite mercy, to choose eternal holiness and everlasting joy and choose it now! Come, let us consider a little longer, a few practical Truths of God which may be of service.

It is quite clear that if you are to get right, you must not go on in the old way. The harvest is past and the summer is ended and, by the way in which you have been going you are not saved. There must be a change of tactics. Salvation must be thought of in another light and sought for in another spirit. Come, my Friend, if you are to find salvation, you must be more earnest about it! You must be more intense about it! There must be a greater valuing of this salvation and a more solemn resolve that if Heaven or earth or Hell can yield it to you, you will have it, for, "the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." Never did a man sleep himself into eternal life! Salvation is all of Grace, but sluggards have no Grace! The Lord does not work in us to sleep and to slumber, but to will and to do. Men reach the Celestial City, not by drowsiness, but by their spirits being stirred to feel that there is nothing else that is worth a *thought* compared with going on pilgrimage to Heaven!

There is one thing certain, that, as the harvests have past and the summer is ended and we have not been saved, we must have been looking in the wrong place. Very likely we have been looking to something on earth for salvation. If so, we have not found it because it is not there! The Prophet enquires—"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" He knew that there was none in that region which could meet his people's dreadful hurt. There was a balm in Gilead, but it was the resin of a *tree*. There were physicians there, but they were mostly quacks that duped the people! If there had been any true balm and any real physician there, the health of the daughter of his people would have been recovered. No, my Hearer, there is no balm in Gilead for you! The balm of Gilead was only good for certain bodily wounds and sores, but not for cuts and wounds and sores like these, for these are in the *soul*! The physicians of Gilead could only heal some few complaints and seldom enough did they heal even these, but all the physicians of Gilead in a row cannot heal *your* complaint! I will tell you of another and better health resort than Gilead—it is Calvary. Where Jesus bled you will find a balm! Where Jesus lives you will find a Physician!

Another thing must have suggested itself to you while I have been preaching, dear Friend, if you have listened in earnest and it is this—the great point must be that if I am to be saved I must get rid of sin. I will again speak for those whom I address. "I have been thinking that I should undergo some strange transformation and some kind of mysterious shock, or have a vision or see some strange sight and *then* I could say I am a converted man. This morning I discover that the main point is to get rid of sin—it must be driven out of my heart. I have not only to leave off the *act* of it and the *thought* of it, but all *love* to it must go. I cannot be a saved man unless that is the case."

If you have kept pace with the preacher so far, I think the next thought will come—"Then this is deep water! This is a place where my own strength utterly fails me! If I must have a new heart—well, I cannot make myself a new heart. If the very love of sin has to go, I cannot accomplish that! I can stop outside the theater, but I cannot prevent my *desiring* to go in. I can renounce dishonesty, but I cannot help having an itching palm. Even if I dare not transgress, yet I may feel the wish to do

so if the punishment could be escaped. This makes the matter too hard for unaided nature since it is true that unless the love of sin is gone, nothing is done. God must help me or this will never be accomplished!”

This is the center of the truth! Your great Creator must come and make you over again. His dear Son must come and end your captivity to the power of evil. He *has* come! He has died! Nothing can ever take out the stains of your past sin but the blood of the Son of God! Nothing can take from you the love of sin but the application of the atoning blood and the work of the Spirit upon your entire nature, creating you anew in Christ Jesus. “Oh,” says one, “I see it all now. I seem to have come up against a rock wall and I can go no further. I wonder not that the summers have gone and the harvests have ended when it is like this, for now I am brought up before a dread impossibility. What can I do?”

You can do this, God helping you—trust Christ to do it all! Throw yourself down at His feet. “Savior, Savior, from the highest Heaven look down, here is a sinner in his blood. I read of others, that when they were in *their* blood, You said to them, Live! Say that to me! Here is one condemned and near to die. Save him! Forgive him! Impute Your righteousness, make me to be accepted in the Beloved. I trust You!” Do you, indeed, trust Jesus? Is it true that you believe on Him? Then you are saved! His merit is yours! His blood has cleansed you the moment you believe in Him! It is done—you shall not love sin again.

You *shall* be tempted and often have to groan because of secret lusts that will linger in you, but you have a new life, now, for you have believed in Jesus and that new life will abhor sin and will fight it! That new life will conquer it and God will help you! And the Spirit will dwell in you and you shall get sin more and more under your feet—yes, you shall bruise Satan under your feet, before long—and you shall triumph and one day you shall burst this shell which holds you in and you shall shine, in the image of Christ, “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Yes, you, sinful man, shall be made perfectly holy, even *you*, now full of iniquity, transgression and sin!

You are a God-provoking rebel this morning, but if you trust in Christ Jesus you shall be washed and made God-pleasing this very day! You are black as Hell today, but you shall, by infinite mercy, be made as bright as a seraph before God and all because you trust the Savior! O God, grant us Your saving Grace for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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

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

# INDIA'S ILLS AND ENGLAND'S SORROWS NO. 150

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1857,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“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!”  
Jeremiah 9:1.***

SOMETIMES tears are base things. The offspring of a cowardly spirit. Some men weep when they should knit their brows and many a woman weeps when she should resign herself to the will of God. Many of those briny drops are but an expression of child-like weakness. It were well if we could wipe such tears away and face a frowning world with a constant countenance. But oftentimes tears are the index of strength. There are periods when they are the noble things in the world. The tears of penitents are precious—a cup of them worth a king's ransom. It is no sign of weakness when a man weeps for sin. It shows that he has strength of mind no more—that he has strength imparted by God which enables him to forswear his lusts and overcome his passions and to turn unto God with full purpose of heart.

And there are other tears, too, which are the evidences not of weakness but of might—the tears of tender sympathy are the children of strong affection and they are strong like their parents. He that loves much, must weep much—much love and much sorrow must go together in this vale of tears. The unfeeling heart, the unloving spirit may pass from earth's portal to its utmost bound almost without a sigh except for itself. But he that loves has dug as many wells of tears as he has chosen objects of affection. For by as many as our friends are multiplied, by so many must our griefs be multiplied, too, if we have love enough to share in their griefs and to bear their burden for them.

The largest hearted man will miss many sorrows that the little man will feel but he will have to endure many sorrows the poor narrow-minded spirit never knows. It needs a mighty Prophet like Jeremiah to weep as mightily as he. Jeremiah was not weak in his weeping. The strength of his mind and the strength of his love were the parents of his sorrow. “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.” This is no expression of weak sentimentalism. This is no utterance of mere whining presence. It is the burst of a strong soul, strong in its affection, strong in its devotion, strong in its self-sacrifice. I would to God we knew how to

weep like this. And if we might not weep so frequently as Jeremy I wish that when we did weep, we did weep as well.

It would seem as if some men had been sent into this world for the very purpose of being the world's weepers. God's great house is thoroughly furnished with everything. Everything that can express the thoughts and the emotions of the inhabitant, God has made. I find in nature plants to be everlasting weepers. There by the lonely brook, where the maiden cast away her life, the willow weeps forever. And there in the graveyard where men lie slumbering till the trumpet of the archangel shall awaken them, stands the dull cypress mourning in its somber garments.

Now as it is with nature, so it is with the race of man. Mankind has bravery and boldness—they must have their heroes to express their courage. Mankind has some love to their fellow creatures. They must have their fine philanthropists to live out mankind's philanthropy. Men have their sorrows, they must have their weepers. They must have men of sorrows who have it for their avocation and their business, to weep—from the cradle to the grave to be ever weeping, not so much for themselves as for the woes of others. It may be I have some such here. I shall be happy to enlist their sympathies. And truly if I have none of that race, I shall boldly appeal to the whole mass of you and I will bring before you causes of great grief.

And when I bid you by the love you bear to man and to his God to begin to weep, if you have tears, these hard times will compel you to shed them now. Come, let me show you why I have taken this as my text and why I have uttered this mournful language. And if your hearts are not as impassive as stone, surely there should be some tears shed this morning. For if I am not foolish in my utterances and faint in my speech, you will go home to your chambers to weep there. "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."

I want your griefs this morning, first, *for persons actually slain*—"the slain of the daughter of our people." And then I shall need your tears *for those morally slain*, "the slain of the daughter of our people."

**I.** To begin—with ACTUAL MURDER AND REAL BLOODSHED. My Brethren, our hearts are sick near unto death with the terrible news brought us post after post, telegraph after telegraph. We have read many letters of the Times, day after day, until we have folded up that paper and professed before God that we could read no more. Our spirits have been harrowed by the most fearful and unexpected cruelty. We, perhaps, may not have been personally interested in the bloodshed, so far as our own husbands, wives, brothers and sisters have been concerned—but we have felt the tie of kindred very strongly when we have found our race so cruelly butchered in the land of the East.

It is for us today humbly to confess our crime. The government of India has been a cruel government. It has much for which to appear before the



bar of God. Its tortures—if the best evidence is to be believed—have been of the most inhuman kind. God forgive the men who have committed such crimes in the British name. But those days are past. May God blot out the sin. We do not forget our own guilt. But an overwhelming sense of the guilt of others who have with such cold-hearted cruelty tormented men and women, may well excuse us if we do not dilate upon the subject.

Alas! alas, for our Brethren there! They have died. Alas for them! They have been slain by the sword of treachery and traitorously murdered by men who swore allegiance. Alas for them! But, O you soldiers, we weep not for you. Even when you were tortured, you had not that high dishonor to bear to which the other sex has been obliged to submit. O England! Weep for your daughters with a bitter lamentation. Let your eyes run down with rivers of blood for them. Had they been crushed within the folds of the hideous boa, or had the fangs of the tiger been red with their blood, happy would their fate have been compared with the indignities they have endured!

O Earth! You have beheld crimes which antiquity could not parallel. You have seen bestial lust gratified upon the purest and the best of mortals. God's fairest creatures stained—those loved ones who could not brook the name of lust—given up to the embraces of incarnate devils! Weep, Britain, weep, weep for your sons and for your daughters! If you are cold-hearted now, if you read the tale of infamy now without a tear, you are no mother to them! Surely your heart must have failed you and you have become less loving than your own lions and less tender than beasts of prey, if you do not weep for the maiden and the wife.

Brethren, I am not straining history. I am not endeavoring to be pathetic where there is no pathos. No. My subject of itself is all pathos. It is my poor way of speaking that does spoil it. I have not today to act the orator's part, to garnish up that which was nothing before. I have not to magnify little griefs—rather I feel that all my utterances do but diminish the woe which every thoughtful man must feel. Oh, how have our hearts been harrowed, cut in pieces, melted in the fire! Agony has seized upon us and grief unutterable, when, day after day, our hopes have been disappointed and we have heard that still the rebel rages in his fury and still with despotic might does as he pleases with the sons and daughters, the husbands and the wives of England.

Weep, Christians, weep! And you ask me of what avail shall be your weeping eye bid you weep today, because the spirit of vengeance is gathering? Britain's wrath is stirred. A black cloud is hanging over the head of the mutinous Sepoys! Their fate shall be most dreadful, their doom most tremendous, when England shall smite the murderers, as justly she must. There must be Judicial punishment enacted upon these men, so terrible that the earth shall tremble and both the ears of him that hears it shall tingle! I am inclined, if I can, to sprinkle some few cooling tears upon the fires of vengeance.

No, no, we will not take vengeance upon ourselves. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Let not Britain's soldiers push their enemies to destruction through a spirit of vengeance. As men, let them do it as the appointed executioners of the sentence of our laws. According to the civil code of every country under Heaven, these men are condemned to die. Not as soldiers should we war with them but as malefactors we must execute the law upon them. They have committed treason against government and for that crime alone the doom is death! But they are murderers and rightly or wrongly, our law is that the murderer must die the death. God must have this enormous sin punished and though we would feel no vengeance as Britons, yet, for the sake of government, God's established government on earth, the ruler who bears the sword must not now bear the sword in vain.

Long have I held that war is an enormous crime. Long have I regarded all battles as but murder on a large scale—but this time, I, a peaceful man, a follower of the peaceful Savior, do propound war. No, it is not war that I propose but a just and proper punishment. I will not aid and abet soldiers as *warriors* but as *executioners* of a lawful sentence which ought to be executed upon men, who, by the double crime of infamous debauchery and fearful bloodshed, have brought upon themselves the ban and curse of God. They must be punished, or truth and innocence can never walk this earth.

As a rule I do not believe in the utility of capital punishment but the crime has been attended with all the horrid guilt of the cities of the plain and is too bestial to be endured. But still, I say, I would cool down the vengeance of Britons and therefore I would bid you weep. You talk of vengeance but you know not the men with whom you have to deal. Many a post may come and many a month run round and many a year may pass before you hear of victory over those fierce men. Be not too proud. England talked once of her great deeds and she has since been humbled. She may yet again learn that she is not omnipotent. But you people of God, weep, weep for this sin that has broken loose, weep for this Hell that has found its way to earth.

Go to your chambers and cry out to God to stop this bloodshed. You are to be the saviors of your nation. Not on the bayonets of British soldiery but on the prayers of British Christians, do we rest. Run to your houses, fall upon your knees, lament most bitterly, for this desperate sin. And then cry to God to save! Remember, He hears prayer—prayer moves the arm of the Omnipotent. Let us proclaim a fast. Let us gather a solemn assembly. Let us cry mightily unto Him. Let us ask the God of armies to avenge Himself. Let us pray Him so to send the light of the Gospel into the land, that such a crime may be impossible a second time. And this time, so to put it down that it may never have an opportunity of breaking loose again.

I know not whether our government will proclaim a national fast. But certain I am it is time that every Christian should celebrate one in his own heart. I bid all of you with whom my word has one atom of respect. If my exhortation has one word of force, I do exhort you to spend special time in prayer just now. Oh, my Friends, you cannot hear the shrieks, you have not seen the terror-stricken faces, you have not beheld the flying fugitives. But you may picture them in your imagination—and he must be accursed who does not pray to God and lift up his soul in earnest prayer—that He would be pleased now to put His shield between our fellow-subjects and their enemies.

And you, especially, the representatives of many congregations in various parts of this land, give unto God no rest until He is pleased to bestir Himself. Make this your cry—"O Lord our God arise and let Your enemies be scattered and let all them that hate You become as the fat of rams." So shall God, through your prayers, perhaps establish peace and vindicate justice and, "God, even our own God, shall bless us and that right early."

**II.** But I have now a greater reason for your sorrow—a more disregarded and yet more dreadful source of woe. If the first time we said it with plaintive voice, we must a second time say it yet more plaintively—"Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night," FOR THE MORALLY SLAIN of the daughter of my people.

The old adage is still true, "One-half of the world knows nothing about how the other half lives." A large proportion of you professing Christians have been respectably brought up. You have never in your lives been the visitants of the dens of infamy. You have never frequented the haunts of wickedness and you know but very little of the sins of your fellow creatures. Perhaps it is well that you should remain as ignorant as you are—for to be ignorant is to be free from temptation, It would be folly to be wise. But there are others who have been obliged to see the wickedness of their fellows. And a public teacher, especially, is bound not to speak from mere hearsay but to know from authentic sources what is the spirit of the times.

It is our business to look with eagle eyes through every part of this land and see what crime is rampant—what kind of crime and what sort of infamy. Ah, my Friends, with all the advancement of piety in this land, with all the hopeful signs of better times, with all the sunlight of glory heralding the coming morn, with all the promises and with all our hopes we are still obliged to bid you weep because sin abounds and iniquity is still mighty. Oh, how many of our sons and daughters, of our friends and relatives are slain by sin! You weep over battlefields, you shed tears on the plains of Balaklava. There are worse battlefields than there and worse deaths than those inflicted by the sword.

Ah, weep for the drunkenness of this land! How many thousands of our race reel from our sin-palaces into perdition! Oh, if the souls of departed drunkards could be seen at this hour by the Christians of Britain, they would tremble. Lift up your hands in sorrow and begin to weep! My soul might be an everlasting Niobe, perpetually dropping showers of tears, if it might know the doom and the destruction brought on them by that one demon and by that one demon only! I am no enthusiast, I am no total abstainer—I do not think the cure of England's drunkenness will come from that quarter. I respect those who thus deny themselves, with a view to the good of others and should be glad to believe that they accomplish their object.

But though I am no total abstainer, I hate drunkenness as much as any man breathing and have been the means of bringing many poor creatures to relinquish this bestial indulgence. We believe drunkenness to be an awful crime and a horrid sin. We look on all its dreadful effects and we stand prepared to go to war with it and to fight side by side with abstainers, even though we may differ from them as to the mode of warfare. Oh, England! How many thousands of your sons are murdered every year by that accursed devil of drunkenness, that has such sway over this land!

But there are other crimes, too. Alas, for that crime of *debauchery*! What scenes has the moon seen every night! Sweetly did she shine last evening. The meadows seemed as if they were silvered with beauty when she shone upon them. But ah, what sins were transacted beneath her pale sway! Oh, God, only You know—our hearts might be sickened and we might indeed cry for, “A lodge in some vast wilderness,” had we seen what God beheld when He looked down from the moon-lit sky! You tell me that sins of that kind are common in the lower class of society. Alas, I know it. Alas, how many a girl has dashed herself into the river to take away her life because she could not bear the infamy that was brought upon her!

But lay not this to the poor. The infamy and sin of our streets begin not with them. It begins with the highest ranks—with what we call the noble classes of society. Men who have defiled themselves and others will stand in our senates and walk among our peers. Men whose characters are not reputable—it is a shame to speak even of the things that are done by them in secret—are received into the drawing rooms and into the parlors of the highest society—while the poor creature who has been the victim of their passions is hooted and cast away! O Lord God, You alone know the awful ravages that this sin has made.

My God, Your servant's lips can utter no more than this—he has gone to the verge of his utterance, he feels that he has no further license in his speech, still he may well cry—“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!” If you have walked the hospital, if you have seen the refuges, if you have talked with the inmates—and if you know the gigantic spread of that enormous evil, you may well sympathize with me

when I say that at the thought of it my spirit is utterly cast down. I feel that I would rather die than live while sin thus reigns and iniquity thus spreads.

But are these the only evils? Are these the only demons that are devouring our people? Ah, would to God it were so. Behold, throughout this land how are men falling by every sin, disguised as it is under the shape of pleasure. Have you ever, as from some distant journey returned to your houses at midnight, seen the multitudes of people who are turning out of casinos, low theatres and other houses of sin? I do not frequent those places, nor from earliest childhood have I ever trod those floors but, from the company that I have seen issuing from these dens, I could only lift up my hands and pray God to close such places.

They seem to be the gates of Hell and their doors, as they very properly themselves say, "Lead to the pit." Ah, may God be pleased to raise up many who shall warn this city and bid Christian people by day and night, "for the slain of the daughter of our people"! Christians, never leave off weeping for men's sins and infamies. There are sins by day. God's own day—this day—is defiled, is broken in pieces and trod under foot. There are sins committed every morning and sins each night. If you could see them you might never be happy. If you could walk in the midst of them and behold them with your eyes, if God would give you grace, you might perpetually weep—for you would always have cause for sorrow. "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."

But now I must just throw in something which will more particularly apply to you. Perhaps I have very few here who would indulge in open and known sin. Perhaps most of you belong to the good and amiable class who have every kind of virtue and of whom it must be said, "One thing you lack." My heart never feels so grieved as at the sight of you. How often have I been entertained most courteously and hospitably, as the Lord's servant, in the houses of men and of women whose characters are supremely excellent. They have every virtue that could adorn a Christian—except faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They might be held up as the very mirrors and patterns to be imitated by others. How has my heart grieved when I have thought of these, still undecided, still godless, prayerless and Christless.

I have many of you in this congregation today—I could not put my finger upon one solitary fault in your character—you are scrupulously correct in your morals. But alas, alas, alas for you, that you should still be dead in trespasses and sins because you have not been renewed by Divine Grace! So lovely and yet without faith. So beautiful, so admirable and yet not converted. O God, when drunkards die, when swearers perish, when harlots and seducers sink to the fate they have earned, we may well weep for such sinners. But when these who have walked in our midst and have

almost been acknowledged as Believers—are cast away because they lack the one thing needful—it seems enough to make angels weep!

O members of Churches, you may well take up the cry of Jeremiah when you remember what multitudes of these you have in your midst—men who have a name to live and are dead. And others, who though they profess not to be Christians, are almost persuaded to obey their Lord and Master but are yet not partakers of the Divine life of God. But now I shall want, if I can, to press this pathetic subject a little further upon your minds. In the day when Jeremiah wept this lamentation with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, Jerusalem was in all her mirth and merriment. Jeremiah was a sad man in the midst of a multitude of merry makers.

He told them that Jerusalem should be destroyed, that their temple should become a heap and Nebuchadnezzar should lay it with the ground. They laughed him to scorn. They mocked him. Still the viol and the dance were only to be seen. Do you not picture that brave old man, for he was bravely plaintive, sitting down in the courts of the Temple? And though as yet the pillars were unfallen and the golden roof was yet unstained, he lifted up his hands and pictured to himself this scene of Jerusalem's Temple burned with fire, her women and her children carried away captive and her sons given to the sword. And when he pictured this, he did, as it were, in spirit set himself down upon one of the broken pillars of the Temple and there, in the midst of desolation which was not as yet—but which faith, the evidence of things not seen, did picture to him—cry, "Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears." And now, today, here are many of you, fakes and merry makers in this ball of life—you are here merry and glad today and you marvel that I should talk of you as persons for whom we ought to weep. "Weep for me!?" you say, "I am in health, I am in riches, I am enjoying life! Why weep for me? I need none of your sentimental weeping!"

Ah but we weep because we foresee the future. If you could live here always we might not, perhaps, weep for you. But we, by the eye of faith, look forward to the time when the pillars of Heaven must totter. When this earth must shake, when death must give up its prey. When the Great White Throne must be set in the clouds of Heaven and the thunder and lightning of Jehovah shall be launched in armies. And the angels of God shall be marshaled in their ranks to swell the pomp of the grand assize—we look forward to that hour and by faith we see you standing before the Judge. We see His eye sternly fixed on you, we hear Him read the book.

We mark your tottering knees while sentence after sentence of thundering wrath strikes on your appalled ear. We think we see your blanched countenances. We mark your terror beyond all description when He cries, "Depart, you cursed!" We hear your shrieks. We hear you cry, "Rocks hide us. Mountains fall on us!" We see the angel with fiery brand pursuing you—we hear your last unutterable shriek of woe as you descend into the pit of Hell. And we ask you if you could see this as we see it, would you

wonder that at the thought of your destruction we are prepared to weep? “Oh that my head were waters and my eyes were a fountain of tears that I might weep” over you who will not stand in the judgment but must be driven away like chaff into the unquenchable fire!

And by the eye of faith we look further than that. We look into the grim and awful future—our faith looks through the gate of iron bound with adamant. We see the place of the condemned. Our ears, opened by faith, hear, “The sullen groans and hollow moans and shrieks of tortured ghosts!” Our eyes anointed with Heavenly eye salve see the worm that never dies. We behold the fire that never can be quenched and see you writhing in the flame! O professors, if you believed not in the wrath to come and in Hell eternal, I should not wonder that you were unmoved by such a thought as this. But if you believe what your Savior said when He declared that He would destroy both body and soul in Hell, I must wonder that you could endure the thought without weeping for your fellow creatures who are going there.

If I saw my enemy marching into the flames, I would rush between him and the fire and seek to preserve him. And will you see men and women marching on in a mad career of vice and sin, well aware that “the wages of sin is death,” and will you not interpose so much as a tear? What? Are you more brutal than the beast, more impassive than the stone! It must be so, if the thought of the unutterable torment of Hell does not draw tears from your eyes and prayer from your hearts. Oh, if today some strong archangel could unbolt the gates of Hell and for a solitary second permit the voices of wailing and weeping to come up to our ears—oh, how should we grieve! Each man would put his hand upon his loins and walk this earth in terror. That shriek might make each hair stand on end upon our heads and then make us roll ourselves in the dust for anguish and woe—

***“Oh, doleful state of dark despair,  
When God has far removed,  
And fixed their dreadful station where  
They must not taste His love.”***

Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for some of you that are going there this day. Remember, again, O Christian, that those for whom we ask you to weep this day are persons who have had great privileges and consequently, if lost, must expect greater punishment. I do not today ask your sympathies for men in foreign lands. I shall not bid you weep for Hottentots or Mohammedans though you might weep for them and you have goodly cause to do so—but I ask this day your tears for the slain of the daughter of your own people. Oh, what multitudes of heathens we have in all our places of worship! What multitudes of unconverted persons in all the pews of the places where we usually assemble to worship God.

And I may add, what hundreds we have here who are without God, without Christ, without hope in the world. And these are not like Hotten-

tots who have not heard the Word—they have heard it and they have rejected it. Many of you, when you die, cannot plead as an excuse that you did not know your duty. You heard it plainly preached to you. You heard it in every corner of the streets. You had the Book of God in your houses. You cannot say that you did not know what you must do to be saved. You read the Bible, you understand salvation—many of you are deeply taught in the theory of salvation. When you perish, your blood must be on your own head and the Master may well cry over you today, “Woe unto you, Bethsaida, woe unto you Chorazin! For if the mighty works that were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

I wonder at myself this day. I hate my eyes. I feel as if I could pluck them from their sockets because they will not weep as I desire, over poor souls who are perishing! How many have I among you whom I love and who love me! We are no strangers to one another. We could not live at a distance from each other, our hearts have been joined together long and firmly. You have stood by me in the hour of tribulation, you have listened to the Word, you have been pleased with it. I bear you witness that if you could pluck out your eyes for me you would do it. And yet I know there are many of you true lovers of God's Word in appearance and certainly great lovers of God's servant but alas for you, that you should still be in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity!

Alas, my Sister, I can weep for you! Woe, woe, my Brother, I can weep for you! We have met together in God's house, we have prayed together and yet we must be separated. Shepherd, some of your flock will perish! O sheep of my pasture, people of my care, must I have that horrid thought upon me, that I must lose you? Must we, at the Day of Judgment, say farewell forever? Must I bear my witness against you? I shall be honest. I have dealt faithfully with your souls. God is my witness, I have often preached in weakness. Often have I had to groan before Him that I have not preached as I could desire. But I have never preached insincerely. Nobody will ever dare to accuse me of dishonesty in this respect.

Not one of your smiles have I ever courted. I have never dreaded your frowns. I have been in weariness oftentimes, when I should have rested, preaching God's Word. But what of that? That were nothing. Only remember there is some responsibility resting upon you. And remember, that to perish under the sound of the Gospel is to perish more terribly than anywhere else. But, my Hearers, must that be your lot? And must I be witness against you in the Day of Judgment? I pray God it may not be so. I beseech the Master that He may spare us each such a fate as that.

And now, dear Friends I have one word to add before I leave this point. Some of you need not look round in this congregation to find cause for weeping. My pious Brothers and Sisters, you have cause enough to weep in your own families. Ah, mother! I know your griefs. You have had cause to cry to God with weeping eyes for many a mournful hour because of



your son. Your offspring has turned against you. And he that came forth of you has despised his mother's God. Father, you have carefully brought up your daughter. You have nourished her when she was young and taken her fondly in your arms. She was the delight of your life, yet she has sinned against you and against God.

Many of you have sons and daughters that you often mention in your prayers but never with hope. You have often thought that God has said of your son, "Ephraim is given to idols. Let him alone." The child of your affection has become an adder stinging your heart! Oh, then weep, I beseech you. Parents, do not leave off weeping for your children—do not become hardened towards them, sinners though they are. It may be that God may yet bring them to Himself. It was but last Church Meeting that we received into our communion a young friend who was educated and brought up by a pious minister in Colchester. She had been there many years and when she came away to London the minister said to her, "Now, my girl, I have prayed for you hundreds of times and I have done all I can with you. Your heart is as hard as a stone. I must leave you with God!"

That broke her heart. She is now converted to Jesus. How many sons and daughters have made their parents feel the same! "There," they have said, "I must leave you, I cannot do more." But in saying that, they have not meant that they would leave them unwept for but they have thought within themselves that if they were damned, they would follow them weeping to the very gates of Hell if by tears they could decoy them into Heaven. How can a man be a Christian and not love his offspring? How can a man be a Believer in Jesus Christ and yet have a cold and hard heart in the things of the kingdom, towards his children? I have heard of ministers of a certain sect and professors of a certain class who have despised family prayer, who have laughed at family godliness and thought nothing of it.

I cannot understand how the men can know as much as they do about the Gospel and yet have so little of the spirit of it. I pray God deliver you and deliver me from anything like that. No, it is our business to train up our children in the fear of the Lord. And though we cannot give them grace, it is ours to pray to the God who can give it. And in answer to our many supplications, He will not turn us away but He will be pleased to take notice of our prayers and to regard our sighs.

And now, Christian mourners, I have given you work enough—may God the Holy Spirit enable you to do it. Let me exhort you, yet once again, to weep. Do you need a copy? Behold your Master. He has come to the brow of the hill. He sees Jerusalem lying on the hill opposite to Him. He looks down upon it, as He sees it there—beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth—instead of feeling the rapture of some artist who surveys the ramparts of a strong city and marks the position of some magnificent tower in the midst of glorious scenery, He bursts out and he cries, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often would I have gathered your children to-

gether as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings but you would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

Go now your ways and as you stand on any of the hills around and behold this huge city lying in the valley, say—“O London, London! How great your guilt. Oh, that the Master would gather you under His wing and make you His city, the joy of the whole earth! O London, London! Full of privileges and full of sin, exalted to Heaven by the Gospel! You shall be cast down to Hell by your rejection of it!” And then, when you have wept over London, go and weep over the street in which you live, as you see the Sabbath broken and God’s laws trampled upon and men’s bodies profaned—go and weep! Weep, for the court in which you live in your humble poverty, weep for the square in which you live in your magnificent wealth.

Weep for the humbler street in which you live in competence, weep for your neighbors and your friends, lest any of them, having lived godless, may die godless! Then go to your house, weep for your family, for your servants, for your husband, for your wife, for your children. Weep, weep, cease not weeping, till God has renewed them by His Spirit. And if you have any friends with whom you sinned in your past life be earnest for their salvation. George Whitfield said there were many young men with whom he played at cards in his lifetime and spent hours in wasting his time when he ought to have been about other business. And when he was converted, his first thought was, “I must by God’s grace have these converted, too.”

And he never rested, till he could say that he did not know of one of them, a companion of his guilt, who was not now a companion with him in the tribulation of the Gospel. Oh, let it be so with you! Let not your exertions end in tears—mere weeping will do nothing without action. Get on your feet, you that have voices and might—go forth and preach the Gospel, preach it in every street and lane of this huge city. You that have wealth, go forth and spend it for the poor and sick and needy and dying, the uneducated, the unenlightened. You that have time, go forth and spend it in deeds of goodness. You that have power in prayer, go forth and pray. You that can handle the pen, go forth and write down iniquity—everyone to his post—everyone of you to your gun in this day of battle for God and for His Truth.

For God and for the right let every one of us who knows the Lord seek to fight under His banner! O God, without whom all our exertions are vain, come now and stir up Your Church to greater diligence and more affectionate earnestness that we may not have in future such cause to weep as we have this day! Sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus. He has died, look to Him and live and God the Almighty bless you! To God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be glory forever and ever.

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# **GOD'S PEOPLE MELTED AND TRIED**

## **NO. 2274**

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1892.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 19, 1891.**

***“Therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts, Behold, I will melt them,  
and try them; for how shall I deal with the daughter of My people?”  
Jeremiah 9:7.***

OBSERVE, here, that God represents Himself as greatly concerned to know what to do with His people. Of course, He speaks after the manner of men, for, as the infinitely wise God, knowing all things from the beginning, Jehovah knew what He would do. But yet, in order that we may understand something of the workings of the Divine mind, He represents Himself as brought to a non-plus and saying, in the words of our text, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?” There are some men and women in the world who seem to greatly perplex those who love them and who desire their welfare. They are a great perplexity to those with whom they live and who labor for their good—and it seems as if God, Himself, regarded it as a matter of perplexity when He said, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?”

But notice, next, the Lord is so resolved to save His people that He will use the sternest possible means rather than lose any of those whom He loves. He says here, “I will melt them, and try them; I will cast them into the furnace, and put them into the melting pot. I will make the fire so hot that their iron hearts shall melt and, though they are like Hell-hardened steel, devoid of feeling, I will make it so hot for them that they shall be melted. As men assay metal, pouring out the molten mass in a red-hot or white state, I will melt them and try them.”

Sinners, that God may save you, He will do the roughest things with you! He will not spare you any kind of sorrow here, or any sort of loss, or any measure of despair of spirit, so that He may bring you to Himself. He asks the question as though He were very anxious to avoid using His rough ways, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?” But He answers the question with all the severity of almighty love, “Behold, I will melt them, and try them. There is nothing else to be done with them, so I will do that by which alone they can be saved.”

Observe, once more, in our preface, that God's concern about His people, and His resolve to use strange ways with them, springs out of His relationship to them, for He says, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?” “My people.” They were His, though they were very far away from Him through their evil ways. Though they had gone from evil to evil, though their lives provoked Him to the highest degree, yet He did not dis-

own them! He remembered the Covenant that He made for them with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob—and because of that Covenant, He thought upon them for good and resolved to somehow save them. When God has chosen a man from before the foundation of the world, and when He has given that man over to Christ to be a part of the reward of His soul's travail, He will adopt strange means to accomplish His sacred purpose. And He will carry out that purpose, let it cost him what it may!

We are going to apply these principles in three ways. First, to the matter of conversion. Secondly, to the matter of Christian life and thirdly, to the Church of God in its corporate capacity.

**I.** First, these principles may be applied to THE MATTER OF CONVERSION. There is a very simple way of being saved. It should be. I hope it is the common way. It is the simple way of following the call of Grace. This should be your way. I hope it is. The Gospel is preached, you believe it. Christ is set before you, you accept Him, you trust Him, you are saved. Without any violence, your heart is opened, as with the picklock of Grace. God puts the key into the door and steps into your heart without a word. "Whose heart the Lord opened," we read of Lydia. Even if you have known nothing of the terror of the Lord, if you have had no strange convulsion of feeling, no earthquake, tempest and thunder—God is in the still small voice—and you are saved by His Grace as much as those who have had a deeper experience.

This is the way of salvation, but there are some who will not come this way. There is the Wicket Gate. They have but to knock and it will be opened, but they prefer to go round about through the Slough of Despond, or to get under the care of Mr. Worldly Wiseman who leads them round by the house of Mr. Legality, who dwells in the village of Morality. And there they go with their burdens on their backs, which they need not carry even for a single hour, for they would roll off directly if they would but look to Jesus and believe in Him. But they will not do this. There are some of whom God has to say, "How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?" Why is this?

Well, some of them have a crooked sort of mind. They never can believe anything straight—they must go round about. I know a friend whose conversation is always of this kind. If he were in King William Street and I were in the Borough, he could not come across London Bridge to me—he would find it necessary to go at least as far as Hamrnernsmith before he crossed the river—and *then* he would come round to me. That is how he always talks. I sometimes get a little tired of that style and I wish he would come to the point at once. There are some minds of that sort. You say to some people, "Believe and live." Then they begin scratching their heads a bit and saying, "What is it to believe, and what is it to live? And how can a man live by believing, and does he believe first, or does he live first? And if he lives before he believes, then how does believing make him live?"

I could puzzle away like that all night if I liked—any fool can put stools in the way for people to tumble over. There are some minds that seem to be made with what I may call a circumbendibus that cannot take the Truth of God as God puts it, believing Him as a child believes his father.

They must somehow twist it about, wrest it, distort it, contort it. Oh, that the Lord would give them another mind! "Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." O you wise people, you deep and subtle people, you very thoughtful folk who cannot think that God means what He says when He says that a sinner has only to look to Christ and live—but imagine that there must be some particular kind of spectacles to be worn through which you are to look, or that you are to get to some point of the compass from which to look, or that you are to do something else beside look—oh, that you would lay aside all this, for you are making the work of your salvation needlessly difficult! It is of such as you that God says, "How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?"

But some others are obstinate in sin. They are not happy in it, but they will not give it up. They have had some very serious talks with their conscience and they know that they are wrong, yet they persist in continuing to be wrong. They mean to be right, some day, but not yet. They wish, somehow, that they had overcome the difficulty, but they cannot face it—they cannot give up their evil habits. They still cling to them and, though often persuaded, threatened and moved, they still stand where they always stood—obstinately continuing in sin—while God repeats the enquiry, "How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?"

Some others are unwilling to confess sin at all. They think themselves wrong, but they try to make excuses. They are wrong, but not so very wrong. They are such poor, frail creatures, and so greatly tempted, it cannot be very wrong for them to sin. The mind is so easily led astray—surely that is the fault of heredity, or the fault of environment, or the fault of—well, they really make it out that it is the fault of God! So they say in their *thoughts*, if they do not dare to put it into words. But as for confessing that they are *sinner*s, they will not come to that! I expect, before they will cry, "Father, I have sinned," they will have to be melted. Before they will ever come to confess their iniquity, they will have to pass through the melting pot.

Then there are some people who are not saved, but who are outwardly very religious. They have never omitted going to Church, or, perhaps, to the Meeting House, whichever they think the better of the two, and they have been brought up carefully—they have said their prayers regularly—and they have had family prayer, too. They have a Bible. They do not read it much, but still they have one. They are very nice people. Everybody thinks that they are Christians, yet all this religion of theirs is not worth a single farthing, for there is no heart-work in it, no repentance of sin, no love to God, no faith in Christ. The robe of their self-righteousness clings to them and prevents their coming to rest in Jesus. Sinful self is bad enough to get rid of, but *righteous* self is even worse! Self-righteousness is a kind of mud that will not be brushed off. The man who is spattered with it does not let it get dry—he renews it every day. The self-righteous man thinks he is too good to go to Heaven by the way a sinner goes—and so he never goes at all.

Some, who have no forms of religion, are, nevertheless, wonderfully self-righteous. They are not Christians, but in their own opinion they are

quite as good as Christians. In fact, they think they are a great deal better! Yet their conscience must tell them that this is a lie. Still, they flatter themselves in their own conceit and hide away in a refuge of lies till God, Himself, says, "How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?" And we cannot answer the question unless it is in the words of the text, where the Lord says, "Therefore I will melt them, and try them." They will have to go into the fire and be melted down before they will be meet for the Master's use.

There are some others who will not come to Christ because they are so full of levity and fickleness. They are all froth, all fun. They live like butterflies—they suck in the juices from the flowers—and flit from one to the other. They are easily impressed, one way and another, but there is no heart in them. "Ephraim is a silly dove without heart." They have no stability, they are fickle. They are like the morning cloud that is soon blown away—as the early dew that melts in the beams of the rising sun—so is their goodness soon departed from them. How are they to be saved? Some of you have been awakened 50 times, already, and if you had been at some places of worship, you would say that you had been converted a dozen times! But I hope we will never flatter you into that delusion. I have heard some people say that they have been converted ever so many times. How can a person be born again more than once? I have heard of being born again, and I know that it is possible—but to be born again, and again, and again, must be impossible—that cannot be! Yet people of this sort are good, bad, or indifferent, just as the fit takes them, for they are fickle, changeable—one does not know where to find them.

And in addition, there is another class of persons that are insincere. There is no depth of earth about them. They do not really feel what they think they feel. And when they say that they believe, they do not really believe in their heart. They promise, too, when they are ill, what saints they will be if the Lord will but raise them up—but when they get well, again, they are not saints. How many have promised and vowed that if they but escaped in such an accident, or their lives were spared in such a disease, they would seek the Lord—yet they have done nothing of the kind! So again, tonight, the question has to be asked about them by God, "How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?"

Now, having brought before you these characters, or held up the mirror of God's Word so that you might see yourselves in it, I want you to notice how God very often deals with such people. According to my text they will have to feel the furnace.

I have noticed, during a considerable period of time, some of the self-righteous and the outwardly-religious put into the fire and melted by being permitted to fall into some gross and open sin. I knew a young man, an excellent and worthy young fellow he was to all appearance. But he was entirely wrapped up in his own righteousness—and there was no getting at him. Under the stress of a sudden temptation in the workshop, he distinctly told a lie. It was a very sorrowful business. Nobody but he knew that he had done so. It was never found out, but he knew that he had told a distinct and willful lie—and he felt so ashamed of himself that all his pretty buildings of self-righteousness vanished away in a moment! And

instead of being great and grand, as he *had* been, he had to come to Christ with the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

He had such a sense of right and wrong that he condemned himself outright. He came to me in an awful state of mind. There were thousands of men who would have done what he had done and never thought the worse of themselves for it—but he had a conscience and a truthful spirit—and he felt mean as dirt for having told his master a falsehood. God blessed that experience to him! He was melted right down and, in the bitterness of his spirit, he cried, for weeks, for mercy and, by God's Grace, he was to find it at the Savior's feet. I pray God that none of you self-righteous people may be left to go into an open sin, but it may be that the Lord may leave you to yourselves—to let you see what you really are—for you probably have no idea *what you are*. I, as the servant of God, might flood my face with tears and weep over you if I could prophesy what you will yet do if restraint is taken from you—for in your heart there are the eggs of all manner of sins—and it only needs favorable circumstances for these to be hatched out into a very cage of unclean birds. That is one way in which I have seen men melted.

Some, again, have been melted down by temporal calamities. I have seen a very great man, with his diamond ring flashing on his finger—I was almost going to say, "and with bells on his toes"—for he would almost have liked to wear them there if he could, to call attention to his superior position and his eminent rank. He was a gentleman. He felt that he was and, as to preaching to him as a poor sinner, he was offended at the idea! He had good health and strength, too, and he was not going to die. He counted it one of the wisest things to "drive dull care away." He was merry-hearted, full of spirits, and the Gospel had no power over him. "Take it to the dying," he said, "take it to the poor people down in the slums. It is the right thing for them, but I—I do not need it."

Yes, but when his fortune melted, he began to melt a little. And when his health went and he found himself on a sick-bed—and those who once did him reverence, forgot him, and he was almost without a friend—then he wanted to come round to God by the back door, somehow, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Oh, yes, there are some who cannot be saved as long as they have a silver spoon in their mouths! But when they are brought to poverty, it is the nearest way round to the Father's House, round by the far country where they would gladly fill their bellies with the husks that the swine eat!

Some years ago a young gentleman, whose father was a godly man, told me that he was keeping racehorses, and betting. I said to him, "That is right, bet all your money away, and when you have nothing left, you will come to your father's God. Maybe that is the way home for you—an empty pocket, a ragged coat, and a sick body. Then, perhaps, you will turn to God." The Lord has often done so with men. Am I speaking to any who are passing through such a trial as that? God grant that your poverty shall lead you to the best riches! And your sickness conduct you to eternal health!

At other times, without any overt sin, without any temporal trouble, God has ways of taking men apart from their fellows and whipping them

behind the door. It has been my lot to meet with, not merely hundreds, but I think I may say, thousands of souls in this condition. Wherever I go, I feel an intense happiness in meeting with miserable, brokenhearted souls, because I believe they are on the way to the possession of a new heart and a right spirit! God is dealing with them in a way of love, though His way seems to them to be very rough. I have tried to cheer them. I have prayed with and for them. They have told me that their sin haunts them day and night—they cannot hope for mercy and cannot think that God will ever blot out their transgressions. Their Bible seems to thunder at them as they read it. Their heart is heavy, their friends think them melancholy—talk about putting them in an asylum—and I do not know what, besides! They are ground down and brought low. This is all meant to work for their good—they would not come to God any other way. It is by such an experience that God is fulfilling His Word, “I will melt them, and try them.”

*In all this God has one great objective.* It is just this, first, to hide pride from men. God will not save us and have us proud. He will not let any one of us throw up his cap and glorify himself for his own salvation. Grace must have the glory of it from first to last! Beside that, God means to take us out of our sin, and to do that, He makes it to be a bitter and an evil thing to us. All that He is doing is to make our sin too heavy for us to carry, to make us sick of sin, fond of Christ and earnest after holiness. Blessed is the blow that almost crushes you if it breaks off the connection between you and sin!

The drift of all this experience is to bring us to Christ, to the Great Sacrifice—and none will ever come to Christ but those who have nowhere else to go. No man ever puts into this port except under stress of foul weather. Souls try to go anywhere except to Christ—but when they cannot go anywhere else, when they are done for, when they are ruined and lost—*then* it is that they fly to Him and take Him to be their All in All! Therefore it takes a long time to get even a child of God to fully understand the way of salvation by sacrifice.

I went to see my venerable friend, George Rogers, yesterday. He is close upon 92 and cannot leave his bed. He has to lie there and can do nothing for himself—but his *mental* faculties are as bright as ever. I was not long with him before he said to me, “They do not seem to savor, now, the Sacrifice of Christ and,” he added, “you know that Peter believed in the Deity of our Lord and he made such a delightful confession of the Deity of Christ that the Master said, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven.’ But,” said Mr. Rogers, “although Peter knew the Deity of Christ, and knew it well, he did not know Christ’s Sacrifice, for no sooner did his Master begin to tell him that He was to be crucified, and so on, than, ‘Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from You, Lord; this shall not be unto You.’ He could not believe it. He could not see the Sacrifice and his Lord had to call him, ‘adversary,’ and to say to him, ‘Get you behind Me: you are an offense unto Me: for you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of men.’”



My dear old friend said, "Until we can see the Sacrifice of Christ, we have not seen things as they really are in God's sight. And any Gospel, even if it appears to glorify Christ and has His Deity in it, savors of the things of men and not of the things of God if it leaves out Christ's Sacrifice." Mr. Rogers was right! There must be the Sacrifice of Christ—it is that savor which we are to make known in every place. That is a sweet savor unto God which we are never to cease to give forth as long as we can speak. But, oh, it takes such a time with some to bring them to smell that blessed savor of the Sacrifice of the Son of God! When they do perceive it, they get peace, and light, and love, and liberty! But, until then, God Himself seems to say concerning them, "How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?"

I have dwelt so long upon the matter of conversion that my time is largely gone. I beg you who can pray to join me in asking God to bless the word I have spoken.

**II.** But, in the second place, I want to say something to *Christians*, for, IN THE MATTER OF CHRISTIAN LIFE, God seems to say, "What shall I do for the daughter of my people? I will melt them, and try them."

*Some Christians go from joy to joy.* Their path, like that of the light, shines more and more unto the perfect day. Why should you and I not be like that? Why should we not simply believe and keep on believing, and go on rejoicing, serving God with all our heart, and resting in the precious blood of Jesus?

There are *other Christians who appear to make much progress in Divine things, but it is not true progress.* Some appear to have a great deal of knowledge. They talk as if they knew everything, but when you come to examine them closely, you find that they do not know hardly anything that they ought to know. Some, too, get a very wonderful experience. You see them swagger about. You hear them brag of it until you are disgusted with them. That experience which a man boasts of is an experience he ought to be ashamed of! Some, too, seem to have great ability. To hear them talk of what they can do, you would imagine that they could drive the Church before them and drag the world behind them, and I do not know what besides! Paul said, "When I am weak, then am I strong," but these people are so strong that they never know what weakness means!

As for the progress that some professors make in sanctification, why, just look at some of them, and listen to their tall talk! They have not sinned for years! The very principle of sin seems to have died out of them! Poor deluded souls! This is what they *say*, mark you, *not what I believe.* As for their graces, they have all things and abound. They are as patient as martyrs. They believe as strongly as John Knox or Martin Luther. You ordinary Christians cannot attain to their stature. If they were to stand bolt upright, they would strike the stars from their places, they are so great and tall! And yet—and yet, there is nothing in their boasting, after all. I do not say that they know that much of their wonderful religion is false. No, but they have wrong ideas, confused notions, addled brains, and so they do not know their own real state. Whereas they say that they are rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing, they are all the while naked, blind, poor and miserable!

The worst thing about their condition is that some of them do not *want* to know their real state. They half suspect that it is not what they say it is, but they do not like to be told so. In fact, they get very cross when anyone even *hints* at the truth. No one's temper is so imperfect as the perfect man! He soon shows his *imperfection*. He is the Brother who must not be touched. You must stand a long way off and look at him with reverence, or else he is soon sorely grieved at you. Some do not want to know their real condition. They have an idea that, perhaps, they are not what they seem to be, but they would not have their dream roughly broken. Instruction is not desired by them. Why are *they* to be instructed? They know a great deal more than anybody else can teach them and they like the man who will speak flatteringly to them—and who will make them believe that what they say is all Gospel! Now, there are such people in all our congregations, of whom God might well say, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?”

This is what He will do with a great many who are now inflated with a false kind of Grace—“I will melt them, and try them,” says the Lord of Hosts. *He will put them to a test*. Here is a man who has a quantity of plate and he does not know the value of it, so he takes it to a goldsmith and asks him what it is worth. “Well,” he says, “I cannot exactly tell you, but if you give me a little time, I will melt it all down and then I will let you know its value.” Thus does the Lord deal with many of His people. They have become very good and very great, as they fancy, and He says, “I will melt them.”

This is a natural test for silver and gold, the very best kind of test for precious metal! But in the process of melting, if it is with you, my Brothers and Sisters, as it is with me, the bulk is very much *reduced*. When God begins to melt us by letting fierce corruptions burn within us, or by allowing our spirits to be depressed and our minds to be darkened, oh, what a shrinkage there seems to be almost immediately in that melting pot! What fear takes hold upon us, then, lest we should shrink to nothing and disappear altogether!

Then, also, the fashion of the precious metal is marred—its beauty soon departs. That silver vase was beautifully fashioned, but when it is melted, nothing of the design remains. All that is of human fashioning is lost in the melting pot. Were you ever in the melting pot, dear Friends? I have been there and my sermons with me, and my frames and feelings and all my good works. They seemed to quite fill the pot till the fire burned up—and then I looked to see what there was unconsumed—and if it had not been that I had a simple faith in my Lord Jesus Christ, I am afraid I should not have found *anything* left! This is what God will do with all His people unless they walk very humbly with Him. “He that is down needs fear no fall.” He that is pure gold will lose nothing in the melting. But he that is somebody in his own opinion will have to come down a peg or two before long. It is well that it is so, for if it were not, we should soon grow proud, worldly and careless—and even licentious—for it is strange, but it is true, that the next thing to a boast of perfect holiness has almost always, throughout history, been intense licentiousness! How it comes to be so, perhaps they who study metaphysics can tell, but so it has con-

stantly been in the history of mankind. When you fancy that you are out of gunshot, there is an enemy close at hand. When you dream that the road is safe, there is a pitfall just before you. When you say, "I am perfectly holy," the very pride that makes you say so is an indication of a deadly cancer of self-righteousness that is eating into your very soul!

Now, Beloved, *the result of melting is truth and humility*. The result of melting is that we arrive at a true valuation of things. The result of melting is that we are poured out into a new and better fashion. And, oh, we may almost wish for the melting pot if we may but get rid of the dross, if we may but be pure, if we may but be fashioned more completely like unto our Lord!

If any of you who have been converted are undergoing a melting just now, do not be staggered by it. It is no strange thing that has happened to you and it is no evil thing. You have, no doubt, needed it. You were growing too gross, too careless—and it was necessary for you that you should be melted. Now God has given you the highest proof of His love in this melting, this scourging, this suffering, this breaking down, this annihilating of carnal confidence, this hanging up of Mr. Presumption by the neck that he may die—that self may fall—and that Jesus may be All in All. God grant that it may be so!

**III.** I was going to speak about this principle in THE MATTER OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN ITS CORPORATE CAPACITY, but I will speak of that at another time if the Lord permits. This you may take for granted, that, if God has chosen us, but we are not willing to go in His way and humbly trust in Jesus, and have Him to be our All in All, the Lord will not give us up, but He will melt us, and try us till we are fit to run in any mold that He likes to use.

God bless you, and save you, and comfort you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON JEREMIAH 9.**

**Verse 1.** *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!* Jeremiah foresaw that the Chaldeans would come up and so many would be slain that the nation would be almost destroyed.

**2.** *Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! For they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.* He mourned because of the doom that awaited them, but he equally mourned because of the sin that would bring that doom upon them. He wished that he could get away into one of those refuges which were provided in lonely places, where travelers might lodge for a night.

**3.** *And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies.* They made use of the tongue, as if it were a bow, to shoot out lies. It is a very graphic description of the men of Jeremiah's day. He dips his pen in his heart's blood as he writes about them.

**3.** *But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth.* Oh, no! No one stood up for the Truth of God in those days. No man was willing to suffer for it, to argue for it, or even to acknowledge it.

**3.** *For they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not Me, says the LORD. They grew worse and worse. It is the way of wicked men to ripen into greater sin.* They proceeded from evil to evil—and Jeremiah had *Jehovah's* testimony for it that, though they knew a great many things, they did not know the LORD—“They know not Me, says the LORD.”

**4.** *Take you heed, everyone, of his neighbor, and trust you not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slander.* It was an evil time, indeed, when, even in the domestic circle, there could be no brotherly confidence. “Every brother will utterly supplant.” Jacob's name, you remember, was, “supplanter,” and all these men were Jacobs, each one ready to supplant his brother, to throw him on one side that he might occupy his place. As to neighborly conduct, there was none—the neighbors were all gossips and slanderers of one another.

**5.** *And they will deceive, everyone, his neighbor, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.* What a sad state they were in! Their tongues spoke lies without any teaching and they schooled them till they were masters of the art of lying. They each had a D.D.—Doctor of Dissembling—they understood the art thoroughly! They had taught their tongue to speak lies and they had committed so much evil that they even tired themselves in the doing of it!

**6.** *Their habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know Me, says the LORD.* Putting forth all their critical ingenuity to get rid of God, His Word, Inspiration and the Divine Sacrifice, doing all they could that they might not know God!

**7, 8.** *Therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I deal with the daughter of My people? Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaks deceit: one speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in heart he lies in wait.* Do you wonder that Jeremiah wept? With so true a spirit, so tender and sympathetic, he could not bear it when man had become man's worst enemy and no man could be relied upon—for all practiced and spoke deceit.

**9.** *Shall I not visit them for these things? says the LORD: shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* Divine Justice sets the fire of indignation burning. Nothing excites God's wrath more than continued lies and deceit, unkindness, unbrotherly conduct and unholiness of life. Put all these evils together and you have more than enough God-provoking sins calling for an avenging visitation!

**10.** *For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone.* The Prophet pictures what the Chaldeans would do. They would not only destroy the cities, but they would even rob the hills of their cattle and sweep the fields till there would be nothing left that men could gather.

**11.** *And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.* Jeremiah had to live to see all this. The thought of it pulled up the sluices of his tears and made him wish that all the clouds and seas and rains would come and dwell in his eyes, for his grief had need of all the watery things that Nature could produce. George Herbert sings, and I quote his lines to illustrate the depth of Jeremiah's grief—

***“Let every vein  
Suck up a river to supply my eyes,  
My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,  
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,  
To bear them out, and with my state agree.”***

**12.** *Who is the wise man that may understand this? And who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD has spoken, that he may declare it, for why does the land perish and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passes through?* The land would never have been desolate if it had not been for the wickedness of the people. Sin—sin it is that does the mischief! There are some who cavil at the punishment that God puts upon sin—they would do better if they found fault with the sin which brings its own punishment with it. There is nothing arbitrary in God's justice—He allows sin, itself, to ripen, and when it is finished, it brings forth eternal death.

**13, 14.** *And the LORD says, Because they have forsaken My Law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, neither walked therein; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim.* After many Baals, is the meaning—many are the gods that men make for themselves when they turn away from Jehovah.

**14, 15.** *Which their fathers taught them: therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.* You cannot sin without suffering. If you will not drink of the waters of obedience, but will drink of the waters of rebellion, they shall be bitter.

**16.** *I will scatter them, also, among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them.* A patriot for man, a Prophet for God, do you marvel that he wept?

**17.** *Thus says the LORD of Hosts, Consider you, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come.* These were the hired mourners, the women who were paid to go to funerals and simulate grief. “Send for your weepers now,” said the LORD of Hosts, “for if you ever needed mourners, you need them now.”

**18, 19.** *And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion.* These were no mock mourners—but real weepers who had cause to mourn.

**19.** *How are we plundered! We are greatly confounded.* Why did they not say, “How we have sinned”? No, men will think of the punishment they suffer—but they will overlook the sin they commit!

**19.** *Because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out.* Why did not they say, “Because we have forsaken the LORD, because we have cast off the worship of Jehovah”? You cannot bring men

to that point. They quarrel with the rod rather than with the hand that holds it. They mourn over the result of sin—but to the sin, itself, they still cling.

**20, 21.** *Yet hear the word of the LORD, O you women, and let your ears receive the word of His mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and everyone, her neighbor, lamentation. For death is come up into our windows. It did not wait to come in by the door. In time of war or pestilence, death comes how it will through every casement, closed or open.*

**21.** *And is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.* Generally, in war, they spare the children, and they carry the young men away as captives. The Chaldeans were cruel—they killed the little ones—and they slew the young men.

**22.** *Speak, Thus says the LORD, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather them.* So dreadful was the devastation that was worked by these Chaldeans on account of the people's sin, that dead bodies lay like heaps of dung that the farmer strews upon the field!

**23, 24.** *Thus says the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD which exercises loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, says the LORD.* This was the God who turned, again, to His rebellious people and who would have been glad if they had but known Him. He would have made them richer than the rich, and wiser than the wise, and mightier than the mighty—but they would not have the things in which Jehovah delighted.

**25.** *Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised.* If they sin like others, they shall die like others, circumcised or uncircumcised, baptized or unbaptized.

**26.** *Egypt, and Judah, and Edom.* You see that Judah is sandwiched in between Egypt and Edom. Those who were the people of God are put in the same category with the accursed nation because they had forsaken Him and mixed up with them.

**26.** *And the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.* If the heart is not right with God, vain are all external rites!

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# AN INSTRUCTIVE TRUTH NO. 2893

A SERMON  
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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*“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself:  
it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.”  
Jeremiah 10:23.*

THIS declaration follows after Jeremiah's lamentation over the Lord's ancient people who were about to be carried away captive into Babylon. The Prophet speaks of a fact that was well known to him. It is always well, Brothers and Sisters, to know the Truth of God and to know it so certainly that you are able to remember it just when you most need it. There are some people who are very much like that foolish captain of whom we have heard who had a good anchor, but he left it at home when he went to sea, so it was of no use to him. So, these people know what would comfort them, but they do not remember it in the time of their distress. Jeremiah says, "O Lord, I know," and he utilizes his knowledge as a source of comfort in his hour of need.

What Jeremiah knew was this—that the affairs of this world are not under the control of men, however much they may imagine that they are. There is a Supreme Authority to theirs and a power which rules, overrules and works according to its own beneficent will—whatever men may desire or determine to do. Nebuchadnezzar was about to carry the Jews away from the land which flowed with milk and honey to his own far distant country, but the Prophet consoled himself with the reflection that whatever Nebuchadnezzar meant to do, he was only the instrument in the hands of God for the accomplishment of the Divine Purpose. He proposed, but God disposed. The tyrant of Babylon thought that he was working out his own will, yet he was really carrying out the will of God in chastising the idolatrous and rebellious nation! This was Jeremiah's consolation, "I do not know what Nebuchadnezzar may do, but I do know that 'the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.' I know that, in God's eternal purposes, every step of Judah's way is mapped out and in the end He will make it all work for His own Glory and the good of His chosen people."

Child of God, will you, for a moment, reflect upon the overruling power of God even in the case of the most mighty and wicked of men? They sin grossly and what they do is done of their own free will—and the responsibility for it lies at their own door. That we can never forget, for the free-

agency of man is a self-evident Truth of God. But, at the same time, God is Omnipotent and He is still working out His wise designs, as He did of old, in the whirlwind of human wrath, in the tempest of human sin and even in the dark mines of human ambition and tyranny—all the while displaying His Sovereign Will among men even as the potter forms the vessels on the wheel according to his own will!

This Truth of God ought to be remembered by us because it tends to take from us all fear of man. Why should you, O Believer, be afraid of a man that shall die, or the son of man who is but a worm? You are, as a child of God, under Divine Protection, so who is he that shall harm you while you are a follower of that which is good? Remember that ancient promise, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.” The most powerful enemy of the Church can do nothing without God’s permission! God can put a bit into the mouth of leviathan and do with him as He pleases. The Almighty God is Master and Lord even over the men who imagine that all power is in their hands!

And while this Truth should banish our fear of man, it should also ensure our submission to the will of God. Suppose that the Lord allows Nebuchadnezzar to devastate the land that He gave to His people by Covenant? It is God who permits it, therefore do not think so much of the instrument employed by Him as of the hand in which that instrument is held! Are you afflicted, poor Soul, by some hard unkind spirits? Remember that God permits you to be so tried, so be not angry with that which is only the second cause of your trouble, but believe that the Lord permits this to happen to you for your good and, therefore, submit yourself to Him! A dog, when he is struck with a stick, usually bites the stick. If he had more sense, he would try to bite the man who holds the stick. So your contention must not be against the instrument of your affliction. If there is any contention, it is really against God—and you would not, I trust, think of contending with your Maker! Rather, say, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.” Let your back be bared to the rod and look up into your Heavenly Father’s face and say, “Show me why You contend with me.”

This Truth ought to also strengthen our faith. When fear goes, faith comes in. It is an easy matter to trust God when everything goes smoothly, but genuine faith trusts God in a storm. When the land of Judah was hedged about by God’s Providence and no enemy ventured to set foot upon the sacred soil, it was easy for a Prophet to praise the Lord. But it was quite another matter to trust God when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the villages, besieged the cities and, by-and-by, took them and gave them up to utter destruction and carried away their inhabitants into captivity. To trust in God *then*, was not so easy, yet that was the time for the display of real faith. Faith in the storm is true faith! Faith in a calm may be, or may not be, genuine faith. Summer-weather faith may be true, or may not be true, but winter faith that can bring forth fruit when the snows are deep and the North Wind blows, is the faith of God’s elect! It proves



that it has Divine vitality in it because it can master the circumstances which would have utterly crushed the faith which appertains only to flesh and blood!

It is a severe trial to a child of God when he is mocked at home—when someone who ought to be kind to him, is quite the opposite—when the ties of nature seem only to intensify the hatred that is felt against the heir of Grace—when Ishmael mocks Isaac and continually grieves him. That is a severe trial, but it affords the opportunity for the tried one to recall this Truth of God, that God has all things in His hands and that this trial is only permitted, in His wisdom and love, for some good purpose towards His own child. It is still true that, “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose” and that, “no good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly.” If your enemy triumphs over you for a time, you should say to him, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy—when I fall, I shall arise.” May the Holy Spirit help you to do so! The way of the persecutor is, after all, not left absolutely to his own will, but there is another and a higher will that overrules all!

We will not, however, tarry longer over the consideration of the context so far as it applies to Nebuchadnezzar and other adversaries of the people of God, but we will endeavor to learn the lesson that is taught us in the latter clause of the text—“It is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” And, first, I will try to prove to you that these words are true. And secondly, that these words are instructive.

**I.** First, then, THESE WORDS ARE TRUE—“It is not in man who walks to direct his steps.”

For, first, although man is an active individual, so that he can walk, he cannot direct his steps *because there may be some obstacle in his way which he cannot surmount* and which will change the whole course of his life. He may have determined, in his own mind, that he will do this or that and that he will go here or there—but he cannot foresee every circumstance that may happen to him and there may be circumstances that will entirely alter the direction of his life. There may be unexpected difficulties, or what many call, “accidents,” which are really Providences, which will prevent us from doing what we have resolved to do.

Take the case of a young man who is just beginning business life—though he is active and strong, is it in him to direct his steps? I know it was not in me to direct *my* steps! I had certain plans concerning my life course, but they have not been fulfilled. No doubt the highest desire I ever cherished has been granted to me, but my first plans and purposes were not realized. I am not, today, where I hoped to have been. There were difficulties in the way which made it impossible for me to get there. I expect others have had a similar experience. A young man may try to choose his path in life, but we all know how seldom, if ever, he can get exactly what he wants. Perhaps he goes into a certain house of business and he says, “I shall work my way up till I get to the top.” Yet how frequently it happens that something occurs which jerks him off the line of rails which he had laid down for himself and he has to go in quite a dif-

ferent direction. The path he had chosen was apparently a very proper one for him to choose—perhaps he spent a good deal of earnest thought upon the matter and, possibly, also a good deal of prayer—yet he finds, as many others have found, that “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.”

It is possible that the young man prospers so that he is able to go into business on his own account, but the same lesson has to be learned under different circumstances! He could not foresee what was going to happen so he had purchased certain goods, relying upon an expected rise in the market—but there was a sudden fall, instead of a rise—and he became a loser, not a gainer. Going into business is often like going to sea—one may be much tossed about and possibly may be wrecked before reaching the desired haven. Many a man has found that he cannot get what he most confidently reckons upon.

Another man fails in health. He might have prospered, but, just when the full vigor of his physical strength was needed and the greatest clearness of his mental vision was required, he was laid aside. As he sickened, he also became depressed in spirit as he realized that his path must be that of an invalid and, perhaps, of a poor man. Yet he thought his career would have been that of a strong man who would soon have reached a competence. I am sure that I must be addressing many who know very well, from their own experience, that it is not of the slightest use for a man to say, “I will do this,” or, “I will do that,” because something or other may occur which will altogether prevent you from doing that which seems simple enough now. The mariner reckons on reaching port at a certain day or hour, but the wind may shift, or many things may happen to delay him. The mariner, however, can reckon even better than you can, for he has his chart and he can find his way! He knows where the shoals are and the quicksands, and the rocks and where the deep channels run—but you do not know anything about your future life—you are sailing over a sea that no ship’s keel has ever sailed before! God knows all about it—everything is present to his all-seeing eyes, but it is not present to your eyes. It is not possible for a man to absolutely direct his own way, for he has not the power to do it—let him strive and struggle as he may, he must often be made to feel this!

Perhaps some of you are just now in this condition. Your affairs have got into a tangle and you do not at all know how to unravel it. You are like a man in a maze or a labyrinth. You wish to take the course which is according to the will of God, but, whether you should turn to the right hand or to the left, you do not know.

Now you have begun to realize what was always true, but what you did not perceive before—that is, “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” You cannot direct your own way! You are quite perplexed as to which of two courses you should take. If this one is taken, it involves one form of trouble, and if the other course is chosen, that involves another kind of difficulty. What are you to do? Well, you know that the wisest thing for you to do is to take the matter to the Lord and ask Him to direct you. That is what you ought to do in every case! That ought to be the

constant habit of your soul—to look for the fiery-cloudy pillar which alone can guide you safely over the trackless wastes of life!

In the second place, man ought not to direct his way according to his own will because *his will is naturally evil*. Ungodly men think that they can direct their own way. Ah, Sirs, if you do that, you will direct your way down to the deeps of destruction! He who is his own guide is guided by a fool. He that trusts to his own understanding proves that he has no understanding. If you will be your own director, you will be directed to the place where you will have bitter cause to rue it forever and ever. If a man, starting out in life says, “I shall follow my own will. I will say to my passions, ‘You shall be indulged.’ And to my desires, ‘Eat, drink and be merry.’ And to my soul, ‘Trouble not yourself with solemn and serious things—leave eternity till it comes and make the best you can of time!’ I will direct my own way as pleasure shall guide me, or as self-interest shall guide me.” If you, Sir, talk like that, I pray you remember that “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” And it ought not to be, for man is quite incompetent to perform such a task as that because he has a natural bias towards that which is evil—an inclination towards that which will be injurious to him and to others, also—and which will make him miss the chief end of his being which is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever!

I should like, before proceeding further with my subject, to urge everyone who has hitherto depended upon himself, to pause and lift up his heart to Heaven and say, “Gracious Spirit, You shall be my Guide from this time and forever.” For, young man, young woman, you will surely run upon the rocks before long if you take the tiller of your life’s vessel into your own hands! With such a heart as yours, you cannot expect to go right without the Grace of God. The Doctrine of the Depravity of the Human Race is not merely an article in the creed—it is a matter of everyday experience! There is in you, by nature, a tendency to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—to put darkness for light and light for darkness! And though you may think that you have a preference for good—and it is possible that you have a preference for some forms of good—yet there are critical points where self seeks to rule, where the weakness of your natural disposition will be discovered sooner or later and where the evil that lurks within your flesh will prove to be your ruin! I charge you, sons and daughters of Adam, to remember that since your father, Adam, even in his state of innocence, could not direct his own way aright, but lost Paradise for us all, there is no hope that in your fallen state you can find your way back to Paradise! No, but you will keep on wandering further and further and further from the way of peace and holiness, for, “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.”

Let me give another meaning to the text and still seek to prove it at the same time. It is not and it ought not to be in man who walks to direct his steps because not only is he naturally inclined to evil, but *even when Grace has renewed his nature, his judgment is so fallible that it is a great mistake for him to attempt to direct his own way*. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the stony heart of unbelief has been removed from you

and you have had a new heart and a right spirit put within you. And now the living and incorruptible Seed that is in you makes you seek after that which is good and right—but if you, even now, shall trust to your own judgment, you will find yourself brought into a thousand sorrows! Ah, my Brother, you are an experienced Christian and others look up to you and ask direction from you. But if you are really experienced, you will often say to them, “God helping me, I can direct you, but, as for myself, I feel that I have need of a director quite as much as the youngest babe in the family of God.”

Does not every man who is truly wise feel himself to be increasingly a fool apart from Divine Guidance? And is it not a token of growth in wisdom and Grace when a man’s self-confidence continues to grow less and less? Distrust yourself, dear Friend, for you accurately gauge your own judgment when you do that! It is about little matters that wise men generally make their grossest mistakes. In what he considers a difficult matter, the wise Christian always has resort to God in prayer—but when he gets what he regards as a very simple thing, which is perfectly clear and which he thinks he can himself decide—then his folly is speedily discovered! He is like the Israelites were with the Gibeonites. They said, in effect, if not in words, “We do not need to pray about this matter. We must not make treaties with the Canaanites, but these men are not Canaanites, that is quite clear. We heard them say that they had come from a far country—and when we looked at their shoes we knew that they spoke the truth. They told us that they were quite new when they put them on, yet now they are old and dried—they must have come a great many miles, you may depend upon it. And their bread—did you notice that? It has the blue mold all over it—we would not like to eat a mouthful of it—yet they told us that it was quite fresh when they started. There is no doubt that they are distinguished foreigners who have come from a far country, so let us strike hands with them and make a covenant with them.”

And so they did, for the case seemed so clear to them that they asked no counsel of God. And therein Israel made a great mistake. So, Brothers and Sisters, whenever any case appears to be very clear to you, be sure to say, “Let us pray about it.” You know the old proverb, “When it is fine weather, carry an umbrella. When it is wet, you can do as you like.” So, when any case seems to be quite clear, pray over it. When it is more difficult, I dare not say that you may do as you like about praying, then, unless I say it in the spirit of the proverb which would imply that you would be sure to pray. When you feel certain that you cannot go wrong, you certainly will go wrong unless you ask counsel of God about the matter. That was a good plan of the old Scotchman who, when anything was in dispute, used to say, “Reach down yon Bible”—and when that was brought down and the Scripture read, and prayer offered—the good man felt that he could see his way and could go with firm step along the path to which the Lord had directed him. “It is not in man who walks to direct his steps,” for his judgment is fallible!

I think there is another meaning to be given to the text, for the gracious man feels that he must not direct his own steps *because he cannot take even a step in the right way apart from Divine help*. How can he talk about directing his own steps when he is absolutely dependent upon the Grace of God for every step he takes? O Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord were to help us, by His Grace, until we got up to the doors of Heaven, we would never be able to get in unless He gave us the Grace to take the last step! You cannot direct your own steps for you are a cripple and cannot take even one step except as strength is given you from on high! You are like a ship upon the sea—you can make no progress except as the breath of the Divine Spirit fills the sails of your boat. How can you direct your own way when you have no power to go in it and are dependent upon God for everything? I pray you to confess your dependence and not to talk of directing your own steps!

I must give you just one more thought under this head. *He that walks need not think of directing his own steps, for there is One who will direct them for him*. What if sin inclines us to take the wrong path and if a feeble judgment makes us err through inadvertence? There is no need for us to choose our own lot—but we may bow before the Lord and say, “You shall choose our inheritance for us.” The choice is difficult for you, my Brother. Then do not choose your own way, but leave it to Him who sees the end from the beginning and who is sure to make a wise choice! The burden of life is heavy, my Sister, then do not try to carry it, but “cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you.” “Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” Let it not be your choice, but let it be God’s choice! That was a wise answer of a good old Christian woman when she was asked whether she would choose to live or die. She said that she had no choice in the matter, but that she left it with the Lord. “But,” said one, “suppose the Lord put it to your choice—which would you select?” “Neither,” she replied, “I would ask Him not to let me choose, but to choose for me so that it should be as He willed, not as I willed.” Oh, if we could but once abandon our own choosing and say to the Lord, “Not as I will, but as You will,” how much more happy we might be! We would not be troubled by the thought that we could not direct our own steps, but we would be glad of it, because our very weakness would entitle us to cry unto the Lord, “Now that I cannot direct my own way, what I know not, You teach me.”

**II.** Time fails me and therefore I will close my discourse by briefly mentioning the practical lessons of the text in order to prove to you that THESE WORDS ARE INSTRUCTIVE. It seems to me that they are instructive if we use them thus.

First, *avoid all positive resolutions about what you mean to do*, remembering that, “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” Do not forget what the Apostle James says about this matter, “Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain, whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow.” If you do make any plans, always make them in pencil and have your eraser handy so that you can rub them out quickly.

Much mischief comes of making them in ink and regarding them as permanent—and saying, “This is what I am sure I shall do.” Cast iron breaks easily, so do not have any cast iron regulations for your life! Do not say, “that is my plan and I shall keep to it whatever happens.” Be ready to alter your plan as God’s Providence indicates that alteration would be right. I have known people who have been very much given to change—I cannot commend them, for I remember that Solomon said, “As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place.” So, do not be in a hurry to wander! On the other hand, I have known some persons who have resolved that they will never move at all. Do not make such a resolution as that, but remember that although “a rolling stone gathers no moss,” it is equally true that “a sitting hen gets no barley”—and believe that there may come a time when it will be right for you to move. Do not make up your mind that you will move, or that you will not move, but wait for guidance from God as to what He would have you do.

The next thing is *never be too positive in your expectations*. I suppose we must have expectations—that old-fashioned benediction, “Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed,” is very difficult to gain. Expect that if God has promised you anything, He will be true to His Word—but, beyond that, do not expect anything beneath the moon, for, if you do, you will be sure to be disappointed sooner or later. It is of the man whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, that it is said, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.” But if his heart had been fixed merely on the attainment of certain worldly ends, he would have been overwhelmed when the evil tidings came! As to anything in this world, let this be the rule by which you are governed—“having food and raiment, be therewith content”—and never cherish too optimistic expectations.

Next, *avoid all security as to the present*. If you have anything that you prize very highly, hold it very loosely, for you may easily lose it. Read the word, “mortal,” plainly imprinted on the brows of all your children. Look into the dear eyes that are to you like wells in the desert and remember that they may be closed in less than an hour and the light of life be gone from them! Your beloved one and you are, alike, mortal—and either of you may soon be taken from the other. Have you property? Remember that wealth has wings and that it flies away like a bird upon swift pinions. Have you health? Then think what a marvelous mercy it is that—

**“A harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long”—**

and remember that, very soon, those strings may be all jarring and some of them may be broken. Hold everything earthly with a loose, hand, but grasp eternal things with a death-like grip! Grasp Christ in the power of the Spirit! Grasp God, who is your everlasting Portion and your unfailing Joy. As for other things, hold them as though you held them not, even as Paul says, “it remains that both they that have wives be as though they had none...and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passes away.” Of everything below, it is wise for us to say, “This is not my abiding portion.” It is very necessary to say this and

to realize that it is true, for everything here is covered with bird-lime—and the birds of paradise get stuck to it unless they are very watchful. Mind what you are doing, you prosperous people, you who have nice homes, you who are investing your money in the funds—mind that you do not get bird-limed! There is nothing permanent for you here! Your home is in Heaven—your home is not here—and if you find your treasure here, your heart will also be here—but it must not be so. You must keep all earthly treasures out of your heart and let Christ be your Treasure—and let Him have your heart.

The next observation I would make is this—*Bow before the Divine Will in everything*. “It is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” Why should it be? O Lord, You are Master, You are King! Then why should we wish to have our own way? Is it right that the servant should take the master’s place? There are some of you who are in trouble and probably your chief trouble arises from the fact that you will not absolutely submit to the Lord’s will. I pray that the Holy Spirit may enable you to do so, for trouble loses all its sting when the troubled one yields to God! If you had directed your own way and this trouble had come upon you because of the choice that you made, you might have cause to be distressed. But as the Lord has so directed and arranged your affairs, why should you be cast down? My dear Friend, you know—or, at any rate, you ought to know—that you cannot be supreme. You must be content to be second. You must say to the Lord, “Your will, not mine, be done.” You will have to say it sooner or later! And if you are a child of God, you ought to have said it long ago, so say it at once!

I heard one who I thought was a Christian, say, “I cannot think that God was right in taking away my dear mother from me.” I replied, “My Sister, you must not talk like that.” Perhaps someone else says, “I did feel that it was hard when my dear child was taken from me.” Yes, my dear Friend, you may have felt that it was hard, but you ought to have felt that it was right. God must be free to do as He pleases and He always does what is right—therefore you must submit to His will—whatever He pleases to do.

My last observation is—*Pray about everything*. Remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Pray about everything! I make no exception to this. Pray about waking in the morning and pray about falling asleep at night. Pray about any great event in your life, but pray equally about what you call the minor events. Pray as Jacob did when he crossed the brook Jab-bok, but do not forget to pray when there is no angry Esau near and no special danger to fear. The simplest thing that is not prayed over may have more evil in it than what appears to be the direst evil when once it has been brought to God in prayer. I pray that all of you who love the Lord may commit yourselves afresh to Christ this very hour. I wish to do so myself, saying, “My Master, here I am. Take me and do as You will with me. Use me for Your Glory in any way that You please. Deprive me of every comfort if so I shall the more be able to honor You. Let my choic-

est treasures be surrendered if Your Sovereign Will shall so ordain.” Let every child of God make a complete surrender, here and now, and ask for Grace to stand to it. Your greatest sorrow will come when you begin to be untrue to your full surrender to the Lord—so may you never prove untrue to it!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 10.**

**Verses 1, 2.** *Hear you the word which the Lord speaks unto you, O house of Israel: Thus says the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of Heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.* Among the heathen, if certain stars were in conjunction, it was considered unlucky. And certain days of the week were also regarded as unlucky, just as to this day there are people who think that it is very unfortunate to commence anything on a Friday. There are a great many foolish superstitions floating about this silly world, but you Christian people should never allow such follies to have any influence upon you. Neither the fiends of Hell, nor the stars of Heaven can ever injure those who put their trust in God!

**3, 4.** *For the customs of the people are vain: for one cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.* Those ancient Prophets seemed to take delight in heaping scorn upon the god-making of the heathen. Even the heathen poets made sport of the god-making! One of them very wisely said that it would be more reasonable to worship the workmen who made the god than to worship the god which the workmen had made!

**5.** *They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must need be borne, because they cannot go.* Pretty gods they must be! They cannot move and cannot even stand till they are nailed up! They cannot stir unless they are carried from place to place.

**5-8.** *Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto You, O LORD; You are great, and Your name is great in might. Who would not fear You, O King of nations? For to You does it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nation, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You. But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities.* To teach people to worship mere stocks and stones may well be called, “a Doctrine of vanities.”

**9.** *Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men.* Step into any Roman Catholic shrine in England, or on the Continent, or for that matter, into any Anglican shrine, for they are all very much alike, and you will see that the modern “gods” are no better than those upon which the Prophets of old poured scorn! And I think it is our duty to pour



scorn upon these saints, Madonnas and bambinos and I know not what besides!

**10-13.** *But the LORD is the true God, He is the living God and an everlasting king: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation. Thus shall you say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion. When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning with rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures. To what a height of sacred imagery does Jeremiah mount! He seems to shake off his usual melancholy spirit when he comes to sing the praises of the Lord! He uses very similar language to that of Job, his fellow-sufferer.*

**14.** *Every man is brutish in his knowledge.* Every idolater proves that he knows no more than a brute beast when he worships a stock or a stone.

**14, 15.** *Every founder is confounded by the engraved image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.* The next verse brings out very vividly the contrast between these false gods and the one living and true God—

**16.** *The Portion of Jacob is not like they: for He is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of His inheritance: The LORD of Hosts is His name.* What a blessed name that is for God—“The Portion of Jacob”! And the other side of the Truth is equally blessed—“Israel is the rod of His inheritance.” God belongs to His people and they belong to Him! If we can but realize that these blessings are ours, we are building on the solid foundation of the richest possible happiness! The form of the prophecy now changes, for God was about to send His people, because of their sin, into a long and sad captivity. So the Prophet says, in the name of the Lord—

**17, 18.** *Gather up your wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress. For thus says the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at once, and will distress them, that they may find it so.* They had fled to their fortresses for shelter, for the Babylonians were coming up against them. But no hope of deliverance was held out to them and they were told to pack up their little bundles, to put their small stores as closely together as they could, for they had to go away into a far distant country as captives of the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar. God compares their captivity to the forcible ejection of stones from a sling—“I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at once.” How severely God chastened His people in Jeremiah’s day! Yet, when we think of their innumerable provocations and of how they revolted again and again against the Lord, we are not surprised that at last the Lord sent them into captivity. Now listen to Jeremiah’s lamentation over the people whom he looks upon as already in captivity. He speaks in the name of the nation and says—

**19.** *Woe is me for my hurt! My wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief and I must bear it.* Ah, child of God, you also must learn to say that! There are some trials and troubles which come upon you against which you may not contend, but you must say, “Truly this is a grief and I must bear it.”

**20.** *My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent anymore, and to set up my curtains.* Alas, poor Israel! She was like a tent removed with none to set her up again. There are some churches in the present day that are in this sad condition—the faithful fail from among them, there are no new converts and no earnest spirit, so that the church has to say—“My tent is spoiled and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent anymore, and to set up my curtains.” Yes, poor afflicted church, that may be all true, yet your God can visit you and make the barren woman to keep house and to be a joyful mother of children! And you who have lost your dearest one and seem to have no stamina left—your children are all taken from you—but your God can build you up! Is He not better to you than ten sons? And has He not said to you, “Your Maker is your Husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name”?

**21, 22.** *For the pastors have become brutish and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. Behold, the noise of the bruit is come.* “Bruit” is an old Norman word—one wonders how it got in here. It might be rendered, “The noise of the tumult is come.”

**22-24.** *And a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.* What a suitable prayer this is for a sick man, for a tried Believer, for the child of God in deep despondency of soul! I scarcely know any better words that any of us could use. The suppliant does not ask to go unchastised, but he says, “O Lord, correct me, but with judgment: not in Your anger; lest You bring me to nothing.”

**25.** *Pour out Your fury upon the heathen that know You not, and upon the families that call not on Your name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.* So he asks God to, instead of smiting His own children, to smite His enemies. And knowing what we do about the Babylonians, we do not wonder that Jeremiah put up such a prayer as that.

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—215, 208.**

—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.**

# SINS OF OMISSION

## NO. 838

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 25, 1868,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant which I commanded them to do; but they did them not.”  
Jeremiah 11:8.***

JEREMIAH was commissioned of God to bring a solemn accusation against rebellious Israel and he commences by solemnly mentioning their sins of omission. Observe that neglect of the Divine command is the charge brought in the text. In the next verses, the Prophet goes on to mention their sins of *commission*, but he very properly gives the first place to their shortcomings in positive service. He reminds them of what they had *not* done which they *ought* to have done and how constantly and persistently they had refused to render active obedience to the righteous will of the Most High.

Brothers and Sisters, it is well for us to have our sins brought to our remembrance. This morning we may spend a little time most profitably by looking into the glass of Holy Scripture to discover the spots upon our countenances. Perhaps some of your sins have never been forgiven because you have never sought to have them pardoned—you may have never been sufficiently conscious of the danger in which they placed you—may you be, by the Holy Spirit, this morning convicted of sin and led to Jesus!

While I shall be trying to speak of your great omissions, perhaps conscience may be at work, and the Holy Spirit may work through conscience so that you may be led to repentance, and to faith, and through faith to salvation. “It is a consummation devoutly to be wished.” Others here who have been pardoned—who rejoice everyday in the perfect forgiveness which they have found at the foot of Christ’s Cross—will, nevertheless, be benefited by being reminded of their sins, for thus they will be humbled. Thus they will be led to prize more the great atoning sacrifice. Thus they will be driven again to renew the simplicity of their faith as they look to Him on whom Jehovah made to meet the iniquities of all His people.

God grant that also, for His name's sake, I shall, this morning, take rather the *spirit* of the text than the words of it. The subject will be sins of omission.

**I.** First, I would call your attention to THE GREAT COMMONNESS OF THESE. Their commonness in the wide world. Their frequency in our own circle of society. And to each man, to each woman, I would say to their abundance in your own heart. Here it is observed at the outset that in a certain sense all offenses against the Law of God come under the head of *sins of omission*, for in every sin of *commission* there is an omission—an omission, at least, of that godly fear which would have prevented disobedience.

Our Lord has told us that the whole law is summarized in these two Commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself." Since, then, every sin must be a breach of this all-comprehensive Law, every sin must, from a certain aspect, be a sin of omission. Consider, then, how multitudinous have been your omissions and mine! Have we loved the Lord our God with all our heart? Perhaps you have omitted to love Him at all. You who have loved Him have omitted to love Him with "all your heart." And if at any time you *have* loved with "all your heart," yet you have omitted to *continue* in this.

There have been slowing downs and intermissions—and every omission of obedience becomes a distinct act of disobedience to the Most High. We have not served Him with "all our mind," any more than with all our heart. That is to say we have not yielded up our understanding to His infinite wisdom and authority. We have even dared to re-judge His judgments and murmur against His Providences. We have not surrendered our wills to His will, but have desired things contrary to His purpose and to His Truth.

Neither has our strength been entirely devoted to His service. We have not done unto You, Creator and Preserver, at all according to the benefits which we have received. Take the first four Commandments, which make up the first table, and what sins of omission have we all committed there! We have omitted to make God the Chief, the First, the Foremost, the only Lord of our spirit, and we have too often had other gods before Him. We have omitted to treat His name with the reverence which He demands. And if we have not committed profanity or blasphemy, yet that name has not always been hallowed by us as it should have been.

As for His day, it has not always been sacredly guarded as a day of mental as well as bodily rest. We have done servile work in our minds, if not with our hands, by our many cares and fretfulness and so have failed to honor our God with the joyful worship which He deserves. Think, dear Friends, especially you who know God, and rejoice in Him, how ill you

have treated the Father of your spirits! He deserved, since He has bought you with the blood of His dear Son, to be served with an all-consuming earnestness. He rightly claims the cream of our thoughts, the best of our meditations, and that our souls should always be diligent in His service. But alas, we have been sluggards and idlers! We have not spoken well of His name. We have not sounded abroad His Glory. We have not been obedient to His will. We are unprofitable servants. We have not done what it was our duty to have done towards our God.

The other portion of the Law, our Savior tells us, is contained in these words, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Which of us has done *that*? We must plead guilty even before we come to details. Take the command as it stands and there is no man of woman born who shall dare to say that he has been perfect in this. Especially let me remind you of those sins of omission which daily occur in our various relationships. We have oftentimes omitted to act lovingly towards our neighbor. We have failed to do the kind thing towards the sick and the poor in relieving them—the right thing towards the ignorant in seeking their instruction.

I am afraid that many of us have the blood of our neighbors upon our garments because we have left them in ignorance and have not told them the Gospel. And if they die in their sins they might well, with their dying breath, upbraid us that, having the light, we have not carried it to them. You cannot, I think, look out of your window and say, "I am clear concerning all those who abide around me. I have, to the utmost of my ability, done for them what I shall wish to have done when I come to die." Brothers and Sisters, have you not fallen into sins of omission against your own children? They have grown up now, some of them—did you, for them in matters towards God, do as you could wish now that you are done?

Or your little ones that are around about you—are you sure that you are always doing everything that God would have you do to train them up in His fear? Are there no omissions in the household? For my own part, I dare not think of my relationships towards this Church, towards the world, towards other Churches of Jesus Christ, towards my own household without the blush and the tear! Brethren, our sins of omission are not to be numbered! Their number grows, as we examine ourselves, till they are more in number than the hairs of our head. And if we had to be justified by our own works, we dare not look up, but must bow our head as guilty culprits and submit to the sentence of God.

Look at sins of omission in another light. How many there are who have omitted yet to perform the first and all essential Gospel commands! Wherever the Gospel goes, it cries, "Repent and be converted." And yet again, "Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." And yet again, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Now, I will not

speak of the neglect of Baptism, though the mass of the Church and the world have renounced Baptism and have adopted a ceremony of their own invention. But I *will* speak to you of the neglect of repentance, for many of you in this house have been urged, again and again, to repent and consider your iniquities, but you have refused the sacred counsel.

There was, indeed, room enough for repentance, and cause enough for a change of mind—but, though you have heard the arguments for penitence, your heart still remains hard towards God and no true sorrow for sin is found within your spirit. How often have these lips declared to you that faith in Jesus Christ is both your *duty* and your *privilege*—that it, alone, can save you? Yet that faith you have neither sought nor desired! You know in *theory* what saving faith means. You could explain to others what it is to believe in Jesus, and yet you remain hearers of the Word and not *doers* of it, deceiving your own souls.

Throughout this huge city of ours, dense masses of men know the Gospel, but obey it not. They have heard it, or might hear it if they would, but they have not obeyed the Gospel. As Isaiah says, it has been a hardening to them, and not a gracious means of renewal. O unbelievers, the lack of faith is a sin of omission which will sink you to the lowest Hell! This is the most damning sin of all, and above all others fills the gates of Hell—that men believe not on Jesus Christ, but love darkness rather than light!

Again, what sins of omission cluster round religious duties! A large proportion of our fellow citizens neglect altogether the outward worship of God. God forgive them and send a change in the manners of the people by which the Houses of Prayer shall be thronged! Alas, it is not with these we need to deal just now if we would find sins of neglect. Are there not with you, my Hearers, even with *you*, sins against the Lord our God? What omissions we are guilty of as to prayer? How some live as if there were no God, or as if atheistic views had bewitched them! From morning to night multitudes forget the Most High, and call not on His name! And if, perhaps, they do remember to bow the knee in outward supplication, how few really *adore* their Maker?

How lax in devotion are the most of us? How ready to be excused from communion with God? How short we make our prayers and how little of our hearts do we throw into them? And that Bible, as it lies open before us, how, with silent but solemn eloquence, it accuses us! Can you look at it, my Hearers, without shame? Unread is that book from day to day while the ephemeral *newspaper*—the mere record of the flying hour and its trivialities—is read with eagerness to the neglect of the great things of God's Law!

Truly, we cannot even look around upon the place where we assemble for worship without our omissions accusing us—for when we have been

here we have not set our thoughts upon God—we have not sung His praises with heart-music! When the time of prayer has come our thoughts have been gadding here and there after vanity. Brothers and Sisters, whatever part of religious worship comes under review we must confess that we have left undone the things which we ought to have done! And so take the whole stretch of human life, from the cradle to gray old age. We failed to honor our parents in our youth. We have been slow in honoring God throughout our manhood. And at the close of life the same omission in different forms may be charged upon us.

God deserves of us that we should serve Him. That we should, to the utmost of our abilities, contribute to the revenue of His Glory. But our talents have been wrapped in a napkin. Our service has been given to *self*—we have lived to please ourselves, or to win our fellow creatures' applause—while our blessed God has had only the dregs of our thoughts, the remnants of our time, the refuse of our actions. The roll of our omissions is very long, and if it were read by a tender conscience it would seem black with multiplied lamentations. Who among us, apart from the Atonement, can endure the thought that God records all our failures of duty as well as our actual transgressions? Who, I say, could dare to look up if it were not for those streaming wounds of that blessed Son of God who has blotted out our iniquities and washed away our scarlet stains?

Our omissions frown upon us and thunder at us! They lie upon the horizon of memory like masses of storm clouds accumulating for a horrible tempest! None of us dares turn our eyes in that direction until first we have seen the Lord's appointed Propitiation and found our rest in Him.

**II.** Brethren, I call you to a second thought—what is THE CAUSE OF THIS EXCESSIVE MULTIPLICITY OF SINS OF OMISSION?

Of course, my Brethren, the great cause lies in our evil hearts. That we do not bring forth fruit unto God is because our depraved nature is barren towards Him. Man is, by nature, dead in sin—and how can the dead in sin perform actions which express spiritual life? Can we expect to gather grapes or figs from withered trees? “You must be born-again,” and until this inward change—this thorough *regeneration* of our nature has been accomplished—we remain barren and unprofitable and unaccepted of God. Lack of the new nature is the great root of the matter in the ungodly. And the absence of a new heart and a right spirit mean men will never obey the Lord's commands till the Holy Spirit takes away the heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh. May the Lord do that for you, O you unsaved ones, and His shall be the praise!

I suspect that the unnoticed superabundance of sins of omission may result, also, from the fact that the conscience of man is not well alive to sins of omission. If any of you had committed theft, he would most likely

feel much ashamed. If another had fallen into an act of unchastity, it would probably stick in his conscience for awhile, unless, indeed, habit had rendered him callous to it. But while conscience will chastise most men for direct acts of wrong, it is not in every case sufficiently alive to rebuke us for so much as one in 10 of our *omissions*. And, indeed, even our *memory* willfully refuses to file the record of duties left undone.

Yet, Beloved, there is as much sin in not loving God as in lusting after evil! There is as much rebellion in not obeying God as in breaking His commands. Measure for measure—put into the scales together—it may even happen that a sin of omission may turn out to be more sinful than one of commission! A sin of omission argues a state of mind sinful and corrupt, while a sin of commission may only be occasioned by the violence of a temptation, while, after all, the soul is at heart, right with God. Those sins of ours which we have never confessed or noticed, which have slipped away with the hours, and have gone as a dream are recorded in the book of God. And in the day when unforgiven sinners with awakened consciences shall be made to hear that book read out before an assembled universe, woe unto them, woe unto them, that they refused to be obedient to the Lord!

No doubt, sins of omission are also multiplied through indolence. Some men have not enough force of character in them to be downright wicked—they are mere chips in the porridge with nothing of manhood in them. They are so idle that they are not even good enough to be diligent servants of *Satan*. There are some who would, if they could, I think, lie in bed and rot of slothfulness, to whom it would be their most supreme bliss to have nothing to do forever, and nothing to think of except maybe a little eating and drinking by way of variety. Because this indolence abounds, many men sleep on and awake not to righteousness and to the service of God.

For them to repent is troublesome. To believe in Jesus Christ requires the exercise of thought. To be a Christian is too laborious. To watch their conduct and conversation is too much to require of them. If Heaven could be reached in a sound sleep, and sleeping cars could be run all the way to the Celestial City they would be among the best of pilgrims! But they cannot rub their eyes even to see Jesus, or leave their couch to win Heaven itself! How these simpletons will wake up one day when they find that their life of trifling has brought them within the fast *closed* gates of Hell! God is not to be trifled with! He does not make immortal beings that they may sport like butterflies from flower to flower. He does not create souls and give them lives to spend in child's play, fashionable frivolities, and killing of time!

Yet in the face of eternity, life, death, Heaven and Hell, multitudes upon multitudes are ruined simply because they neglect the great salvation and



are absolutely too idle to concern themselves about eternal matters. They *doze* into damnation! They *sleep* into eternal fire! But what a waking! O my fellow Men, run not the risk, run not the risk! Ignorance, too, is a more excusable and, perhaps, less fruitful cause of sins of omission, but still a prominent one. Some men neglect to serve God because they do not know His Word, His mind or His Gospel. But with many the ignorance is willful.

In every land the subject is supposed to know the law—and though our magistrates very rightly are often lenient to prisoners who commit the first offense against a new law, yet such leniency lasts only for a case or two. And if, after the law has been made for years, a prisoner pleaded that he did not know a law, he would be told that he ought to have known it. Especially is this the case with us who have the Law here in the Bible, and who have it moreover written upon our consciences, so that when we sin we sin not as the heathen do, but sin against light and knowledge.

If a man sins through ignorance, he is so far excusable as the ignorance is excusable, but no further. And, in this country, an ignorance of Christ, an ignorance of Gospel duties, an ignorance of the Law of God is without excuse, since in almost every street Jesus Christ is preached, and the Word of God is within every man's reach! If he is but willing and desirous to know the mind of God, he may soon discover it. Yet, I doubt not, ignorance in many, many cases—willing, witting ignorance—does cause many sins of omission.

Sins of omission, again, are very plentiful because men excuse themselves so readily about them by the pretense of a more convenient season. "I have not repented," says one, "but then I mean to do so. I have not believed, but I shall do so before long. It is true I neglected prayer today, but then I intend, by-and-by, to give myself to supplication." So that men imagine that God is to be served by them at their own times and seasons! *God* is to wait until it pleases *them* to do His bidding! And when they have a more convenient season, *then* will they hearken to His Word and to His Spirit! Ah, but, Sirs, the excuse of some future improvement is pitiful—it holds no water—for we are always bound to serve God at once, and the postponement of service is the perpetuation of *rebellion*.

Many neglectors of God's will excuse themselves by the prevalence of the like conduct. To omit to love and serve the Lord is the custom of the *majority*. Wherever custom endorses a good thing, then it becomes unfashionable as well as sinful to break through the rule—and there are thousands of people who would sooner be wicked than be unfashionable! But when a right thing is not commonly observed in society, men straightaway begin to think that it is not necessary, and so they leave it undone. As if a prisoner brought before the bench should say, "It is true I

am a thief, but then all the people in the court where I live are thieves, too! Therefore I ought not to be punished. It is true, Sir, that I could not keep my hands from picking and stealing, but then none of my family ever could. They were brought up to it, and you would not have a man forsake the customs of his father and mother—my father and mother were professional thieves—therefore I cannot be blamed for following their example.”

But enlightened conscience warns us that custom is no excuse for sin. To your own Master each one of you will stand or fall! And, Sirs, however graceless may be the parish in which you live, you have not to account for the parish, but for *yourselves!* And however covetous may be the times in which your lot is cast, you are not accountable for the times, but for *yourselves!* I charge you, in the name of God, let not custom ever be an excuse to your soul for sin, for custom will be no plea at the bar of God, nor will the multitude of those who are lost be any alleviation to your pain when you, too, are cast away with them into outer darkness!

Need I multiply reasons for the commonness of sins of omission? They grow on every plot of wasteland in our hearts, and their seeds are carried everywhere—as the down of the thistle—and as many as the seed of the poppy.

**III.** I come now, in the third place, to say a few words by way of setting forth THE SINFULNESS OF SINS OF OMISSION. I wish I had the power to speak upon this subject as I would, for I long to see broken hearts among us convinced of their innumerable shortcomings. Broken hearts are God’s sacrifices. There are some among us who complain that they cannot believe in Jesus because they do not *feel* their need. I only wish they might be made to feel their need while, this morning, they are reminded of what they have left undone.

Now I pray the Holy Spirit to make you feel the guilt of omissions as they are seen in the following light. Consider, for a moment, what would be the consequences if God were to omit, for one minute, to supply you with breath—if the Lord should omit, for a *second*, to supply you with life! Suppose the infinite God should omit His long-suffering mercy for an hour! Suppose He should refuse for an hour to restrain the axe of judgment—where were you then? Suppose that the great Preserver of all should make but one day’s intermission of goodness in His dealings with the universe? The sun would not shine. The air would fail to fill the lungs. Life would forget to be! The world would cease to exist, and the whole universe would subside into the nothingness from which it sprang! One moment’s forgetfulness on God’s part would be annihilation to all His creatures!

Suppose that Jesus had left an omission in the plan of salvation? If only one part of our salvation had been left unfinished, then all must be

forever accursed! Then must you put your hands upon your loins, this morning, and go up and down through this hopeless world in desperate sorrow, saying one to the other, "There is no hope! Salvation is unfinished, and consequently unavailable! The Savior omitted one necessary item and none of us can, therefore, be saved!" If you will digest these two thoughts, you may, perhaps, taste the blessedness which lies in neglect of necessary things. Omissions cannot be trivial, if we only reflect what an influence they would have upon an ordinary commonwealth if they were perpetrated there as they are in God's commonwealth.

Think a minute—if one person has a right to omit his duty, another has, and all have—then the watchman would omit to guard the house; the policeman would omit to arrest the thief; the judge would omit to sentence the offender; the sheriff would omit to punish the culprit; the government would omit to carry out its laws. Then every occupation would cease and the world die of stagnation. The merchant would omit to attend to his calling. The farmer would omit to plow his land! Where would the commonwealth be? The kingdom would be out of joint. The machine would break down, for no cog of the wheels would act upon its fellow. How would societies of men exist at all?

And surely, if this is not to be tolerated in a society of *men*, much less in that great commonwealth of which God is the King—in which angels and glorified spirits are the peers, and all creatures citizens! How can the Lord tolerate that here there should be an omission, and there an omission, in defiance of His authority? As the Judge of all the earth, He must bring down His strong right hand upon these omissions and crush out forever the spirit that would thus revolt against His will. Think for a minute of how you would judge omissions towards yourselves. You have said to yourself, "So long as I do not drink or swear, or curse, or lie, or steal, it is a small matter that I neglect to be devout towards God."

Now listen. There is your servant—he has never stolen your goods, he has never set your house on fire, he has never held a pistol to your ear—and yet you have discharged him. Why? "Why," you say, "because the fellow neglects everything about the house! I do not find that any command which I give him is carried out. *He* must be master or *I* must—and if he will not do what I tell him, of what service is he? Let him go his way." That is how you judge your servant, is it? And is God to let *you* neglect His service and yet to suffer you to go unpunished? Take a soldier in the army. To commit an act of mutiny it is not necessary for the soldier to fix his bayonet and kill his colonel. When he is ordered out on guard, he can just stop at home. Or when the battle rages, he may, if he chooses, just ground his arms, and say, "No, I am not going out to fight." Who could tolerate such mutiny—how could it be allowed?

The omission is as vicious as the commission. Your child, the other day, smarted beneath the rod, and why? He had not lied or pilfered. There was no direct vicious act—but you had told him to go on an errand and he had refused to go. And when you told him again and again, (and remember, God has commanded you a great many more times than you ever told your child), there he stood in stolid obstinacy and would not move. And, then, very rightly he was made to feel that such things could not be permitted in your household.

Now, if in our house we cannot tolerate this from a child, much more shall the great Father not endure these obstinate omissions from us! Ah, “But,” you say, “I have not omitted towards God to go to Church or to meeting regularly. I have not omitted the form of singing and prayer, and so on. All I have omitted is the *spiritual* matter, I have not loved Him.” And suppose, dear Friends, suppose you have a wife, and the only thing that she has omitted is that she has omitted to love you—what do you think of that? Well, the house and domestic arrangements may show great cleanliness and order, but she is no wife to you if she has no love for you! The omission of love *you* feel to be a fatal one! And so that absence of love to *God* is such a dreadful absence, too! It is such a taking away of everything that I only wish you could feel, you who have not loved Him, how guilty you are!

It may also help us, if we will consider for a moment, what God things of omissions. Saul was ordered to kill the Amalekites, and not to let one escape. He saved Agag and the best of the cattle, and for that, though he had positively done nothing but simply stayed his hand and refused to do so, the Lord said, “I have put you away from being King over Israel.” Ahab was commanded to kill and slay Benhadad on account of innumerable cruelties. Benhadad was taken captive, but Ahab treated him with great leniency—and the result was, “Because you have let this man go, therefore your life shall be for his life.” Non-obedience ruined Ahab.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was the gentlest of all Men, and yet there was one miracle which He performed which had a degree of vengeance in it—and what was that? He stood by a fig tree and saw leaves but no fruit, and He said, “Henceforth there shall be no fruit on you forever,” as if to show that fruitless things provoked His anger—not so much brambles which bear their thorns—but *fig trees* which ought to bear figs and do not. Remember, too, the parable which we read this morning in your hearing. The man with the one talent was condemned, if you remember, and his condemnation was for this—not that he had squandered his lord’s money, but that he had not *increased* it. So that, in God’s opinion, the *not doing* of good is sufficient to condemn men even if they have not committed positive evil.

When the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin, what is the special sin which He reveals? The sin of adultery? The sin of robbery? No, of an omission—"Of sin, because they believe not on Me." Omitting to believe in Jesus is the master sin of which the Holy Spirit convicts the world. Remember that solemn question of Paul when he asks, "How shall we escape if we—what? If we *swear*? If we frequent the tavern? No—"if we neglect so great a salvation?" The life-long neglect of salvation involves us in danger from which there is no escape.

**V.** Much more might be said, but time fails me and therefore let me remind you very solemnly of what will be THE RESULT AND PUNISHMENT OF SINS OF OMISSION. Sins of omission will *condemn* us. Take the parable with which we closed our reading this morning—the King said to those on His left hand, "I was hungry and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink." He did not say to them, "You were frequenters of evil houses. You were common drunkards. You were dishonest. You were fraudulent bankrupts. You were neglectors of the Sabbath. You were common profane swearers." No, but He said, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat."

It was the *absence of virtue*, rather than the presence of vice, which condemned them. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." "But, Lord, the man has no vice about him. He has not plunged himself into the kennel of open iniquity." "Ah, but that suffices not! If there is not the positive *fruits* of the Spirit producing in him holiness of life, he shall not see the Lord." O Sirs, let none of us deceive ourselves! God will not accept our profession of religion because it simply keeps us chaste and decorous, and makes us civil to our neighbors! We must have worked in us, by the Holy Spirit, a righteousness *better* than that of the Scribes and Pharisees or we shall by no means enter into the kingdom of Heaven!

There must be worked in us as a work of Divine Grace—a deep abhorrence of sin, an earnest clinging to purity, a resolute pursuit of everything that is peaceful, and lovely, and of good repute—or else let us prate as we may, we shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of God! I preach not salvation by works in any sense or degree, or shape, or form, but salvation by Grace alone! Yet still I hear in my ears the echo of the Baptist's words, "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

Not only the tree that brings forth *bad fruit* is burned, but the tree which is *barren* and unprofitable is hewn down and cast into the fire! If we bring not forth the fruits of true saving faith, we may be sure that such faith is not in our possession! Sins of omission not only bring condemnation, but if persevered in they effectually shut against us the possibilities of *pardon*. I mean that sins of omission against the Gospel deprive us of

Gospel privileges. “He that believes not”—is there pardon for him? “He that believes not”—is there *rescue* for him? No! He “is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.”

He that repents not—will Divine Grace reach him? Will the mercy of God blot out sins that are unrepented of? No, not so! As long as we cling to sin, sin will cling to us as the leprosy did to the house of Gehazi. God forgives all sins through Jesus Christ and He is willing to forgive the vilest of us if we come to Him trusting alone in Jesus. But if we have no faith in Jesus Christ it is not possible for us to receive from the Lord the forgiveness of sins which He promises only to those who believe in Jesus! In the marriage feast of which we read in the Gospels, there were many who would not come and they perished because they would not come. They are not charged with having actually committed anything wrong—but they perished for *not coming*.

There was one who came to the feast but he had not on a wedding garment. I do not read that he had put on rags, or had decorated himself with anything offensive to the master of the house—but he had failed to put on the wedding garment—that was the deadly sin. And what was the sentence? “Bind him hand and foot, and deliver him to the tormentors.” So I could not charge some of you, today, with anything outwardly contrary to morality, but, O Sirs, if you have not—mark this—if you have *not put on the righteousness of Jesus Christ* by a living faith in Him, the tormentors must have you at the last!

O that this Truth of God might sink into your ears and into your hearts! There is pardon for all omission to be found in the flowing wounds of Jesus! There is life in a LOOK at Him! Over the heads of these multiplied shortcomings, God’s mercy will come to Believers. But, oh, remain not in your unbelief! May the Holy Spirit, by His own mighty power give you Grace now to repent and to believe—and *yours* shall be the salvation—and *God’s* the glory, world without end! Amen.

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# ARE YOU PREPARED TO DIE?

## NO. 635

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

*“How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”  
Jeremiah 12:5.*

CANAAN may be considered as a type of two states or conditions in the Christian's life. It was the land of rest to the children of Israel after a weary pilgrimage in the wilderness. Now it is written that “we who believe do enter into rest.” A true Christian possessed of strong faith will not have a wilderness state on earth so much as a land flowing with milk and honey because his faith will give him the substance of things hoped for and be the evidence of things not seen. Many disciples live a life of depression, wretchedness, and discomfort which would be completely changed if they had faith in God and lived a higher life of devotedness and love.

Canaan may be fairly considered as a type of that better state of Christianity which some enjoy. It is not altogether free from ills. The Canaanite dwells in the land and there are still wars and fights, but there is rest and there is the spirit of service developing itself in the cultivation of the promised land. But Canaan is generally used to shadow forth “the rest which remains for the people of God” beyond the skies. Heaven is thus frequently described as corresponding to the earthly inheritance of the Jews.

It is our *hope*—the *end* of our pilgrimage. It contains our Jerusalem and the temple “not made with hands.” When this is the view taken of the type, then Jordan is not unnaturally likened unto death. Its dark waters are made to picture forth to our minds the chill stream through which we wade in our dying hour. It is a beautiful emblem and we have all doubtless often sung Dr. Watt's hymn with much feeling—

***“There is land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign.  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain.  
There everlasting spring abides,  
And never-withering flowers.  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours.”***

Taking “the swelling of Jordan” to represent the precise time of death, the question really is what shall we do when we come to die? “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

**I.** We notice, in the first place, that this is an EXCEEDINGLY PRACTICAL QUESTION. “How will you do?” is the enquiry. There are some subjects which are more or less matters of pure faith and personal feeling. And though all Christian doctrines bear more or less directly upon the Christian life, yet they are not what is commonly meant by practical subjects. Our text, however, brings us face to face with a matter which is essentially a matter of *doing* and of *acting*—it asks how we mean to conduct ourselves in the hour of death.

We sometimes hear the remark made by those who object to doctrinal preaching that we are too speculative and utter our own opinions which feed men’s fancies but do not regulate their life. Now we believe that every promise leads to a precept and every doctrine has its duty—so we will not admit the justice of the insinuation even if we did preach doctrine entirely to the exclusion of the Commandments—which we emphatically deny. But here we have, at any rate, a topic practical enough. I am only afraid it will be a little too much so for some! They will turn it into a sentiment and a feeling and not *act* upon it so as to put it into practice and exemplify its power in after days.

Christians may differ with me on some points, but I am sure that here we are united in belief—we *must* die and ought not to die unprepared. There is a divergence of opinion as to what we ought to do at the *commencement* of our Christian life—I maintain that we ought to follow Christ and be immersed in water, “for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.” Others oppose that as being unnecessary, inexpedient, or what not. We differ at the beginning of life, but we agree in the end—we must die. And we all want to die the death of the righteous and to have our last end like his.

**II.** We notice, in the second place, that it is UNDOUBTEDLY A PERSONAL QUESTION. How will *you* do? It individualizes us and makes us, each one, to come face to face with a dying hour. Now we all need this and it will be well for each one of us to look for a minute into the grave. We are too apt to regard all men as mortal but ourselves. Somehow we can see frailty of life as well as all the other frailties which we possess in common much more clearly in *other* people than we can in ourselves.

We are far too much blind to our own weakness and shall do well to ask ourselves, each of us, “My Soul, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” The ancient warrior who wept because before a hundred years were passed he knew his immense army would be gone and not a man remain behind to tell the tale, would have been wiser if he had wept also for himself and left his bloody wars alone and lived as a man who must one day die and find after death a day of judgment! Each one of you must die. If I were addressing an assembly of the sages of the world, I should say, “All your combined wisdom cannot lengthen the days of one of you even a single minute. You may reckon the distance of the stars and weigh



worlds, but you cannot tell me when one of you will die, nor how many grains of sand are left behind in the hourglass of time which shows the exit of each spirit from the world.”

I say now to you, the wisest of you must die! And you know not but that you may die before long. So with the mightiest and the richest of men. Samson was mastered by a stronger than man and the wealthiest of men cannot bribe Death to delay his dart for a single hour. We all come into the world one by one and will go out of it alone, also. Loved ones come to the brink of the dark stream, but there they shake hands and say, “farewell,” and we go on alone. The Prophet’s companion and successor followed his master till the fiery chariot came to take his leader away. And when the messengers of God came they left the servant behind, vainly crying, “My father, my father! The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.”

We had better, therefore, take the question up as *individuals*—seeing that it is one in which we shall be dealt with singly and be unable, then, to claim or use the help of an earthly friend. I put to the young, to the old—to the rich, to the poor—to each one of this vast assembly! I put it as if we were alone before our God—“How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

**III.** As a third thought we call attention to the fact that it is one of the MOST SOLEMN questions. Death and life are stern and awful realities. To say that anything “is a matter of life and death” is to bring one of the most emphatic and solemn subjects under our notice. Now the question we are considering this morning is of this character and we must deal with it as it becomes us—as a subject involving the everlasting interest of souls. The question is of infinite importance to all, but there are some whose case is manifestly such that they need to gird up the loins of their minds and address themselves to its consideration with intense thought and care.

Let me call attention to one or two cases—for while I wish to stir up all—I am bid to have special compassion on some, making a difference, so that I may pluck them as brands out of the fire. I have been curious enough to think that I should like to ask that question of a Jew, of one who rejects Christ as the Messiah. “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” According to the Law, and it is that under which every Jew is born, “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them.”

Now there never was and never will be any man who did, or could, “continue in all things written in the book of the Law to do them”! And consequently *every* man becomes accursed. And it must be a dreadful thing for a man to think of dying under the curse and ban of his own religious faith! And yet every Jew is so cursed by his own book of Law—accursed forever! What comfort will that yield him when he comes to the swelling of Jordan? I have thought, too, that I should like to ask the athe-

ist, the unbeliever, this question, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

He tells me, perhaps, that he believes in annihilation—he will need comfort when he is lying upon that last weary bed. Will he get it out of that well? The dreary blank of total destruction, of ceasing to be—is there anything to help a spirit when it lies where it most wants consolation, tossing to and fro in pain and weakness? I think not. I should like also to put the question to a Roman Catholic—how will *he* do “in the swelling of Jordan?”

Some time ago, you will remember, a Prince of the Catholic Church departed—where did he go? I am not versed in such matters and should not like to judge anybody’s soul, but on the coffin of the Cardinal we find a request that we would *pray for his soul*—and there have been masses said for its repose. It is evident, therefore, that the Cardinal’s soul went *some-where* where it needs praying for and to some place where it is *not* in repose. Now if this is to be the lot for a Cardinal Archbishop, there is but a poor outlook for an ordinary professor of the same faith! If a prince in the church dies and does not go to Heaven as we have been hoping, not to eternal rest—but to a place where he needs our intercession and where he has no repose for his soul—why then it must be dreadful work to die with such a creed as that!

I would sooner have beneath my head the most prickly thorn bush than have that for my dying pillow! Oh, we want something better than this! We desire a hope more rapturous, more Divine, more full of immortality than the certainty of going to a place where there is no repose and where our souls need the prayers of sinful men on earth! But I do not know that we have very much to do with any of these—they must “gang their am gait”—they must go their own way. And if they are found wrong at the last, we are sorry that it should be so. Our own business is certainly the first matter in hand. Therefore, forgetting *them*, let the question come to each of us, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

**IV.** Remember, in the fourth place, that this question was put by way of REBUKE to the Prophet Jeremiah. He seems to have been a little afraid of the people among whom he dwelt. They had evidently persecuted him very much, mocking him and laughing him to scorn. But God tells him to make his face like flint and not to care for them, for, says He, “If you are afraid of them, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

This ought to be a rebuke to every Christian who is subject to the fear of man. I do not believe that any preacher will be long in his pulpit without having the temptation to be afraid of some man or another. And if he does not stand very firmly upon his integrity he will find some of the best of his friends getting the upper hand with him. And this will never do with God’s minister. He must deal out God’s Word impartially to rich or poor, to good or bad. And he must determine to have no master except his Mas-

ter who is in Heaven—no bit nor bridle for his mouth except that of prudence and discretion—which God Himself shall put there.

If we are afraid of a man that shall die and the son of man that is crushed before the moth, how fearful shall we be when we have to talk with the grim king of terrors! If we are afraid of puny *man*, how shall we be able to face it out before the dread ordeal of the Day of Judgment? Yet I know some Christians that are very much abashed by the world's opinion—by the opinion of their family circle—or of the workshop. Now what does it matter, after all? There is an old proverb, that “he is a great fool that is laughed out of his coat.” And there was an improvement on it, that “he was a greater fool who was laughed out of his skin.”

And there is another, that “he is the greatest fool of all who is laughed out of his soul.” He that will be content to be damned in order to be fashionable pays dearly, indeed, for what he gets. Oh, to dare to be singular, if to be singular is to be right! But if you are afraid of man, what will you do in the swelling of Jordan? The same rebuke might be applied to us when we get fretful under the little troubles of life. You have losses in business, vexations in the family—you all have crosses to carry—but my text comes to you and it says, “If you cannot bear this, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? If your religion is not equal to the ordinary emergencies of common days, what will you do when you get to that extraordinary day which will be to you the most important day of your being?”

Come Friends, be not bowed down with these things! Bear them cheerfully since there is much sterner work to do than any that you have met with in the battle of life. And the same reproof might come to us when we get petulant under pains of body. There are some of us who, as soon as we get a little sick, become so fretful that those who like us best are farthest from us! We can scarcely have a little depression of spirit but straightway we are ready to give up all for lost and like Jonah, say, “We do well to be angry even unto death.” Now this ought not to be! We should quit ourselves like men and not be perturbed with these little rivulets—for if these sweep us away, what shall we do when Jordan is swollen to the brim and we have to pass through that?

When one of the martyrs, whose name is the somewhat singular one of Pommily, was confined previous to his burning, his wife was also taken up upon the charge of heresy. She, good woman, had resolved to die with her husband and she appeared, as far as most people could judge, to be very firm in her faith. But the jailer's wife, though she had no religion, took a merciful view of the case as far as she could do so and thought, “I am afraid this woman will never stand the test. She will never burn with her husband—she has neither faith nor strength enough to endure the trial.” Therefore, one day calling her out from her cell, she said to her, “Lass, run to the garden and fetch me the key that lies there.”

The poor woman ran willingly enough. She took the key up and it burned her fingers, for the jailer's wife had made it red hot. She came running back crying with pain. "Yes, Wench," said the jailer's wife, "if you cannot bear a little burn in your hand, how will you bear to be burned in your whole body?" And this, I am sorry to add, was the means of bringing her to recant the faith which she *professed*, but which never had been in her heart.

I apply the story thus—If we cannot bear the little trifling pangs which come upon us in our ordinary circumstances which are, as it were, the burning of our hands, what shall we do when every pulse beats pain and every throb is an agony and the whole tenement begins to crumble about the spirit that is so soon to be disturbed? Come, let us pluck up courage! We have yet to fight the giant! Let us not be afraid of these dwarfs! Let the ordinary trials of every day be laughed to scorn! In the strength of Divine Grace, let us sing with our poet—

***"Weak as I am, yet through Your strength,  
I all things can perform."***

For if we cannot bear these, how will we do in the swelling of Jordan? This is what the text was originally meant to teach. We will now use it for a further purpose.

**V.** The question may be put as A MATTER OF CAUTION. In this assembly there are some who have no hope, no faith in Christ. Now I think if they will look within at their own experience they will find that they are by no means completely at ease. The pleasures of this world are very sweet, but how soon they sour if they do not *sicken* the appetite! After the night of merriment there is often the morning of regret. "Who has woe? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. They that go to seek mixed wine."

It is an almost universal confession that the joys of earth promise more than they perform and that in looking back upon them the wisest must confess with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Now if these things seem to be vanity while you are in good bodily health, how will they look when you are in sickness? If vanity while you can *enjoy* them, what will they appear when you must say farewell to them all? If it were vanity to the rich man while he was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, what greater vanity it must have been when it was said, "This night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be which you have provided?"

How will you do in Jordan when these joys shall vanish and there shall be a dreary blank before you? Moreover, you feel already that conscience pricks you. You cannot live without God and be perfectly at ease unless you are one of those few who are given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. You could not take an hour quietly to think about yourself and your state and yet go to your bed easily. You know right well that the

only way some of you can keep your peace of mind at all is by going from one gay assembly to another and from one party of frolic to another, or else from business to business and from care to care.

Your poor soul, like the infant which is to be cast into Moloch's arms, cries, and you do not hear its cries because you drown it with the noisy drums of this world's pleasures and cares. But still you are not at rest—there is a worm in your fair fruit—there are dregs at the bottom of your sweetest cups and you know it. Now, if even now you are not perfectly at peace—if in this land of peace wherein you have trusted you are getting weary of these things—then “how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

Moreover, you sometimes have, if I am not mistaken, very strange apprehensions. I have known some of the most reckless sinners who have had fearful times when nobody could cheer them when a certain fearful looking of judgment has haunted them. The most superstitious people in the world are those who are the most profane. It is a strange thing that there is always that weak point about those who seem to be most hardened. But you that are not thus hardened—you know that you dare not look forward to death with any pleasure—you cannot! To go to the grave is never very joyous work with you. Yes, and if you were certain that there could be no more death, it would be the best news that you had ever heard! But to some of us it would be the worst that could ever come.

Ah, well! If the very *thought* of death is bitter, what will the *reality* be? And if to gaze at it from a distance is too hard a thing for your mind, what will it be to pass under its yoke—to go through its dark valley, to feel its dart—to know that the poison is rankling in your veins? What will you do? “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” Well, I shall not describe what you will do, though I have seen it and you must have seen it, too. Sometimes a man dies at ease, like a sheep, because he has been dosed with the opium of self-confidence. At other times the man is awakened and sees the dreadful doom to which death is driving him and starts back and shrinks from the wrath to come and cries and shrieks—and perhaps swears that he will not die! And yet die he must—dragged down to that place where he must lift up his eyes to see nothing that can give him hope—nothing that can take away the sharpness of his anguish.

I leave this point. God make it a caution to many now present. Some of you men and women here may be nearer death than you dream of. I wish you would answer the question, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

**VI.** But now I intend to use the question as EXCITING MEDITATION in the breasts of those who have given their hearts to Christ and who, consequently, are *prepared* to die whenever the summons may come. Well, what do we mean to do—how shall *we* behave ourselves when we come to die? I sat down to try and think this matter over, but I cannot, in the

short time allotted to me, even give you a brief view of the thoughts that passed through my mind.

I began thus, "How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?" Well, as a Believer in Christ, perhaps I may never come there at all, for there are some that will be alive and remain at the coming of the Son of Man and these will never die For so says the Apostle—"Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."

This thought we wish to keep ever before us. My real hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would far rather see the Master return than see the messenger, Death. I regulate my life as one who is looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Son of Man. I will not pay more attention to the servant than to the Lord of All. "Come, Lord Jesus! Yes, come quickly," is the prayer of our hearts continually. And as the bride of Christ, we ought to have our hearts filled with rapture at the thought of His return to claim us as His own. If He sends for us, "It is well." But best of all, if He comes Himself again the second time without sin unto salvation. A sweet truth, which we place first in our meditation. I may not sleep, but I must and shall be changed!

Then I thought again, "How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?" I may go through it in the twinkling of an eye. Remember that good man who some time ago was getting ready to preach as usual, but the sermon was never delivered on earth? I mean the President of the Wesleyan Conference—how speedily was he taken to his rest! And how happy it is just to close one's eyes on earth and open them in Heaven! Such, also was the death of one of God's aged servants, Mr. Alleine, who had battled well for the Truth of God. He was suddenly taken ill and was advised to retire to bed. "No," he said, "but I will die in my chair. And I am not afraid to die."

He sat down and only had time to say, "My life is hid with Christ in God," and he closed his eyes with his own hands and fell asleep. When Ananias, a martyr, knelt to lay his white head upon the block, it was said to him as he closed his eyes to receive the stroke, "Shut your eyes a little, Old Man, and immediately you shall see the light of God." I could envy such a calm departing. Sudden death, sudden Glory! Taken away in Elijah's chariot of fire—with the horses driven at the speed of lightning so that the spirit scarcely knows that it has left the clay before it sees the brightness of the beatific vision! Well, that may take away some of the alarm of death—the thought that we may not be even a *moment* in the swelling of Jordan!

Then again, I thought if I must pass through the swelling of Jordan, yet the real act of death takes no time. We hear of suffering on a dying bed. The suffering is all connected with *life*, it is not death. The actual thing called death, as far as we know, does not cost a pang—it is the life that is in us that makes us suffer—death gives one kind pin's prick and it is all

over. Moreover, if I pass through the swelling of Jordan, I may do so without suffering any pain. A dying bed is sometimes very painful with certain diseases, and especially with strong men it is often hard for the body and soul to part. But it has been my happy lot to see some deaths so extremely pleasing that I could not help remarking that it were worth while living only for the sake of dying as some have died!

We have seen consumption for instance—how gently it takes down the frame very often. How quietly the soul departs. And in old age and debility how easily the spirit seems to get away from the cage that was broken, which only needed one blow and the imprisoned bird flies straight away to its eternal resting place! Well, then, as I cannot tell in what physical state I may be when I come to die, I just tried to think again, how shall I do in the swelling of Jordan? I hope I shall do as others have done before me who have built on the same Rock and had the same promises to be their succor.

They cried, “Victory!” So shall I, and after that die quietly and in peace. If the same transporting scene may not be mine, I will at least lay my head upon my Savior’s bosom and breathe my life out gently there. You have a right, Christian, to expect that as other Christians die, so shall you. How will you die? Why, you will die as your sainted mother did! You will die as your father did. When the time came for the “silver cord to be loosed and the golden bowl to be broken, for the pitcher to be broken at the fountain and the wheel broken at the cistern,” the pitcher was broken and the cord loosed and their spirits went to God who gave them. How will you die?

Why, as I mused on this I took down my little book of “Promises,” for I thought I shall certainly do as God says I shall. Well, how is that? “When you pass through the rivers I will be with you.” And again, “Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” And again, “He shall swallow up death in victory.” And again, “He shall make all your bed in your sickness.” And yet again, “Fear not, I am with you. Be not dismayed, I am your God. I will never leave you nor forsake you.” You know what a many dying pillows God has made for His dear people in the hour of their departure! “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” Why, manfully, patiently, if God shall keep His promise as we know He will!

Now let me speak to you all again—I mean you that are in Christ. “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” Why, you will do as a man does who has had a long day’s walk and he can see his home. You will clap your hands. You will sit down upon the next milestone with tears in your eyes and wipe the sweat from your face and say, “It is well, it is over. Oh how happy it is to see my own roof-tree and the place where my best friends, my kindred, dwell. I shall soon be at Home—at Home forever with the Lord.”

How will we do? Why we will do as a soldier does when the battle is fought! He takes off his armor, stretches himself out at length to rest. The

battle is all over. He forgets his wounds and reckons up the glory of the victory and the reward which follows. So will we! We will begin to forget the wounds and the garments rolled in blood and we will think of the "crown of life that fades not away." How will we do in the swelling of Jordan? We will do as men do when they launch for a foreign country. They look back upon those they leave behind and wave their handkerchiefs as long as they can see them—but they are soon gone.

And we will bid adieu to dear ones. They shall have the tears, but we shall have the joy—for we go to the islands of the blest, the land of the hereafter, the home of the sanctified—to dwell with God forever! Who will weep when he starts on such a voyage and launches on such a blessed sea? What will we do when we come into the swelling of Jordan? Why I think, dear Friends, we shall then begin to see through the veil and to enjoy the Paradise of the blessed which is ours forever! We will make that dying bed a throne and we will sit and reign there with Christ Jesus! We will think of that river Jordan as being one tributary of the river of Life which flows at the foot of the jasper Throne of the Most High!

We will live in the land of Beulah on the edge of Jordan with our feet in the cold stream, singing of the better land. We will hear the songs of angels as celestial breezes bring them across the narrow stream. And sometimes we will have in our bosom some of the spices from the Mountains of Myrrh which Christ shall give us across the river. And when we come to die, what will we do in the swelling of Jordan? Why we will try and bear our dying testimony—

***"My joyful soul on Jordan's shore,  
Shall raise one Ebenezer more."***

Oh, that was a grand thing when Joshua said to the twelve men, "Take up twelve stones and set them down in the midst of Jordan where the priests' feet stood still. And take up twelve other stones and set them up on the other side of Jordan, where the children of Israel first trod the promised shore." You and I will do this—we will leave twelve stones in the midst of Jordan. They shall tell our friends and kindred here of the good words we said, the adieu we gave them and the joyful hopes which cheered us—the song we sang when death began to stay our throat. And then we will raise another Ebenezer in Heaven!

There shall be twelve stones there that will tell the angels and the principalities of the love which cleft the Jordan and brought us through it as on dry land. This is how we will do in the swelling of Jordan! We are not looking forward to death with any fear, with any dread. When we get home tonight we shall begin to take off our garments one by one. We shall not shed a tear. Nor shall we when we come to die—

***"Since Jesus is mine, I will not fear undressing,  
But gladly put off these garments of clay.  
To die in the Lord is a comfort and blessing,  
Since Jesus to Glory through death led the way."***



This is how we shall do in the swelling of Jordan—take off our garments to put on the celestial robes. As the bridegroom longs for the marriage day, and as the bride waits until she is joined unto her husband in wedlock, even so our spirits wait for God. As the exile pants to be delivered and the galley slave to be separated from his oar, so we wait to be set free for Glory and immortality! As she that mourns her absent lord pines for his return. As the child longs to reach his father's house and to see his father's face, so do we!—

***“My heart is with Him on His Throne,  
And ill can brook delay,  
Each moment listening for His voice,  
‘Make haste and come away.’ ”***

I must finish, for time has gone. But I meant to have said a word or two by way of warning. I can only do so now briefly, abridging them and compressing the thoughts as tightly as I can. “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” may well be used by way of warning. I think, dear Friends, you ought to ask yourselves one question. Some of you never think of dying and yet you should. You say you may live long—you may—and you may not. If there were a great number of loaves upon this table and you were to eat one every day and if you were told that one of those loaves had poison in it, I think you would begin every one with great caution. And knowing that one of them would be your death, you would take each up with silent dread.

Now you have so many days and in one of these days there is the poison of death. I do not know which one. It may be tomorrow. It may not be until many a day has gone. But I think you ought to handle all your days with holy jealousy. Is not that a fair parable? If it is, then let me ask you to think upon the question, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” You grant that you will die and you may die soon. Is it not foolish to be living in this world without a thought of what you will do at last?

A man goes into an inn and as soon as he sits down he begins to order his wine, his dinner, his bed. There is no delicacy in season which he forgets to request. There is no luxury which he denies himself. He stays at the inn for some time. By-and-by there comes the bill and he says, “Oh, I never thought of *that*—I never thought of that!” “Why,” says the landlord, “here is a man who is either a born fool or else a thief! What? Never thought of the reckoning—never thought of settling-day!” And yet this is how some of you live! You have this and that and the other thing in this world's inn, (for it is nothing but an inn), and you have soon to go your way and yet you have never thought of settling-day!

“Well,” says one, “I was casting up my accounts this morning.” Yes, I remember a minister making this remark when he heard of one that cast up his accounts on Sunday. He said, “I hope that is not true, Sir.” “Yes,” he said, “I do cast up my accounts on Sunday.” “Ah, well,” he said, “the Day of Judgment will be spent in a similar manner—in casting up ac-

counts and it will go ill with those people who found no other time in which to serve themselves except the time which was given them that they serve God.”

You have either been a dishonest man, or else you must be supremely foolish to be spending every day in this world’s inn and yet to be ignoring the thought of the great day of account! But remember, though you forget it, God forgets not. Every day is adding to the score. Photographed in Heaven is every action that you perform. Your very thoughts are photographed upon the eternal mind. And in the day when the book shall be opened it will go ill with you. Perhaps you will say, as one did in the Book of Kings, “Well, I was busy here and there. I was looking after my family and my property. I was looking after politics. I was seeing after such-and-such an investment. And my soul is gone.”

Yes, but that would not bring it back again. And what shall it profit you, though you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? It is no business of mine what becomes of you, except this—I do desire to talk with you at all times, that if you perish it may not be laid at *my* door. What would you say to that soldier who should be told by his commanding officer to fight with the foe on the field of battle and the so-called soldier were to reply, “I don’t know anything about battle or fighting. I never thought of the battlefield, I can do anything but fight”?

The general would be sorely amazed. He would want to know what the soldier lived for, if it were not to fight and defend his country in the hour of his country’s need. What do we live for if it is not to prepare for a hereafter life and for the day for which all days were made? What? Are we sent into this world and told that we are to “prepare to meet our God,” and we do everything else but that one thing? This will not be wise. And when the Lord of the whole earth shall come out of His place to judge the sons of men, bitterly shall we rue our folly!

Be wise now! Remember this and consider your latter end. What words shall I use to urge you to consider the subject and take my warning? Is Heaven a place you would like to enter? Is Hell a place you would like to avoid, or will you make your bed in it forever? Are you in love with eternal misery that you run to it so madly? Oh, stop! Turn! Turn! Why will you die? I do pray you stop and consider. Consideration does no man harm. Second thoughts here are for the best. Think and think and think again and oh, may God lead you, through thinking, to feel your danger and may you then accept that gracious remedy which is in Christ Jesus!

For whoever believes in Him is not condemned! Whoever trusts in Christ is saved! Sin is forgiven, the soul is accepted, the spirit is blessed the moment it trusts the Savior. Before I close the subject I must guide your thoughts to what is the true preparation for death. Three things present themselves to my mind as being our duty in connection with the dying hour. First seek to be washed in the Red Sea of the dear Redeemer’s

blood. Come in contact with the death of Christ and by faith in it you will be prepared to meet your own. Without giving an opinion upon the merit of that system of medicine which professes to cure diseases by producing an effect upon the system akin to the original malady, or as they put it, "like curing like," we recommend it in *spiritual* things.

Come into union with Christ's death and that will take away the evil and sting of your own. Be buried with Him in Baptism unto death and have part with Him in the reality symbolized in that blest ordinance and you will not dread Jordan's swellings if the full tide of the Redeemer's blood has rolled over you so that you are washed and clean. If guilt is on your conscience, it will be as a millstone round your neck and you will sink to endless woe! But if the love of Jesus is in your heart, it will buoy up your head and keep you safe so that although heart and flesh fail you, you will have God to be the strength of your heart and your portion forever!

Again, learn of the Apostle Paul to "die daily." Practice the duty of self-denial and mortifying of the flesh till it shall become a habit with you and when you have to lay down the flesh and part with everything, you will be only continuing the course of life you have pursued all along. No wonder if dying should prove hard work if you are completely unused to it in thought and expectation! If Death comes to me as a *stranger*, I may be startled—but if I have prepared myself to receive him, he may come and knock at my door and I shall say, "I am ready to go with you, for I have been expecting you all my life."

How beautiful this expression of the Apostle, "I am ready to be offered up and the time of my departure is at hand." He was waiting for death as for a *friend*, and when it came I am sure he was well pleased to go. He tells us he had "a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better." Even so may we learn to look at the time when we shall hear the summons, "Come up higher," as to a time to be longed for rather than dreaded. Learn to submit your will to God's will daily. Learn to endure hardness as a good soldier of the Cross so that when the last conflict comes it may find you able, by the Grace of God, to bear the brunt of the final contest with unflinching courage.

And as the last preparation for the end of life, I should advise a continual course of active service and obedience to the commands of God. I have frequently thought that no happier place to die in could be found than one's post of duty. If I were a soldier I think I should like to die as Wolfe died—with victory shouting in my ear! Or as Nelson died in the midst of his greatest success. Preparation for death does not mean going alone into the chamber and retiring from the world, but active service—"doing the duty of the day in the day."

The best preparation for sleep, the healthiest soporific, is hard work and one of the best things to prepare us for *sleeping* in Jesus is to *live* in

Him an active life of going about doing good. The attitude in which I wish Death to find me is with light trimmed and loins girt—waiting and watching—at work, doing my allotted task and multiplying my talent for the Master’s Glory. Idlers may not anticipate rest, but workers will not be unwilling to welcome the hour which shall hear the words, “It is finished.”

Keep your eye upon the recompense of the reward. Lay up treasures in Heaven and thus you will be ready to cross the stream and enter the beloved land where heart and treasure have gone beforehand to prepare the way. Washed in the blood of Christ! Accustomed to submit to whatever God wills and to find our pleasure in doing His will on earth as we hope to do it in Heaven! Joined to a life of holy service I am persuaded that we shall be prepared with one of old to say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” And with him, calmly and joyfully, to anticipate the crown which fades not away. God bring you to this point, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

**TO MY READERS—DEAR FRIENDS,** Refreshed in body and mind I am on my way homeward to my pulpit and my work. I trust that my absence from labor, so profitable to my own health, may prove to be no loss to you from the stores which I have gathered in my traveling. It is no small strain upon a man’s mental powers to preach to the same people and to publish the sermons for eleven years consecutively. In time the mind which continually labors ceases to be fresh and vigorous and craves for rest. The soil without fallow grows poor. Rest is true medicine.

That rest, I bless God, I have been enabled to enjoy in the most agreeable and instructive manner and trust that it will enable me, by Divine assistance, to avoid the sameness and repetition which are sure signs of exhaustion of mind and poverty of thought. To be in the very best condition to be used of God is my heart’s desire. I would be a bow well-strung. An arrow sharpened by the King. He who works for God should seek to do his work well and should strive to be fit for labor. To feed the saints and gather in Christ’s blood-bought wanderers is my highest ambition resting or working—my eye is on this.

The most indefatigable must sometimes submit to rest in order to avoid being laid aside altogether. But work is the happiest and best state for Believers. And I feel that it is so. Oh that we, like the spirits before the Throne, could serve God day and night without sin or ceasing! May I beg a continued interest in my readers’ earnest prayers. And may I hope that if ever they receive a blessing in reading my discourses they will kindly introduce them to their friends and neighbors. Yours to serve in the Gospel,  
Bell Alp, Switzerland, June 16th, 1865 **C. H. SPURGEON.**

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# THE CAST-OFF SASH

## NO. 1706

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

*“Thus said the Lord unto me, Go and get a linen sash, and put it around your waist, and put it not in water. So I got a sash, according to the word of the Lord, and put it around my waist. And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, Take the sash that you acquired, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock. So I went, and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me. And it came to pass after many days, that the Lord said unto me, Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take the sash from there, which I commanded you to hide there. Then I went to the Euphrates, and dug, and took the sash from the place where I had hid it: and, behold, the sash was marred, it was profitable for nothing. Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thus says the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this sash, which is good for nothing. For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so have I caused to cling unto Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, says the Lord; that they might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.”*  
**Jeremiah 13:1-11.**

GOD’S servants, in olden times, were very anxious to be understood when they spoke. They were not content because the people listened to them, or because they were to their hearers as “a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument.” They reckoned the people’s approval of their style to be proof of its *failure*. Had it wounded their hearts, it would not have gratified their tastes. They wanted the Truth of God to go home to men, so that they could no longer discuss modes of speech, or methods of action, but would be compelled to remember the message and feel its force. They reckoned that they had done nothing unless they riveted attention, excited thought and impressed the heart.

Oh that all preachers were as solemnly in earnest in all their addresses as Jeremiah was—we might then hope to see more true conversions and

less of the flimsy religion of the day! The people of Israel and Judah were so sunk in thoughtlessness that it was absolutely necessary to do something more than speak. Prophet after Prophet had spoken, "but they would not hear." Even though Jeremiah, the most plaintive of all the Prophets, spoke in such melting tones that it must have been difficult to turn away from him with indifference, yet they remained so hardened that God described them as, "this evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts."

Though the Prophet wept, entreated and persuaded, yet they regarded him not, but turned on their heels and went, each one, his own way to his merchandise, to his idolatry, to his adultery, or to his oppression. Therefore the Lord bade His servants add to their speech certain symbols which the people would see with their eyes, which would be talked about as strange things and so, would excite attention and command consideration. Perhaps, by this means the Lord would extort from some of them a deeper thought, and bring them penitently to their knees. It is better for preachers to do odd things than for men to be lost!

If plain talk fails, we may even use emblems and signs, for we cannot let the careless ones perish without another attempt to get at them. Oh that by any means we might save some! In many instances the Prophets were told to do singular things and among the rest was this—Jeremiah must take a linen sash, put it about his waist and wear it there till the people had noticed what he wore and how long he wore it. This sash was not to be washed—this was to be a matter observed of all observers—for it was a part of the similitude. Then he must make a journey to the distant river Euphrates and take off his sash and bury it there. When the people saw him without a sash, they would make remarks and ask what he had done with it, and he would reply that he had buried it by the river of Babylon.

Many would count him mad for having walked so far to get rid of a sash—250 miles was certainly a great journey for such a purpose! Surely he might have buried it nearer home, if he must bury it at all. There was the Jordan—he might have gone to its bank, dug a hole and hid the garment there, if he thought it well to do so. There would be a good deal of talk about Jeremiah's eccentric conduct, but the more thoughtful would endeavor to spell out his meaning, for they would feel sure that he meant much by it. Soon the Prophet goes a second time to the Euphrates and they say one to another—The Prophet is a fool! The spiritual man is mad! See what a trick he is playing. Nearly a thousand miles the man will have walked in order to hide a sash and to dig it up, again! What will he do next?

Whereas plain words might not have been noticed, this little piece of acting commanded the attention and excited the curiosity of the people. Blame us not if we sometimes dramatize the Truth of God—we must win men's hearts—and to do so we dare even run the risk of being called theatrical! Jeremiah might have been ridiculed as an actor, but he would not have fretted much under the charge if he saw that he had succeeded in teaching the people the Truth which God would have them learn. When our young folks cannot learn by books, we try the kindergarten method, and we will sooner teach them by toys than leave them ignorant! Even so

was it with the old Prophets. They would use emblems rather than leave the people in the dark.

The record of this singular transaction has come to us and we know that, as a part of Holy Scripture, it is full of instruction. Thousands of years will not make it so antique as to be valueless! The Word of the Lord never becomes old so as to lose its vigor—it is still as strong, for all Divine purposes, as when first of all Jehovah spoke it! This Bible is the oldest of instructors and yet it wears the dew of its youth! Like the sea, it is ancient as the ages, but time has written no furrow on its brow. It is always venerable, yet ever novel—eternal, yet always fresh. Even the symbol of Jeremiah, which was so strikingly adapted to his age and time, is quite as well suited to this present year of Grace. May the Holy Spirit give us all instruction thereby.

I. And, first, in our text we have AN HONORABLE EMBLEM of Israel and Judah. We may say, in these days, an emblem of the Church of God. I say it is an *honorable* emblem. I hardly know of one which is more so except when the Church is called a Crown of Glory, or a Royal Diadem, or, better still, the Bride, the Lamb's Wife. The people were compared to a linen sash with which the Prophet, in the type, girt himself, but which God explains to be His sash, "for as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so have I caused to cling unto Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, says the Lord."

Notice first, then, that God had taken this people to be bound to Himself. He had taken them to be as near to Him as the sash is to the Oriental when he binds it about his waist. The eastern merchant or worker does not go out without his sash—it is an essential part of his dress, keeping all the rest together—and so the Lord declares that He had taken His people and had bound them about Himself to be near to Him and fastened about Him, so that He would not go forth without them. Often He speaks of them as "a people near to Me." Had they acted as they should have done, so as to be not only the *natural* but the *spiritual* seed of Israel, they would have enjoyed what every true Believer may enjoy, namely clinging unto God as a sash clings unto a man, for the Lord's own sanctified ones are bound unto God by God, Himself, so as never to be torn away from Him.

I invite you, beloved of the Lord, to consider your choice privilege in thus being, as it were, girt about the waist of God. It is a wonderful metaphor. In infinite condescension the Lord has put it so—the Believer's place is near his God in intimate, continuous, open fellowship. What can be more intimately associated with a man's most vital parts than his belt? What can be nearer to the life of God than His living people? The traveler in the East takes care that his sash shall not go unfastened—he girds himself securely before he commences his work or starts upon his journey, and God has bound His people round about Him so that they shall never be removed from Him. "I in them," says Christ, even as a man is in his belt.

"Who shall separate us?" says Paul. Who shall ungird us from the heart and soul of our loving God? "They shall be Mine, says the Lord." They are His and always shall be His! Neither shall any tear them away from Him, for by Covenant and by promise are they bound up with the life of God. Yet remember that there are many who, like the Jewish people, bear the

*name* of Israel, but they are not the true Israel. They are bound about God nominally, as it were, but yet they are not spiritually united to Him. And concerning such, this parable tells us much that is worthy of solemn consideration. May the Holy Spirit warn all professors by this instructive image! If we are, indeed, what we profess to be, then we shall cling to God forever, as it is written, "I will put My fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from Me." Our faith will encompass Christ our Lord! Our love will embrace Him! Our patience will surround Him! Our hope will encircle Him world without end!

In all our service we shall endeavor to cling fast to God. If anything comes between us and God, it will be our sorrow, a trouble not to be endured. Nothing shall seduce the faithful from their hold upon God, for He who bound them about Himself will allow no enemy to unloose His sash. Whatever the world may do by way of bribe, or by way of threats, we shall hold fast to Him and shall not let Him go! And all for this reason—that unchanging Love and infinite Wisdom have bound us too fast for us to be unloosed again. Because the Lord's own love has bound us to Himself, therefore we bind ourselves to Him by steadfast Covenant—

***"Loved of our God, for Him again  
With love intense we burn!  
Chosen of Him before time began,  
We choose Him in return."***

And, as nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, so nothing shall separate our love from God whom we love in Christ Jesus our Lord!

What a privilege this is—that the Lord should cause us to cling to Him, to be to Him for a people, for a name, for a praise and for a glory! Pardon me if I speak feebly, my heart loses utterance in contemplating the gracious imagery here set before us. But Jeremiah's sash was a linen one—it was the sash peculiar to the priests, for such was the Prophet. He was "the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth." Thus the type represents chosen men as bound to God in connection with *sacrifice*. The people of the Lord are the very sash of the Most High in this sense, that if there is priestly work to do, He puts us about Him and makes us to be the instruments of this hallowed service.

For us, our blessed Lord girt Himself with a linen sash! For us, He, even now, is girt about the paps with a golden sash and now, for Him, we, also, become priests and kings unto God and His continued priestly work among men is done by us. I mean, not by ministers, alone, but by all the inheritance of God—by all the blood-washed ones, by all the regenerate ones—for you are "a royal priesthood, a peculiar people." God has made His people to be "a nation of priests" and it is ours to offer sacrifice to God continually, the sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. We know of no order of priests, save the whole body of the faithful, who present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

That is why a linen sash was specified rather than any other. We are bound to the Most High, for solemn priesthood, to minister among the sons of men holy things. The Lord Jesus is now blessing the sons of men as Aaron blessed the people—and we are the sash with which He girds Himself in the act of benediction by the Gospel. The sash is also used by God always in connection with *work*. When eastern men are about to



work in real earnest, they gird up their loins. Our garments in this country are close-fitting and convenient, but the Oriental's robes would always be in his way whenever he had work to do if he did not tightly strap them around him.

Whenever we read of earnest work to be done we read of this sash—so when God comes to do work among the sons of men, we always hear of this sash, which sash we are, or may be, if we are unto God what we ought to be. When the Lord works righteousness in the earth, it is by means of His chosen ones. When He publishes salvation and makes known His Grace, His saints are around Him. When sinners are to be saved, it is by His people. When error is to be denounced, it is by our lips that He chooses to speak. When His saints are to be comforted, it is by those who have been comforted by His Holy Spirit and who, therefore, tell about the consolations which they have, themselves, enjoyed. The sash of the Lord's workday robes is His people!

He says, "Gather My people unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." When He comes—not to Judgment, for that is His strange work—but for mercy and salvation, then He comes girt about with His redeemed! Blessed are they whose happy lot it is to be connected with God in His sacred acts and in all His glorious work of salvation! I cannot explain my deep emotion, but my heart would utter weighty words if it could talk without my lips, for I am awe-stricken at the bare idea of our being used as the sash of the Divine Strength, clinging unto God as a sash cleaves unto the waist of a man! How blessed a thing it is to be bound to God, bound for hallowed service, being set apart for the Master's most personal and honorable use! Blessed are you who were once worthless and useless, but are now made so precious in His sight that you are bound around Him for His use in the highest exercises of His Grace among the sons of men!

Moreover, the sash was intended for ornament. It does not appear that it was bound about the priest's waists *under* his garments, for if so, it would not have been seen and would not have been an instructive symbol—this sash must be seen, since it was meant to be a type of a people who were to be unto God, "for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory." Is not this wonderful beyond all wonder, that God should make His people His Glory? Yet so it is, for true Believers become an ornament unto God, adorning the doctrine of God, their Savior, in all things. Is it not written, "You shall also be a crown of glory in the hands of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hands of your God"? Like as when a man puts on his jewels, or a prince puts on his royal attire, so does God regard His elect "as the jewels of a crown," and to prove His value of them, He arrays Himself with His people as with a sash!

Can it be so, that God is glorified in His saints? Is it so that Christ, Himself, is admired in them that believe as well as by them that believe? Do we, after all, illustrate the magnificence of God and show to principalities and powers in the heavenly places what God can do? Yes, it is so! You can easily perceive what true glory God has in us if we are sincere. Is it not to His honor that we, who were disobedient and obstinate and hard-hearted should, by His love, be subdued to the obedience of the faith? Does not this show His Glory—that we creatures, possessed of the very

dangerous possession of a free will, nevertheless, without violating that will, are led to obey His commands with pleasure and delight?

Is it not to the praise of His Grace that we, who are, under some aspects, the meanest of His creatures, seeing that we have been guilty of such gross sin, are, nevertheless, set next to Himself and made to be His dear children? Next to God, the Redeemer, comes man, the redeemed! Yes, God and man are united—wondrously united in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. What can more grandly set forth the adorable love and goodness of Jehovah!? What great things God has done for us, already, in having taken us up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay! Let this stand as His beautiful sash—that He passes by transgression, iniquity and sin. Let this be His Divine adornment—that He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious. Hallelujah!

But how much greater things He will yet do for us! I know that He has taken us from the dunghill, but then it follows that He has set us among princes, even the princes of His people. We are not always sitting among princes, yet, but we shall be elevated to the throne before long! Our spirits, rid of this clay, shall rise up among spiritual dignities and powers, not second to the most exalted of them—and then shall an astonished universe behold the mercy of the Lord! Yet once more, when the blast of the archangel shall have awakened the sleeping dead, even these poor material bodies, made like unto Christ's glorious body, shall share the glory of the Son of Man. Truly "it does not yet appear what we shall be" for there are great things, yet, for men—and the race of men to whom God has had a special favor shall yet be highly exalted and have dominion over all the works of His hands and He shall put all things under his feet.

In all this, the exceeding riches of Divine Grace shall be resplendent and thus man shall be as a jeweled sash unto the Lord of hosts. Oh, majesty of love! Infinity of Grace! Here seraphs may admire and adore. My Brothers and Sisters, beloved in the Lord, muse much upon this figure of a sash! Silently meditate upon it and try to understand it. We are the sash that God causes to cling unto His waist and that no mere poverty-stricken sash of a beggar, but the sash of a royal priest, worn by Him in sacrifice and labor, and regarded as His ornament and glory! Oh the splendor of Jehovah's love to His people!

**II.** But now, alas, we have to turn our eyes sorrowfully away from this surpassing glory! These people who might have been the glorious sash of God, displayed in their own persons A FATAL MISSION. Did you notice it? Thus says the Lord unto Jeremiah, "Go and get you a linen sash, and put it around your waist, and put it not in water." Ah, me! *There* is the mischief—the *unwashed* sash is the type of an unholy people who have never received the great cleansing. God is pure and holy and He will wear clean garments, but of this garment it is said, "Put it not in water." The priests of Jehovah were continually washing, but of this sash, we read, "Put it not in water."

Now, when a man seems to be bound to God, and to be used of God, if he has never undergone the great cleansing, he will sooner or later come to a terrible end. "If I wash you not, you have no part with Me," is a very solemn word from the Lord Jesus, Himself. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I invite you to meditate upon this for a moment! No nearness to God can save you if you have never been washed by the Lord Jesus! No official

connection can bless you if you have never been washed in His most precious blood! No matter though you may seem to be an ornament of the Church and all men may think so, and even good men may bless God for you—if you have never been washed—you are not Christ's!

If Jesus Christ, your Lord and Master, has never enabled you to say, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," then, the great cleansing having been omitted, you will be shut out of the marriage supper of the Lamb. Oh the terror of that sentence—"Put it not in water"! Surely, this is what Satan desires—his malice cannot exceed the wish that we may never be cleansed from our iniquities! How accursed are those of whom Solomon says, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." If that one, first, *perfect* washing has never exercised its purifying influence upon you, my Brothers, it is all in vain for you to bear the vessels of the Lord and to be thought to be great and to be eminent in His house, for you must be put away!

On the spot let each one of us pray, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." God loves purity and will not keep unholy men in nearness to Himself. Here is the alternative for all professors—you must be washed in the blood of Christ, or be laid aside—which shall it be? The Prophet was bid not to put it in water, which shows that there was not only an absence of the *first* washing, but there was no *daily* cleansing. Take heed, Beloved, that you omit not those after-washings which must follow the washing in the blood of the Lamb. When our blessed Lord took a towel and a basin and went to wash the disciples' feet, He did not perform a superfluous action! Peter was misguided when he said "You shall never wash my feet." It is necessary that we be washed every day. Even "if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

We are constantly defiling our feet by marching through this dusty world and every night we need to be washed. There is sin within us as well as sin outside us and even if we do not leave our chamber, but have to lie upon a sickbed all day long, impatience is quite enough to defile our feet—and we greatly need to be cleansed. The first grand washing is never repeated—that great bath does its work so effectually that the putting away of guilt is perfected once and for all and forever! When our Lord bowed His head and gave up the ghost, He offered an effectual Atonement by which all the guilt of His redeemed was eternally put away. "This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"—and he that has that one washing needs not except to wash his feet.

But the foot-bath is always necessary. Stains of pilgrimage, stains of service, stains of grief, stains of pleasure, stains of our holy things—these must still be put away. What with pride, or doubt, or ill-desire, or imagination, or anger, or forgetfulness or error, we are always being defiled and always need to be put in water to undergo that washing in water by the Word of God of which the Apostle speaks. If, dear Friends, you and I live without washing, we live in a way that renders us unfit for Divine service! And have you not found it so? I know this, that if you suffer a sin to lie on your conscience, you cannot serve God aright while it is there. If you have transgressed as a child and you do not run and put your head into your

Father's bosom and cry, "Father I have sinned!" you cannot do God's work.

The *external* part of it you may perform, though there will often be a great weakness even there. But as for the *spiritual* and vital part, it will be sadly deficient. If you try to write the epistle of life with an unwashed hand, it will tremble and every line you write will be in the shaky handwriting of paralysis. "He that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger," but the foul hand shall wax weaker and weaker! There must be this washing or there cannot be abundant working. If you do not know yourself to be "accepted in the Beloved." If you do not know yourself to be clean every whit, you will not be happy with God! And when you are not happy with Him, your mind will be taken off from work for Him to work for yourself. You will be thinking about your own *imperfection* rather than His *perfection*—the sin of any single day, though it will not destroy you, will grieve you.

A stone in your shoe, though almost invisible, will spoil a day's journey. It is not a great rock to grind you to powder. It is only a little stone, but your foot will blister before you have walked many miles. Ah me, how great the pain of a single unconfessed sin! The best thing you can do is to take off your shoe at once and remove the stone before you, again, put down your foot. So it is with every little sin—if it is only a *thought*, if it is only a look the wrong way—go to your Father and get rid of it! Do not live a *day* out of fellowship with God, no, nor an *hour* under the Lord's frown! You know how it is with your dear child when he has done wrong. He does not expect that you will turn him out of doors and say, "You shall not be my child," but he does expect you to be grieved with him!

Children are believers in the "final perseverance" of parental love—they expect always to be your children—but if you are a wise father, they do not feel happy when they have done wrong. You have not, perhaps, found out their disobedience, but the kiss at night is not half as warm as usual, for they are afraid that Father will soon know of their fault and will be angry. When God deals with us as a father who has seen his child's naughtiness, there is no peace or rest in our spirit. Even chastisement, however, is better borne than a sense of having offended. If you gave your naughty child a good whipping at once, it would comfort him, for your displeasure would be over—but as long as you do not chastise him, but only say, "No, my Child, I cannot have dealings with you while you act so. I have no word of love for you, for you are so wicked"—then the dear child will be sorely troubled until your anger is over. He will be ready to break his little heart until you forgive him and comfort him, saying, "I shall put the matter away this time, for I see you are sorry, and I hope you will not behave so badly again."

Brethren, this holy, filial fear of the Lord is not servitude under the Law; it is not trying to be saved by what we *do*—it is the discipline of the Father's house and that is what we attend to when we ask for daily washing. There was a fatal flaw about this sash—it had never been washed—and it is a fatal thing if you and I can go from day to day without being cleansed by our blessed Lord. Oh Lord, purge me by Your continual pardon! Cleanse me this day from every spot, for Your sweet mercy's sake! But observe, once again, that the more this sash was used, the more it gathered great and growing defilement. It was a Prophet that wore it, but

even with such wear the unwashed sash began to be spotted and stained. And as he might not put it into water, the more often the Prophet went out to his daily work—the more the sash was used—the more service it performed, the more worn and dirty it became.

It will be just the same with us if no water is applied and there is no application of the cleansing blood of Christ. Without the Atonement, the more we do, the more we shall sin. Our very prayers will turn into sin! Our godly things will breed evil! We shall be preaching and when we preach we shall preach our condemnation! We shall gather our class about us and talk to them of good things—and all the while there will be in our consciences the thought that we are not acting as we talk, or living as we tell them to live—and we shall be growing blacker and more defiled from hour to hour. Oh, Lord, deliver us from this! Save us from being made worse by that which should make us better! Save us from turning even our *service* into sin, our *prayers* into abominations and our Psalms into mockery! Let us be Your true people and therefore let us be washed that we may be clean, that You may gird Yourself with us.

**III.** Very soon that fatal flaw in the case here mentioned led, in the third place, to A SOLEMN JUDGMENT. It was a solemn judgment upon the sash, looking at it as a type of the people of Israel. First, the sash, after Jeremiah had made his long walk in it, was taken off and put away. It is an awful thing when God takes off the man that has once appeared to be on Him and lays him aside, as He did Saul when He finally gave him up and took the kingdom from him. Yes, and it is a solemn thing, also, when the Lord takes off the man that has been really bound to Him and, for a time, lays him aside and says, “I cannot use you. I cannot wear you as Mine. I cannot work with you. You can be no ornament to Me—you are defiled.” He puts away the spoiled sash—in other words, He works no longer with the backsliding professor.

This is a terrible thing to happen to any man. I would rather suffer every sickness in the list of human diseases than that God should put me aside as a vessel in which He has no pleasure, and says to me, “I cannot wear you as My sash, nor acknowledge you as Mine before men.” That would be a dreadful thing! Is there one here who has come into that condition? Has the Lord left you to your backsliding? Learn the lesson of my text! What you need, my Friend, is to be cleansed in the double stream which John of old saw flowing from the Redeemer’s riven side! You need *spiritual* cleansing before the Lord can put you on, again, and use you, again, and be one with you, again—and before you can be, again, unto Him a praise and a glory. While you are unclean you are dishonoring Him and He must set you aside.

After that sash was laid aside, the next thing for it was hiding and burying. It was placed in a hole of the rock by the river of the captivity and left there. Many a hypocrite has been served in that way. God has said to His servants, “Put Him out of the Church. He is defiled.” And there has been nothing heard of him any more. He may have been offended at being put aside and have gone into the world altogether—and though he once *seemed* to be as the very sash of God, yet he has rotted and decayed into corruption and open transgression, for the raw material of hypocrisy soon decays and turns into loathsomeness. The worst things are fre-

quently the rot of the best things and so the worst characters grow out of those who apparently were once the best.

Thus, this sash is put away, hidden and left. God will have nothing to do with it! He has put it aside. And now the sash spoils. It was put, I dare say, where the dampness and the wet acted upon it, and so, when, in about 70 days, Jeremiah came back to the spot, there was nothing but an old rag instead of what had once been a pure white linen sash. He says, "Behold the sash was marred; it was profitable for nothing." So, if God were to leave any of us, the best men and the best women among us would soon become nothing but marred sashes instead of being as fair white linen. Alas, for certain goodly professors that did appear to be very fine, once, what rotten old rags they come to be when they are put into the hole and left to themselves!

We have seen it. They have only been fit, at last, to be put upon the dust heap with useless things. They have fallen into such a horrible condition of mind that they can do evil without check of conscience—they have forgotten how to blush! The same persons who did run well (what hindered them?) are now found, not only sleeping in the harbors of sloth, but rioting in chambers of wantonness! The glorious sash of God, as the man seemed to be, becomes a mass of rottenness! What does the text say? Let me read the words, for I should not like to say them of myself—"Behold, the sash was marred, it was profitable for nothing." And again in the 10<sup>th</sup> verse—"Which is good for nothing." So may men become who have not been washed! So *will* they become unless God, in His infinite mercy, gives them speedily expiation through His Son, renewing by His Spirit.

I desire to profit you all and so I want to notice how true this is of the real children of God. I could speak this even weeping. There are certain real children of God whom God greatly honored at one time, so that they were as His sash. But they were proud and were soon defiled with other sins. And so the Lord has laid them aside from His service. They are still His, but He has put them under discipline—and as a part of that discipline He has banished them from His public service. They were once everywhere in the Lord's battles, but now they are nowhere. He knows where He has put them and they will remain there till their pride is quite gone.

When the Lord has effected this purpose, His wandering servant will come back with an altered tale, and you shall hear him as he laments himself and cries—"I do not feel fit to be in God's Church! I have walked in such a way that if I were cast off altogether it would be my just deserts. Oh that I may be forgiven." The deep repentance of returning wanderers makes you feel that they are the children of God though they have dishonored Him—and you welcome their return, saying, "Come with us, and enjoy the means of Grace." Alas, they answer—

***"The saints are comforted, we know,  
Within the house of prayer;  
We often go where others go,  
And find no comfort there."***

One man sighs, "I have a Sunday school class, and I teach it, but I do not feel tenderly for the children as I once did. There is no power about me. I am a branch of the tree that appears to have no sap in it. I bear no fruit. Alas," he cries, "I do not enjoy private prayer and when I pray, and

pour out my soul before God, I do not obtain a comfortable answer! I am as one that is forgotten." Is it at all amazing that God frowns when we disobey? The Lord will not hear those who decline to hear Him! If we are deaf to His Commandments, He will be deaf to our prayers. You have become defiled, for you have not watched your steps, and now the Lord cannot be in communion with you. You have not been careful and so the sash has become foul with public spots and private foulnesses!

And the Lord says, "I cannot use that man; I cannot be in fellowship with him. If I would, it would ruin him." If God were to be kind and tender to His children when they are living in sin, it would encourage them in evil and they would go from bad to worse! If a Believer grieves God, he must be grieved, himself. The heavenly Father takes down the rod and though it is more pain to Him than it is to us, He will not spare us for our crying. Just because He loves us He will lay on His strokes thick and heavy, one after the other, perhaps in sharp affliction, but very often in a continuous and growing loss of all that made us happy and useful.

Alas! Alas! The sash is marred and the Lord has hid it out of His sight! Oh, what a mercy it is that the Lord can take that sash and wash it and make it as good as new, and even better than at the first! He can give back to the man his old joy with an added experience which will make him humble and tender. He can restore his former usefulness and even increase it by teaching him to deal gently with others that err and, by enabling him to prize and value the mercy of God. Did you ever get into a corner and sing that verse, "Love I much? I've more forgiven. I'm a miracle of Grace"? Those sweet lines have often charmed my inmost heart. I have wanted to love my Lord infinitely! I have wished that I could love Him as much as seven million hearts put together could love Him!

I would love Him as much as the whole universe could love Him! I wish I had His Father's love to Him, for what do I not owe Him for all His wonderful mercy to me? And do you not feel the same? Are you not, also, great debtors to Sovereign Grace? If you do not at any time kindle love and gratitude, I am afraid that you are put in the hole with the sash and that you are rotting away. Sad case for you! Certain of God's people are marvelously high-minded—they cannot sit anywhere but in the big armchair, or at the head of the table. They cannot mingle with any of us common Christians at all because they are perfect—and we are a long way from making any claim to such a degree of excellence. Some of the hymns that we are glad to sing are not good enough for them, for they cry, "We hate hymns of this style! They are so below our experience."

These are the dons and grandees of the Court of Arrogance! When I see fine professors coming in with the seven league boots on, I am always afraid that they are not God's children at all because I have never read of any true saints who said much in praise of *themselves* and I have read of so many gracious persons whose tone and temper were the very reverse of this lofty boasting! I have seen God's poor little child like Moses in a basket on the Nile with crocodiles all round ready to devour him—and when I have looked at him, I have always noticed that which the Holy Spirit took pains to record—"Behold, the babe wept." This was the real Moses—those crystal drops are the tokens of a goodly child! The tears of God's babes are wonderfully precious and they have great power with Him.

The dragons of Nilus cannot devour a weeping Moses. "When I am weak, then am I strong." When you are so weak that you cannot do much more than cry, you coin diamonds with both your eyes! The sweetest prayers God ever hears are the groans and sighs of those who have no hope in anything but His love! There is music in our moaning to His kind and tender ears. He can restore you, even though you are as the marred sash. And when He once puts you on again, you will cling to His waist more closely than ever, praying that He will bind you fast about Him. But the worst part of it—and this I finish with—is that this relates undoubtedly to many mere professors whom God takes off from Himself, laying them aside and leaving them to perish.

And what is His reason for doing so? He tells us this in the text—He says that this evil people refused to receive God's words. Dear Friends, never grow tired of God's Word! Never let any book supplant the Bible! Love every part of Scripture and take heed to every Word that God has spoken. Let it all be a Divine Word to you, for if not, when you begin to pick and choose about God's Word, and do not like this, and do not like that, you will soon become like a marred sash—for the base-hearted professor is detected by his not loving the Father's words.

Next to that, we are told that they walked in the dictates of their hearts. That is a sure sign of the hypocrite or the false professor. He makes his religion out of himself, as a spider spins a web out of his own bowels! What sort of theology it is, you can imagine, now that you know its origin! This base professor grows his theology on his own back as the snail produces her shell! He is everything to himself—his own savior, his own teacher, his own guide! He knows so much, that if the world would only sit at *his* feet, it would become a wonderfully learned world in a very short time, so great a Rabbi is he! When a man is so puffed up that his own imagination is his inspiration, and his obstinacy holds him fast in his own opinion, then he has become as the sash which was taken from the Prophet's waist and put into a hole to rot away.

Upon all this there followed actual transgression—"They walked after other gods to serve them and to worship them." This happens, also, to the base professor. He keeps up the name of a Christian for a little while and seems to be as God's sash. But by-and-by he falls to worshipping gold, or drink, or lust. Bacchus, or Venus becomes his deity. He turns aside from the infinitely glorious God and so he falls from one degradation to another till he hardly knows himself! He becomes as a rotten sash "which profits nothing." Neither God nor man are benefited by him. The Lord save you, dear Friends, from being found insincere in the day when He searches the heart. May He also save us from failing to be washed in the most precious blood. Is not this a fit subject for immediate and continuous prayer? See to it! The Lord bless you for His name's sake. Amen.

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# JEHOVAH HAS SPOKEN— WILL YOU NOT HEAR? NO. 1748

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 4, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Hear you, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before He causes darkness and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains and, while you look for light, He turns it into the shadow of death and makes it gross darkness. But if you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and my eyes shall weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive.”  
Jeremiah 13:15-17.*

IN this chapter Jeremiah had proclaimed the judgment of God against His sinful people under two very striking figures. Israel had been to God what a sash is to a man—the people had been bound closely about Him in His great love and favor. But on account of their sin, the Lord would put them away and they should be hidden by the Euphrates till their beauty was marred—until, in fact, like a rotten sash, their whole state had become decayed. “Thus says the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.”

Then He spoke to them by a second parable—“Every bottle shall be filled with wine”—and he showed how God's wrath would come upon the people to fill them with a judicial drunkenness, so that they should become drunk, and in their delirium should strive, one with another, to their mutual undoing. The Lord declared that thus He would “dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together.” Thus, under two homely but exceedingly terrible figures, Jeremiah preached the Law of God to the people, that they might be humbled under a sense of sin.

Had they but felt the force of this teaching, they would have begun to mourn for their sin and, under dread of wrath, they would have cried for mercy. Taking it for granted that this might be the case, though, alas, it did not so happen, the Lord gave to His Prophet an interval for proclaiming mercy. After those two great thunderclaps of judgment came a gracious shower of Grace. The Prophet, in what we may venture to call an evangelistic style, exhorts the people and addresses to them the characteristic Gospel precept—“Hear you, and give ear; for Jehovah has spoken.”

His words remind us of Isaiah's exhortation—“Incline your ears and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live.” And again—“Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good.” Under the Gospel, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God—and so Jeremiah does, as it were, in these verses preach the Gospel to the backsliding house of Judah. This is always God's design in threatening judgment—He desires to prepare the people for His Grace!

I would take up the Prophet's strain, by the help of the Lord, praying to be a partaker of his earnest and tender Spirit. Oh, that today those who have never heard the voice of the Lord in the inward parts of their being may hear it and live! O Holy Spirit, work to that end!

I. We will enter upon our subject at once, for there is much to speak of. The first head will be this—listen, O my Hearers, with deep attention, for THERE IS A REVELATION. Read the text—“Hear you, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord has spoken.” If the Lord had *not* spoken, the silence would have deepened and established your natural darkness. And if you had been inquiring after God, your heart would have cried, “Oh, that He would break this dreadful silence!” How sad would have been our state if the only way to find God depended upon our seeking Him! Shall man, by searching, find God? Who among us could reason ourselves into the knowledge of the Lord? Or imagine the thoughts of His mind?

But here you have the great source of comfort and instruction—“Jehovah has spoken.” Is not this a just call for the attention of all His creatures? The voice which we are bid to hear is a Divine voice! It is the voice of Him that made the heavens and the earth, whose creatures we are! Jehovah has spoken! If it were but the voice of Prophets apart from their Master, it might be but a slight sin to refuse what they say. But since Jehovah has spoken, shall men dare to be deaf to Him? Shall they turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven? He that spoke us *into* being has spoken *to* our being! He by whose Word the heavens stand and at whose word both Heaven and earth shall pass away, has spoken, and His voice is to the sons of men! It is God who says, “I have written to him the great things of My Law.” The sacred Scriptures are the record of what God has spoken—receive them with the reverence which they deserve as coming from God, and as being, therefore, pure truth, fixed certainty, and unerring right.

It is a Word most clear and plain, for Jehovah has spoken. He might have taught us only by the works of His hands, in which the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen. What is all creation but a hieroglyphic scroll in which the Lord has written out His Character as Creator and Provider? But since He knew that we were dim of sight and dull of comprehension, the Lord has gone *beyond* the symbols and hieroglyphs and used articulate speech such as a man uses with his fellows—Jehovah has *spoken*! A man may act before us his mind in symbols and we may fail to perceive his meaning. But when he *speaks*, we understand his communications by language, since such modes of expression are suitable to the human intellect.

Speech is the fit manner of commerce between mind and mind and it is, therefore, most delightful that the all-glorious Jehovah should stoop from writing in starry letters across the sky—and from mirroring His form in tempests on the sea—and speak with us as a man speaks with his friends! Jehovah is no dumb Deity—He has spoken to us in sweet and chosen words by His Spirit. Oh, when there is a testimony so clear and plain that he who runs may read, well may the Prophet exhort us, saying, “Hear you, and give ear; for Jehovah has spoken.” Let it *not* be said of us,

as of the sinners long ago, “I spoke unto you, rising up early and speaking, but you heard not; and I called you, but you answered not.”

Moreover, I gather from the expression in the text that the Revelation made to us by the Lord is an unchangeable and abiding word. It is not today that Jehovah is speaking, but Jehovah *has spoken*—His voice by the Prophets and Apostles is now silent, for He has revealed all His Truth which is necessary for salvation. The Lord might fitly say to us this day, “What I have written I have written.” He changes not His Word, and, though Heaven and earth pass away, His Word abides. We are not living in a period of gradual Revelation, as some imagine—Jehovah has spoken and He opens not His mouth a second time. He has closed the canon of Scripture with a curse upon him that shall add to or take from the Words of the Book of this prophecy.

Jehovah has spoken! You have not to go on making discoveries of new Truth outside of Scripture. Your duty lies in diligently receiving the completed testimony of the Lord God, for the Word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. He has fully told you your relation to your God and the way by which you may be reconciled to Him and be at peace. “Add not unto His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar.” Jehovah has spoken! And it is written in His Law, “You shall not add unto the word which I command you.” Beloved, this Revelation is pre-eminently a condescending and cheering word. The Lord might have trodden us down to destruction without a word when we sinned against Him! He might have left us to that natural testimony which is borne upon the face of creation and which is also reflected in the conscience of all men—and when we rejected those testimonies He might have allowed us to travel on in tenfold night.

But instead thereof, in the plenitude of His Grace, Jehovah has spoken—and be it always remembered that while of old He spoke in sundry times and different manners by the Prophets, He has in these last times spoken unto us by His Son. The very fact that the great God speaks to us by His Son indicates that mercy, tenderness, love and hope are the burden of His utterance! His Son Jesus is full of Grace and Truth and, therefore, that which He now speaks to us is not only Truth, but Grace. It is truthful Grace and gracious Truth which God speaks to us by Jesus Christ. Oh, the richness of that message—the height and depth of love which it contains! Who can refuse to listen to the heavenly music of mercy?

The Lord’s voice on the first day of creation said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And now this second voice, this voice to the spiritual world, gives us light, life, love and every necessary, conceivable, desirable gift! The words of God, as they are recorded in this Book, have a unfathomable fullness about them—they are spirit and life! In Christ, by whom He speaks, there is hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge! The Prophet asked no more than was perfectly reasonable when he said, “Hear, and give ear; for Jehovah has spoken.” When the kings who dwell at the utmost ends of the earth hear that Jehovah has spoken, they would do well to quit their thrones and make a journey, like the Queen of Sheba, to hear of the Divine wisdom!

If all workmen should throw down their tools and say, "We will hear what God the Lord shall speak," and if merchants should close their shops and counting-houses for a while and come together without delay crying, "Everything must stop till we have heard what the Lord has spoken," would it be any more than right reason would suggest to thoughtful and right-minded men? O Sirs, if God has spoken, every ear should surrender itself to attention, for surely never could the sense of hearing be more honorably and profitably employed! Jehovah has spoken and His Word is true—"The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." There is a way of salvation arranged and determined by the Lord! It is not to be guessed at, but we are to learn it from Infallible Wisdom—Jehovah has spoken!

There is an atonement prepared, provided, designated and set forth. We have not to search for it, or add to it—Jehovah has spoken! There is no point of necessity, nor even of real interest to the heart of man but what Jehovah has spoken to it—and if there is any Truth of God upon which He has *not* spoken, it is because it is to His Glory to conceal the thing—and for our profit that we do not pry into it! Upon all that is essential to our full preparation for our eternal destination, Jehovah has spoken! He has said it and here it is recorded—in the volume of the Book it is written—and blessed are they that read and keep the Words of the Book of this prophecy!

**II.** Secondly—and I have already anticipated it—since there is a Revelation, IT SHOULD BE SUITABLY RECEIVED. If Jehovah has spoken, then all attention should be given. Yes, *double* attention! Incline your ears; listen diligently; surrender your soul to the teaching of the Lord God and be not satisfied till you have heard His teaching—have heard it with your whole being and have felt the force of its every truth! "Hear you," because the Word of God comes with power. "Give ear," because you willingly receive it. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I fear that we give far more attention to the distracting voices of the world than to the soul-satisfying voice of the God of All Grace!

How eager men are after the treasure which melts before their eyes—how they will drink in every syllable by which they may learn how to be rich! But when God speaks, who brings in both His hands eternal and abiding riches, men are deaf as the adder, careless as the beasts of the field! He says, "I have called and you refused; I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded." Is this right or wise? Surely, if Jehovah speaks, we are bound by all that is just, good and grateful to wait in reverent silence till we know His mind! Let a general hush go through the universe and let all ears, with solemn reverence, await the sound of the voice of the Lord!

Then it is added, as if by way of directing us how suitably to hear this Revelation—"Give glory to Jehovah your God." There ought to be in hearing and reading the Revelation of God a constant giving of glory to the Lord. His speaking is a manifestation of His Glory as when the sun rises his light is spread abroad. You and I are to reflect that light even as the valleys rejoice in his brightness of the noontide. Let us stand, as it were,

this morning, to be shone upon by the Lord—ready, each one of us—to reflect that light which comes from on high! Give glory to God at once by worthily hearing His Gospel. How is that to be done? Stand still and hear the Word of the Lord! Glorify the Lord by accepting whatever He says to you as being infallibly true! Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe His Prophets, so shall you prosper. Know what the Lord has said and let it stand to you as sure and steadfast truth. Seek for no further reasons to sustain your faith, but let, “Thus says the Lord” stand to you in the place of all arguments.

To me, a sentence of Scripture is the essence of logic, the proof positive, the Word of God which may not be questioned. Eyes and ears may be doubted, but not the written Word, inspired of the Holy Spirit! Blessed are those who sit at Jesus’ feet and receive His Words. It is our wisdom to know nothing of ourselves, but to be taught of the Holy Spirit—to think nothing of ourselves, but to have the mind of God—and think after Him whose thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth! We give glory to God in reference to Revelation when we receive it, every jot and tittle of it, and bow our minds before it.

In these days this virtue is lightly esteemed, for the Savior’s Words are still true—“He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings.” In all its length and breadth, whatever the Lord says, we believe, and we desire to know neither less nor more than He has spoken. We must receive the Word of God, however, in a hearty and honest manner so as to *act* upon it. We must therefore repent of the sin which the Lord condemns and turn from the way which He abhors. We must loathe the vice which He forbids and seek after the virtue which He commands. We give glory to God when we penitently confess that we have broken His holy Law and grieve because we have done so. Did not Joshua bid Achan give glory to God by confession of his sin? And so must we.

By confession we glorify God’s Justice, Omniscience and Truth—and yet further we glorify His mercy when, confessing sin, we ask for pardon through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus should every human being receive the Revelation of God bringing forth fruits necessary for repentance. Your light has shone upon me, O my God, and therefore I see my darkness! O remove it! You have lit a candle, and by its light I discover my spots and stains. I acknowledge them in Your sight—“Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak and be clear when You judge.” Thus humbling ourselves on account of sin, we receive the Word of God aright, and give God glory.

But we must go further than repentance and the acceptance of the Truth of God as Truth. We must further reverence the gracious voice of God when He bids us believe on Christ and live. He has couched that message of love in so blessed a form that he who does not accept it must be wantonly malicious against God and against his own soul. For the Lord does not demand that by penances, acts of mortification and feelings of misery and despair we are to purge ourselves from sin—He has graciously declared—“He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” If Jehovah has spoken in such a manner; if the sum and substance of what He has spoken is that, “God

has set forth His Son Jesus Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood,” then we must and will listen to Him! He says, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

If this is the heavenly Word of God, how can we refuse to hear it with our whole hearts? Give glory to the Lord by answering, “Lord, I joyfully obey Your call! I am glad of a Savior, glad of the atoning blood, glad to cast myself at those dear feet that were nailed to the Cross for me—and to find, in the Lord Jesus, my salvation and my all.” This is the way in which we ought to receive this Revelation and we ought to go on to complete obedience. We should humbly inquire, “Lord, what further would You have me know; what further would You have me do? Is there still left in me a part of my nature unsubdued? I would humble myself under Your mighty hand. Is there in me anything unrenewed, of pride revolting, or of the flesh rebelling? Then conquer it in me, for I desire Your Word to be my rule, my law, my guide. O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! I wish in all things to be obedient to Your gracious will.”

There is no part of God’s Word at which the human mind should kick. If our hearts were in a right state we would fling open all the doors of our mind and say, “Come in, O sacred Truth, come in! You are welcome to my heart of hearts since you come from my God.” If Jehovah speaks, ought we not, instead of quibbling, questioning, disputing and raising difficulties, just say, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears”? When the Lord says to us, “Seek you My face,” our heart should at once reply, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.”

I think that point is clear. There is a Revelation and that Revelation ought to be suitably received.

**III.** But thirdly, PRIDE IN THE HUMAN HEART PREVENTS SUCH A RECEPTION. The text runs, “Hear you, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord has spoken.” And further on the Prophet says, “If you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.” The Prophet, here, puts his finger upon the blot. Why is it, my dear Hearers, that there are *any* among you this day who have heard God’s Word, year after year, and yet have not *received* it? The secret reason is your pride! Perhaps pride prompts you indignantly to deny the accusation. In some, it is the pride of intellect. They do not wish to be treated like children—they are not content to receive the Kingdom of God as a little child—and so, when Jesus says, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven,” they reply that they intend to think out a Gospel for themselves.

To lay the inventiveness of thought on one side and simply to believe what Jesus teaches is not to their mind—they will not humble themselves to a fact so little self-exalting. Well, Sirs, if you shut the door of the Kingdom against yourselves because you are too wise to enter—be this known to you—that the poor have the Gospel preached to them and they receive it! God has hid these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes. God has chosen things that are despised and things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are—that no flesh may

glory in His Presence! If your wisdom is greater than the wisdom of God, it were better for you to be foolish! If you will destroy yourself to indulge your own conceit, well, so it must be, but the day shall come in which your regret shall know neither measure nor end! Oh, let none of us be so proud as to lift up ourselves in opposition to that which Jehovah has spoken!

In some others it is the pride of self-esteem. “No,” they say, “this Gospel which we have heard so often is too simple! We are capable of something more elaborate. It humbles us; it represents us as fallen; as depraved. It says that we can do nothing; it lays us in the very dust; it makes nothing of us—it excludes all hope of boasting and glorying—we cannot stoop so low! Salvation by Divine Grace, is it? Then Free Grace, Sovereign Grace is not to our mind! We care not to be saved like paupers! We care not to be freely forgiven as those who have nothing to pay. That no composition will be accepted, not even a farthing in the pound of our own merit—it is a doctrine too lowering to our dignity!” They set the Gospel on one side because it sets them on one side. They are too great to be saved!

O Sirs, if you must be proud, at least do not throw away your souls to indulge that propensity! Surely, something less costly may suffice for a sacrifice to the demon of vainglory! It is a dreadful thing that men should think it better to go to Hell in a dignified way than to go to Heaven by the narrow road of a child-like faith in the Redeemer! Those who will not stoop even to receive Christ, Himself, and the blessings of eternal life, *deserve* to perish! God save us from such folly! It may well make us weep to think that any man should be so far gone astray from right reason as to throw away eternal bliss in order to walk with haughty steps through this poor life.

Some have a pride of self-righteousness. They are good. They have kept the Commandments from their youth up. They have attended to religion; they have seen to it that all rites and ceremonies have been duly performed upon them and they thank God that they are not as other men are! This righteousness of theirs is a garment respectable enough for them to wear and, therefore, they reject the righteousness of God! O you proud fool! I would to God you knew that you are naked, poor and miserable! I would to God you understood that your fig-leaf righteousness will never cover your nakedness in the sight of God, for if you knew this, you would seek after the perfect righteousness of Christ and be robed and adorned with it! While sin ruins many in the outside world, I fear self-righteousness ruins more among those who attend places of worship. They say, “we see,” and, therefore, their eyes are not opened. They cry, “we are clean,” and, therefore, they are not washed from their iniquity. Oh that they would cease from this vanity and give glory to the Lord their God instead of taking glory themselves! How can they believe while they seek honor, one from another?

In some, too, it is the pride of self-love. They cannot deny their lusts. To cut off right-hand sins and pluck out right-eye iniquities cannot be endured by them. Their hearts are set upon a certain evil pleasure and they cannot give it up. The Gospel of Jesus Christ demands of those who receive it that they shall be saved not *in* their sins, but *from* their sins! It

comes to give us renewal as well as rest, purity as well as pardon, sanctity as well as safety. But there are many who, because of their foolish self-indulgence, cannot deny themselves any seeming joy, but must fill themselves with the poisoned sweets which delight the flesh. O Friend, I wish that this pride were taken from you and that it seemed wisdom to you to deny yourself life, itself, for the present, rather than miss the hope of eternal life!

The pride of self-will also works its share of ruin among men. “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?” is the cry of many beside Pharaoh! The unrenewed heart virtually says—“I shall not mind these commands. Why should I be tied hand and foot and ruled, and governed? I intend to be a free thinker and a free liver—I will not submit myself.” Just so, and you are free to lose all hope of Heaven, my Friend! Free to destroy yourself. If this is your choice, then who is to hinder you in it? I know that I cannot. Oh, that the Lord will lead you to a better mind. Would God that the Lord would change your will and renew your heart! But if you are so proud that you reject the testimony of God against yourself, then who is to blame when you fall into eternal destruction? Who is to blame but yourself?

And so I pass from mournfully considering this great evil which prevents the Revelation of God from being properly received.

**IV.** Fourthly, THERE COMES AN EARNEST WARNING. The Prophet has put it—“Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains.” I desire to explain this with deep humiliation of spirit on my own part—and with much trembling lest anyone of you should ever, by experience, know the truth of these words. Listen, my Friend, you who have rejected God and His Christ till now! You are *already* out of the way, among the dark mountains! There is a King’s highway of faith and you have refused it. You have turned aside to the right hand or to the left, according to your own imagination. Being out of the way of safety, you are in the path of danger even now.

Though the sunlight shines about you and the flowers spring up profusely under your feet, yet you are in danger, for there is no safety off of the King’s road. If you will walk according to His bidding, you shall be quiet from fear of danger, for no lion shall be there, but, inasmuch as you are now your own keeper and your own law and you follow in your own ways, you are in great peril. The unbeliever is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God. Escape, I pray you, while you may, and enter upon that one road which is strait and narrow, but leads to eternal life—the way of faith in Jesus! If you will still pursue your headlong career and choose a path for yourself, I pray you remember that darkness is hovering around you. The day is far spent! Around your soul there are already hanging mists and glooms—and these will thicken into the night-damps of bewilderment!

Thinking, but not believing, you will soon think yourself into a horror of great darkness. Refusing to hear what Jehovah has spoken, you will follow other voices which shall allure you into an Egyptian night of confusion. You will go on meditating and carefully thinking, or criticizing and



trifling till you are enveloped in a cloud of doubts, wrapped as in a dense smoke of speculation and well near smothered in exhalations of unbelief! You shall not know what to do, nor what to think, nor what to say, nor what to do with yourself, for you will have renounced your Guide and quenched your torch. At the same time, it may be there will come upon you a darkness of distress—you will be sick and sorry; you will be faint and weary; you will be tried and troubled—and your soul will see no help or deliverance.

To which of the saints will you turn? Upon whom will you call in the day of your calamity? And who will help you? Then your thoughts will dissolve into vanity and your spirit shall melt into dismay. “Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself, and to all your friends.” You shall grope after comfort as blind men grope for the wall! And because you have rejected the Lord and His Truth, He, also, will reject you and leave you to your own devices. Meanwhile, there shall cloud over you a darkness bred of your own sin and willfulness. You shall lose the brightness of your intellect. The sharp clearness of your thought shall depart from you. Professing yourself to be wise, you shall become a fool.

You shall no longer be able to boast of yourself because of the clearness of your judgment, but you shall find your conceptions thrown into confusion. You shall ask of others, but they shall know no more than yourself, or if they know, you shall not understand what they tell you! You shall be in an all-surrounding, penetrating blackness. Hence comes the solemnity of this warning, “Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness.” While as yet you have not absolutely turned away from the Truth of God and rejected God’s Word, accept it in your heart by a living faith and give Him glory, lest, by continuing a procrastinator and a halter between two opinions, you are gradually made to slide, little by little, away from the brightness of the Truth till you are shut up in a sevenfold night out of which there shall be no escape. For after that darkness there comes a stumbling, as says the text, “before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains.”

He who is going to think out his own way apart from Revelation will meet with mysteries which he cannot surmount. There are mysteries in Revelation, but these rise before us like hills of light—while to those who trifle with the Word of the Lord there shall arise mountains of gloom. I care not what philosophy you take, whether it is old or new, openly profane or faintly sprinkled with Christianity, you will *never* get rid of mystery—it is essential to the limited capacity of the human mind confronted by boundless Truths of God. There must be difficulties in every man’s way, even if it is a way of his own devising. But to the man who will not accept the Light of God, these difficulties must necessarily be dark mountains with sheer abysses, pathless crags and impenetrable ravines. He has refused the path which wisdom has cast up and he is justly doomed to stumble where there is no way. Beware of encountering mysteries without guidance and faith, for you will stumble either into folly or superstition and only rise to stumble again. Those who stumble at Christ’s Cross are likely to stumble into Hell.

There are also dark mountains of another kind which will block the way of the wanderer—mountains of dismay, of remorse, of despair. Woe to that man who finds himself traveling at midnight without a guide, without a road—and in the midst of tremendous mountains impassable to human feet! Ah, when a man comes into the land of doubt, which is a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness—how terrible his case! I say no more—thank God, my Hearers, you are not there yet! Therefore listen to Jehovah's voice and give glory to God before He sends a thick darkness over your soul—even darkness that may be full and your feet stumble, never to rise again.

After that stumbling there will come bitter disappointment. The man finding that he cannot discover his way, sits down awhile and says to himself, "I will wait till the moon rises, or the day dawns. Many before me have come to a pause—no doubt light will come." He looks and looks and looks again, but all in vain, for thus says the Prophet, "While you look for light, He turns it into the shadow of death." Dread word—death! Terrible shade which death casts over men's minds! That shadow is coming on the man as years advance and he has no light with which to dispel it. The physician cannot remove the death shadow—the disease is incurable. The sinner's face is pale with anguish and his heart melts like wax in the midst of his insides, for the shadow now upon him chills him to the marrow of his bones!

What will he do, now that the arrow is rankling in his heart? What will he do, now that eternal night is descending? He cowers down and waits, but nothing comes except the thickening of the death shadows—and the weeping of those whom he must leave. He is anticipating the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth which are to be his endless portion! And now a paralyzing despair seizes him, for God makes the darkness to be, "gross darkness," black, palpable, as it were a *solid thing*. The man is shut up and he cannot come forth. The darkness is within the chambers of his soul! It is in his brain! It is in his heart—he is drowning in a Black Sea. This is a just ending this for one who hated the Light of God!

Oh, I pray you, before any of you pass into that state, give glory to God and receive His Word! I beseech you believe before your doubt has utterly destroyed you! Accept the witness of God before you become hardened in skepticism. I do not know what may ever happen to me in this life—perhaps it shall come to pass that I may be visited with severe physical infirmities and possibly these may cause me mental depression and anguish. But this one thing I know, I have committed my mind, my heart, my whole intellectual nature to His keeping who has promised to preserve His own! I desire to *believe* nothing but what He tells me; to *do* nothing but what He bids me and to yield myself to no influence but that which He ordains for my direction! And, therefore, it seems to me that having done this for many a day, I can with unstaggering confidence say, at the last, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit."

I think I may confidently hope to cast anchor forever in that haven which is no new refuge to me, but the daily travel map of my soul. Can a man be safer as to his soul's condition than when he has ceased from de-

pending upon himself and has taken the great Lord to be the Shepherd at whose heels he follows? What shield can so well protect you as the Divine faithfulness? Under what rock can you find such shelter as under the truthfulness of God? I am at a pass with all new ideas in religion—I will have none of them! If this grand old Book fails me, I am content to fail! If the Lord shall desert me, I resign myself to be deserted! If God lies, then there is an end of all things and we all alike flounder in chaos!

But we tolerate no such fears. Believing in God, I am not fearful of the future. Neither dark mountains nor dark death can cause the Believer to stumble, for he cries, “I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” But oh, if God is true, what will become of you who will not hear Him? If the Bible is true, what must be your portion, who pretend to be wiser than the Holy Spirit? You must assuredly wander into that endless captivity from which there can be no redemption!

**V.** So now I have to close, but not till I have delivered my burdened heart once more. If the people would not submit to God, the Prophet determined what he would do. THERE REMAINS FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE IMPENITENT BUT ONE RESORT. The loving Prophet cries, “If you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and my eyes shall weep bitterly, and run down with tears, because the Lord’s flock is carried away captive.” He cannot do anything more! He has no other message to deliver. He cannot hope that God will overlook their insults and invent another way of saving them! He has told them the Truth and if they refuse it, he will lay no flattering unction to their souls. He will deliver the Word of the Lord once more and if they, again, *refuse*, he will go home to mourn for them even as Samuel mourned for Saul when the Lord had put him away.

Observe that he does not say in the first clause, “my eyes shall weep,” but, “my *soul* shall weep.” Bitter tears make red the eyes, but what must be the brine of those tears which are wept by the soul itself—a soul in anguish over willful men who persist in destroying themselves! Those soul-sorrows showed themselves in floods of tears which drenched the Prophet’s cheeks, for he loved the people and could not bear to look upon the ruin which was coming upon them. Like our Lord in later times, the Prophet beheld the city and wept over it—he could do no less, he could do no more. Alas, his sorrow would be unavailing; his grief was hopeless! He could not help those who would not be helped by God!

If they refused to hear, he does not speak to them of a “larger hope” yet to be revealed. He speaks not of “purgatory” and another season of probation, or a future Revelation which would override the present Word of God. Ah no, he loved men too well to invent for them fools’ paradises! He dared not imitate the old serpent in the garden by insinuating, “You shall not surely die.” I fear that the garments of many modern divines are steeped in the blood of souls whom they are deluding with their, “larger hope,” which is but a larger snare of Satan! Jeremiah had a brave, though tender heart—he did not bow to men and sing pretty ditties to them, as preachers, nowadays, are prone to do.

He told them they would stumble in the darkness and that nothing remained for him but to sigh out his soul over their ruin. Let us each one learn to sympathize with this holy man—

***“Arise, my tender thoughts, arise,  
Though torrents melt my streaming eyes!  
And you, my heart, with anguish feel  
Those evils which you cannot heal!  
See human nature sunk in shame—  
See scandals poured on Jesus’ name!  
The Father wounded through the Son;  
The world abused and souls undone!  
See the short course of vain delight  
Closing in everlasting night  
In flames that no abatement know,  
Though briny tears forever flow.”***

Observe that the Prophet did not expect to obtain sympathy in this sorrow of his. He says, “My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.” He would get quite alone, hide himself away and become a recluse. Alas, that so few even now care for the souls of men! Many ignore their danger, forgetting or else denying it. And few mourn over the ungodly and seek—

***“With cries, entreaties, tears to save,  
To snatch them from the fiery wave.”***

Hearts are hardened, pride is flattered, falsehoods are cried up! And what can the faithful do but seek their God and weep in secret places? Solitude and weeping are a poor solace, and yet there is no other.

This also puts a pungent salt into the tears of the godly, that the weeping can do no good, since the people refuse the one and only Remedy. Jehovah has spoken and if they will not hear Him, they must die in their sins! O Sirs, if you will not have Christ—if all the saints in the world prayed for you, yes, all the saints that ever lived, or ever shall live—if they all prayed for you and if in one great river, the tears of the whole Church flowed on forever, they could *not* help you nor bring you hope of salvation! You must have Christ or die! You must believe in the Lamb of God or perish forever! Does it stand so according to the Scriptures? Then none can change it! Do not dash yourselves against this rock! Fall not upon this stone!

What a burden it is that so many should cause us this unnecessary sorrow, for if men turned to God, our joy would exceed all bounds! O my Hearers, why will you distress me? Turn, turn—why will you die? What excuse can you urge for your folly in choosing to perish? What motive can be strong enough to make you leap into the fire when Christ is waiting to be gracious to you? We have labor enough in preparing and delivering our weighty messages without the added grief of seeing you reject them to your own destruction! Our throes of heart are sometimes grievous enough before we preach a sermon lest we should not preach aright—why must we be driven to this further misery?

We exhaust ourselves while pleading with you! Why should we have to sit down in sorrow because you will not believe our report? O blessed Spirit of God, touch all hearts this day, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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# THE ETHIOPIAN

## NO. 2536

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1897.**  
**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON,**  
**ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 15, 1884.**

***“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?  
 Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”***  
**Jeremiah 13:23.**

Jeremiah had a friend who was a black man. Ebedmelech, the Ethiopian eunuch, had a great and tender concern for Jeremiah when he was shut up in the miry prison. He took ropes and covered them with rags that they might not cut the poor Prophet's armpits, and drew him up out of that filthy well into which he had been cast for the Truth of God's sake. I suppose, from the way Ebedmelech afterwards treated the Prophet Jeremiah, that they were great friends. And as we usually talk of people of whom we are fond, it was natural that Jeremiah should use the Ethiopian as an emblem. I do not know that any other Prophet did so. Perhaps there was no other Prophet who took to a Negro so thoroughly as Jeremiah did, but, anyway, he had that black man's face imprinted on his mind and when he was speaking to the people, the Holy Spirit moved him to use a simile with which he had become familiar. I wish that every thought and experience I have ever had could be used in speaking for my Lord. I would like to never set my eyes on anyone or anything without trying to turn all to good account for the Master's work. And if those of us who are teachers of others will only go about with our eyes open, we shall find plenty of illustrations of the Truths we have to proclaim. There will not be a black man cross our path but we shall learn something or other from him.

Let us go at once to our text and notice that it contains *a question which admits of only one answer*—“Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” Of course he cannot! And this fact suggests to us a *spiritual* question—Can a man who is accustomed to do evil, so change himself as to do good? Of course he cannot, any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin! When we have talked over that question which admits of only one answer, I shall put *another question which admits of the opposite reply*. In that latter part of our subject may the Lord be pleased to send comfort to those who are despairing and who know that they can no more change their own nature than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots!

**I.** First, we are to consider a question which admits of only one answer—“Can the Ethiopian change his skin?”

No one ever heard of such a thing being done. Very wonderful things have occurred, but no one has ever yet heard of a blackamoor who has

been able to wash himself white. It was an old fable of Aesop as to the absurdity of attempting to do anything of the kind and, often, when we want to point out that a thing cannot be done, we use this simile, and say, "You cannot change the blackamoor's skin."

There are some things that men can do. A white man may be made almost black, as far as his skin is concerned. There are certain medicines that operate upon the skin and give it a very strange color—you may have seen a few such cases in your lifetime. But, though you can put the color in, you cannot take it out. The man who is white, or the woman who is very fair, may, either of them, sit in the sun till they become browned so that they might almost say with the spouse in the Song of Solomon, "I am black because the sun has looked upon me." But you could not turn a black man, white, though you can turn a white man black. You can do what you please by way of spoiling, but you can do nothing by way of mending. You can make yourself filthy by sin, but you cannot make yourself spiritually clean, do what you will! There is an ease about going down—you can jump down a precipice quickly enough, but who could stand at the bottom of a high cliff and leap to the top at one bound? Man can come down against his will, but he cannot go up even with his will. You can do evil all too readily—you can do it with both hands, greedily, and do it again and again and not grow weary of it—but to return to the right path, this is the difficulty!

As Virgil said about his arduous task when he went down to the land of shades, "Easy is the descent to Avernus, but to return to the clear air again—this is the work, this is the difficulty." You have all seen persons make themselves black externally—the chimney sweep in pursuit of his lawful calling becomes quite as black as a Negro, yet, with a basin of water, he can change the look of his face very speedily because the blackness is only something outside of him which merely adheres to him for a time. But the question of our text is, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" That is a part of himself and he cannot alter it. The Ethiopian can wash himself clean and he ought to do so, it is his duty to do so. And a man can keep himself moral and he ought to do so, it is his duty. If the Negro is ever so black, he may be clean, but he cannot wash himself white, neither can a sinner cleanse himself from the stains of his guilt.

But remember, dear Friends, that, even if an Ethiopian could change his skin, that would be a far smaller difficulty than the one with which a sinner has to deal, for it is not his skin, but his *heart* which has to be changed. There are some creatures in which, if they lose a limb, it will grow again, or another will come in its place, but there is no creature living that could lose its heart and then grow another. There is a tree of a certain sort and you can, if you please, graft upon it and it will produce a different kind of fruit. Or you can take off one limb of a tree and another branch may grow—but you cannot change the tree's heart. Even if it were possible for the Ethiopian to change his skin, that would be a change, as we say, only skin-deep, and that is no parallel to the sinner and his sin—the leprosy lies deep within. It is the heart that is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." It is the center and source of thought and action which is polluted and a change must be worked

there. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” No, but if he could do so, could a sinner change his heart? Assuredly not!

Observe, dear Friends, that the question is about an Ethiopian changing his skin *himself*. That cannot be done, certainly, but, if it could be done, a man could not, himself, change his own heart. For an evil heart to make its own self good is inconceivable. Darkness never did beget light. You may sit as long as you like in the sepulcher amid the dry bones, but life will never be born of death—life must come from quite a different source. The earth warms the seeds in her bosom and nourishes them into growth, but if those seeds were dead, all the genial seasons could not make them spring up. And even if the earth could make dead seeds to live, that is not the kind of miracle of which we are speaking—the miracle would be for the *dead seed to make itself alive*. That is utterly beyond the bounds of possibility! The figure in our text is a very strong one. As I have said before, the Ethiopian cannot change his own skin, but even that figure is not strong enough to express the utter helplessness of human nature as to its own renewal, for the change is greater and deeper—and it is quite impossible that it ever should come from fallen human nature.

Let me try to set forth, in some small measure, the difficulty of this business. The first difficulty is because the evil that man has is *in his nature*. If sin were merely an accident, then it might be prevented. But it is not so. If sheep were to fall down into the mud, they might soon be up again, and it would be possible to keep them from falling. But when the swine go down into the mud, they roll in it because they delight in wallowing! As long as there is any mire about and the sow can get there, she will return to her wallowing as long as she remains a sow, for the filthiness is in her nature as well as in that which surrounds her! And it is so with us so far as sin is concerned. The Ethiopian could wash himself clean, but the blackness of his skin is a part of his Ethiopian nature and he cannot get rid of that. The leopard’s spots are not accidental to it, but it has spots because it is a leopard.

So, sin is not accidental to human nature, but it is part and parcel of ourselves. When you see a man, you see a sinner! And if you could look into his heart, you would see the seed-plot of all manner of mischief which only needs congenial surroundings to fully develop itself. How can a man change his own nature? I do not suppose that, by any possibility, I could ever become an Ethiopian. I do not think that if I were to set my mind to the task, I could ever, by any possibility, turn into a Dutchman because I was not born so—it is not according to my nature. I must remain an Englishman, Essex-born, as long as I live. Only a miracle could make me anything different from that! And the sinner is a sinner right through. Wherever you look at him, he is a sinner, and so he always will be unless a superior power shall intervene to change him.

Alas also, this evil nature of man brings with it the fact that *his will* is altogether perverted. A man will not cease to do evil and learn to do well because he has no heart to do it. Sinners do not want to be saved. “Oh,” says one, “I do!” But do you understand what it is to be saved? Every sinner would like to escape from going to Hell, but that is *not* what is meant

by salvation. To be saved means to be saved from loving evil, from seeking after it and living in it. Do you want to be saved from that? Do you want to be saved from falsehood, saved from the indulgence of your passions, saved from strong drink, saved from pride, saved from covetousness? The most of men have not a heart inclined to that—there is some sweet sin of theirs which they would like to sip, at least now and then upon the sly. That is to say, evil, as evil, is not abhorrent to the natural will, but the natural will of man goes after that which is evil as surely as ever children seek after that which is sweet! Sin is sweet to man and he will have it if he can. How, then, can his nature be changed while he has no will to it? The will is, as it were, the rudder of the ship. My Lord Will-be-Will, according to John Bunyan, is the Lord Mayor of the town of Mansoul. And so he is, and he carries it in a very lordly way. He will have this and he will have that—and he will not have the other—and he is the master of the man. Till the will is changed, till what is called, “free will,” is made, in truth, to be free will—free from the chains of evil and the love of sin—the man cannot rise to happiness and God any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin!

Moreover, in connection with this natural depravity, and the perversity of the human will, there comes to be *the power of habit*. Oh, what an awful force the power of evil habit has upon a man! It begins at first only like a cobweb—he can break it when he pleases. It grows into a thread and he is somewhat restrained by it. It changes to a cord and he is in a net. It hardens into iron and the iron becomes further hardened into steel—and the man is shut up in it. He becomes like the starling that cried, “I cannot get out! I cannot get out!” The sad thing is that the man is in a cage of his own making! It is a sort of living cage which has grown up all around him and he cannot escape from it! How often is this the case with strong drink! The man at first only took a very little, but how much does he take now? Mr. Wesley, when dining once with a friend of his who had greatly helped him in the district, saw him, after dinner, rise from the table and get just a little brandy and water, Mr. Wesley said to him, “My Friend, what is that?” “I am very much troubled with indigestion,” he answered, “but I only take a tablespoonful of brandy in a little water.” “Well,” said Mr. Wesley, “that is certainly very little, but, my Friend, you will want two tablespoonfuls before long to do for you what you think that one does. And then you will want four. And then you will want eight and, unless you give it up, I fear that you will become a drunk and disgrace the cause of God.” After Mr. Wesley was dead, that man still lived a drunkard—he had lost his reputation, disgraced the people with whom he had been connected and brought untold sorrow upon himself.

Now, as it is with that one particular sin, so it is with every other! If a sin comes, alone, to your house the first time, it will come the next time with seven other devils more wicked than itself—and those seven will very soon bring seven each and you will have a legion of devils! And when you get one legion, it is highly probable that another legion will come into the barracks of your heart and stay there. The beginning of sin is like the letting out of water—just a little drop trickles through the wall of the dike. Then it becomes a tiny rivulet which a child’s hand can stop—then



it increases to a stream and soon the dike begins to heave, break, crack and, by-and-by, it is broken down and a torrent rushes over town and village and carries away multitudes of men with it. Beware! That evil habit is a dreadful thing—he who yields to an evil habit is preparing himself for the bottomless pit!

In addition to this habit, I grieve to say that there generally springs up a kind of *delight in sin*. There are, no doubt, some men who, for a time, feel an intense satisfaction in sin. Yes, and not only in their own sins, but they take pleasure in the sins of others. I hope you never hear them talk. If it has ever been your misfortune to do so, you know that they will talk about some piece of filthiness as if it were a brave thing. They will boast about what some boy has done under their abominable tuition and they seem to take a delight in seeing how precocious he is in everything that is vile. Some men are never happy except when they are destroying souls and, while the deepest pleasure under Heaven is to bring a soul to God, the most diabolical pleasure out of Hell is certainly that of helping to damn a soul! Yet there are many who seem to take a delight in that terrible work. How some skeptics endeavor to entrap a youthful Believer! How some licentious persons seem to lay themselves out to try and seduce others! How many there are who have become ripe in iniquity and their evil seed is scattered broadcast, sowing sin and everlasting ruin upon every wind that blows! Can such an Ethiopian as that change his skin or such a leopard as that his spots? Of course he cannot—the case is utterly hopeless so far as his own power is concerned.

Further than this, *the force of sin increases upon men*. If a stone is let fall from a tower, it multiplies the pace of its fall in a mathematical ratio. It drops very much faster the last part of its descent than it did at the first. Set anything rolling down a hill and see how the momentum increases. A railway truck has got on a decline—it is running down. It starts slowly enough at first, you might easily stop it. But let it go on and see how it accumulates force as it rushes along till it breaks through every obstacle. Well, just such is the power of sin in men—they seem as if they cannot sin enough. Having once given themselves up to the demon power, it comes upon them stronger and yet stronger till the appetite grows within them into a passion and a fury—and a fire that burns like the flame of Gehenna that cannot be slowed or quenched. I know what they think at first—that they will go just so far and then stop. Well, try it—no, do NOT try it! It would be an awful experiment to set a house on fire, intending to let it burn just so much and no more. Can you say to the fire, “You shall come this far, but no farther”? Even if you could say it to fire among standing corn, blown by the wind, yet you would say it in vain to sin! Sin swiftly grows from a pigmy to a giant and, ever increasing in its awful power, it crushes down the man who is in its grip and holds him under its dreadful sway.

There are many drunks who now have within them a compulsion to drink. They seem as if they could not pass by the door of the bar. There is many an adulterer who cannot glance without a lascivious thought. As for the gambler—and I dare to say that there is no sin that does more swiftly send men down to Hell than gambling—having once begun with

his shilling and his pound, he will plunge till he has lost his all! There is an awful infatuation about this evil—it is a stream that catches the boat and bears it swiftly along, noiselessly, but with irresistible force, till it comes to the cataract of endless ruin! Oh, that you could escape! But there are some who never can and never will—and there is not one of us who can escape unless He who is mighty to save shall come in with His own right hand and His holy arm and get unto Himself the victory! For when once the force of sin really grasps a man, we may ask concerning him, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” and answer, “No, he cannot.”

Added to all this there is another horrible evil—after a while *the understanding refuses to see*. The man who, at first, knew a thing to be wrong, may continue in it till he does not believe it to be wrong at all. There are men who can utter language which would have chilled their blood when they first began to swear. But now it drops from them as an ordinary word. I believe that the filthy talkers of our street, or the most of them, do not mean anything by what they say—they have got so hardened in misusing the Lord’s name and using obscene language that their understanding does not convict them of having done wrong. They have given Mr. Conscience so much opium that he has gone to sleep! Now and then, perhaps, he wakes up and makes a great noise—but they soon lull him to sleep, again—and they go on sinning without compunction. We read of David, on one occasion, that his heart smote him. It is an ugly knock when your own heart smites you, for that blow comes home. But it is also a blessed knock and, if any of you have never felt it, I am very sorry for you. If your heart never smites you, it must be because your conscience has fallen into a dead sleep, or is seared as with a red-hot iron! When a man reaches that stage that he can lie and swear, and then can wipe his mouth and say that there is nothing in it, oh, how shall such a man be changed? “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil.”

Then, again, as a man’s conscience is sent to sleep, so his heart is *hardened against every holy influence that might move him*. He used to go to a place of worship, once, but he will not go now. He rails at such places and pours contempt upon Gospel ministers and all Christian people. Though he is as bad as he can be, yet he thinks that he is better than they are and he tries to trample under his feet the saints of God. Though such a wretch as he is not worthy, even, to unloose the laces of their shoes, he cannot have sufficiently bad names for them. In former times, when there came sickness into the house, he used to pray. And in time of trouble he sought the Lord. He has had many a trouble, since, but he is not at all disturbed about it—he only gets angry against God and becomes more and more hardened in sin. His dear wife used to have a wonderful influence over him for good, but he has even broken away from that. And there is that dear girl of his—he loves her very much and she has pleaded with her father. And there is somebody else there, for a little child has led him, but now he feels that all that is a kind of weakness and he will get beyond it. Ah, he is hardening himself! As for his Bible—alas, he never reads that. If there is a word spoken to him by some

kind friend who takes an earnest interest in his welfare, he lets it go in one ear and out the other—or else he gets into a furious passion and asks who he is that he is to be talked to like that! He is as good as anybody else, though he knows, all the while, that he is rotten right through.

What is to be done with a man like that? He is determined to go over hedge and ditch to Hell. His father, a dear gray-headed old saint, has blocked the way, but he has pushed him aside. His mother has come and said, “My Boy, do not ruin yourself,” and she has hung about his neck and tried to keep him from sin. But he has shaken her off. In spite of wife, child, and friends, he is determined to destroy himself! And do you tell me that such a man is able to change himself? Yes, when Ethiopians change their skins and when leopards change their own spots, then will it be done, but not till then! The case is hopeless if it remains with the man, himself—the work cannot be accomplished.

You will say that now, surely, I have gone far enough in my description of this man. And so I have, painfully far, but what can he do by which he can change his nature and make a new man of himself? *All outward means are unavailing.* He may go and hear sermons. Well, I know that sermons of *my* preaching will never turn a heart of stone into flesh. Without the Spirit of God there will be no result whatever produced! The man may be christened, or he may be baptized, but what is there in water drops or water floods that can alter his sinful nature? Why, there have been villains upon earth who have gone through every religious ceremony and yet have ended at the gallows! You may scrub an Ethiopian till you scrub his skin away, but he will be as black as ever when you have done with him. So is it with the sinner. You may put him through every form and ceremony of the church—and you may make him think that he has accepted the orthodox creed and you may even alter his outward life to a considerable extent—yet, when it is all done, nothing at all will really have been done towards his soul’s salvation!

Somebody, perhaps, asks, “Why, then, do you preach to these people?” Well, I do it principally because I am sent to do it. You see, if God were to send me to preach to the mountains and to bid them move, I would go and do it—and expect to see them move! If He were to bid me go and stand on the shore, and say to the salt sea waves, “Turn into fresh water,” I would do it, not because I think the sea, which is salt, can make *itself* fresh, but because my Lord never sent me on a fool’s errand and He will honor the message He tells me to deliver! I heard somebody say that to tell a dead sinner to live was as if you were to stand at a grave and bid a dead body live. That is *exactly* it, my dear Friends, and you say it is ridiculous. Yes, it is very ridiculous if you leave God out of it, but as we are *told to do it*, we leave the responsibility of it with the Lord—and we intend to go on with this thing which men call ridiculous! Like Ezekiel, we are commanded to say, “O you dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord.” Somebody objects that dry bones cannot hear—that does not matter to us—we are bid to tell them to hear and we expect that the Lord will enable them to hear what He has commanded us to say to them!

Another reason why we do it is because, when we have been preaching the Gospel to these Blackamoors, when we have been holding up Jesus

Christ and Him crucified to these Ethiopians, we have seen them turn white! So we shall keep on, dear Friends, for, though they could not turn themselves white, yet when we have come in the name of the Lord and said to the Ethiopian, "Be white," he has become white before our very eyes. I have seen, not only hundreds, but I have seen many thousands of persons from whose lips I have heard the story that though they were formerly persecutors of Christ and His people, they have become His followers! Or, though they were fond of drink and every evil thing, they have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. So I shall keep on bidding sinners do this impossible thing, for, God working with me, the withered hand shall be stretched out and the dead Lazarus shall come forth from the grave at the bidding of the Lord!

**II.** I said that I would finish up with another question and another answer. I have only two or three minutes in which to speak about them. The question of the text is, "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin?*" The answer is—No, no, no, no, no, no! Here is the other question—*Can the Ethiopian's skin be changed?* The answer to that is—Yes, yes, yes, as emphatically as we have just now said no, no, no! Can the Ethiopian's skin be changed? Can the sinner's nature be renewed? Yes, for *God can do everything*. He changed primeval darkness into light! He changed chaos into order and God can turn that poor ruined man—that wretched drunk, swearer, adulterer, into one who is chaste, pure, ad lovely and honest, for all things are possible with God! He who made us can newly make us! There is nobody who can put your clock in order so well as the man who made it. If your clock has gone wrong, you had better send it to the maker if you can find him. And there is nobody who can put a heart in order like the God who made the heart. Send your heart to Him, for He can make it new by His blessed Spirit.

Remember, also, that it is provided in the Covenant of Grace that *the Holy Spirit should make us new*. It is written, "A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." God the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit, is master of our spirits. My dear Friend with a bad temper, the Holy Spirit can conquer that evil! You who have such a forgetful memory, he can conquer that! You who are so proud, He can make you humble! You who feel so hard, He can dissolve the heart of stone, or take it altogether away! Do not doubt that the Ethiopian can have his skin changed by a power outside him and above him!

Further, know you this—*the Lord Jesus Christ has come to save the lost*. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. If you believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, you shall be saved. To put it in other words, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Or, to give you the whole Gospel as Christ told us to preach it, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." If you will come, not to *do*, but to have *all done for you*—not to *merit* salvation, but to *receive* it as a *gift* of God's free favor—if you will come just as you are, altogether without desert or anything to plead before God—and you will just say in your heart, "Lord, I adore the love which moved You to give Your Son to die for sinners, and I believe in the great Propitiation which He offered for sin,"

go your way, you are saved! If you thus believe, it is not only that you shall be saved, but you *are* saved.

Have you anything to trust to beside Christ? Then you are lost, for you have a mingled faith that is not of God's making! But if you wholly, solely, alone, heartily and entirely fix your hope on the blood and righteousness of Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation for sin—then you are saved and I know that your heart says, "Blessed be God for that! Now that I love God, what can I do for Him?" That is the way!

I noticed, yesterday, when I was talking to some 40 persons who had recently found Christ, that they were, all of them, either hard at work for the Lord, or they were asking what they could do for Him. Could I tell them something they could do for their dear Lord who had saved them? There is far more done out of love than there is out of law. We will not, cannot do anything to be saved, but, when saved, what is there that we cannot do? Live, and then do! Not, do and live. Live in Christ and then serve Him, but do not put the cart before the horse! Come, dear Friends, and trust in Christ. The Lord bless you by His Divine Spirit leading you to do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 78:9-72.**

This story of the children of Israel, after they came out of Egypt, is like a mirror in which we may, with great sadness, see ourselves reflected.

**Verse 9.** *The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.* They had every opportunity of serving their God. He had provided them with fit weapons for the war, but they were cowardly, so they "turned back in the day of battle."

**10, 11.** *They kept not the Covenant of God, and refused to walk in His Law; and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had showed them.* Let each one of us ask, "Does the Psalmist describe me?"

**12, 13.** *Marvelous things did He in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters to stand as an heap.* What a marvelous miracle that dividing of the Red Sea was! Did it not make an abiding impression upon them? I will be bound to say that many of them said, "We shall never doubt God again." Yet, they soon did doubt, murmur and rebel against Him!

**14-16.** *In the daytime also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.* It seemed as if there was nothing that the Lord would not do for them—all that they needed for food and refreshment was given to them freely.

**17, 18.** *And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.* He had given them food for their necessities, but now they must have meat for their lusts.

**19.** *Yes, they spoke against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* So you see, dear Friends, what speaking against God really is! I am afraid that we, also, have often done that. To question God's power is to speak against Him. Perhaps you have thought lightly of your unbelieving speeches, but God does not think lightly of them—to my mind it seems that there is hardly anything that so grieves Him as the doubts of His people concerning Him.

**20.** *Behold, He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can He give bread also? Can He provide flesh for His people?* There ought to have been no question as to the Lord's power—the God who could fetch water out of a rock could, if He pleased, make loaves of bread out of the sand under their feet, or cause the very stars to drop with meat for them if necessary.

**21.** *Therefore the Lord heard this, and was angry.* He was really angry with His people because they doubted Him. He loved them and because He loved them, it cut Him to the quick that they should have questioned His power to bless them.

**21-23.** *So a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation: though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of Heaven.* Unbelief is very hard to kill. God opens the doors and windows of Heaven to feed His people yet, nevertheless, the next time they are in trouble, they begin to stagger at the promise. Oh, shameful unbelief!

**24-29.** *And rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of Heaven. Man did eat angels' food: He sent them meat to the fullest. He caused an east wind to blow in the Heaven: and by His power He brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: and He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled: for He gave them their own desire.* Yet that was not a blessing to them and, Brothers and Sisters, let us always be afraid of our own desire, unless that desire comes from the Lord. You know how David puts it in the 37<sup>th</sup> Psalm—"Delight yourself, also, in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." If, however, you find your delight in any *earthly thing*, it shall be a plague to you to have the desire of your heart! "He gave them their own desire."

**30.** *They were not estranged from their lust.* For the more lust gets, the more lust wants. It is like the daughter of the horse-leech that always cries, "Give! Give!" God can satisfy the longing soul, but all the world cannot satisfy the cravings of lust.

**30, 31.** *But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.* They received what they pined for, but they had a curse with it. Affliction with a blessing is far better than prosperity with a curse!

**32.** *For all this they sinned still, and believed not for His wondrous works.* They were dyed ingrain with unbelief, so that it seemed as if it could not be washed out of them.

**33.** *Therefore their days did He consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.* A great part of our trouble is the fruit of our own unbelief. It is like hemlock in the furrows of the field. They who distrust God are making a rod for their own back and, before they have done with it, they will have to rue the day in which they thought themselves wiser than God!

**34-36.** *When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God, their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues.* Some men are like dull animals that will not go without the whip. Many of us cannot be kept right without constant affliction. If our God gives us a little smooth walking, we go half-asleep, or we trip and stumble. And so He is compelled, as it were, to make our way very rough, and often to strike us with the rod to keep us from falling altogether into sinful slumber. How many there are who, when they seem to turn to God in times of sickness, are not truly penitent! A death-bed repentance may be true, but, oh, what a risk there is that it may be false!

**37-51.** *For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His Covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not: yes, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passes away, and comes not again. How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert! Yes, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy. How He had worked His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan: and had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle, also, to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to His anger; He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; and smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham. This is what God did with their enemies who had oppressed them, that He might set His people at liberty. After all that, ought they not to have trusted Him as a little child trusts its mother, without ever a question or a doubt? While He thus overthrew their enemies, see what He did for His own people.*

**52-56.** *But made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And He led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And He brought them to the border of His sanctuary, even to this mountain, which His right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen, also, before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not His testimonies. This sad note seems to come over and over again, as*

if they never could have too much of grieving God. Yet the Lord was still tender towards them. Well may we sing—

***“Who is a pardoning God like Thee?  
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”***

**57-64.** *But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, He was angry, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy’s hands. He gave His people over, also, unto the sword; and was angry with His inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation. They were dumb with excess of grief. When God chastises His children, He does not play at it. Sometimes, when He is angry at their sin, He lays on the blows fast and heavy till their very bones are broken, so that they may hate sin as God hates it, and seek after holiness even as God loves it. So, dear Friends, I pray that if any of us have lost the consolations of God and are feeling the weight of His rod, we may begin to inquire what secret thing it is in us which has angered Him, and go back to Him, and seek to stand before Him as once we did. For, otherwise, He will smite, and smite, and smite yet again and again. But notice that the Lord never delights in chastening His children. He is glad to have done with the necessary correction. So, when their enemies were most cruel with them—*

**65-69.** *Then the Lord awakened as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouts by reason of wine. And He smote His enemies in the hinder parts. He put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover He refused the tabernacle of Joseph and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which He loved. And He built His sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which He has established forever. You see that we are getting into clear water now—it was all broken water, storm and hurricane, while we heard of what Israel did—but when we come to deal with God in Christ, of whom David is the type, then how sweetly everything goes!*

**70-72.** *He chose David, also, His servant, and took him from the sheep-folds: from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob, His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands. Blessed be God who puts away the sin of His people, because He delights in mercy!*

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—489, 474, 448.**

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

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



# THE DROUGHT OF NATURE, THE RAIN OF GRACE AND THE LESSON THEREFROM NO. 2115

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1889,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, NOV. 10, 1889.**

*“And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits and found no water. They returned with their vessels empty. They were ashamed and confounded and covered their heads. Because the ground is parched, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are not you He, O Lord our God? Therefore we will wait upon You: for You have made all these things.”  
Jeremiah 14:3, 4, 22.*

IT is my heart's desire and earnest prayer that many in this house may this morning say with the Prophet, “O Lord our God, we will wait upon You.” I shall not be satisfied to have delivered a discourse, nor for you to have heard it, and even approved of it, unless there shall come from it this delightful fruit, that those far off from God shall be drawn near to Him. And that they shall say, in very deed and of a truth, “Therefore we will wait upon You.” In God alone can men live happily. And if they would be recovered from their fallen state, it is to the Lord their God that they must turn, Oh, that they would wait upon Him!

In the last verse we have the word “therefore,” which shows that the speakers had come to this conclusion by an argument. In truth, they had been forced to their resolution by a very painful and personal argument, which God had set before them in the order of His Providence. By their thirst and by their failure to find water anywhere, the Lord had driven them to say, “Therefore we will wait upon You.”

I trust it will not be needful to urge us to conversion by sufferings as terrible. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding.” Come willingly, since the argument for coming is clear and cogent. I should like you to go this morning mentally through the process by which the Israelites passed practically when they came to the gracious conclusion, “Therefore we will wait upon You.” Let us begin at once with the argument, praying God to send it home to every heart by His good Spirit, that we may reach the desired conclusion.

**I.** First, consider that MAN IS A VERY DEPENDENT CREATURE. He is, in some respects, the most dependent creature that God has made. For the range of his wants is very wide, and at a thousand points he is dependent upon something outside of himself. All creation exists by the will

of the Lord. And if His will should cease to send forth conserving power to maintain the created things in existence, they would all cease to be. This great world—the sun, the moon, the stars—would all dissolve. And, as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it, they would be lost forever.

At the Lord's will the universe would be gone, as yonder bubble which your child was blowing but a moment ago, and now has vanished, and left no trace behind. God alone is by his own power—all else is dependent upon Him—

***“Life, death and Hell and worlds unknown,  
Hang on His firm decree—  
He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave to be.”***

Man as a living creature, is peculiarly dependent upon God as to temporals. We see in the text that when the dews no longer fell and the rains were withheld, then the unhappy inhabitants of Palestine suffered from drought and that drought brought with it failure of the harvest, famine, disease and death.

To quote our common saying, the people died like flies. They fell everywhere by thousands, fainting, famished, doomed. On what a feeble thread hangs human life! Water, though it is itself unstable, is needed to the establishment of human life and without it man expires. Many an animal can bear thirst better than man. Other creatures carry their own garments with them. But we must be indebted to a plant, or to a sheep, for the covering of our nakedness. Many other creatures are endowed with sufficient physical force to win their food in fight. But we must produce our own food from the soil.

Behold, how we come into the world, helpless and without strength—utterly dependent upon others. And when our strength is developed and our manhood is perfected, we only enter upon another phase of dependence upon our surroundings for our food—and therefore, for our life, we are dependent upon drops of rain. We cannot produce food from the earth without the dew and the rain. However cleverly you have prepared your soil, however carefully you have selected your seed, all will fail without the rain of Heaven.

Even though your corn should spring up, yet will it refuse to come to the ear if the heavens are dry. Nor can you of yourself produce a single shower, or even a drop of dew. If God withholds the rain, what can the farmer do? Call together the Parliament! Collect a synod of scientists! Convoke a conclave of princes—what can they do? In vain their acts, theories and commands. When the skies are brass, the earth is iron. When God is angry, then the clouds scatter no blessings over our field and earth yields not her increase to the husbandman.

Yes, and life itself would vanish as the food of life ceased. It would be an instructive calculation if it could be accurately worked out—to estimate how much bread—food, there is at any time laid up upon the surface of the earth. If all harvests were to fail from this date. If there were no har-

vests in Australia during our winter, no harvests early in the year in India and the warm regions, if there were no harvests in America and in Europe, I have been informed that, by the time of our own harvest months, there would be upon the face of the earth no more food than would last us for six weeks.

How dependent we are for each year's crop! Should there be universal failure, starvation would be closely within sight. God does, indeed, give us bread as we need it. Even as, in the wilderness, He gave the manna. We are every hour dependent upon His generous care. The bottles of Heaven contain the juices of human life—if these were utterly stopped, none of us could endure the burning drought and the consequent famine.

See, then, the absolute dependence upon God, not only of the Eastern nations but of all peoples of our race. Whatever may be our trade or profession, we are all fed by the fruit of the field. And whatever may be said about laws of nature, the God of nature is not bound and limited by methods of procedure. He can operate exactly as He pleases and fill our barns full, or stop the supplies of grain by the simple method of giving or withholding rain. Our breath is in our nostrils—He takes away that breath and we die. Apart from His preserving, the whole race of man would be turned to dust and cease from the land of the living.

In spiritual things this dependence is most evident. Brethren, if God shall bless us with His saving health and with the visitation of His Spirit, we shall be as a field that God has blessed and our lives shall be glad with a harvest to His praise. But apart from God, what can we do? In this realm of spiritual things we are absolutely and wholly dependent upon God. And without His aid, we are as a salt land, which is destitute of verdure. Salvation is of the Lord. Vain is all trust which builds not on Him.

The priceless blessings of pardon and Divine Grace—how can we procure them apart from God in Christ Jesus? How can sin be removed, except by the Lord, who passes by iniquity? Who is he that can absolve but He against whom the transgression was committed? The washing from all stain—from where can it come but from those dear hands that were pierced for us? When He shall wash us and our robes in His most precious blood, only then shall we be clean—and then all the glory shall be to Him as the Lamb slain.

Justification and acceptance—are not these of God? What can you and I do to justify ourselves, or to make ourselves acceptable with God? These are the gifts of the Covenant of Grace and only God can give them. But if He gives them not, we can never obtain them. These gifts—it is His royal prerogative to bestow according to the counsel of His own will.

So is it with the life and the power of the Spirit of God, by which we are able to receive and enjoy the blessings of the Covenant. The Holy Spirit, like the wind, blows where He wishes and the order of His working is with the Lord, alone. The new life whereby we receive the Lord Jesus—how can it come to us but from the living God Himself? Can a dead soul quicken itself? Can a man steeped in sin liberate and purify himself? “Can the

Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” “You must be born again.”

But can a man cause himself to be born again? Is it imaginable that the new birth is caused by the person born? The change worked is mysterious, radical, abiding—who can work it upon himself? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one. The new life must come from God! “Except a man is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The new heart and the right spirit—from where do they come? Can the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, beget within itself love of God and desire for fellowship with Him?

They cannot be self-created. They are the work of the same hands which made the heavens and the earth. The love of holiness and the pursuit of it, and perseverance in that pursuit—do these come any way but from Him who has worked all our works in us? Every beginning of good, yes, every desire after it, is worked in us by God, or else it is never in us at all. We are absolutely dependent upon God, not only for all spiritual gifts but for the power to become partakers of them.

And, Brethren, all the Divine Graces that are pleasing to the Lord, do they not come to us from God our Savior? Is there a grain of faith in the world that God did not create? Is there a spark of holy love in any human bosom that God did not kindle? Is there any true hope in any heart which the God of Hope did not implant? Is there anything anywhere that is holy, or lovely, or of good repute, which has not first come from God Himself and so entered into the heart of man? Sinner, you are absolutely dependent upon God for your possession of Divine Grace and the obtaining of salvation.

You lie like the dry bones in the valley, which were very many and very dry. What can you do? By what power can dry bones live? The Lord’s Prophet, as an act of faith in God, bids you live. But God’s Prophet knows that you will not live by your own strength, nor by the power of his persuasion. No, his appeal is to a power beyond himself and you. He cries, “Come from the four winds, O Breath and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” He looks to the Holy Spirit to create life in you and apart from that Spirit he has no hope for you.

Putting this case very broadly—and I cannot put it too broadly—I am not afraid of exaggerating, or going too far in it—I know that for the clouds, and the rain, and the harvest, men are absolutely dependent upon the God of Providence. And I know, also, that for the gift of the Holy Spirit and for the power which saves souls, we are altogether dependent upon the great God who creates all good things.

Here is the pity of it—against God, upon whom we are so dependent, we have sinned and continue to sin. We are dependent upon Him and yet rebellious against Him. Shall the man who accepts from me his daily bread lift up his heel against me? Shall he who could not live without me, yet live to speak evil of me? Shall he abuse my goodness into a means of doing me damage? That were an atrocious thing, which could only spring

from a black, ungrateful heart. Yet every sinner who goes on in sin is acting thus ungratefully.

Existing only by God's infinite charity, he who continues to do evil is ungrateful in the highest degree to the Lord of Love. This being the case, the dependence of guilty man upon the graciousness of Divine Sovereignty and the sovereignty of Divine Grace is still further enhanced. Because man has broken God's command and continues to rebel against Him, he lies all the more absolutely at the disposal of a righteous God. The traitor has now no rights. He has forfeited them. He has no claims. He has outlawed himself. O ungodly man, you can make no appeal to God's justice. For if you do, He must award you eternal destruction.

You cannot claim anything now of Him as due to you, for your only due is to be driven into everlasting punishment. You are condemned before Him in whose hands are the issues of life and death. You are as much in the hand of God as the prisoner condemned to die is in the hand of the royal power—indeed, you are far more absolutely so. If pardoned, it must be by the exercise of the sovereign prerogative which is vested in Jehovah, the Lord of All, who does as seems good in His sight. Provided it can be done justly, sovereignty may step in and rescue the guilty from his doom. But this is a matter which depends upon the will of the Lord alone. If you are executed, the condemnation is so well deserved, that not a word can be said against the severity which shall carry out the sentence.

If God had left this sinful world to perish in its sin, none could have blamed Him. It is but right that those should die who have provoked their God and incurred the penalty which He threatened against sin. If the Lord, in the greatness of His love, chooses to save this man or that, He does no injury to any but magnifies His mercy in those whom He redeems from deserved death. If the Lord enlightens an island and leaves a continent in the dark, who shall accuse Him? If He takes one of a city and two of a family and brings them to Himself, while the rest are suffered to have their own way and willfully continue in rebellion, who shall charge God with partiality, or say unto Him, What are You doing?

He can reply to all who object to His way of mercy, "May I not do as I will with Mine own?" He lays on no man more than is right and what He chooses to forgive of His own bounty cannot be challenged. Whether you like the doctrine or not, it is true that, as sinners, you are absolutely dependent upon the sovereign mercy of God. I wish you could see and feel this great Truth of God. For it would tend to humble you and prepare you to seek His favor. I pray the Holy Spirit to impress it upon everyone here who has not yet come to God in Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first Truth of God.

**II.** Our second remark is this—MEN MAY BE REDUCED TO DIRE DISTRESS. Men, being dependent upon God, may be reduced to dire distress if they disobey Him and incur His just displeasure.

Kindly follow me in the earlier verses of my text. Here we have great temporal distress—the people had no water! The highest ranks of society were made to feel the terrible pinch. The whole of the city was tormented

with thirst and the leading men instituted diligent searches to find water. They sent to the great reservoirs which Solomon had constructed in his time—the upper and the lower pools. But they found no water. They searched again and again but the waters had utterly failed and they were driven to despair. They covered their heads as men who gave themselves up to die without hope.

Terrible was the drought which Jehovah sent upon His land because of the sin of His people—it was as if the day of Elijah had returned, wherein there was neither dew nor rain for three years and six months.

My dear Hearers, there is a spiritual distress of which this drought is a figure. Behold, as in a parable, the state into which we have seen many brought when God has begun to deal with them—to such there comes drought of life and famine of hope. My Hearer, do you know what is meant by God's dealing with a man? Do you remember that passage in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," where one pilgrim says to the other, "Let us fall into good discourse. Where shall we begin?" The other answers, "Where God began with us." Do you know what that means? Has God begun with you? If so, you will follow me with understanding when I say God makes the aroused and convicted man conscious of the greatest conceivable want, even of a drought in his own soul.

These people were conscious that they wanted water. The case was worse than that—they were tormented with thirst. So does God come to men and make them feel that they need the living water of His Divine Grace and He sets them thirsting for it. They did not know their need before but went on merrily enough, content with the pleasures of time and sense. But now, being quickened, they feel an intolerable hunger and thirst after higher and better things. They are tormented by an insatiable desire, which cannot and will not be set aside.

Have we not seen these thirsty ones? Have we not pitied them? Have we not pointed them to the one and only Source of supply? Have we not in secret rejoiced over them as we have foreseen to what their anguish tended?

To proceed a little in detail with the words of my text—when the Lord causes sinners to feel the spiritual drought, pride is humbled. "Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters." Generally, the nobility concern themselves little enough about water. But in great drought King Ahab and his chancellor, Obadiah, went forth themselves to find water. In this case the nobles sent their servants—no, even their sons and daughters—to discover some source of supply. So God knows how to teach a man so that his lofty thoughts are humbled and his pride is brought down to the dust.

My Lord, you will feel yourself a nobody should the Spirit deal with you in conviction. Not long ago, your excellency looked down from the highest seat in the synagogue, but now you sit down in the dust and count everyone your superior. The philosopher grows into a little child and gladly accepts the cup which at some prior time he sneered at. We heard you singing to your own honor and glory the other day. But now you have no song

to sing—you cover your lips and mutter, “Unclean, unclean, unclean!” When the Lord lays His hand on a man, He makes his beauty to consume away like the moth. From head to foot the man is moved—his soul within him melts and all his glory is rolled in the mire. Our noblest thoughts become lowly seekers after the water of life in the day of our distress.

But observe that when humbled and made thirsty, these people went to secondary causes—they came to the pits, or reservoirs. Reservoirs in the East are sometimes great caverns in the natural rock and at other times they are excavated by labor, or built up by skill and then streams are turned into them and they hold a great storage of water. Some of the children of the nobles thought they knew of caverns which others had not seen, hidden cisterns under ground, which had been forgotten. And they went forth to find them. They hurried to the place where they hoped for the priceless water.

But we read not that they cried unto God, or sought mercy of Jehovah, who could right speedily have given them rain. They resorted to the secondary causes—they turned not to the hand which smote them. Thus souls, when they are awakened, go to fifty things before they come to God. It is sad that, in superstition, or in skepticism, they look for living streams. They try reformation of manners—I have nothing to say against it. But apart from God, reformation always ends in disappointment. They seek consolation from an orthodox creed, for which I might have much to say. But if a belief in a creed is trusted in, it is as if a man sought to quench his thirst with a bottle but did not care to see whether it held water or not.

A creed is a pitcher in which the water is held but it is not the water itself. Some try forms and ceremonies in abundance and to these they add self-denials and penances—they suffer anything sooner than come to God for His Divine Grace. Grace is a port to which no man steers until it is seen to be the only one into which he can enter. O my Heart, my Heart, how is it that you can be so loath to go to your Father and your God? O you that are wandering at this time from one creature-trust to another, I pray you cease your roaming and come home to God, who alone can help you.

There is no hope for you but in God and the way to God is by His Son, Christ Jesus. Why do you gad about so much? Straightforward to God is the surest, safest way—why do you not take it? God is our haven and our Heaven—why are we so reluctant to seek Him? O man, why will you turn to saints, to angels, and even to devils, rather than to the Lord your God? But I know you, your heart is set on idolatry and this is the essence of idolatry—that you seek the *creature* rather than to the Creator.

If you read on, you will find that when they went to these secondary supplies, they were disappointed—“They came to the pits and found no water.” They found mud, black, filthy mud. But no water. Once they saw the sparkling liquid in the cool cave. But it was all spent. When waters were to be found everywhere else, the cisterns were full. But when all else was dry, they were dried also. They stooped down, they searched in the

darkness. They tried, at least, to get a cupful of the precious liquid. But it is written, "They found no water."

Disappointed, "they returned with their vessels empty." The women with their water pots upon their heads presented a sad sight as they entered the city gate and one after another all sighed, "Empty! Empty!" They thirsted to drink. But not a drop was found to cool their tongues. It is an awful thing to come home from a sermon with the vessels empty. To rise from the communion table, having found no living water and return with vessels empty. To close the Bible and sigh, "I find no comfort here, I must return with my vessel empty." When the ordinances and the Word yield us no Divine Grace, things have come to an awful pass with us. Do you know what this disappointment means?

Now, upon this disappointment, there followed great confusion of mind—they became distracted—"they were ashamed and confounded." On the back of that confusion came despair; "they covered their heads." The Orientals cover their heads when in the deepest grief, as David did, when he went over the brook Kedron. It means, "I cannot face it. Do not look on me in my sorrow, nor expect me to look on you. I cover my head, for it is all over with me." Thus have I met with many who, after going to many confidences, have been disappointed in all and seem ready to lie down in despair and put forth no more effort.

They fear that God will never bless them and they will never enter into eternal life. And so they sign their own death warrants. Shall I confess that I have been better pleased to see them in this condition than to hear their jovial songs at other times? It is by the gate of self-despair that men arrive at the Divine hope! I would to God that many a Mr. Vain-Confidence sitting here might be struck down to the ground and be compelled to end his proud boastings, by going at once to Jesus only! Oh, that they might come to that holy and safe conclusion, of which I keep on thinking all the while I am preaching to you—the Scriptural and logical conclusion mentioned in my text—"Therefore we will wait upon You."

At last, when these people came to despair, it is very remarkable how everything about them seemed to be in unison with their misery. Listen to the third verse—"They covered their heads." Did you hear the last words of the fourth verse? They were the very same—"They covered their heads." Surely the second is the echo of the first. It is even so—earth has sympathy with man. Nature without reflects our inward feelings. When God makes us happy we, "go forth with joy and are led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands."

But when we are in despair, then all nature echoes our misery. "The ground is dismayed," so it runs in the Hebrew. The very earth is frightened for want of rain and opens its mouth, gasping for fear. "The ground is dismayed, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads." Have you ever been in such a state of mind that you knew your need of the water of life but were not able to find it anywhere? If so, you have been unutterably miserable, and all creation



has put on mourning to keep you company. Earth is responsive to man, whom the Creator made to be her lord. Nature rings her marriage peal to sound forth man's happiness, or tolls her knells to mourn the funerals of his joys.

If you have drawn down the blinds of your heart and your soul sits in the dark, then the heavens are darkened, too. Or if not, the very brightness of nature seems another form of blackness to you—and her joys mock your griefs and cast salt into your wounds. When men are cast down and their face is covered, then nature covers her face, too, and all the universe is sad. Alas, for the day when the hand of the Lord is sore on the soul! Then our moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

**III.** I have brought you so far in the argument. Now I must rush on to the conclusion. Man is a very dependent creature. He may be reduced to dire distress. And thirdly, MAN'S ONLY SURE RESORT IS HIS GOD. "God is a refuge for us."

If I address myself to any here who are in such trouble as I have described, let me press upon them this thought—the only place of refuge for you is in God as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus. Hasten to Him! Lay hold upon His strength! Hide under the wings of His care! For, first, there is no help anywhere else. Read verse 22—"Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?" He says not "the gods of the Gentiles"—those who were "gods" in better days are seen to be, in truth, nothing but vanities in the time of need.

To make rain is a Divine prerogative. Therefore the priests of the idols pretend to it for their false deities. The Rain-maker is found in every idolatrous country, but I think scarcely anybody believes in him, now. What antics and tricks the Rain-makers go through to produce rain but it does not come, neither can their gods create a cloud! And where can any of you go to get Divine Grace if you refuse to look to God alone? There is a Rain-maker over there at the Ritualistic Church, who can produce a shower on the child's heart, by which it becomes "a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven."

But I trust you are not so foolish as to believe in him. And therefore you will not make a fruitless journey towards priest-craft. Where will you go? Come not to any of us poor gospelers, for in us you will find nothing—we are only fingers to point you to the Lord Jesus, in whom all fullness dwells. The long-descended priest of the Church of Rome, who can, for a shilling, grant you absolution—will you look to him? No, you have still some wit remaining and feel that to be absolved of man will not ease your conscience. Priests of Baal are of small account when a total drought and a terrible dearth are in the land.

In the days of Elijah they cried aloud and cut themselves with knives and said, "O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!" But only the God that answered by fire could answer by water. And Baal could do neither the one nor the other. Therefore we will leave Baal alone and all the prophets of the grove, with their candles and their crucifixes and their incense and their robes. I know where you are likely to go and that is to your own

frames and feelings, to your own resolves and doings. Alas for your folly! Oh, yes, you want to get peace, and so you take the pledge, and you vow that you will become a decent, sober body and all that. What are these confidences but vanities of the heathen? The very best of duties that you and I can perform, if we put our trust in them, are only false confidences, refuges of lies and they can yield us no help.

No, look—according to the text there is no help for us even in the usual means of Divine Grace if we forget the Lord. Read that second question—“Can the heavens give showers?” Showers come from the heavens but the heavens cannot yield showers apart from God. The eastern sky, without rain, is blue, bright, beautiful. But after months of pitiless drought, when no tear of pity has stood in the eye of the heavens, the blue color becomes the ensign of melancholy. And if this continues month after month it becomes the color of despair.

Until the Lord opens the windows of Heaven to pour out the blessing, neither sun, nor moon, nor stars can help the need of man. If God does not help you, O tried and anxious Soul, the sacraments are all in vain, though they are ordained of Heaven. And preaching and reading, liturgy and song, are all in vain to bring the refreshing dew of Divine Grace. Job truly says, “If God will not withdraw His anger, the proud helpers do stoop under Him.” If God Himself save you not, O Man, all that can be done by men or angels throughout the ages can never help you one single jot. You are lost, lost, lost, if a stronger arm than man’s is not stretched out to help you!

But with God is all power. There is the mercy—“Are not You He, O Lord our God? For You have made all these things.” See in how short a time He covers the heavens with clouds and pours forth an abundance of rain till He makes the wilderness a pool and the dry land springs of water. He can. He can! He can reach the extremity of human weakness and woe. What can He NOT do? Nothing is too hard for the Lord. And you, poor Sinner, dried up like the sand of the desert—God can, within an hour, yes—in a moment, make your heart to be flooded with His Grace.

He is the Creator, making all things out of nothing. And He can create in you at once the tender heart, the loving spirit, the believing mind, the sanctified nature. Though you have no Divine Grace this morning, no, not a drop of it—He can open streams in the desert. You can not find within yourself, wherever you look, any trace of love, or holy feelings or anything that is good. Yet He can give you all, can give you all for nothing, can give it to you now! If you believe that He can and will trust Him, as He displays His love in the Lord Jesus, He will save you.

He can give you the power to believe it and lead you now to cast yourself on Him. He can, but it hangs upon His will. Does He not say, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”? A God without a will is no God at all. And if He has no will in the matter of salvation, then is He dethroned from His choicest empire and man is set up above the God of Divine Grace Himself. This cannot be.

Well, then, what follows from this? If God has all this power, our wisdom is to wait upon Him, since He alone can help. We draw this inference—"Therefore we will wait upon You." O my beloved Hearer, if you have never been converted, I pray the Holy Spirit to bring you to decision, that you may at once seek the Lord. O tried and anxious soul, the sacraments are all in vain, though they are ordained of Heaven. And preaching and reading, liturgy and song, are all in vain to bring the refreshing dew of Divine Grace. Every road is closed but the way of Sovereign Grace.

You have no merit, you have no strength. You never can have any merit, you never can have any strength of your own. God must save you, or you are lost to all eternity. But He can save you to glorify His own Grace and make His own mercy to be known and to reveal His great power in turning hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. He can save you. Submit yourself to Him, then, and come to Him and say, with the "therefore" of my text, "Therefore we will wait upon You."

Do I hear somebody say, "How I would like to pray"? Yes, that is the way to come to God. Come to Him by prayer in the name of Jesus. Do you want a prayer? This chapter is full of petitions and there is one which I would point out to you. Here is a short one for you (verse 7), "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do You it." "Do You it." "Lord, I cannot create Grace in my own heart, any more than I can make rain to fall from the sky. But do You it." "Lord, I cannot come to You, come You to me; do You it." Is not that a wonderful prayer? There is more in it than you think—the more you consider it, the bigger you will see it to be. Three monosyllables—"Do you it!"

And then observe the argument—four words all of one syllable, "for Your name's sake." Not for *my* sake but for Christ's sake, who is the manifestation of Your name. For Your own glory's sake, for Your glory is Your name. Lord, make men see what a sinner You can save by saving me! Lord, glorify Your mercy by forgiving me. For oh, if You will save such a poor, unworthy wretch as I am, even Heaven itself will ring with Your praises. And even in Hell they will say, "See what God can do! He saved one who was ripe for the eternal fire and He has placed the rebel among His children." "Do You it for Your name's sake." Heartily do I commend this prayer to every soul here that is seeking the Lord. May the Spirit write it on your hearts! I cannot give you a better. "Do You it for Your name's sake."

Well then, next, if you are really going to wait upon the Lord, you must do it through a Mediator. These guilty people of Jerusalem had Jeremiah to pray for them. Jeremiah, with the weeping eye fitly typifies a greater than Jeremiah. Remember the Man of Sorrows, the Acquaintance of Grief? Jeremiah's Master must be your Intercessor. Beg Him to be your Mediator. You cannot go in unto an absolute God. You need a Mediator. A Mediator is provided—He has presented an acceptable sacrifice—He will plead the causes of your soul. Trust in His blood instead of your tears. Let His death wash your life. Leave your case in the great Mediator's hands. For if you believe in Him, He will undertake for you. And He never fails. He

will go into the Court of King's Bench for you and be your Advocate and win your suit. Come, trust yourself with Jesus. For He will save.

Let me advise you to make a full confession of sin. Read verse 20 "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness: for we have sinned against You." Make a clean breast of it, admit the past, lay bare the present. Think not to cloak sin. To conceal sin is to ruin yourself. To confess it is to find mercy. Place yourself among the guilty, for there mercy can fitly reach you. When you have done this, cast yourself down before your God, saying, "Therefore I will wait upon You." Come through Christ, believing in the power of His precious blood and you may draw near to God. Though you are loaded with enough sins to sink a world of sinners down to Hell, yet if you will believe in the mercy of God through Christ Jesus and cast yourself down at His feet and lie there, He will never say "Depart."

Jesus has said, "He that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." If you perish, it is because you do not come. Not because you come and He rejects you. O dear Souls, I do not know some of you, others I do know. But whether known to me or not, I look at you now with loving eyes and say, Come to my Lord. Does your heart say, "I will arise and go unto my Father"? Then am I glad. You have tried the citizens of this country and they have sent you into the fields to feed swine. And husks are all that you have to feed upon. You have spent your money and wasted your substance in riotous living. You can find no pleasure now—go where you may.

Vanity of vanities. All is vanity! Quit the vanities and seek the verities. Turn unto your God. Turn instantly! Hark back! Hark back! You have gone too far already in the evil way. A precipice is before you! One more step, yes, one more step and you are over and your eternal ruin is complete. Hark back as quickly as you can to the great God from whom you have departed! Come now, even now, for He invites you—"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."

While he speaks in this manner, I hope you will answer to the call and bow at His feet at once. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." May the Holy Spirit lay hold on you, that you may lay hold on Jesus! God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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# PRAYING AND PLEADING

## NO. 1661

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

***“O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake; for our backslidings are many. We have sinned against You. O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night? Why should You be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet You, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by Your name. Do not leave us!”  
Jeremiah 14:7, 8, 9.***

THIS passionate appeal for mercy was forced from the people by extreme misery. There was a famine in the land until men fell in the streets of the city exhausted with hunger. Drought had long prevailed and lack of water was terribly felt. Meanwhile, invasion kept them in perpetual fear, so that the Prophet lamented, “If I go forth into the field, then, behold, the slain with the sword! And if I enter into the city, then, behold, them that are sick with famine!” Such judgment had God inflicted on a guilty nation for her sin. No springs were bubbling up from the earth and no rain dropped down from Heaven. This dire privation had produced universal distress. “Judah mourns, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.”

As the calamity, like a river of lava, burned its dreadful way, an eyewitness, in his heart’s anguish, describes a few common scenes which forcefully tell the tale of utter desolation. Princes and peasants are seized with the same consternation—the Prophet paints them both with their heads covered in token of a common grief. Here in the city the children are coming back from the place of pools and fountains with empty pitchers, for they find not a drop of water in the pits. Out yonder in the fields the ground is chapped and cleft by the scorching sun in the absence of dew or rain. The plow is of no use in that parched soil! Farmers are sitting down ashamed, confounded, utterly dejected—it is vain for them to lift the hand of labor.

Down in the valleys the dumb cattle express their feeling with throes of anguish—the hind calves and forsakes her young. And up on the mountain heights the wild asses prove their share in the universal distress. Those creatures which are most apt to scent water from afar and to hasten to it to drink, are unable to discover a cooling brook, though they snuff up the wind like dragons. What a dreadful thing for a country to be placed, as it were, at the oven’s mouth and to become so completely burned up that even the wild beasts can discover no pasture and their eyes fail because there is no grass! Nothing could help the people. Grim death stared them in the face. None of their idol gods could cause rain and, without it, they must all perish.

Under such circumstances prayer to God was the last and only resource. Driven to their wits' end, they now began to be wise. The Prophet has expressed in admirable words the penitent confessions and the earnest supplications of those who were ready to perish. Our text is a most appropriate model of humble petitioning. I can easily imagine that all the Jews of the land were willing enough to adopt this form of prayer at such an extremity and to follow it with a fervent, "Amen." But, alas for them, the feet which had loved to wander were not willing to return! And the hearts which had cast off their allegiance to the Lord were not reconciled to His Law of righteousness. The Lord felt compelled to say of them, "I will destroy My people, since they return not from their ways."

Theirs was prayer in terror, not prayer in penitence! How many there are who pray, similar to this, in times of dire distress! When the plague was raging, the cross was marked on many a door which otherwise had never known that token! When the cholera rages they go to Church. When poverty invades their homes and they are sorely pinched, they cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us." When they are brought to death's door, they entreat, "Send for some minister to come and pray at our side." What a wretched business is this, that we should only be disposed to think of God when we are in our utmost need! Dare we treat the Lord as if He were only to be called upon in our emergencies? How can we expect that God will accept prayers that are only forced out of us by selfish fears?

It is not uncharitable to suspect that too often such prayers are either hypocritical or superstitious—and far different from the contrite cries which are music in the ears of the Most High. What a mercy it is that God hears real prayer, even if it is presented to Him only because we are in distress! "Call upon Me," says the Lord, "in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me." When the prodigal went home to his father, his father did not say, "You have only come home because you have a hungry belly. You seek a meal among my hired servants because you could not fill yourself with the husks with which the swine are fed." No, not so. Every word was *welcome*, every look was *love*.

He "gives liberally, and upbraids not." He does not fling into the teeth of a sincere penitent any reproach concerning the past. There is no scowl on the heavenly Father's face; no scolding words are uttered by His lips. No, but He opens wide His arms of love and clasps His lost one to His heart! The Lord of Mercy bids the poor and needy come to Him and welcome, though he may have been a rake and a profligate. What a dreadful state, then, must those men be in to whose prayers the God of all Grace has resolved to shut His ears! Thank God, my dear Hearers, that you are still on praying ground and pleading terms with Him. How terrible is the case of any who have passed the frontier of hope!

The case described in this chapter did not admit of pity or pardon. No chastisement could condone crimes which had been so repeated and gloried in. The Lord Himself bade Jeremiah not to pray for these people! If you read the sequel, you will find that God declared that though Moses and Samuel stood before Him—though the mightiest of intercessors and the best and most honored of saints were to join in supplication—yet He

would not hear them, for His mind was made up to ease Him of His adversaries! Their hour of doom was come! The scaffold was ready; the executioner was at hand. Take heed, you that trifle with mercy, lest God should put away the silver scepter and draw the sword out of its sheath!

Take heed, you that scorn the Mercy Seat, lest it turn into a burning throne of wrath and you “perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little.” That is not the condition of things with us at this time, blessed be His name, and so I may invite you to notice the text as a model prayer—an excellent example to God’s own people who are in a wandering state. And afterwards I shall use it as an instructive example for sinners, conscious of their sin, who would gladly come to God and find mercy.

**I.** First, then, I speak to the Church of God at large, wherever it has backslidden, and to each Believer in particular WHO MAY HAVE DEPARTED FROM THE LIVING GOD IN ANY MEASURE OR DEGREE. Would you take with you words and turn unto the Lord? You cannot have better words than those now before you! I will read them again. “O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake; for our backslidings are many. We have sinned against You. O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night? Why should You be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet You, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by Your name. Do not leave us!”

Begin by pleading guilty! It is hard to bring men to this, yet there is no forgiveness apart from it. “O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake; for our backslidings are many. We have sinned against You.” The sin-stricken soul has no defense, nor even an excuse, to offer on its own behalf. The penitent cries—Guilty! Yes, guilty, for there is no denying it. Our iniquities testify against us. If there were no witnesses of our sin, our sins, themselves, bear witness against us! Oh that every child of God felt this if he has in the least gone aside from the paths of holiness!

It is not only that you see us, O our God, or that our brother Christians may have seen our faults, or even that some scoffers in the world have spied them out and may be all too ready to bear witness against us—but our sins, themselves, have gone before us to the Judgment Seat and testify against us! When the facts are in clear evidence, what plea can we plead? No witnesses can more effectually secure condemnation! Look at the lives of many professors. Yes, let us look at our *own* lives. Is there not enough of fault, enough of folly, enough of failure for our own lives, themselves, without any accusation from others to witness against us? If I had to stand before God tonight to plead upon the matter of my own righteousness, I could do nothing but lie in the dust and hide my face for very shame! And it must be, more or less, the same with every Believer who knows his own heart and life—and sees it in the light of God’s Countenance.

There is no denying the charge—we are prone to wander! Therefore, O my Brothers and Sisters, come with me—take the sinner’s place! Be

abashed as an erring child and come before the great Father and say, "Our iniquities testify against us." While there is no denying it, let us admit that there is no excusing it, "for our backslidings are many." If we could have excused ourselves for our first faults by offering a degree of extenuation for the fickleness of our youth, yet what are we to say of the transgressions of our riper years? If you, my Brethren, could say, "Lord, when we began to be Believers we were ignorant and feeble and were readily carried away by temptation," you cannot make that apology *now*, when years have given you stability; experience has brought you knowledge and the favor and protection of God have ripened your character, or should have done so. "Our backslidings are many."

I feel as if I could not preach about this, for it touches my heart and makes me feel ready to weep! Much rather would I like everyone to say to himself, "What have I done? What have I left undone? How far have I declined from the ways of the Lord?" Turn over the records of your life, Brother and Sister Christian! What have you done for Christ? What have you done for the Truth of God, for the souls of men, for the spread of your Redeemer's Kingdom? Alas, may you not have lived as even to have disparaged the Truth and done injury to the cause which is so dear to you? "Our backslidings are many." We cannot count them! Their number is as great as their guilt!

It is well for us to feel that extenuation and apology and excuse are out of the question. There is no use in our making any pretense to self-justification. We are compelled to plead GUILTY! Guilty with gross aggravations! Guilty again and again "Our backslidings are many." Guilty, though we were under bonds to have lived in a very different fashion. Yes, and not only is it past denying and past excusing, but also it is past computing! We cannot *measure* how great have been our transgressions, as that next sentence may well imply—"We have sinned against You." It looks, at first sight, as if that were the smaller sentence of the three. But let me read it again and throw the emphasis where it ought to be—and then you will see that it is the heaviest clause in the indictment.

"We have sinned against *You*." That is where David always lays the emphasis upon when he makes his confession—"Against *You*, *You* only, have I sinned and done this evil in *Your* sight." This is the prodigal's confession—"Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before *You*." Oh, Brothers and Sisters, to have sinned against our Father and His infinite love; against our Savior and His precious blood; against the Holy Spirit and all His gentle striving and His sweet comforting and blessed teachings—this is to have sinned with a vengeance! What shall we say of ourselves? Do not such sins strike us dumb? Sins against the Law and against the Gospel! Sins against the Light of God and sins against knowledge! Sins in our holy things; sins on our knees; sins in our hearts—sins—where are they *not*? Sins as high as the clouds, broad as the earth, immense as the sea! Who shall fathom the great ocean of our iniquity? It is wise for us, therefore, to stand at the bar of God and humbly confess that, "Our iniquities testify against us. Our backslidings are many, for we have sinned against You."



Next to this plea of guilty, we find that the culprits do most vehemently appeal to God for mercy. Please observe carefully how they order their cause before Him and with what arguments, as Job has it, they fill their mouths. No reasons whatever could they fetch from *themselves*. They dare not plead before God that if He will have mercy upon them they will do better, for their many backslidings render such a promise hopeless. Brothers and Sisters, are you not sick of promising that you will, from this time forward, amend your lives? I hardly think that we are convinced of our sinfulness if we flatter ourselves that we shall do better in the future! Can you again trust that broken bone which has let you fall so many times? Can you again trust that tongue of yours when already you have been unable to rule it? Can you trust that flaming member which has been ready to set on fire the course of nature? What? Trust your heart again? Go, confide in the wind or the treacherous sea, but trust not your treacherous resolutions!

“If I could only have my life over again,” says one, “I should do better.” My Brother, I should not like to have *my* life over again for fear I should do worse! And worse I would do unless I had more Grace. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it never does to say to God, “Lord, forgive the backslidings of the past, for I shall do better, by-and-by.” Suppose you do? There is no merit in that! But it is a wild supposition, for you will do nothing of the kind. “Yes, but,” you say, “I am now more resolved than I was. I am older and wiser, now, and I feel quite safe because my resolution is so strong.” This is fine talk for one who is no better than a reed shaken by the wind! How preposterous is such boasting! Your strong resolution? How strong is the wax before the fire? How strong is the twig in the midst of the flame?

Your resolution, however, seems to *yourself* to be firm as adamant! Alas, it is only seeming! Peter’s resolution was strong when he said, “Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You.” Yet the look and laugh of a silly maid at the palace door opened his mouth with floods of blasphemy—that mouth which Peter thought would overflow with brave confessions of his Master! We know not what spirit we are of. We are worse than we think we are. When young folks tell me how terribly wicked they are and, therefore, they are afraid that they cannot be saved, I sometimes reply, “Yes, but you are much worse than you think you are.” They look so astonished, for they hoped to be comforted, and ho, they are plunged into a deeper ditch!

Probably they cry out that they feel themselves to be more weak and foolish than any other people alive. I tell them that most likely they are near the truth, but that they are much worse than they fancy they are, for, in fact, they are utterly undone and there is no good thing in them! They look bewildered and then I tell them that the Lord Jesus came to save the weak and worthless—and that He looks after the lost and ruined ones. We lay the axe to the *tree of self* that men may fly to the *Tree of Life*! There must be no reliance upon arguments based upon our own excellence—we must beg for Grace and plead for mercy—for upon no other terms but those of Grace can the Lord meet with us! Child of God, it is well for you, in prayer before the Lord, to get rid of every sort of excuse,

apology, or palliation. Let your self-impeachment stand in the forefront of your petition—"O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name's sake; for our backslidings are many. We have sinned against You."

But still there is a plea, for they make a plea out of God's name. From the badness of the rebellious subjects to the goodness of the righteous Sovereign is a rapid but reasonable transition. A weighty motive is suggested that may dispose God to be merciful—and that motive is drawn exclusively from Himself—"Though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your *name's* sake." Oh the majesty of the name of the Lord! The fame thereof is wonderful throughout all generations. You have a name, O God, for pardoning iniquity. So David said, "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." Come, then, desponding Brothers and Sisters! Here is a prayer which will avail for us when the night is darkest and not a star is to be seen—"Do it for Your name's sake"—because it will glorify Your name to save us! Because there is something about Your name which encourages our soul to hope. "Do it for Your name's sake."

The distracted nation is drawn into closer fellowship as the story of the past suggests a plea for her present distress. Nor is this all—the Covenant of Grace promises a glorious future and this promise is pleaded as the Lord is called, "the Hope of Israel." It is well to draw upon the bank of hope as well as upon the bank of experience. When your cup is full of sorrow and your face is covered with shame—and not a ray of light falls on your dreary path—remember that there is a history full of Grace behind us and a prophecy full of Glory before us! And it is all wrapped up in the name of Him who is the Hope of every contrite heart. But take good heed that your hope is not a vague hope. See to it that you believe firmly in God and that you lay hold upon an actual promise of His Word or some statute of His Kingdom—for then you may hope to your heart's content! Though you cannot see the way of deliverance, you can feel that the Lord holds you by the hand.

Now plead with Him, "Lord, You are my only hope. You know that I have no hope anywhere else. I am clean driven to despair except You look upon me in Your Grace." This is good pleading. Everyone has a hope somewhere. To the miserable there remains no other medicine. Deprived of this, the sufferer would grow desperate and his melancholy would drive him to the verge of madness! But there is a hope of some kind in every man's bosom. Now, if you can truly say, "One thing I know, my hope is alone in You, my God," you may plead that. You may argue thus—"Lord, save me for Your name's sake, that I may never be ashamed of my hope. You have never left a poor soul to use You as its anchor and then to find that anchor drag and leave the vessel to drift upon a lee-shore. Be true, then, to this, Your name, and rescue me and blot out my transgressions, seeing I put my trust in You." Beloved, a hope so grounded shall never fail you!

The Church of God pleads the name of God under another title, "The Savior in time of trouble." God has saved His people. In the roll of fame His name is written as a great Deliverer. The annals of Israel were full of

anniversaries. By feasts and fasts they were taught to remember dire emergencies and delightful escapes. The mighty deeds of the Lord of which their fathers had told them are celebrated in Psalms and songs—and their charm is this—His mercy endures forever! Here, again, is a lesson in the art of prayer. He has been a Savior, therefore plead with Him, “Lord, I have no right to salvation, but, still, You are a Savior. You have been accustomed to save Your people in time of trouble—save me! Fulfill Your gracious office. Lord, save, or I perish! It will glorify You to save me. Why is Your name thus revealed but to guarantee the Grace that is wrapped up in it? Savior is an empty name if You do not save.” Is not this fine pleading? O Laodicea, you that are neither cold nor hot, do you mourn your lukewarmness? Then awake to some such a plea as this—“O Hope of Israel, O Savior in time of trouble, for Your name’s sake deal graciously with me.”

Then, next, she does not mention the name, but it is implied in the words. She says, “Why should You be as a stranger in the land?”—one who is merely traveling through the country and takes little interest in its trouble because he is not a citizen—one who merely puts up for a night in an inn and, therefore, does not enter into the cares and trials of the family. She does as good as call Him, Master, Lord of the house, and His ownership is pleaded in the suit. Jesus, You are Head of the family? You are the Lord, the Husband. Will You act as if You were a mere lodger or a stranger? Tell Him that your house is His—that the Church is His—that He is the Head of it and plead with Him that He will not lay aside His position or neglect that condescending responsibility which He voluntarily took upon Himself when He became the Head of His Church and undertook, on her behalf, to be her Redeemer! Plead with Him, then, for His name’s sake, and you will win a gracious reply!

Then the argument ventures a little farther and the plea is this, “You, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by Your name.” God’s Presence with His Church and His connection with it becomes a plea. Have I not thus pleaded, sometimes, for this Church when I have thought over its sins and its wanderings? I have said—“And yet, Lord, You are in the midst of us. We have Your Presence at Your Table and in the Prayer Meeting. You are with this people right blessedly and we are called by Your name. And if You shall leave us, the ungodly world will say, ‘In that edifice was once assembled a Church of God, but it has become deserted! There, in former times, a Gospel ministry flourished, but it has failed.’ If ever it should be so said, Your name will be dishonored.”

See how Israel pleads in the text— “Why should You be as a man astonished?” That is, like a man confounded who does not know what to do—who is distracted and amazed! She says, “Lord, if You do not help us now, the men of the world will say, ‘Their God could not help them. They were brought into such a condition, at last, that their faith was of no use to them and their God could not deliver them.’ Why should You be as a mighty man that cannot save? A champion defeated in all his efforts? No, but You have given us a banner, a sacred standard that must not suffer

defeat—let it be displayed because of the Truth of God and give us victory.”

Some of you who are trying to serve God have floated into shallow waters, lately, and you are in great trouble. Now, if you can somehow implicate God in what you are doing, you will greatly strengthen your cause. Are you His servant, acting in His name and entangled with difficulties that arise out of conscientiously following His command and trusting in His promise? Then you may say to Him, “Lord, what will the Egyptians say? What will the Philistines say? Will they not say that at last it is proved that faith is a delusion, that the promise is a snare and that there is either no God, or else that He is a God who cannot aid, or will not hear prayer and help His servants?”

I delight to get upon this track. It refreshes me to feel that I have no help but in God, but that His promise binds Him to help me! When I am quite out of my own depth, I feel that I must swim, for if the Lord’s power does not buoy me up, I shall sink to destruction. How can He suffer one to be destroyed whose trust is in Him? If this faith is a lie, it will be exposed by my failure. And if this God is not the living God and He does not hear prayer, the adversaries of the Lord will laugh. Ah, then you may plead with Him, “Do it for Your name’s sake.” Though our iniquities have been many—though we have not served You as we ought to do—though we have backslidden often, yet, Lord, do not punish Yourself on account of us! Do not put Your name to dishonor because of our folly! Do not put Your Gospel to the rout because we are so unbelieving! But, for Your own honor’s sake, interpose and deliver Your servants in this, their time of need!

**II.** Having thus tried to put before you, though very feebly, the good ground on which your feet may stand while you are wrestling with God, I need, for a very few minutes, to speak with THOSE POOR TROUBLED HEARTS THAT DO NOT YET KNOW THE LORD or fear that they do not. To my text, as a whole, they have no title. But from the matter of it we may draw some valuable suggestions for their use. Are there not among us many, who though strangers to the fellowship of the saints, are distressed in soul and desirous to find peace with God? Are there not many who would gladly obtain salvation from the God of Grace? You say, “I need peace.” Then, I pray you, take heed that you do not put up with a *false* peace, or calm your conscience with anything less than true reconciliation with God! It is better to be always restless than to find rest in a delusion.

Begin and *continue* in the way of the Truth of God, for this will endure to the end, while all that is false will burst like a bubble. Begin first by confessing your guilt. Come, my dear Hearer, there can be no benefit in trying to conceal *anything*—therefore acknowledge your transgression. God can see it all, but there will be great benefit in your seeing it and confessing it before Him. Do not try to patch up a righteousness of your own! Jesus Christ is never sweet to any but to sinners. You have to prove that you are a *sinner*, not a saint—for Jesus gave Himself for our sins—not for our merits. Remember, when Christ comes to fill us, the first thing we need to know is our own emptiness. Do not, therefore, go upon the tack of

trying to make any kind of defense! Acknowledge your sins and say, "My iniquities testify against me."

Some of you could not make out a plea of righteousness if you were to try—your life-long actions would confuse you if you attempted it. When people come in here who have never heard the Gospel, they are often brought speedily to receive Christ because when God blesses the Word to such, it is not difficult to convince them of sin. They are so plainly guilty that they do not *dream* of disguising it. They never attempt to mend their old clothes, for they are too far gone and only fit for the dunghill! They would only make greater tears by patching up such old and rotten materials.

Come, oh you poor ragged sinners, in all your torn garments; in all your loathsomeness and sin—and say, each one—"Lord, I acknowledge that my transgressions testify against me! It is not the first time that I have been anxious, or the first time that I have promised better things, but I have been a deceiver until now. My backslidings are many. I am an old sinner and a hardened sinner. I have sinned against convictions, sinned against a tender conscience, sinned against the restraints of Your Spirit. If I did seem to leave my evil ways, the dog has returned to its vomit and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Ah, my Hearer, you are a bad fellow, and I want you to admit that you are! I want you to stand in the dock like a felon and plead, "Guilty!" And be sure you do not add, "Only there are extenuating circumstances." There are no such circumstances in your case! You are thoroughly unworthy and deserve to be sent to Hell! If you had died in your sins 20 years ago and had been condemned without mercy, your wickedness would have abundantly vindicated the sentence of the Judge! Do you kick against that? I hope not—it will be your wisdom to admit your terrible desert of punishment. I beseech you, put your confession into words and state, truthfully, what you have done! The sense of your wickedness will grow more keen when you recall your follies.

Remember, too, the forms in which you have sinned against God. You have violated the Laws which regulate your life. You have set at nothing those counsels which make for your physical health and your moral welfare. It is bad enough to have sinned against a mother's tears and a father's prayers. It is bad enough to have sinned against your own body and to have disregarded your wife and your children. That is sad enough and horrible enough. Many have gone deep enough in that direction to crimson their cheeks with shame! But you have despised the God that made you! You have dishonored your *Creator*. You have lived to gratify your own lusts! You have delighted in defying His Laws. "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib." And, alas, dumb driven cattle have been more dutiful than you!

The Lord raised you up from fever. He sheltered you in storms. He rescued you from shipwreck. He has delivered you many times from going down into the Pit by sudden death, yet you have been unmindful of Him and unthankful to Him! You have doted on the idols that provoked Him. Feel this! Admit this! Mourn this! Come before the Lord in penitent contri-

tion! But make sure you are sincere. Think not that the language of a litany will avail you if you falsely say, "Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners," when you are *not* miserable and do not believe that you are sinners at all! Rather may God the Holy Spirit work such deep conviction in your spirit that the language of my text may seem too feeble for you—may you be compelled to cry out—"O God, no speech can tell the depth of my guilt! Forgive me, for Your mercy's sake."

Shall I leave you there sitting down in abject despair? Doubtless in such depths we learn that salvation is of the Lord. Be sure of this—no excuse can exonerate you! Apologies drawn from your constitution or your circumstances will only aggravate your crimes. Your only ground for hope must be based on His Grace. Call, now, upon His name! "For Your name's sake." You big sinners say, "Lord, if you will save *me*, it will be a great instance of Your power." "Well," said one the other day, "it is of no use your trying to convert *me*. If I ever shall be converted, it will need God Himself to do it, for I am such a tough fellow." Yes, yes, and the Lord delights to let men see what He can do! He proves that He is Omnipotent in the moral world as well as in the physical world—and as able to subdue free will as to stay the raging of the wild winds that sweep the sea! He is Lord and besides Him there is none else! When He speaks, His Word can turn the lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove!

Oh, plead with Him to glorify His power! Say, "Lord, it will show Your power if You will save one like me! If You will cast a legion of devils out of me, I shall be a standing wonder wherever I go! To men and angels I shall be a convincing proof of the regenerating power of the Almighty—therefore save me for Your name's sake." If the Lord were to forgive a dozen ordinary sinners, it would not so much display His mercy among men as in saving one unusually vile transgressor. Plead this! There may be somebody listening to this discourse whom this word exactly suits. I feel as if the Holy Spirit were prompting me to utter these words for your use—"Lord, all the sin in the world seems to have run into me as into a common cesspool! But, O Lord, if You can cleanse *my* heart, it will be a wonder of mercy, indeed, and Your name shall be glorified! I am the man who ought to be damned above all men! I deserve to be the center of the target at which all Your arrows ought to be leveled! But oh, if You will forgive *me*, it will make all Hell quiver with astonishment! That God should save such an one as I will make Heaven ring with joy that such an one should be delivered from going down into the Pit because God has found a Ransom."

Here you may remember that all God's name is comprehended in Jesus Christ. This master key unlocks every door! If you will cry, "Lord, save me for Jesus' sake, that men may see what Jesus can do by the cleansing power of His blood, by the strength of His hands and by the love of His heart," you will have pleaded the name of the Lord. This argument has matchless force! The dying thief—look what glory He has brought to Christ all through the centuries! The Apostle Paul—changed, renewed—what honor he has brought to Christ ever since he was saved! Be this, then, your prayer, "O Lord, honor Yourself, honor Your Son, honor Your Spirit by saving *me*. Bless me for Your name's sake." Cannot you join me

in this prayer? O Holy Spirit, enlighten men as to their lost condition till they feel that there is no other way of pleading and no other name to plead!

Is it not the desire of the Father that Jesus should see of the travail of His soul in the salvation of the chief of sinners? The Lord give you a grip of that plea! It is sure to prevail. "For Your name's sake." You may thus plead the name of the Father, "My Father, glorify Your fatherly heart by welcoming Your prodigal child with a kiss of reconciliation and saying, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.'" You may next use it with the Holy Spirit and say—"O Divine Spirit, glorify Your power over human hearts by cleansing and regenerating even *me*, that men may see Your new creation and wonder at it as You do work it in me."

A great point is to be able to lay hold upon a promise, a promise in the Book. I remember, when seeking the Lord, the sweetness of that saying to my heart—"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I found liberty when I could plead that! I said, "Lord, as far as I know what it means, I do call upon Your name. I have no other name to call upon and You have said that whoever calls upon Your name shall be saved. Now, for Your Word's sake, do not draw back! I know You cannot lie. Fulfill Your promise even to me."

Brothers and Sisters, we cannot say to a man, when we have made him a promise, "I promised to do this for you, but you are such a bad fellow." That would be no excuse for our breaking our promise. You must honor your promise even if you feel ashamed of the person to whom it was made. The Lord in mercy, having made a promise, never quotes our character as a reason why He should break it! He knew all about you when He made the promise and so He is not surprised. He knows more about you, now, than you know about yourself! He knows that you are a thousand times worse than you think you are! He has a much deeper sense of your guilt than you have! Still, for all that, He is ready to pardon! Plead His promise with Him and He will stand to His Word!

Do any of you doubt the possibility of your obtaining mercy of the Lord because of the depths of your iniquity, or the ruinous consequences it has already worked? Believe me, you are victims of a delusion of Satan! The Lord God is merciful and gracious and passes by iniquity, transgression and sin. There are some parts of the book of Jeremiah that I should not like to read to you. I can hardly think that they were meant to be read in public—they are intended, rather, for our private meditations. There is, however, one picture of infamy which I will merely hint at, though it has often excited my profound astonishment. It runs something like this, "They say if a man puts away his wife and she goes from him and is another man's and plays the harlot, shall he take her to himself again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? Yet return unto Me, says the Lord."

Do you see the drift of this striking illustration? Here is a woman, kindly treated in every way, who willfully leaves her husband. She has not been led astray by a profligate, but she has wantonly left her husband of her own wicked self. She has defiled her name and her honor—and to crown her infamy, she has even left her paramour and has gone on the

streets and become utterly vile! Shall her first husband take her back, again, after her multiplied and manifest impurities? Would it not pollute the land? Everybody will say, "Why, this is an offense against morality! She has dishonored herself! She has dishonored her husband! She has dishonored her country!" "Yet," says God, "return unto Me." Is not this beyond the manner of man? So does the mercy of the Lord transcend even the statutes of the Law which He gave to Israel!

You will see the force of this more clearly if you compare the third chapter of Jeremiah with the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy. The parable is startling! God is represented as dealing with an idolatrous nation as it would be an abomination before His own eyes for any man to deal with an unchaste wife. Such delight has Jehovah in mercy that He dispenses it at the risk of public disgrace! He knew that the self-righteous would find fault and that even elder brothers would be angry, but He dared all that! Therefore let there be no objection on your part! "Yet return again unto Me, says the Lord." If there is any disgrace, it must rest on His name whose holiness cannot be sullied!

The elders in our Savior's day who sat in Moses' seat thought it an open scandal that He received publicans and harlots. I am not surprised that when He welcomed such fallen ones, they were glad to come—but I am astonished beyond measure at those of you who put aside the only Gospel that can do you good! Why argue against your own interests instead of accepting the Lord's open invitation? Every evangelist who preaches pardon and peace by the blood of the Lamb braves the ethics of the age—the new teaching is that people must reap the consequences of their *actions*—there is no hope of ever undoing anything that a man does and, therefore, there can be no Gospel to the guilty.

Yes, I know that this is what the reign of Law seems to demand! But, for all that, the Lord would sooner that men should accuse *Him* of weakening the principles of morality than refuse a poor sinner who comes to Him for mercy in Christ Jesus! I know that if we receive certain persons into the Church, the mere moralists cry out, "How can they associate with such people?" Yet, come along, come along, you chief of sinners! The vilest are welcome to Christ! You that are worse than the worst—you who have leaped over the hedge and have got upon the wild commons of outrageous sin—you may come to Jesus!

Do you sing—

***"Depths of mercy, can there be  
Mercy still reserved for me"?***

It is reserved for you! You are the person for whom it is reserved! This deep consciousness of sin; this guilt of yours which you feel and admit points you out as the one to whom I am to say, "Return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon you! He will blot out your transgressions! He will change your nature! He will turn you from a sinner to a saint and glorify His name in you! God grant that you may each and all prove the exceeding riches of His Grace, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

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# INTERCESSION AND SUPPLICATION NO. 2745

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1879.

*“Are You not He, O Lord our God? Therefore we will wait for You”  
Jeremiah 14:22.*

THIS is an instance of amazing yet holy boldness. The Prophet had received from the Lord the explicit command, “Pray not for this people: for their good,” and yet, after reasoning with God, his heart grew so warm with sacred fervor and his spirit became fired with such a passionate zeal that he could not help pleading for the sinful nation! He poured out his soul in the vehement prayer and said to the Lord, “We will wait upon You.” This was, perhaps, disobedience in the outward form, but it was not disobedience as to the inner spirit of the Prophet, for the Lord counts not as disobedience the earnest pleading and yearning of the heart of His people. This is a marvelous instance of how, under the most discouraging circumstances—when there appears no prospect whatever of success—men who are moved of God to pray for their fellows, will cling to His garments and still intercede on behalf of those who are altogether unworthy of their supplications.

One of the reasons why Jeremiah resolved that he would still wait upon God was because the case was such an urgent one. The land was chapped through the long drought. The poor beasts were dying of thirst. Men and women were pale and pinched with hunger and there was no one who could deliver them out of their distress. The heavens could not pour down rain of themselves and the gods of the heathen could not render any help, so Jeremiah says, “Therefore we will wait upon You. It is our only hope and though it seems to be a forlorn one, yet, since it is the only one we have, we will cling to it with desperate resolve.”

There are two things which appear to me to be strikingly illustrated by our text and its connection. The first is the beauty of an intercessor—and I want you to so admire it as to *imitate the intercession*. And the second is the necessity which drives men to God—and I want you to *feel the necessity which drives you to wait upon the Lord*. May God the Holy Spirit make you feel it!

**I.** First, I want you to see the beauty of a true intercessor and to endeavor, by the power of God's Spirit, to IMITATE THE INTERCESSION.

Jeremiah interceded for the people, but we have not to seek far before we discover the reason why he did it. God, in Infinite Mercy, gave the weeping Prophet to his sinful people in order that they might not be left

as sheep without a shepherd and be quite given over to utter destruction. And wherever you meet with a man who intercedes with God for his fellow men and makes this the main business of his life, you see in him one of the most precious gifts of God's Grace to the age in which he lives. *It is God that writes intercession upon men's hearts.* All true prayer comes from Him, but especially that least selfish and most Christ-like form of prayer called *intercession*—when the suppliant forgets all about himself and his own needs—and all his pleading, his tears and his arguments are on behalf of others. I repeat that such men are a most precious gift from Heaven and I feel certain that before the Reformation, there must have been hundreds of godly men and women who were, day and night, interceding with the Lord and giving Him no rest until He answered their supplications—and Luther and the rest of the Reformers were sent by God in answer to the many prayers which history has never recorded, but which are written in the Lord's Book of Remembrance.

And when Wesley and Whitefield, in more modern times, stirred the smoldering embers of religion in this land, it was because godly people, perhaps poor obscure men and women in their cottages, reading the Scriptures, saw the sad state of irreligion and indifference into which the nation had fallen—and groaned over it and spread the case before God. I know not how to estimate the worth of even one man who has power with God in prayer! When John Knox went upstairs to plead for Scotland, it was the greatest event in Scottish history. All things are possible with the man who, like Elijah upon Carmel, casts himself down upon the earth and puts his face between his knees, and cries unto Him that hears prayer, till the heavens, which were like brass, suddenly drop with plentiful showers of rain! There is no power like that of intercession! The secret springs that move the puppets of earth—for kings and princes are often little more than that—are the prayers of God's believing people. The hidden wheels that start the whole machinery and that keep it in motion, are the prayers of God's people. Oh, if the Lord makes you an intercessor, my dear Brother or Sister, even if you cannot speak with men for God, if you know how to speak with God for men, you occupy a position that is second to none. God help you to fill it well!

True intercessors, then, are special gifts from God and when He raises up men or women for this high service, you will find that *such persons plead with mighty arguments.* You must have noticed, as we read the chapter, [Exposition at the end of the sermon was always *before* the sermon.] that Jeremiah knew well what he was praying about. He had, in his mind's eye, all those nobles of the land who were reduced to such poverty that they sent their children out to hunt for water. His prophetic eye could even see the hinds in the field leaving their fawns to die because there was no grass for them to eat, and no water for them to drink. Jeremiah had upon his heart all the agony of the nation and he prayed as if his were the thirst, and as if he were perishing of hunger! He took the burden of the guilty people upon himself and became their mouth-piece to God, although they did not thank him for pleading for them, but smote him, and despitely used him. Yet he took all their griefs into his

own sympathetic heart and he pleaded mightily with God while he had all that great burden resting upon his spirit.

I want you to notice how he pleads. First, he pleads God's name. "Lord," he says, "these people are called Jehovah's people and though they deserve nothing but condemnation at Your hands, yet, if You do not bless them, the heathen will say, 'Jehovah forsakes His people! This is what comes of being the chosen nation—and so Your great name will be dishonored in the earth.'" And then Jeremiah uses a very strong expression—for using which, I understand, a minister has recently been called to account and I do not wonder at that, for, if it had not been Inspired, it would have been too strong an utterance from the mouth of any man—"Do not disgrace the Throne of Your Glory." That Throne of God's Glory was the Mercy Seat—and if it could be carried away to Babylon, the heathen would rejoice, and the daughters of the uncircumcised would triumph! And thus the Throne of God's Glory would be disgraced. Jeremiah rightly felt that this was a strong argument, so he urged it in pleading with the Lord, "Do not let Your Glory be tarnished, do interpose to prevent such a calamity."

As the strongest argument of all, he pleads the Covenant—and that is always a masterly argument with the Lord. Turn to the 21<sup>st</sup> verse. "Remember, do not break Your Covenant with us." God had entered into a Covenant with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob, and with David—and though the sin of the people might well be conceived to have made the Covenant null and void, and though they certainly did not deserve that He should keep His Covenant with them, yet Jeremiah felt emboldened to say, "Do not Break Your Covenant with us." Depend upon it, God is never a Covenant-breaking God—and no plea has greater weight with Him than "the Covenant, the Covenant." O Brothers and Sisters, if God has made us intercessors, let us come with holy boldness to the Throne of Grace and let us plead for our nation, and for our age, and for our kinsfolk, that God would bless them! And let this be our chief argument—for the honor of Your holy name, for the glory of Your Throne and for the sake of the Covenant which You have made with our great Surety, forsake not those whom You have chosen, however undeserving they have proved to be!

Notice next that when a man has his heart set upon this blessed work of intercession, *it makes him quick to seize every advantage that he can when he is pleading with God.* Jeremiah argued thus with God, "Lord, You said to me, 'Pray not for this people for their good,' but it is the false prophets who have deceived them, so, O Lord, pity the poor people. They are misled. The priests have led them astray. They are poor silly sheep that have followed the shepherds that deceived them. Therefore, O Lord, have pity on them and spare them."

I like that sacred ingenuity on the part of Jeremiah, leading him to catch at such a plea as that and to urge it before God. That is something like Abraham did when he, too, had a desperate case in hand—the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is only these great intercessors who can take up such cases as these. There he stands to plead for Sodom and Gomorrah! Mark the holy boldness which he uses before God. "Lord," he said,

“perhaps there are 50 righteous within the city. Perhaps there are 45 righteous there. Perhaps there are 40 righteous there,” and so on, till he said, “Perhaps there are 10 righteous there—will you also destroy the righteous with the wicked?” That was fine pleading and God yielded to it, for He would have spared the city for the sake of 10 righteous people if they could have been found. And if you know how to plead with God, you will rake up everything which may, in any degree, count on the behalf of the people, even as your Master did, for, when He could say nothing else in favor of His murderers, he said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Even their ignorance He turned into some kind of plea, and in His wondrous mercy used it in praying to His Father. May we all learn how to plead for sinners like that!

True intercessors resemble Jeremiah in another respect—they *will not be turned aside from their pleading*. If they meet with rebuffs and no answer seems to come to their supplications, they plead on! It is a wondrous sight, to see a mother—a true, tender, gracious mother—pleading with God for her son. She began pleading for him while yet he lay in the cradle, or before that. She cried to God for him when he was learning to walk with tottering footsteps. She followed him with her prayers through the devious ways of his boyhood and youth—and also when he went away from home and left her to sorrow over him. Parental restraint was gone, even maternal love was rejected as he roamed over a great part of the world. He has grown into a bronzed man, now—his face is tanned with the scorching sun of the equator and he has come home—but his mother’s prayers have followed or accompanied him wherever he has gone!

She has persevered in pleading with God for him. True, he has been a Sabbath-breaker, and a swearer, and the very sound of his voice has terrified the dear old soul when she has heard him say hard things against the God of Israel. But you should hear her pray when she is alone! She cannot say, “Lord, save my son, for there is in him some good thing towards You.” But she cries, “O You that are mighty to save, I cannot let You go until You save my poor sinful boy! Have You not said, ‘Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me?’ Lord, I am in sore trouble about my son! I beseech You to have pity upon him and save him. Did you not listen to the Syrophenician woman when she prayed for her child? Oh, hear me as I pray for mine!”

Ah, I cannot put it as pathetically as she does, for there is a wondrous sacred ingenuity in the true mother’s heart that makes her plead with peculiar power for her child even when he has grown to manhood. I hope you know what I mean because this is what you have done. When, under great discouragements, seeing those who are the subjects of your supplication going from bad to worse—when you see them get hardened and apparently incorrigible, and invulnerable—when even the arrows of the Word of God do not seem to touch them or pierce them—still persevere in prayer! And I will say what some may think a very strong thing—even if you should have reason to fear that they have committed the sin which is unto death—you remember how John puts it, “I do not say that he shall pray for it.” But he does not say that you are *not to do so*—therefore take

advantage of the negative and pray on! Yes, even until their souls have passed beyond the reach of change—into the unseen world—pursue them with your persistent intercession! And it may be that you shall yet have your heart's desire concerning them, notwithstanding the fact that, as yet, everything seems to tend in the contrary direction.

Now, dear Friends, let me say that if any of us shall ever learn how to offer such prayer as this—if we shall ever be able to intercede with God in this manner—we *shall become imitators of our blessed Lord Jesus, Himself*, for He was, on earth, preeminently the Intercessor. If you could have seen Him coming forth in the morning to preach the Gospel and to heal the sick, you might have noticed how His garments were covered with the dew which had fallen upon Him as He had knelt all night in prayer to God. He could often truly say, “My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night,” for He had spent the whole night upon the lone mountainside agonizing for the souls of those He loved. That sorrowful lament of His—“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not”—was only a flash of the fire that always burnt within His heart.

The tears that fell from our Savior's eyes as He wept over Jerusalem, dropped from a cloud that always rested on His soul which was always filled with a deep sympathetic compassion even for those who had despised and rejected Him. And now, today, my Brothers and Sisters, though He has put off the seamless garment that He wore on earth and has put on His royal, priestly vesture white as snow, He still wears the golden belt that John saw in the Revelation. The eyes of faith may see Him up there with no care upon His brow, no spittle upon His cheeks, no scourges for His back, but standing amidst the harps of angels and the songs of seraphs, before His Father's Throne as our great Intercessor still, for He always lives to make intercession for us, so that—

**“For all that come to God by Him”—**

there may be eternal and certain salvation! Oh, if we could only hear Him pray! Of course, there cannot be tears and cries such as became Gethsemane and its humiliation, but there is as much earnestness in Your cry, O blessed Lover of sinners, in the midst of Your Glory as there was in the depths of Your shame!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, learn from your Lord and Savior how to be mighty in intercession! I give you this blessed work to do, all of you who truly know and love Him. As I have said before, you may not all be able to speak to men for God, but you can all speak with God for men. This morning [Sermon #1471, Volume 25—CONCEALING THE WORDS OF GOD—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] I told you how to use one hand for battle by not concealing the words of the Holy One—now here is the way to use the other hand for battle by drawing near to God in powerful, prevalent intercession! With these two hands uplifted, this Church, like Joshua, shall utterly destroy Amalek, and the sun and moon shall stand still while it is being done! And so long as

Moses prays, and Aaron and Hur hold up his hands, the victory must surely come!

**II.** Now I want your very earnest attention to the second and, perhaps, the more important portion of my discourse, in which I am going to urge you to FEEL THE NECESSITY WHICH DRIVES YOU TO GOD.

Tried Believer, here is a lesson for you. Have you come to a very difficult place? Are you in very sore trouble—such trouble as you never knew before? Then wait upon the Lord and if at first He does not answer you and it seems as if the very gates of Heaven are shut against you, still continue to wait upon the Lord. Where else can you go if you turn away from Him? You are shut up to this one course, so do not seek any other way out of your difficulty. Take that blasphemous letter of Sennacherib and spread it before the Lord, as Hezekiah did. Take that bitter grief and tell it all in His ears. To whom or where should you go if you should turn from Him? Therefore cling to Him and though He slays you, still trust in Him, for you have nobody else to whom you can trust!

But I want, mainly, to speak to the sinner. Perhaps I am addressing some who, by the Holy Spirit's teaching, have become aware of their danger and who, therefore, are longing to find eternal salvation, but they are afraid they never shall be able to do so. My dear Friend, go and wait upon God and ask Him to save you. Present your case before Him, now, and plead with Him to have mercy upon you—and then show that your supplication is genuine by accepting the salvation which He sets before you in Christ Jesus for all who believe in His name.

In order to urge you to wait upon God, I would just say these few things. First, *you will perish unless God hears you*. You say that you have prayed to the Lord for a month and yet you have received no answer. Well, even though that is the case, forsake not the posts of His doors, for there is no other door at which you can knock with any hope of success! Perhaps you say, "I have tried to believe in Jesus, but I cannot." I will not correct your mistake this time, but I will say this—remember that if you do not believe in Jesus Christ, there is no one else in whom you can believe in order to be saved, "for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." It is Christ or nothing! It is faith in Christ or eternal destruction! It is laying hold upon Jesus Christ or else banishment forever from the Presence of Jehovah's Glory. You are brought to this pass, that God must save you, or you are damned forever! God Himself must save you, or you are a lost man! You are shut up to that alternative, so, being shut up to it, say to the Lord, with all your heart, "Therefore will I wait upon You."

Now, think, what else can you do? If you want to be saved, what can you rely upon but the Grace of God in Jesus Christ? *Your past life avails not*. Would you dare to lean upon that broken reed? If you are self-righteous and reckon yourself to be among the best of mankind, or think that you have done no great wrong, well, then, I do not know that I have any Gospel to preach to you, for our Lord Jesus Himself said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." But if the Lord has been dealing with you by His Holy Spirit and convincing you of your real

condition in His sight, I know that you can perceive such flaws in your past life—such black sins—so many of them—such departures of heart from God—that you dare no more trust your soul’s salvation upon your past action than you would trust yourself over the mouth of a pit swinging by a spider’s web! You know better than to do such a thing as that—your past life is so deeply stained with sin that you know you must be washed from it in the precious blood of Jesus, or, otherwise, you must certainly perish!

No, your past life cannot avail for your salvation. And suppose it is suggested that you should trust *your future resolves*—will they save you? If you make a good resolution, tonight, as strong as you can possibly make it—will that give you a good ground of hope? No, my dear Friends, you know it will not, for you have made very strong resolutions before and they have all been in vain. You have bound the Samson within you with new ropes and I know not what besides, but he has gone outside and shaken himself, and burst your bonds, and once again you have seen that the strong man has not been overcome. I would give nothing at all for the resolutions that you make in your own strength—they do but increase your sins because they are simply further specimens of your presumptuous self-confidence! But, my dear Friend, you know better, do you not, than to trust to your own resolutions? You really wish to be saved and you know in your heart that it would only be a mockery if you were to rely upon your own principles, resolutions and things of that sort. Why, in yourself, you are as weak as water! Have you not proved, by painful experiments again and again, that in you, that is, in your flesh, there dwells no good thing? Come, then—escape from that refuge of lies and go to Jesus—wait upon God because you cannot go anywhere else for salvation!

There is no salvation to be obtained from *priests, or forms and ceremonies*. There is a gentleman over there who beckons you to come to him. I know him well—Mr. Priest-Craft is his name. He says that he has power to ease men of their burdens, that by some charmed incantation he can give them absolution. “Hi! Presto!” He mutters his formula and away goes the sin—and the sinner is as white as snow! Oh, yes! I know all about his tricks. I have seen quacks in the street selling their medicine to fools and so, doubtless, there are fools that rely upon the word of quacks in churches, cathedrals, and the like! But “none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” Of all the monstrous lies which show the impossibility of human civilization giving common sense, not to say religion, to men, one of the grossest is this lie of pretended priestly power! I charge you, go not to that man! He will take your money, but he will leave you worse off than you were before.

There is forgiveness—there is mercy—to be obtained from God through Jesus Christ. But He has not given to any man the power to forgive sins. He says to me, and to all His servants, that we may proclaim forgiveness of sins to those who repent, and we do so, and God will prove that the proclamation is true. But, if sinners look to us, or to priests, or to any mortal men to find forgiveness in them, they will look in vain! Turn not there, I implore you! Take your eyes off the priests of Rome and the

priests of Baal! Look to Christ alone, and say, "I will wait upon God. I can do no other if I would find salvation." Do as the poor monk did who, after living a life of asceticism, at last came to die. In his cell he had found a copy of the Scriptures, which he had read to such good purpose that, when the so-called "sacraments" were brought to him, he waved them aside and was heard to say, "*Tua vulnera, Jesu! Tua vulnera, Jesu!*"—"Your wounds, Jesus! Your wounds, Jesus!" Ah, that is the remedy for human sin and there is no other! "Therefore we will wait upon You, O Lord! If there were some other fountain of Grace, we might, perhaps, leave You to go and seek it, but we know that there is none. These priests are of no use to us. We have been to those broken cisterns and found no Water of Life there. Therefore we will come to You, by Your Grace." O come, Brothers and Sisters, and wait thus upon the Lord!

All of you must know that there is no salvation anywhere but in Christ Jesus, but, suppose any of you were to say, "Yes, I know that. Neither will I seek salvation anywhere else, but I will brave the matter out. I will never yield to God! I will take my chances." Ah, but can you do as you say? And if you could, what would be the good of it? There will come a time when that strong frame of yours will be as weak as a rush, and then you will talk very differently. I, too, have known what physical vigor and strength mean, but it is not many weeks ago that I knew what it was to be more trembling than an infant! I seemed to feel as if life were not worth the having, so great was my pain of body and heaviness of heart. And such times may come to you big burly men—and you strong-minded women may feel the same—and then you will begin to tremble. As great Caesar, when the fit was on him, whined like a sick child—so many of your braggadocios are the very men who tremble most when they come to die!

Ah, and when God, the Judge of All, lays hold of you in the world to come, though your bones were iron and your sinews brass, you will tremble in every joint! Belshazzar only saw the "fingers of a man's hand" that wrote upon the wall of his palace, in letters of fire, "You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting" and, though he knew not the meaning of the mystic characters, "the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." There he sat, a shivering coward—but what will he do who sees God's hand, by-and-by, not writing on the wall, but lifted up to deal a blow that shall break Him in pieces, as the potter's vessels are broken with a rod of iron?

"Now consider this, you that forget God," He says, "lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Those are not my words. I dare not say such terrible things on my own account! They are the warning words of the God of Love! And if Infinite Love speaks like that, you ought to give heed to what is said! There is a weight of emphasis about this message that my voice cannot convey. Let me utter it again, with sorrowful and heartfelt earnestness, imploring you never to run the risk of knowing what these dreadful words means. "Consider this, you that forget God"—not merely you that blaspheme, but you that forget Him and do not think of Him—"Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and



there be none to deliver.” God grant that you may not try to fight it out with Him, for you cannot do so, it is impossible!—

**“You sinners, seek His Grace,  
Whose wrath you cannot bear!  
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,  
And find salvation there.”**

“But,” someone says, “I do not believe in any future state.” Well, Friend, suppose it should happen to be as you wish—have you any advantage over me even then? Suppose, that, after all, there should be no future state? I am as well off as you are. If there should be no Hell and no Heaven, I am as well off as you are. But if there is a future state. If there is a Hell and there is a Heaven, where will you be then? Remember that to disbelieve is not the same thing as to disprove—and I, for one, feel certain that as surely as you live, there is a future state and there is a God who will judge you! And your unbelief cannot postpone the dread assize.

The ostrich hides his head in the sand—I know the simile is trite, but I can think of no better one just now—and when he sees not the hunter, he persuades himself that he has escaped from danger. But do you imagine that because you refuse to believe the Scriptures, that they will be altered to please you? That can never be! But if you will not believe, I suppose you must go on sinning until you find out the Truth of God and have to cry, in the agony of despair, “Now it is too late!”

The Lord grant that it may not be so. But, because it is true, therefore wait upon God, now, for there is no hope anywhere else.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JEREMIAH 14.**

In some respects, Jeremiah is one of the greatest of the ancient Prophets, for he had a most sorrowful task to perform. He had not to deliver a message full of Evangelical comfort, like that of Isaiah, nor had he gorgeous visions of coming kingdoms, as Ezekiel had. He was the Cassandra of his age. Jeremiah spoke the Truths of God, yet few believed him. His life was spent in sighing over a wicked people who rejected and despised him. He bore a heavy burden upon his heart and tears continually wet his cheeks, so that he was rightly called “the weeping Prophet.” This chapter gives us an illustration of the style in which he used to pray.

**Verse 1.** *The Word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the droughts.* There had been no rain, so the crops had failed and there was a famine in the land. Jeremiah describes that famine in striking poetic imagery.

**2-6.** *Judah mourns and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is parched, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. Yes, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they*

*snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass.* The distress in the land was so great that the city gates where, in more prosperous times, business transactions took place, and meetings of the people were held, were deserted. There was nothing that could be done while the nation was in such sorrow—and a great cry of agony went up from the capital of the country—“The cry of Jerusalem is gone up.” The highest in the land sent their children to hunt even for a little water to drink. They went to the cisterns where some water might have been expected to remain, but they found none—“they returned with their vessels empty; they were as ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.” The covering of the head was the sign of sorrow. You remember how, in the day of his distress, “David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered.” “And all the people that were with him covered, every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.” The ground had been reduced, by the drought, to such a state of hardness that it was useless to plow it, for there was no hope of any harvest coming. Even the wild creatures of the field shared the general suffering. The hind, which is reckoned by the Orientals to be the fondest of its young, forsook its fawn and left it to perish because there was no food. And the wild asses, which are able to endure thirst better than other creatures can and are always quick to perceive water if there is any to be found, tried in vain to scent it anywhere. “They snuffed up the wind like dragons”—like cobras, or serpents, or jackals, as the word may be variously rendered—but they snuffed in vain and their eyes became like coals in their head. They “did fail, because there was no grass.” What then? Why, the Prophet turns to prayer as the only means of obtaining relief!

**7.** *O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake.* “You cannot do it because of any merit of ours.”

**7-9.** *For our backslidings are many; we have sinned against You. O the Hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night? Why should You be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet You O LORD, are in the midst of us and we are called by Your name; leave us not.* Can you not almost hear the good man praying? Notice how he begs the Lord not to be to the land like a mere stranger who passes through it and cares nothing for it. “Why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night?” Then he pleads with the Lord, “Why should You be as a strong man, but stunned?”—for that is the meaning of the expression he uses—“Be not You as a mighty man astounded or stunned, who cannot save us; let it not be thought or said that we have come to such a pass that even You cannot help us.” This was grand pleading on the Prophet’s part, and he followed it up by mentioning the close connection that existed between Israel and God. Yet You, O Jehovah, are in the midst of us, and we are called by Your name.” And then he pleaded, “leave us not.” It was a grand prayer, yet, at first, this was the only answer that Jeremiah received to it.

**10, 11.** *Thus says the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD does not accept them; He will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. "You may pray, if you like, for a plague to come upon them as a chastisement for their sins, but do not pray for any blessing for them."*

**12.** *When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation I will not accept them: but it will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.* After being long provoked, God at last determines that He will punish the rebellious nation and He seems, as it were, to put Jeremiah aside. "Now the day of My vengeance has come, and I will show no more mercy to them." Now note what Jeremiah does even after the Lord has said to him, "Pray not for this people for their good."

**13.** *Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, the prophets say unto them, You shall not see the sword, neither shall you have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.* He says, "Lord, have pity on the people, for they are misled by their prophets! Perhaps if these false prophets had not thus deceived them and puffed them up, they would not have been so hardened in their sin." He tried to make some excuse for them, but the Lord would not yield to his pleading.

**14, 15.** *Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in My name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spoke unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nothing, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in My name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land. By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.* God says, "Yes, I will deal with the false prophets. It is true that they have misled the people and I will punish them for their deception, but I will not excuse the people even on that ground."

**16.** *And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.* That seems to be a hard answer to Jeremiah's pleading—what is the Prophet to do now? God gives him another message to deliver to the people—

**17, 18.** *Therefore you shall say this word unto them; Let my eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. If I go forth into the field, then behold! the slain with the sword! And if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! Yes, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.* So God told Jeremiah that he might go and tell the people that he would weep continually for them. The faithful and sympathetic Prophet was to be allowed constantly to shed tears on their behalf and to feel great distress of soul because he saw signs everywhere of the heavy hand of God resting upon the guilty people. If they went outside the city, the Chaldeans slew them with the sword. And if they stayed inside, they perished

by famine! Or those that died not were carried away captive into a land that they knew not. What is Jeremiah to do in such a case as this? He is told that he must not pray for the people, and God seems determined to smite them. What can love do when even the gates of prayer are ordered to be closed? Notice how, after he is told that he must not pray, he edges his way up towards the Throne of Grace and, at last, he does what he is told not to do. He begins thus—

**19.** *Have You utterly rejected Judah? Has Your soul loathed Zion? Why have You smitten us, and there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble! That is not exactly praying, but it is very like it. Jeremiah is asking the Lord whether He can really have cast off His people.*

**20.** *We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against You.* He has now advanced a step farther, to the confession of sin. If that is not really prayer, it always goes with it. It is the background of prayer, so we shall soon have some other touches in the picture.

**21.** *Do not abhor us for Your name's sake, do not disgrace the Throne of Your Glory: remember, break not Your Covenant with us.* Now he is actually getting to praying. He cannot help himself. He is told that he must not pray, but he feels that he must—he loves the people so much that he must plead for them.

**22.** *Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain! Or can the heavens give showers? Are You not He, O LORD our God? Therefore we will wait for You: for You have made all these things.* O splendid perseverance of importunity—strong resolve of a forbidden intercession! “You, O Lord our God, tell us not to pray, but we cannot restrain our supplication—“Therefore we will wait for You.” God help us all to wait for Him! We are not so discouraged from praying as he was who spoke these words, so there is still more reason why we should say to the Lord, “Therefore we will wait for You.”

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# THE NORTHERN IRON AND THE STEEL

## NO. 993

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

*“Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?”  
Jeremiah 15:12.*

THE Prophet Jeremiah was, as we saw upon a former occasion, a man of exquisitely sensitive character. Not a Prophet of iron, like Elijah, but nearer akin to Him who was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He lived in times which were peculiarly trying to him, and in addition was called to exercise an office which involved him in perpetual sorrow. He loved the people among whom he dwelt, yet he was commissioned by God to pronounce judgments upon them. This in itself was a hard task to such a nature as his. As a loving father, fearful of Eli's doom uses the rod upon his child, but feels each stroke in his own heart far more acutely than the child does upon his back, so every threat which the Prophet uttered lashed his own soul and cost his heart the direst pains.

He went, however, to his work with unstaggering firmness—hopeful, perhaps, that when his countrymen heard the Divine threat, they would repent of their sins, seek mercy, and find it. Surely if anything can add weight to the prophecy of the judgments of God it is the trembling love, the anxious fear with which such a messenger as Jeremiah would deliver his warning. The deep sorrow of him who warned them ought to have driven the sinful nation to a speedy repentance. But instead they rejected his warnings, they despised his person, and defied his God.

As they thus heaped wrath upon themselves, they also increased his sorrow. He was a delicate, sensitive plant and felt an inward shudder as he marked the tempest gathering overhead. Though a most loyal servant of his God, he was sometimes very trembling, and though he never ventured, like Jonah, to flee unto Tarshish, yet he cried in the bitterness of his soul, “O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men. That I might leave my people, and go from them!”

The Jews treated him so harshly and unjustly that he feared they would break his heart. They smote him as with an iron rod, and he felt like one crushed beneath their unkindness. To silence his fear the Lord assures him that He will renew his strength. “Behold,” says He, “I have made you this day a defended city and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against you. But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you.”

Thus the Lord promised to His servant the Divine support which his trials demanded. He never did and never will place a man in a trying position and then leave him to perish. David dealt thus treacherously with Uriah, but the Lord acts not thus with His servants. If the rebellious seed

of Israel were iron, the Lord declared that His Prophet should be hardened by sustaining Grace into northern iron and steel. If they beat upon him like hammers on an anvil, he should be made of such strong, enduring texture that he should be able to resist all their blows.

Iron in the olden times among the Israelites was very coarsely manufactured, but the best was the iron from the north. So bad was their iron generally, that an admixture of brass, which among us would be thought rather to deteriorate the hardness, was regarded as an improvement. So the Lord puts it, "Shall iron—the common iron—break the most firm and best prepared iron?" It cannot do so—and if the people acted like iron against Jeremiah, God would make his spirit indomitably firm that they should no more be able to put him down than common iron could break the northern iron and the steel.

That being the literal meaning, we shall draw from our text a general principle. It is a proverbial expression, no doubt, and applicable to many other matters besides that of the Prophet and the Jews. It is clearly meant to show that in order to achieve a purpose, there must be a sufficient force. The weaker cannot overcome the stronger. In a general clash the firmest will win. There must be sufficient firmness in the instrument or the work cannot be done. You cannot cut granite with a penknife, nor drill a hole in a rock with an auger of silk. Some forces are inadequate for the accomplishment of certain purposes. If you would break the best iron, you will be foiled if you strike it with a metal less hard.

**I.** We shall first of all apply this proverb to the PEOPLE OF GOD INDIVIDUALLY. Shall any power be able to destroy the saints? We are sent into the world, if we are Believers in Christ, like sheep in the midst of wolves—defenseless and in danger of being devoured—yet no power on earth can destroy the chosen disciples of Christ. Weak as they are, they will tread down the strength of their foes. There are more sheep in the world now than wolves. There are parts of the world where wolves once roamed in troops where not a wolf can now be found.

Yet tens of thousands of sheep feed on the hillside—one would not be very bold to say that the day will come when the wolf will only be known as an extinct animal, while as long as the world lasts the sheep will continue to multiply. In the long run, the sheep has gained the victory over the wolf. And it is so with Christ's people. They appear to be weak, but there is a force about them which cannot be put down—they will overcome the ungodly yet—for the day will come when the mighty Truth of God shall prevail. God hasten that blessed and long-expected day!

Till then, when persecuted we are not forsaken. When cast down we are not destroyed. Many Christians are placed in positions where they are subject to very great temptations and persecutions. They are mocked, laughed at, ridiculed, called evil names. Persecuted One, will you deny the faith? Are you going to put aside your colors and relinquish the Cross of Christ? If so, I can only tell you, you are not made of the same stuff as the true disciples of Jesus Christ. For when the Grace of God is in them, if the world is iron, they are northern iron and steel. They can bear all the blows which the world may possibly choose to lay upon them, and as the anvil breaks the hammers in the long run, so will they, by their patient endur-

ance for Christ's sake, break the force of all persecution and triumph over it.

Do I speak to a young Christian who has come up to London and finds himself placed where he is continually ridiculed? Will you shrink in the day of trial? Do you mean to play the coward? Shall the iron break the northern iron and the steel? Let it not be so! Be strong. Be you like men. And in the energy of the Holy Spirit, endure as seeing Him that is invisible. There is no need that we should fear, for amid all dangers the love of God shall live within us as a fire unquenchable. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Besides persecution, we are called frequently to serve the Lord under great *difficulties*. There are supreme difficulties connected with the evangelization of this city. To stand here and preach to such a congregation as this—so large and so eager for the Word—is a pleasure. But every sphere of labor is not equally cheering. Some of you who go to the lodging houses to speak, or who visit the alleys, or stand up in the low neighborhoods to preach the Word of Life, I know full well find it anything but child's play to serve your Lord under such conditions.

Yours is rough hedging and ditching work—with very little in it of rose-water and gentility—and very much of annoyance and disappointment. What, then, is your resolution? I trust it is this—that as much strength is needed, you will wait more than ever upon the Strong One till the needed power is given you. I trust you are not of that craven spirit which shrinks at difficulty or toil. Will you give way before the labors demanded of you? Do the redeemed of the Lord consent to give London up to Satan's rule?

Do they say in despair that its dark parts cannot be enlightened? Will the Church of God despair of any race or country? Will it say—"There is no converting the Romanist. There is no convincing the literate and crafty Brahmin?" Is the iron to break the northern iron and the steel? Will we not rather take a firmer grip upon Omnipotence and draw down almighty help by the blessed vehemence of prayer? What are we doing? What ails us that we are so soon dispirited? Is the Lord's arm waxed short? The Apostles never thought of defeat—they believed that the Gospel could break everything in pieces that stood in its way—and they went without hesitation to the work which the Lord sent them to do.

It was theirs to dare and die—questions and foreboding were not theirs. Into the bloody jaws of death those champions of Christendom rode on with dauntless courage and won the victory! And are we to give way under difficulties? Are we to be as reeds shaken of the wind? You, Sunday school Teacher, are you going to give up your class because the boys are unruly? You in the Ragged-school, are you thinking of closing the doors, because as yet the children have not come in great numbers, or because the young Arabs are as wild as unbroken colts?

You, who stood in the corner of the street the other night to preach—did you determine never to stand up and preach again because of the rough reception you received? O Man, be of different metal from this! If God has called you to do anything, do it even if you die in doing it. To a

man for whom Jesus died, no work should seem hard, no sacrifice grievous. All things are possible to those who burn with the love of God. There is nothing but what you can make a way through if you can find something harder to bore it with.

Look at the Mont Cenis Tunnel, made through one of the hardest of known rocks. With a sharp tool, edged with diamonds, they have pierced the heart of the Alps, and made a passage for the commerce of nations. As St. Bernard says—"Is your work hard? Set a harder resolution against it, for there is nothing so hard that it cannot be cut by something still harder." May the Spirit of God work in you invincible resolution and unconquerable perseverance! Let not the iron break the northern iron and the steel.

Under persecutions and difficulties, let God's people resolve on victory, and by faith they shall have it—for according to our faith so shall it be unto us. One of the greatest trials to which the people of God are subject, in trying to serve their Master, is *failure*. The seven lean kine, as they eat up the seven fat kine, sorely try the Believer's faith. Alas, our disappointments seldom come alone, but like Job's messengers follow close upon each other's heels. When a man succeeds, he continues to succeed, as a rule. He derives encouragement from what God has already done by him, and goes from strength to strength.

Probably, however, there is more Grace exhibited by the Christian, who, without present success, realizes the things not seen as yet and continues, still, to work on. To labor is not easy, but to labor *and to wait* is harder by far. It is a grand thing to continue patiently in doing well, confident that in the end the reward is sure. He is a man, indeed, who under long-continued disappointment will not—

***"Bate a jot  
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer  
Right onward."***

Such a man "plucks success even from the spear-proof crest of rugged danger." The well-annealed steel within him before long breaks in shivers the common iron which strikes him so severely. To him, to overcome by Grace is glory, indeed.

Some of the greatest works that were ever performed by Christian people were not immediate in their results. The farmer has waited long for the precious fruits of the earth. The question has been asked, again and again, "Watchman, what of the night?" Some, no doubt, have had to labor all their lives and have bequeathed to their heirs the promise whose fulfillment they had not personally seen. They laid the underground courses of the temple and others entered into their labors.

You know the story of the removal of old St. Paul's by Sir Christopher Wren. A very massive piece of masonry had to be broken down. And the task, by pick and shovel, would have been a very tedious one, so the great architect prepared a battering-ram for its removal. A large number of workmen were directed to strike with force against the wall with the ram. After several hours of labor, the wall, to all appearances, stood fast and firm. Their many strokes had been apparently lost, but the architect knew that they were gradually communicating motion to the wall, creating an agitation throughout the whole of it, and that by-and-by, when they had



continued long enough, the entire mass would come down beneath a single stroke.

The workmen, no doubt, attributed the result to the one crowning concussion, but their master knew that their previous strokes had only culminated in that one tremendous blow and that all the nonresultant work had been necessary to prepare for the stroke which achieved the purpose. O Christians, do not expect always to see the full outgrowth of your labors! Go on, serve your God! Testify of His Truth! Tell of Jesus' love! Pray for sinners! Live a godly life! Serve God with might and main—and if no harvest springs up to *your* joyous sickle—others shall follow you and reap what you have sown! And since God will be glorified, it shall be enough for you!

Let no amount of failure daunt you. Be uneasy about it, but do not be discouraged. Let not even this iron break the resolution of your soul. Let your determination to honor Jesus be as the northern iron and the steel. I might thus enlarge but I have so many other things to speak of that I shall pass on. The essence of what I want to say is this—if any dear Brother here, as a Christian, is put to very severe trials, he may depend upon it there is nothing that happens to him but what is common to men. And that there is Grace enough to be had to enable him to bear up under all. There is no need for any one soldier of God to turn his back in the day of battle.

It is not right that any one of us should consider himself doomed to be defeated. The Holy Spirit gives power to the weak and lifts the common warriors into the ranks of the mightiest. Fullness of Grace is provided for us in Christ Jesus, and if we draw from it by faith we shall not need to fail. Let us not be slow to arm ourselves with the Divine might! Let us ask the Captain of our salvation to make us as tough in the day of battle as the northern iron was beneath the blow of the common iron—that having done and suffered all, we may still stand—and none may be able to rob us of our crown.

**II.** But we shall now make a second use of this same proverb. It is applicable to the cause of God in the world—to THE CHURCH. I shall speak but little upon this, for time would fail me. What power, however like to iron, shall suffice to break the kingdom of Jesus, which is comparable to steel? We every now and then hear the babyish talk of persons who say that the Gospel will die out in England—that Romanism will return in all its darkness—Gospel Light will be extinguished, and the candle which Latimer helped to light will be blown out. Atrocious nonsense, if not partial blasphemy!

If this thing were of men it would come to nothing. But if it is of God, who shall overthrow it? It has sometimes happened that fear has been the father of the thing it feared—let it not be so in this case. Let us not court defeat by anticipating it. As surely as the Lord lives, the end of the Roman Catholic Anti-Christ will come, and the long-expected angel shall cry with a loud voice, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” “Rejoice over her, you Heaven, and you holy Apostles and Prophets. For God has avenged you on her” (Rev. 18:2, 20).

Other desponding prophets foretell that infidelity will so spread through all the Churches and the fabric of society, that at last we shall see this country without a Gospel ministry, and perhaps, through the spread of revolutionary principles, bereft of all respect for law and order. We are to go down by way of Paris to the foulness of Sodom, and from there to pandemonium. Brethren, let those who will believe these evil tidings, I am not greatly moved by this noise. There are eternal principles and immutable decrees which uphold my joyful hopes!

Consider, for a moment, what is involved in these gloomy forebodings. Then the gates of Hell *are* to prevail against the Church, are they? Then Christ is to be defeated by Anti-Christ, is He? Then the pleasure of the Lord is *not* to prosper in His hand? Who said that? Who, but a lying spirit that would lay low the faith and confidence of the people of God? It is no more possible for the Truth of God and the Church of God to be defeated, than for God Himself to be overcome in conflict.

Lo, Jehovah girds His Church like a buckler on His arm—this is His battle-ax. This His weapon of war. And if you can wrench from His hand the weapons of His choice, then you may lift up the shout of triumph over the Eternal Himself. But it never can be, for who shall stand against the Lord and prosper? My Brethren, we may well fear the crafty machinations of the Church of Rome, for all the subtlety of the old serpent is within her. But with the wisdom of God to meet it, there can be no alarm. He takes the wise in their own craftiness—there is no device nor counsel against the Lord.

We may well be dismayed at the insidious attacks of skepticism. But while there remains a Holy Spirit to create and sustain faith in the world, we need not fear that the faithful will utterly cease out of the land. There are thousands still reserved whose knees have never bowed to Baal. Infidelity and Socinianism have ready tongues, but every tongue that rises against the Church, in Judgment she will condemn. The forges of Hell are busy in fashioning new weapons with which to assail us, but the Lord will break their bows and cut their spears in sunder.

They may and will defeat the dogmas of superstition, but the Truths of Revelation and the people who believe them they can never overthrow. The iron will never break the northern iron and the steel. The Church can bear the blows of Ritualism and Infidelity, and survive them all—and be the better for them, too. See what the cause of Christ is. It is Truth—there is victory! Who knows not that the Truth must prevail? There is in the Church of God, moreover, Life, and life is a thing you cannot overcome. A dead thing may be cut in pieces, and thrown to the winds of Heaven. But the Life in Christ's Church is that which has defied and overcome Satan a thousand times already.

In the Dark Ages the enemy thought he had destroyed the Church, but Life came into the monk in his cell, and Luther shook the world. The Church in England fell into a deadly slumber in the days of Whitfield and Wesley. But she was not dead, and therefore a time of awakening came. The flame burned low but the heavenly fire still lingered among the ashes, and only needed the Holy Spirit to blow upon it and cause a hallowed conflagration! Six young men in Oxford were found guilty of meeting to pray—

their offense was contagious—and soon there sprang up hundreds glorying in the same blessed crime!

Earnest servants of the living God were forthcoming and no man knew from where they came. Like the buds and blossoms which come forth at the bidding of spring, a people made willing in the day of God's power came forward at once. Seeing that there is Life in the Church of God, you can never calculate what will happen within its bounds to-morrow, for Life is an unaccountable thing, and scorns the laws which bind the formal and inanimate. The statues in St. Paul's Cathedral stand fixed on their pedestals, and the renowned dead in Westminster Abbey never raise a riot. But who can tell what the living may next conceive or attempt?

Men have said—"We will put down the troublesome religion of these gospellers. Build prisons enough, forge chains enough, make racks enough, concoct tortures infernal enough, slay enough victims and stamp out the plague." But their designs have never been accomplished. They hatched the cockatrice's egg, but that which came of it died. They burnt the Gospel out in Spain, did they not? And in the Low Countries they erased the memory of it. How is it now? Has not Spain achieved her liberty at a blow? Is not also Belgium free to the preacher of the word? Not even Italy or Rome itself is safe against the obnoxious heretic.

Everywhere, by God's Grace, the Gospel penetrates! Even the earth helps the woman, and swallows up the flood which the dragon casts out of his mouth to drown the Man Child—political rulers restrain the violence of those who otherwise would slay the saints in one general massacre. It shall be so, right on through all the ages till Christ comes—the iron shall not break the northern iron and the steel. Glory be to God, we have confidence in this, and in the name of God we set up our banner. This, too, is a pleasing theme. But we must leave it and pass on to another.

**III.** We may apply the principle to a very different matter, indeed—THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS EFFORTS WHICH MEN MAKE FOR THEIR OWN SALVATION. We may remind them that the iron will never break the northern iron and the steel. The bonds of guilt are not to be snapped by a mere *human* power. Here is a man with the fetters of his transgressions about him, but "he will get them off," he says—prayer shall be his file! Tears shall be the acid to dissolve the metal, and his own resolutions shall, like a hammer, dash the links in fragments!

But it cannot be—the iron shall never break this northern iron and the steel. Habits of sin yield not to the rasping of the unregenerate resolves. You are condemned, and only Christ, the Son of God, can set you free from the fetters which hold you in the condemned cell! All your efforts, apart from Jesus, are utterly useless. He must bring liberty—you cannot emancipate yourselves. You say that you will break off the chains of evil habits. There are some you can break off, but can you alter your *nature*?

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" That were an easy task compared with a man renewing his own heart. The imaginations of the thoughts of your heart are evil, only evil, and that continually. Do what you will, they will remain so. The dead cannot give themselves life—it needs superior power to hew off the fetters which hold you prisoner in the sepulcher of your natural death. Your iron can never

break the northern iron and the steel which bind you to the slavery of Hell.

Do you think to force your way to Heaven by *ceremony*? Do you imagine that Baptism can wash away your sins, that confirmation can convey to you Grace, that outward ceremonies of man's devising, or of God's instituting can deliver you from wrath? Believe no such thing! There is no potency in all these to deliver you from the bonds which hold you. The iron cannot break the northern iron and the steel. Come, Sinner, with your fetters, and lay here at the foot of the Cross where Christ can break the iron at once. Come, bring yourself, chained as you are, to Him! Or if you cannot stir an inch, cry out to Him!

Ask Him to deliver you! He can do it. Trust in Him, for trust in His precious blood and reliance upon His perfect Sacrifice will make you a free man in a moment, never to be a bond slave again. But, oh, let not your puny strength be wasted on so futile an effort as that which aims at self-salvation! How shall weakness achieve the labor of Omnipotence, or death accomplish the sublime miracle of the Immortal? Remember the work of salvation—think how great it is—how worthy of a God.

And then cease utterly from all self-reliance, for it is madness and blasphemy! Where were the need of the Holy Spirit if you could regenerate yourself? Where would there be room for a display of the power of Sovereign Grace, if man's will and effort could accomplish all? But I leave that topic, also, and pass on to another consideration.

**IV.** This same text is applicable to the case of any persons who are making SELF-RELIANT EFFORTS FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS. How painfully are we made to feel, my Brethren, after every series of our special services at this Tabernacle, that we of ourselves can do nothing! How are we driven to the conclusion that it is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God, and by the Spirit of God alone!

Man's heart is very hard. It is like the northern iron and the steel. Our preaching—we try to make it forcible, but how powerless is it of itself! The preacher seeks goodly words and illustrations. He brings forth the Law of God, he gives forth threats in God's name. He reasons concerning judgment to come, and flinches not from declaring the eternal punishment of sin. He preaches the love of God, and the infinite mercy of Christ Jesus, and he blends all this with an affection which longs for conversion.

He prays for God's blessing—but in many many hearts there is no change—the northern iron and the steel remain unmovable. We call spirits from the vast deep of their lost estate, but they come not at our bidding. We plead with sinners to be reconciled to God, and we beseech them as though God Himself besought them by us! But they remain unreconciled. They are even the more obdurate in iniquity. The cries and tears of a Whitfield would not avail. Though all the Apostles reasoned with them they would turn to them a deaf ear.

The best adapted means cannot break the northern iron and the steel. With some of you an instrumentality has been used which ought to have been more prolific in results. A mother's tears, to your knowledge, have been shed for you. How affectionately has she spoken to you of the Savior whom she loves—but powerful as your mother's pleadings are on any

other point, you reject them in the matter of your soul. How would it make yon gray-headed man, your father, rejoice if he might see you saved! In other matters this also would have weight with you, but it has none in this.

You have had the Gospel, too, some of you, put to you very, very tenderly by those whom you love best, but you are still unsaved. There could be no better means than human love sanctified and strengthened by indwelling Grace. It has been strong as iron, and would have broken any ordinary heart, but it has not crushed yours, for it is hard as the northern iron and the steel. Yes, and you have been sick. You have been stretched upon the bed with fever, within a hair's breadth of Hell. Or you have been at sea, and escaped as with the skin of your teeth from shipwreck.

But even the judgments of God have not aroused you. The iron has not broken the northern iron and the steel. This month, to some of you, there have been addresses delivered pointedly, plaintively—which should have moved a rock. I have been present at some of the meetings, when I have heard certain of our Brethren speak in a way that made me inwardly say, "Surely these careless ones will yield to that!" There has been much sighing and crying for your souls. And you have been spoken to personally, many of you. A kind hand has been put upon your wrist, and with tearful eye, Brother and Sister have looked into your face, and told you of your danger and of your remedy.

Oh if this does not save you, what will? "What shall I do unto you?" "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you?" What other instrumentality can be employed? The iron will not break the northern iron and the steel. Children of God, you are driven to this—that here is a case in which you are powerless. You might as well reverse the wind, or move a star, or create a world, as soften these hardened hearts! What are you to do? Certainly you are to continue the effort—nothing must tempt you to relinquish it—or even to relax your zeal. If you cannot break the heart—truly it is no business of yours to do so—commit that work to HIM who is fully equal to the miracle!

Keep to your work, and fear not that the Lord will work with you. God bids you continue prayer, warning instruction, and invitation. If you knew that every soul you preached to or talked with would be lost, it were no less your duty to preach the Gospel. For the duty to tell out the Gospel is not influenced by our *success*, but is based upon the commission of Christ—"Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." It is not Ezekiel's duty to make the dry bones live—but whether they live or not it is his duty to prophesy to them.

Noah was none the less a preacher of righteousness because none, save his own family, listened to his appeals and sought shelter with him in the ark. Go on with your work. But let a sense of your personal inability make you fall back upon your God. Let it keep you from one self-reliant prayer or word, much more from one self-confident sermon or address. Every time we try to do good in our own strength, the effort bears the certainty of defeat in its own heart. You shoot pointless darts. You wield a blunted sword when you go to work for God without God.

It is only when we go in *God's power* that we can save souls. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain." Lo, spiritual children are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of our soul's womb is His reward. Feel your weakness, my Brethren, and then you shall know your strength! Go to the sinner in God's strength, and then shall you see the Divine operation. But certainly not till then.

What a blessing it has been to some of us at times to be made to lie very low in the dust and see what unworthy creatures we are! I have often noticed that when God intends to give a great blessing upon my ministry, and to let me know it, He usually makes me feel as if I had rather die than live, because I feel myself so utterly unworthy to preach His Word, and am made to bemoan my wretched unfitness to be used at all by my gracious Master. Let the stone lie in the brook, and let it be rounded, and made smooth by the water—it will do nothing of itself.

But when it has been worn away enough by the brook, and David slings it, and smites the giant's brow, the stone cannot say, "I slew the giant by my own force." But all men will give glory to the champion who hurled it at the giant's forehead. Yes, God will have the Glory, and He will take means to prevent us from usurping it. He will make us feel that the iron cannot break the northern iron and the steel, and then He will send us forth to victory. Truly my inmost heart confesses that if one heart has been won for my Lord Jesus by *me*, I am less than nothing in it, and He is All in All. My soul dares not touch the Glory, but loathes every thought of self-praise. He has done it, and to Him be everlasting songs!

**V.** But now I must close—time warns me to do so—by remarking that this text has A VERY SOLEMN APPLICATION TO ALL THOSE WHO ARE REBELS AGAINST GOD. Men sometimes think themselves of very great consequence. I spoke with one some years ago who had professed to be a Christian, who addressed me very indignantly after some little argument, and said that before long he intended to produce a pamphlet which would extinguish Christianity.

I remember making the remark that I dared to say that the world would hear as much about it as when a fly fell into a pail of water and was drowned, and not much more. And then he was more indignant still. But I told him I had seen many a moth dash against my gas burner in the evening, but I had never seen the light put out, though I had seen the wretched insect fall with singed wings upon my table, to suffer for its fatal folly. And I feared that such a fate would happen to him.

So rest assured it will be to you, O Blasphemer of God, or Hater of His Christ! Fight against God, would you? Measure your Adversary, I charge you! The wax is about to wrestle with the flame—the twig is about to contend with the fire. It is too unequal a warfare. If you are wise, you will select another adversary, and not attempt to go to war with the Omnipotent King with such a puny force as yours. "Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His?" You may be like iron—go and break the potsherds of the earth. They are fair game for you. But do not contend against the northern iron and the steel, for these will break you.

You will not be able to deprive Christ of a single atom of His glory. You may blaspheme, but even that shall, somehow or other by a holy alchemy, be turned to His Glory. You cannot thwart His Decrees. The great wheels of His Providence grind on, and woe to him who throws himself in their track—they will surely grind him to powder. The huge Matterhorn lifts its colossal head above the clouds. Who will speak against it? It bows not its giant form. And no matter what of snow and sleet may dash against its ramparts, there it stands, still the same—emblem herein of the great Throne of the Eternal, firm and immutable—though all the universe storm at its foot.

To resist God is to strike with naked feet against a goad. “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” You will hurt yourself. You cannot injure Him, nor change His purposes by so much as the turning of a hair. God will have His way—none shall resist His will. Everlasting and eternal are His decrees. And fast and fixed they ever must remain, though all earth and Hell should unite in one great conspiracy. He thrusts a bit into the tempest’s mouth and rides upon the wings of the wind! Confusion there is none to Him. Adversaries, what are they? They are utterly consumed as the stubble.

Take heed that God come not out against you, you who are rebels. For if He once puts on the war harness and fights against you, woe unto you! Have you not heard? Has no one told you of the arrows of His quiver? They are sharp, heart-piercing, infallible. Sickness can shake you till every nerve shall become a road for pain to carry on its dreadful traffic. Poverty can come upon you, and want, like an armed man. Death shall strike down all your lovers, and your acquaintances shall sink into the abyss. Let God but come forth in judgment against a man, or a people, and what can He not do?

Look at the nation across the Channel, and see how God has dealt with it. Turn to any other nation against whom His fiat has gone forth, and read the story of its overthrow. What can emperors do, and their imperial guards, and their novel instruments of war, and their death-dealing machines that were to mow down thousands in an hour? He that sits in the heavens does laugh! The Lord does have them in derision. He has broken the bow and cut the spear in sunder. He has burned the chariot in the fire.

Contend no more against the Almighty—put back your sword into the scabbard and submit yourself to the inevitable—for remember, before long, O Rebel against God, He will deal with you in another fashion than He does now. Let that breath which is in your nostrils go forth from you, and where are you, then? I will quote one passage of Scripture and leave it to your thoughts. “Beware, you that *forget God*”—that is the very mildest form of rebellion—“Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

O may you never know what that means! Cast down your weapons! Come now and ask for reconciliation. The Ambassador of Peace invites you. I point you no longer to His burning Throne, but to yonder Cross. See there God in human flesh—bleeding, suffering, dying. Those wounds are fountains of mercy. Look to them, and you shall live! Wrath is appeased

by the death of Jesus. Fury is no more in Jehovah! Trust in Jesus, the Crucified, and your transgression shall be forgiven you. That precious blood shall make reconciliation—there shall be peace between you and God.

But O resist no longer, for the iron cannot break the northern iron and the steel. The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 40: 9-31.**

**LETTER:** CLAPHAM, JUNE 5. **TO MY FRIENDS EVERYWHERE**, I HAVE now endured ten silent Sundays, and as I know that many of you are anxious to have accurate information as to my state of health, and as I have now something cheerful to communicate, I feel bound to add the present note to this week's sermon. The pain of my disease, which has been intense, has now ceased for a week or more. I have had a succession of good nights in which sweet sleep has so refreshed me that I felt, each morning, to be far in advance of the previous day. I am now very weak—weak as a little child—but by the same mercy which allayed the pain, strength will be restored, and I shall have the pleasure of being again at my delightful labor.

Please pray for me that I may be speedily and lastingly restored to health, if it is the Lord's will. Ask also that the furnace heat which I have suffered may produce its full effect upon me in my own soul and in my ministry. My heart's inmost desire, as the Lord knows, is the salvation of sinners and the building up of His people in their most holy faith to the glory of the Lord Jesus—therefore it has been very grievous to me to have been debarred my pulpit and shut out from other means of usefulness.

Nevertheless, no work has flagged at the Tabernacle because of my illness—pecuniary help has been furnished just when it was needed—and spiritual help has been given by the Lord of Hosts. We desire to accomplish more and to receive more blessing when our health is restored to us. Surely the Master has some great design to be answered by laying His servant aside—we trust it will prove to be so. Let our prayers be more fervent, our zeal more ardent and our labors for the spread of the Truth more abundant, and “God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”

I have one great favor to ask of all readers of the sermons, and that is that they will try to spread them abroad, and increase the number of regular subscribers. What has been good to you will be good for others if the Lord blesses it. If you cannot preach yourself, you can distribute the word spoken by others. I hope to be able to occupy the pulpit again by June 25, if the Lord wills—but all things are uncertain to us, especially when one is slowly recovering from severe affliction. Yours to serve till death,

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



# THE SECRET FOOD AND THE PUBLIC NAME NO. 1079

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

*“Your Words were found, and I did eat them; and Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.”  
Jeremiah 15:16.*

JEREMIAH had been greatly persecuted for his faithfulness in delivering the Word of God. He tells us the reason for his continuance in a work which brought him so sorrowful a reward. He makes us understand that he had been faithful in delivering God’s Word because that Word had been overpoweringly precious to his own soul. He could not do otherwise than speak the Truth of God, because that Truth had been his own daily food. He had met with nothing but ill-treatment from those whom he addressed. They had vilified him in every way—he had been put into the most noisome dungeon. He had been denied even bread and water—everything short of actually putting him to death had been inflicted upon him by his ungrateful countrymen.

But still he went on prophesying. He could not be silent. Though his prophesying brought him nothing but tears, yet he continued still to prophesy, for God’s Word came with such sweetness to his own soul and filled his heart with such ravishing joy and delight that he could not do otherwise than go and tell his fellow men what had been so delightful to himself. I believe this to be the secret of every living ministry. The ministry that is fed upon flattery and flatters those who flatter it is a poor feeble counterfeit and God will never bless it. But the ministry which under great difficulties and fierce opposition is still sustained because the preacher cannot help continuing in it is that which God will bless.

It was good advice of a venerable Divine to a young man who aspired to be a preacher, when he said to him, “Don’t become a minister if you can help it.” The man who could very easily be a tradesman or a merchant had better not be a minister! A preacher of the Gospel should always be a *volunteer* and yet he should always be a pressed man who serves his King because he is constrained to do so by God Himself. Only he is fit to preach who cannot avoid preaching—who feels that woe is upon him unless he preaches the Gospel—and that the very stones would cry out against him if he should hold his peace.

I have said that Jeremiah lets us into a secret. His outer life, consisting in his perpetual faithful ministry, was to be accounted for by his inward love of the Word which he preached. Depend upon it, this secret reveals all true spiritual life. If ever you see anyone who walks in holiness, stands fast in temptation and is upheld under affliction, you may rest assured there is a something about him that is not perceived by every eye—there is

a secret which the world knows not of—a hidden fountain which sustains the stream of his life. There is an invisible spring of vitality which keeps him vigorous even in the midst of surrounding death. Bunyan's metaphor was that he saw a fire which was burning under singular circumstances, for one stood before it who continually threw water upon it to quench it, and though he did so, yet the fire was not put out.

Christian could not understand the marvel till the Interpreter took him behind the wall and there he saw one that cast oil upon the fire as perseveringly as the enemy cast the water, so that the fire, being secretly nourished, could not be extinguished. Every Christian's life is of that sort—there is abundance to destroy it, but, if it is sustained, there is a secret something which keeps that soul alive unto God and persevering to the end. We shall, then, tonight speak about the secret life of the Believer and afterwards upon his public life. His secret life is described in this way: "Your Words were found, and I did eat them; and Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." That was for himself alone. In the next sentence you have his public life, his manifestation before men—"For I am called by Your name O Jehovah, God of Hosts."

**I.** Now observe that in the description of Jeremiah's SECRET LIFE which consists of his inward reception of the Word of God, (which description will answer for ourselves), we have three points—the finding of God's Word, the eating of it and the rejoicing in it with all his heart. First, you have the finding of it—"Your Words were found." Now we have not to find God's Word as Jeremiah had, by waiting until the Spirit of God reveals fresh Truths of God, for the Spirit of God now reveals no fresh Truth to us. He takes of the things of Christ—the things which are revealed in the Scriptures—and opens them and applies them to us.

We are not to expect any addition to the sacred canon—the Book is finished and there shall be nothing added to it. We have not to find God's Word, therefore, in that respect. If any man comes to me and says, "I have God's Word for you"—if he speaks not according to this Book, you may know at once that he is a liar and that his utterance is a vain imagination. Yes, though he should come with pretended miracles and should boast proudly of his visions, yet is he to be rejected, for Holy Scripture is the mind of God and novelties are the fancies of men. And, therefore, when we use the term "finding" God's Word, we must use it rightly and our meaning will be mainly contained in the following senses—First, we *read* the Word. Here it is—God's Word is all here and, if we would find it, we must read it earnestly.

Let me commend to you the frequent reading of the Word of God. Young people would do well to form the habit of reading a chapter every day, not as a form, but with a sincere desire to understand what they read. If they continue to do so till life's latest hour they will not regret it. The lack of habitual reading of Holy Scripture by professedly Christian people is very much to be regretted. If you trust yourself to read the Word only when it is convenient for you, it will very often happen that day after day will pass without a passage of Scripture having been read at all. But if you make it

a point that such a time shall be set apart for the reading of a chapter and keep to it, it will be well for you.

Of course the habit of setting apart any time is not binding. None of us may say to his Brother, "You ought at such an hour to read the Scriptures," for we are not under legal bondage, neither are we to judge our Brethren. But, though not binding, I believe it to be very profitable and as proper a thing as appointing regular times for meals. As the habit of having a time for prayer is good, so also is the habit of reading the Scriptures. Yet it is a mischievous practice to read a great deal of the Bible without time for thought—it flatters our conceit without benefiting our understanding.

The practice of always reading the Bible in scraps is also to be deprecated. I recommend the student of Scripture to read through a whole book carefully. As with a poem, we could not get the spirit and sense of the poet by reading a stanza here and there, so you cannot expect to discover the drift of Bible teaching by taking a verse or two here and there. The Bible is divided into many books and I would recommend you all to read through a book, carefully and prayerfully, and get the general run and catch the drift of the Author and so endeavor to perceive the mind of God.

But at the same time, remember that like every other valuable book, the Bible needs diligent and prayerful reading. Surface-skimming is of little use. Some go through the Bible just as a traveler may be whirled through a country in a railway carriage—he will know very little, indeed, about that country though he may traverse it from end to end. He only sees a little of it out of the window and the conclusions he may come to will be very poor ones and utterly unreliable. And to go whirling through a chapter of Scripture, as it were, at railway speed, is of little or no service to the mind. I recollect an Arminian Brother telling me once that he had read the Scriptures through a score or more times and could never find the doctrine of Election in them.

He added he was sure he would have done so if it had been there, for he read them on his knees. I said to him, "I think you read them in a very uncomfortable posture and if you had read them in your easy chair you would have been more likely to understand them." Pray, by all means, and the more the better, but it is a piece of superstition to think there is anything in the *posture* in which a man puts himself in reading—and as to reading through the Bible 20 times without having found anything about the doctrine of Election, I said, "the wonder is that you found anything at all! You must have galloped through them at such a rate that you were not likely to have any intelligible idea of what the meaning of the Scriptures was at all."

If but once in that man's life he had taken the Scriptures and really desired to know their meaning and had weighed them deliberately and studied them verse by verse and word by word, I think he would have been far more likely to find what was the true meaning of the words which the Holy Spirit has used. But, to come back to our subject—we need more Bible reading. I shall not, tonight, speak of those who waste their time in reading works of fiction though there are innumerable hordes of time-

destroying volumes that come pouring forth from the press. I fear that even our religious literature, the best of it, has in some measure kept men from the Word of God itself. I should like to see all the good books themselves burnt, as well as the bad books of Ephesus, if they keep men from reading Holy Scripture for themselves!

Here is the well of purest Gospel undefiled—it springs up in this precious volume with freshness and sweetness unequalled. We who write upon it hand out that same sweet water to you in our own cups and goblets, but to some extent all our vessels are defiled! There is, in the purest intellect, some measure of error and the living water which we hand out to the people must in some measure participate in our imperfection. Do not be content to drink from our small pots and our chalices, but come and put your lips right down to where the living water, with all the self-sufficient fullness of the deeps eternal, comes welling up from the very heart of God!

This is the way to find the Word—to read it for yourselves, to read it from the Bible. If you can read it from the original books so much the better, but if you cannot, be thankful that you have so good a translation as that which is to be found in every Englishman's house. Be sure you read it until you can say, "Your Words were found." But we have not found God's Word when we have read it unless we add to it an *understanding* of the Word. The mere Words of Scripture are no better than any other words, only so far as they contain a holier and nobler sense. It is man's superstition to think a text is any more because it is in the Bible than anywhere else—I mean the words of the text—the mere *sound*. Yet I have known a great many who, when they have just repeated a text of Scripture or read a text of Scripture, think that something good is done.

Why, dear Friend, you need to get the *meaning*—the inner sense. Nuts must be cracked, so must Scripture—you must get out the meaning, or you have got nothing! Marrow bones, who can feed on them? Split them, take out the marrow and *then* you have luscious food! Merely verbal utterances, even though they are the utterance of the Holy Spirit, cannot feed the soul. It is the *inward* meaning, the Truth that is revealed, which we should labor after. To often they stick in the letter and advance not to the soul of Divine Truth. Pray, dear Friends, as you read the Scriptures, that God may illuminate you. Ask that you may not read in the dark as many do, who therefore stumble at the Words in disobedience. The best interpreter of a book is generally the man who wrote it. The Holy Spirit wrote the Scriptures. Go to Him to get their meaning and you will not be misled. Oh, when shall the time come when every Christian shall say, "By the Grace of God I read the Scripture and I am enabled by the Holy Spirit to mark it, to learn it, and to understand it. I earnestly labor to know what God means by what He has said, as far as the human intellect can understand His meaning"?

To find God's Word, however, means more than this. I think it means sometimes the discovery of select and appropriate words to suit our case. "Your Words were found." You know when you have lost your key and your cupboard or your drawer cannot be opened? What do you do? You

send for a locksmith, and he comes in with a whole bunch of keys. First he tries one—that does not fit. Then he tries another—that will not do. And the good man perseveres, perhaps with 20 keys—it may be with fifty. At last he gets the proper key which springs the lock and he opens your treasure for you.

Now Scripture to us is much of the same nature. We have many promises in the time of trouble and it is a great blessing to find the promise that suits our case. We turn them all over and say, “Well, that is a precious promise, but then I am not exactly in that condition. That is a choice Word, but then I do not think I can lay claim to it. And then again, this third passage is very cheering but it is evidently not spoken to a person in my position.” At last you find one, and you say, “Ah, this is the Word spoken to a person of my character—in my condition of soul. My God, now apply this to my heart with power and make this Truth be to my soul comforting and cheering. Your Words are found. I have found the Divine utterance which emphatically pertains to me.”

And truly, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we desire to find a Word of God that would suit us we need never be long in searching if we seek sacred direction. We have come to a point, perhaps, in life, where two roads meet and neither of them seems to diverge from the straight path. And yet we feel solemnly that in a moment we may change the whole current of our life from peace to sorrow by making a mistake. Kneel down at the cross roads and cry, “Lord lead me,” and then go to the Book and ask that the proper guidance for this condition may be indicated by the written Word and you shall often find a text leap out of Scripture to you, seizing your soul with loving violence and drawing you into the appointed path!

I do not mean by this the idle and wicked practice of opening upon texts as a sort of lottery, but a far higher and more spiritual matter by far. The Holy Spirit still remains for us and is the Urim and Thummim of the Christian Church, even as Providence is the pillar of cloud and fire. “Your Words were found’—I went to You and to Your Book for them that I might be guided and comforted by them. And I was guided to, and guided by the appropriate text for the occasion.” At the same time, in opposition, or apposition to this remark, let me say it looks to me as if Jeremiah made no selection at all in another sense—“Your Words were found.” They were Your words, all of them, and I did eat them. No matter what the Words were—were they bitter Words? I did eat them—they were my medicine.

Were they sweet Words? I did eat them—they were my consolation. Were they Words of instruction? I did eat them—they were my daily bread. I did not find fault with doctrinal Truth for I found it among Your Words. On the other hand, were they Words of precept? I did not say, “I do not need to be legal. I hate the very word, ‘duty.’” No, but when I found Your Words, if they were precept Words I did eat them. There were some of Your Words that, in the face of them, threatened me. They rebuked me, they humbled me, they spoiled my beauty—they laid me in the dust—but these very words I loved, because “I felt that faithful were the wounds of a friend.” I laid bare my breast to these lances. I asked the Good Physician to use these sharp texts upon me.

Now this ought to be our constant spirit—searching for the text appropriate to the occasion and yet willing that any Scripture and every Scripture should have its due effect upon our souls. Beware of picking and choosing in God’s Word! It is a very dangerous symptom when there is any portion of Scripture that we are afraid to read. If there is one single chapter in the Book that I do not like, it must be because I feel it accuses and condemns me. My duty ought to be to face that chapter at once and answer its accusation and endeavor, as far as possible, to purify myself by God’s help from that which the passage of Scripture condemns. Brethren, read that passage most which stings you most!

When I go to visit the aged or the sick, I generally know whereabouts the Bible will be marked with dog’s ears, and thumbed and rubbed. Of course one of the favorites is the chapter, “Let not your heart be troubled,” and another—the 8<sup>th</sup> of Romans—“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” And then, again, they are sure to read again and again the precious Book of Psalms. We are sure to find that the Saints have been there. And I cannot blame them. I think so many of the ripest saints would not have fallen into the habit if it had been a wrong one, but, at the same time, I pray you all to not be *afraid* to read, or *hesitate* to read, or be *slow* to read portions which are not comfortable—passages which are full of rebuke.

We all need rebuke and need it continually, and as soon as we find the Word of God, whether we like it or not for the time, it is ours to receive it and feed upon it by God’s gracious help. “Your Words were found,” that is, I felt I had got a hold of them. I *knew* I had got them. I had discovered them—they were Your Words to my inmost soul. Do you know there is a habit springing up in these times, when a passage of Scripture is quoted, to put the name of the author at the bottom, as, for instance, Isaiah, Paul, Christ? Now I think the habit is a very absurd one, for the moment you read a verse of Scripture you do not need to know who wrote it—you feel quite sure it is a Scriptural text.

When a man quotes a text of Scripture and puts the name of Christ at the bottom, you feel it to be a superfluity. You know Christ’s words—there is a particular ring about them—there is a something golden in them that cannot be imitated by the utterances of other men. So it is with the whole of the Word of God—we perceive by instinct that the Words are the Lord’s own. Perhaps we could not tell others why we know, but there is a peculiar majesty, a remarkable fullness, a singular potency, a Divine sweetness in any Word of God which is not discoverable, nor anything like it, in the word of man except that word of man is itself drawn directly from the Word of God.

Now we hear of some who try to take away from us God’s Word. “This book is not Inspired,” they say, “And that particular book is not authentic—this chapter—there is a dispute about it.” And, as for the whole of it, the gentry of these days tell us that there may be a *sort* of Inspiration in it, and so on. Well Sirs, the Bible shall be to you what you like. You shall treat it as you please and you shall look upon it as a mere commonplace book if you will. But know this, that to us it is God’s Inspired teaching, In-

fallible and infinitely pure! We accept it as the very Word of the living God, every jot and tittle, not so much because there are external evidences which go to show its authenticity—a great many of us do not know anything about those evidences and probably never shall—but because we discern an inward evidence in the Words themselves.

They have come to us with a power that no other words ever had in them and we cannot be argued out of our conviction of their superlative excellence and Divine authority! We have found the Words of our heavenly Father—we know we have, for children know their own Father's voice. When we speak God's Truth, we speak what we know, what we have tasted and handled and tested and proved! Dear Brothers and Sisters, I have been rather lengthy upon this first and most important matter of finding God's Word, and I will tell you why. I have dwelt thus fully upon it because it is just this which is the secret of the thorough Christian life in all its departments. Jeremiah would not have been so bold a preacher if he had not thus found God's Word. If you hold God's Word with a loose hand; if you are an inattentive reader; if you are a superficial Believer; if you have loose views about the authority of Divine Revelation, you will be lax in everything else—you will be loose in your obedience to the precept, in your love to the doctrine—and in your hope in the promises.

It stands to reason if the Word of God is not God's Word to you, it will not comfort you to the same extent as it did Jeremiah and neither will you obey it with the same reverence or teach it with like perseverance. If you do not attach reverence and Divinity and Inspiration to the Word of God it will not yield to you the force and power which it ought to yield and your whole life will suffer. Thus much upon the finding of God's Word.

A second view of the inner life must now be considered. "Your Word was found, and I did eat it." The surest way to preserve the Truth of God is to put it into the casket of the soul—to enclose it in one's inner man. "I did eat it." By that term is signified, first, the *prizing* of God's Word. When Jeremiah received a sentence which he knew came from God's mouth he prized it—he loved it so that he ate it. He could not lay it aside. He did not merely think of it—he loved it so that he put it into his very self! Oh, when we get God's Truth, do not let us love it so little as to shelve it by saying, "I accept it formally as belonging to the Articles of the Church of which I am a member." No! Let us prize it so that we may say, "I must carry it about me, no, better than that, I must carry it *in me*—it is meat and drink to me." "I did eat it."

The term, *eating*, implies, moreover, that he derived nourishment from it. The food we eat, if it is fit for eating, nourishes and supports us. So when a man reads God's Word as he ought to do, he feeds upon it and finds in it a something that makes him a better man, a stronger man, more bold in holy service and more patient in submission to God's will. It is delightful to sit down and suck the soul out of a text, to take it and feel that not the letter, only, but the inner vitals of the text are our own and are to be received into the very nature of our spirit to become assimilated with it.

Many foolish persons, when they come to the Lord's Table, imagine that in eating the bread and drinking the wine there is some eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood of Christ in a corporeal manner. But those who understand the mysteries know that eating the flesh of Christ signifies *considering, meditating* and *feeding* upon the Truth of God that Christ was Incarnate, was of our nature and is *still* partaker of the nature of man. The Humanity of Christ becomes food for our souls and *that* is the meaning of eating His flesh! So, when we drink the wine, the Atonement, the sufferings of Christ are thought upon, weighed and considered—and these become food for our faith, our gratitude, our love, our confidence and holiness.

So, too, with every Truth of God—we are to feed upon it. We are not merely to accept the statement as being true, but we are to get out of it that abolishment for our inner man which God intended it should render. "Your Word was found, and I did eat it." It is a very different thing from saying, "Your Word was found, and I did admire it," or, "Your Word was found, and I did criticize it," or, "Your Word was found, and I did divide it and make a sermon of it." That is a minister's temptation. But, "Your Word was found, and I did eat it." I said to my soul, "Here is something to make you better, to make you more Christ-like, something to help you in your struggle against sin." Brothers and Sisters, let us use the Word for that purpose! By the help of God's blessed Spirit let us eat it as our everyday food, the bread and the salt, the wine and the water of our life.

But the figure of eating means more. It sets forth an intimate *union*. That which a man eats gets intertwined with his own self, his own personality. The body is built up from the elements which are received in the form of food. So the man, the real man—the *soul*—is made up of the Truth which he lives upon. Some feed on error and their whole manhood, their hope, their confidence—everything is built up of error and their religion is deceitful throughout. But he that feeds upon God's Word gets God's Word to be a part of himself and his faith and hope are all based upon the Truth of God. I sometimes hear of a person giving up a certain doctrine. Well, I am certain if a man gives up any doctrine of God's Word he never knew it, for he who knows God's Truth knows that it has a clinging power and will not be separated from us!

The diligent Believer, when he knows the Word, learns it so well that he assimilates it into his own being. Let me illustrate this by a fact which is notable, in a lower sense, in certain natural persuasions. When Galileo was convinced that the world moved, they put him in prison for it. In his weakness he recanted and said he believed it stood still and that the sun moved. But the moment he got away from his persecutors he stamped his foot and said, "But it *does* move." And so he who knows the Truth of God as it is in Jesus has even a higher persuasion than that which ruled Galileo. He cannot belie the Truth—he has got it so *into* himself that he cannot give it up.

Sirs, if you can run from Christ you have not yet become His disciple. If you can leave Him, you never knew Him. If you can deny the Truth of God and utterly give it up, you have never known it savingly. But he that can



say, "Your Word was found, and I did eat it," may confront the foe and when his enemy cries, "Give it up!" his reply will be, "How can I give it up? I have eaten it." You remember the faithful servant who was sent by his master with a very valuable diamond, and who, when he was attacked on the road swallowed the diamond? Well, but even then it might have been taken from him had the robbers killed him. But if the diamond had been of such a nature that the man, in eating it, could dissolve it and assimilate it into himself, all the thieves that ever attacked him could not take away from him that which he had eaten.

And so, when a soul feeds upon the precious Truth of God, all the devils in Hell multiplied 50,000 times could not take the Truth away from him! It is most important for this very reason that we should get such a grip of the Truth of God that it should be, as it were, *burnt* into our souls—interwoven into the warp and woof of our very being to run like a silver thread right through our entire existence—so that you would tear that existence to pieces and destroy it before you could destroy the Truth that is inwrought in it. "Your Word was found, and I did eat it." See here, then, my Beloved, the secret power that will support a Christian's life—the eating of God's Word—the getting it thoroughly into one's soul. This is it which will make you speak and act as a Christian.

There is a great deal of error in many Christians and a great deal of sin. And many try to correct the error and remove the sin, and they do well. But have you never heard a doctor say, when a person has been covered with some eruption, "I shall not deal with these eruptions at all. I shall apply no ointment. They are caused by the poorness of the patient's blood. I shall recommend to him a generous diet. I shall give him a strengthening medicine which will invigorate the system and these blotches will disappear as a natural consequence"? Depend upon it, very many of the faults which are to be condemned in Christians are the result of their not leaning upon God's Word—their not knowing the whole of it—especially the strong meaty parts of it as they ought to. And if they did come to find God's Word and to eat it, their spiritual constitution would be stronger and then they would throw off many of the ailments that are now such an injury to them—and they would become healthy, vigorous, mighty in the service of God.

Notice, now, the third glimpse into the inner life. "Your Word was found, and I did eat it, and it was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Nothing makes a man so happy as the Word of God. Nothing makes him so full of delight and gives his soul such peace as feeding upon the Word of God. "The joy and rejoicing of my heart." I preached the Gospel on a certain occasion in a certain place of worship and I preached the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints and it was not believed in by the minister. However, many of his people who heard the doctrine, and never would have believed it if I had mentioned the words, "Final Perseverance," drank it in and it made them so very happy that the minister declared I had done a world of mischief by it, for he believed the good souls would never give up the doctrine!

Truly, when God's Word comes with the power that makes you joy and rejoice in it, your inward delight becomes to your heart a main reason for holding it tenaciously! I would cheerfully give up many doctrines if I believed that they were only party watchwords and were merely employed for the maintenance of a sect—but those Doctrines of Grace, those precious Doctrines of Grace—against which so many contend, I could not renounce or hate a jot of them because they are the joy and rejoicing of my heart!

When one is full of health and vigor and has everything going well, you might, perhaps, live on the elementary Truths of Christianity very comfortably. But in times of stern pressure of spirit when the soul is much cast down, you need the marrow and the fatness! In times of inward conflict, salvation must be all of Grace from first to last. Then it must not be according to the will of the flesh, but according to the will of God! Then you need an "Everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure." Then, "the sure mercies of David are precious" and then it is that you come to understand how those glorious Truths of God which have been called Calvinistic, but which are really the Truth of God's own Word, are so much prized by old and advanced Believers.

Aged and tried saints, having had their senses exercised to discern good and evil, have also come to a period of life in which they need consolation—to a time in which deep experience calls for solid sustenance—and therefore they fall back on the eternal verities and rejoice in them. Beloved, may you know every Truth of God's Word by rejoicing in it! May you know its power to console you and uplift you in the time of distress, for, when you know the joy that flows from the Truth of God into the regenerate heart, you will say—

***"Should all the forms which men devise  
Assault my faith with treacherous art,  
I'll call then vanities and lies,  
And bind the Gospel to my heart."***

These three things are the secret of a strong spiritual life—to find, to eat, and to rejoice, in God's Word.

**II.** Now, very briefly, we shall describe THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS OUTWARD LIFE, as he is mentioned here—"I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts." Now I think these words may be used in three ways. First, the condition of Jeremiah was one which he had attained by his conduct. He was so continually preaching about Jehovah, so constantly insisting upon Jehovah's will and going upon Jehovah's errands, that they came to call him, "Jehovah's Man," and he was known by Jehovah's name.

Now the man who loves God's Word and feeds on it, and rejoices in it, will so act that he will come to be called a Christian. He will not only *be* so, but he will be *called* so. Men will take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. If they do not give him the name in the sense of honoring him, they will give it him as a nickname, but they will be sure to call him, in their hearts, at least, by such a title. An esteemed city missionary who for years frequented public houses to preach the Gospel there, was known as, "The Man with the Book," because he always carried his Bible with him. Oh, I wish many of us were known as, "The Man with the Book." Among the heathen it has frequently happened that earnest missionaries

have been known as, "Jesus Christ's Men," or the heathen have said, "Here comes God's Man."

We don't expect them to give us that title by word of mouth, but I could earnestly pray that every one of us may have it in some shape or other. You know generally the world will pick out some religious leader and then they will abuse those who listen to him by calling them by his name. They need not blush at that, since it is often only the world's way of owning that they are Christians—their acknowledging that they are the followers of that which is right and true. Years ago, when a man spoke of the things of God with great emotion so that he quaked with holy trembling, they called him a "Quaker." It was but acknowledging that a power was influencing the man which the world did not understand.

And when other persons were methodical and precise in their lives, they called them "Methodists"—persons who lived by method and rule. They needed not to be ashamed of that and they were not. It was only another way of the world's pointing them out and saying, "These are God's people." They thought it a sneer and meant it for a sneer, but it was an honor! To be called, "Jehovah's Man," was an honor to Jeremiah. And to be called by any of these nicknames which signify that we belong to God is an honor to aspire after and not to be regretted. May we all win some opprobrious name and wear it as our title of holy chivalry!

But this is a name, in the second place, which is involved in the profession of every Christian. "I am called by Your name, O Jehovah, God of Hosts." Of course you are so called, if your profession is true! You were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and you then and there accepted that name. You are a Believer in Christ and therefore you are rightly called a Christian—you cannot escape from it. By being a believer in Christ's name, you have Christ's name named upon you.

Oh, Friend, consider what your obligations are! There was a soldier in the Macedonian army who was named Alexander—a coward. And he was called before the king, and asked, "What is your name?" He said, "Alexander." "Then," said the king, "You must give up your name, or you must cease to be a coward." So we call before us those who are Christians and we say, "What is your name? You are named with the name of Christ, therefore you must give up being covetous. You must give up being bad-tempered, worldly, slothful, lustful—or else you must give up Christ's name—for we cannot have Christ's name dishonored any more than Alexander would have his name dishonored." You were spitting fire just now against that person who had irritated you. Suppose I had stepped in at that moment, and said, "You are called by the name of Christ!" What a color would have risen in your face!

Perhaps today you were talking idle stuff with vain persons and supposing someone whom you honored and loved had laid his hand on you and whispered, "What? You, a Christian, and talk like that?" How would you have felt? Oh, that we remembered always that we are Christians and therefore must always act up to the name that is named upon us! God grant you, Friends, that in the power of the eating of God's Word you may

be constrained to always act as becomes those upon whom the name of Christ is named!

Once more—this word may be used in the sense which arises out of the Gospel itself. “I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts: I belong to You. When they gather up the nations and they say, ‘This man belongs to Babylon, and that man to Assyria, and that man to Egypt,’ I belong to You and am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.” What a comfort this is—we who believe in Christ belong to God! We are His portion and He will never lose us. “They shall be Mine,” says the Lord, “when I make up My jewels.” We see the broad arrow put here and there upon royal property—upon government property—let us remember that we have the broad arrow of the King of Kings set upon us as Believers in Christ!

The Lord will take care of us because His name is named upon us and we belong to Him. “You are not your own: you are bought with a price.” “All things are yours and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” You are poor but you are Christ’s. Does not that mitigate your poverty? You are sick but you are God’s. Does not that comfort you? The poor lamb lies in the cold field but if it belongs to a good shepherd, it shall not die. The sheep is sick, or it has wandered, but, if it belongs to an Omnipotent Shepherd, it shall be healed and it shall be brought back! The name of Christ being named upon us is the guarantee of our present comfort and of our future security.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I come back to the point I began with—find God’s Word, eat God’s Word, rejoice in God’s Word, and then go and live as those who are alive from the dead, who wear not the name of the first Adam, but the name of the second Adam—who are not known any longer as the servants of sin, but known as the servants—the *sons*—of God, forever and ever! God bless you and if you have not believed, may you be led to trust in Jesus crucified this very night that you may be called by His name. We pray it for His name’s sake. Amen.

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# HIDDEN MANNA

## NO. 980

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 12, 1871,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Your Words were found, and I did eat them. And Your Word  
was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am  
called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.”  
Jeremiah 15:16.***

JEREMIAH was a man of exceedingly sensitive temperament. The very reverse of Elijah. Yet he was sent of God to execute a duty which apparently required a person of great sternness and slender sensibility. It was his unhappy duty to denounce the judgments of God upon a people whom he dearly loved, but whom it was impossible to save. For even his deep anguish of heart and melting pathos were powerless with them, and rather excited their ridicule than their attention. Either they did not believe that he was sent of God at all, or else they neither cared for Jehovah nor for His Prophet.

Naturally mild and retiring, his strong sense of allegiance to God and love to Israel made him bear a fearless testimony for the Truth of God. But the reproaches, insults, and threats which were heaped upon him sorely wounded his soul. And even deeper was his anguish because he well knew that his rejected warnings were terribly true. He carried before his mind's eye at all times the picture of Jerusalem captured by her foes, and her wretched sons and daughters given up to the sword. There is no line in the whole of his prophecy more characteristic of him than that exclamation, “O 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.”

He was eminently the man that had seen affliction, and yet in the midst of a wilderness of woe he discovered fountains of joy. Like that Blessed One, who was “the Man of Sorrows,” and the acquaintance of grief, he sometimes rejoiced in spirit and blessed the name of the Lord. It will be both interesting and profitable to note the root of the joy which grew up in Jeremiah's heart like a lone palm tree in the desert. Here was its substance. It was an intense delight to him to have been chosen to the Prophetic office. And when the Words of God came to him, he fed upon them as dainty food. They were often very bitter in themselves, for they mainly consisted of denunciations, yet being God's Words, such was the Prophet's love to his God that he ate every syllable, bitter or not.

This also was evermore a consolation to him—that he was known by the people to be a Prophet of Jehovah. This distinction, whatever persecution it brought upon him, was his joy. “I am called by Your name.” God's Word received, God's name named upon him, and God's work entrusted to him—these were stars which cheered the midnight of his grief. However hard his lot might be—and none seem to have fallen upon worse times—there were secret sweetnesses of which none could deprive him. When he

was “filled with bitterness, and drunken with wormwood,” he still drank of that ever-flowing river, the streams which make glad the city of our God.

The basis of faith’s joy lies deeper than the floods of affliction. No torrents of misery can remove the firm foundations of our peace. May our hearts be so molded by Divine Grace that the words of the weeping Prophet in this verse may be proper language for us to use. Especially do I speak to those who during the last few weeks have found a Savior. My prayer and cry to God for you, beloved Friends, is that you may say sincerely, “Your Words were found, and I did eat them. And Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.”

**I.** In considering these words, we shall begin by dwelling upon A MEMORABLE DISCOVERY—“*Your Words were found.*” As Jeremiah meant them, they signified this—that certain messages came to him most clearly from God, and he recognized them as such. He ascertained how far the thoughts which passed through his mind were originated by the Spirit of God, and how far they were merely his own imaginings. He separated between the precious and the vile, and when he had found, discovered, and discerned God’s Word, then it was that he fed upon it. But the words, as we may use them, may signify something more.

Beloved, it is a great thing to find God’s Word, and discern it for ourselves. Many have heard it for years and yet have never *found* it. I may say of them as of the heathen gods, “Eyes have they, but they see not: ears have they, but they hear not.” Content with the outward letter of the Scriptures, the inner meaning is hid from their eyes. O that they had known the life-giving Truth! O that they had found the “treasure hid in the field!” The Word of God to them might as well be the word of King James the First, whose name dishonors our authorized version, for they have never felt that its Truths proceed immediately from the throne of God, and bear the authority of the King of kings.

Therefore they have never felt the weight of authority with which its Authorship impresses Holy Writ. What is meant by *finding* God’s Words? The expression suggests the mode. A thing found has usually been *sought for*. Happy is that man who reads the Scriptures and hears the Word—searching all the while for the hidden spiritual sense—which is, indeed, the Voice of God. The letter of the Truth contains a kernel, which is the inner life of it. Like some tropical fruits which are very large, but in which the actual life-germ is a comparatively small thing—so within the Sacred Volume are many words and books—but the living secret may be summed up in a few syllables.

The mystery which was hid from ages is a secret something which flesh and blood cannot reveal unto us. “Do you understand what you read?” is a vital and heart-searching question, meaning more than appears on the surface. The chosen of God dig into the mines of Revelation believing that, “Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they find it.” Therefore they give their hearts to meditation and cry mightily unto God to reveal Himself unto them.

Such seekers winnow sermons as the farmer winnows his corn. They care little for the chaff of fair speeches. They desire only the fine wheat of

the Lord's own Truth. Solomon tells us the method of finding true wisdom in that cheering word at the commencement of the second chapter of the Proverbs, "My son, if you will incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding. If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures. Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

Though occasionally the Lord, in His infinite Sovereignty, has been pleased to reveal His salvation to those who sought it not, according to His own Word, "I am found of them that sought Me not," yet there is no promise to this effect. The promise is to those who *seek*. To find God's Words means that we have been *made to understand them*. A man may be well versed in Scripture, both in the English and in the original tongues. He may be accustomed to read the best of commentaries, and be acquainted with Eastern manners, and yet he may be quite ignorant as to the Word of God.

For the understanding of this Book, as to its depth of meaning, does not lie within the range of natural learning and human research—reason, alone, is blinded by the excess of light, and wanders in darkness at noon day. For "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Before my conversion I was accustomed to read the Scriptures, to admire their grandeur, to feel the charm of their history, and wonder at the majesty of their language. But I altogether missed the Lord's intent in them. But when the Spirit came with His Divine life, and quickened all the pages to my newly-enlightened soul, the inner meaning shone forth with quickening Glory! The Bible is to many carnal minds almost as dull a book for reading as an untranslated Latin work would be to an ignorant plowman. They are unable to get at the internal sense, which is to the words as juice to the grape, or the kernel to the nut. It is a tantalizing riddle till you get the key.

But the clue once found, the volume of our Father's Grace absorbs our attention, delights our intellect, and enriches our heart. To find the Word of God means not only to understand it, but *to appropriate it as belonging to yourself*. To read a will is not an interesting occupation—repetitions, legal phrases, tautologies multiplied to utter weariness. But if there is a legacy left to *you* in that will, no writing will be more fascinating! You will trip lightly over the lawyer's fences and five-barred gates, and rejoice as one that finds spoil when you reach those clauses which leave certain "messages, tenements, and property" to yourself and heirs. In such a case every repetition becomes musical, and technical phrases sound harmoniously!

After this manner we learn to enjoy the Word of God by discovering that we have a part and lot in it. When we perceive that the Lord is calling *us* and blessing *us*, then have we found His Word. When the Divine promise assures us, personally, that our sin is forgiven, that our spirit is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, that Heaven is for us, that we are accepted in the Beloved—then the Word of God is found, indeed! I will ask each hearer here whether in this respect he has found God's Word. Have you

an ear to hear Gospel Truth as the voice of the Infinite God addressed to your own soul?

The Dutch farmers at the Cape, at no very distant period, considered the Hottentots around them to be little better than beasts—quite incapable of anything beyond mere eating, drinking, stealing, and lying. After our missionaries had labored among the natives for a time, one of the Hottentots was found reading the Bible by the roadside. The Dutchman enquired of him, “What book are you reading?” “The Bible.” “The Bible? Why that Book was never intended for *you!*” “Indeed it was,” said the black man, “for I see my name here.” “Your name? Where?” cried the farmer. “Show it to me!” “There,” said the Hottentot, putting his finger on the word, “*sinners.*” “That’s my name. I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came to save me.”

It were well, indeed, if men would but read the Bible, saying, “In this volume the great God condescends to speak to me, and bids me come and reason with Him that my scarlet sins may become white. In here He appeals to my weakness that He may remove it, to my willfulness that He may subdue it, to my distance from Him that He may bring me near!” Happy is that man who hears or reads the Word of God for *himself*, feeling evermore a living power witnessing within his soul, and operating mightily upon him. Unapplied Truth is useless. Inappropriate Truth may condemn but cannot save.

The Word of God to an unregenerate heart is like a trumpet at the ear of a corpse—the sound is lost. Beloved, I pray that you may discern the Truth, and then may grasp it as your own. May your interest and title to the promises be clearly made out so that not presumptuously, but with the full approbation of your conscience you may know yourself to be Beloved of the Lord. “Your Word was found.” Yes, indeed, it has been found by many of us, and a blessed find it was! Remember, my Brethren, the time when you first found God’s Word?

Recall the period of your conversion? Let the remembrance kindle in you anew the flame of gratitude. Magnify the Divine Grace which revealed the heavenly Word to you. What a removal of darkness and bursting in of Glory you then felt! It was a discovery far more memorable than the finding of a new continent by Columbus, or the discovery of gold mines in the southern continent—you found eternal life in God’s Word! May you, who have never found the life-giving Word, be led to desire it. We pray for you, that the Lord may open your eyes to see wondrous things in His Law.

**II.** Secondly, our text testifies to AN EAGER RECEPTION. “*Your Words were found, and I did eat them.*” It is not, “I did *hear* them,” for that he might have done, and yet have perished. Herod heard John gladly, and yet became his murderer. He does not say, “I did learn them by heart”—hundreds have committed chapters to memory, and were rather wearied than benefited. The Scribes fought over the jots and titles of the Law, but were blind leaders of the blind nevertheless.

It is not “Your Words were found, and I did repeat them,” for that he might have done as a parrot repeats language it is taught. Nor is it even, “Your Words were found, and I remembered them.” For though its an excellent thing to store Truth in the memory, yet the blessed effect of the Divine Words comes, rather, to those who ponder them in their *hearts*.



“Your Words were found, and I did eat them.” What is meant by *eating* God’s Words? The phrase signifies more than any other word could express. It implies an *eager study*—“I did eat them”—I could not have too much of them, could not enter too thoroughly into their consideration.

He who loves the Savior desires to grow in knowledge of Him. He cannot read or hear too much or too often concerning his great Redeemer. He turns to the Holy Pages with new delight. He seeks the blessing of the man who meditates in God’s Law, both day and night. It is pleasing to notice the sharp, spiritual appetite of a new convert. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He will hear a sermon without fatigue, though he may have to stand in an uncomfortable position. And when one discourse is over, he is ready for another.

O that we all had our first appetites back again! Some Professors grow very squeamish and proudly delicate. They cannot feed on heavenly Truth, because, indeed, they see defects in the style of the preacher, or in the manner of the service. Some of you need a dose of bitters to keep you from quarrelling with your food. When the Word was found by my soul I did not stand to remark upon an inelegant expression or a misplaced word, but I seized at once the marrow of the Truth, and left the bones to the dogs. I drank in the expressed juice of the sacred clusters, and left the husks to the swine. I was greedy for the Truth of God. My soul hungered even to ravenousness to be fed upon the bread of Heaven.

The expression also implies *cheerful reception*. “I did eat them.” I was so in love with Your Word that I not merely held it, rejoiced in it, and embraced it—but I received it into my inner man. I was not in a frame of mind to judge God’s Word, but I accepted all without demur. I did not venture to sit in judgment upon my Judge, and become the reviser of the unerring God. Whatever I found to be in His Word I received with intense joy. The stamp of Divine authority upon any teaching is enough for the Believer.

Proud self-will demands to have doctrines proved by reasoning—but faith lets the declaration of Jehovah stand in the place of argument. Others may cry, “Let us spin our creed out of our own heart like the spiders. Let us find in the easing of the great the grounds of our beliefs. Or let us remain in a state of suspense, to be molded by fresh discoveries.” But we are committed to Revelation, our minds are made up. We confess that we have eaten God’s Word and intend still to feed upon it—upon the whole of it, and upon nothing else. Open your mouths, you wild asses of the wilderness, and snuff up wind. Our food is more substantial, and we will not leave it to wander with you.

The expression signifies also *an intense belief*. “Your Words were found, and I did eat them.” He did not say, “Perhaps it is true, and if it is so it is of no great consequence.” No, he made practical use of it at once. He set about testing the power of the Word to nourish his soul. He brought it into the most intimate contact with his being, and allowed it to operate upon his vital parts. We have heard that God’s Word is life. Be it ours to possess that life abundantly! The Truth makes men strong, free, pure, God-like. Let us then eat it, that it may purify, strengthen, liberate and elevate us.

Whatever God's Word, by His Spirit can do for man, it should be our desire to experience for ourselves. Blessed is that man who is so humbled as to become like a little child in the submission of his mind, his judgment, and all his faculties to the operation of the Word of Divine Truth. He has eaten it, and shall live by it. But food eaten does not long continue as it was. The juices of the body operate upon it, and the substance is dissolved and absorbed so that it becomes a *part* of the man's body.

So when we find God's Truth we delight to meditate, contemplate, and consider. We let it dwell in our hearts richly till at last its sustaining, up-building, nourishing influence is felt and we grow. It is not a hasty swallowing of the Word which is blessed to us, but a deliberate *eating* of it. Our inward life acts upon the Truth, and the Truth acts upon our life. We become one with the Truth, and the Truth one with us. I would to God we were all more given to feeding and lying down in the green pastures of God's Word. The sheep fattens as it chews the cud at peace, and so do we. Establishment in the Gospel is the result of meditation, and nothing is more desirable at this present crisis than that all Believers should more constantly study and weigh the Word of God.

Neglect in this matter has weakened, is weakening, and will weaken the Church. We want, at this time, not just persons who have been aroused by solemn exhortation and led to give their hearts to Christ under the influence of deep emotion, but Christians well-instructed in the things which are verily believed among us, rooted and grounded in Gospel doctrines. Many professing Christians think very lightly of Scriptural knowledge, and especially of an *experimental* acquaintance with Divine Truth. Few nowadays have studied the doctrines of Grace so as to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them.

Too often converts are made by excitement, and, as a consequence, when the excitement is gone, they grow cold. Some of them go back to the world and prove that they were never taught of God. Others linger on in a half-starved condition, because soul-sustaining Truth is hidden from them. The man who knows the Truth of God, and feels that the Truth has made him free is the man who will continue a free man at all hazards. There are enemies of the faith about nowadays—error is put in very tempting forms. Those who try to subvert the Gospel are exceedingly skillful and know how to make every falsehood fascinating.

These will rend and devour—but who will be their victims? Not the instructed saints! Not those who can say, "Your Words were found, and I did eat them," but the mixed multitude in nominal union with the Church, who scarcely know what they believe—or knowing it merely in the letter—have no inward vital acquaintance of it. We read in the Word of God of certain deceivers who would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect, from which we gather that the elect cannot be deceived, and that for this reason—that the Truth is not held in the hand of the elect man as a staff which can be wrenched from him, but he has *eaten* it—it has entered into his vital substance.

You cannot tear away from a man what has become assimilated to himself. You might draw the silken thread out of a piece of tapestry and in so doing injure the material, but you cannot remove the Truth which is interwoven into the fabric of our new-born Nature by the Holy Spirit. A

Christian is dyed ingrain with the Truth—he wears no flying nor fading colors. He can as soon cease to be as cease to believe what he has learned by the Spirit's teaching. In olden times, the fury of persecutors failed to make the servants of Christ deny the faith. The saints were taken to the stake, but the fires which devoured their bodies only burned their testimonies into the hearts of other witnesses. They were faithful even unto death.

This glorious firmness in the faith is greatly needed now to resist the insidiousness of error. Besides, dear Friends, it may in the Providence of God happen that some of you will be taken away from the ministry which now feeds you, and what will you do if the Word of God is not in your inmost souls? I have observed many who did run well when under a Gospel ministry, who, when they have been removed into a barren region, have lagged and loitered in the race. Some, whose principles were never very deep, have given them up when placed in society which despised them. I pray you get such a hold of the Gospel that you need not be dependent upon the preacher or upon earnest companions. Let not your faith stand in the wisdom of *man*, but in the power of God!

No Truth will be of any use to you unless it is branded into you! Yes, and made to penetrate the marrow of your being. If you could give up the Truth of God, you have never received it. He only has the Truth of God who so holds it that he could never part with it. A person takes a piece of bread and eats it. He who gave it to him demands it back. If he had put that bread upon a shelf, or laid it in a cupboard, he can hand it down. But if he can reply, "I have eaten it," there is an end to the request—no human power can reproduce what is already eaten.

"Give up justification by faith and trust in sacraments," says the Ritualist. "Give up faith and follow reason," cries the Infidel. We are utterly unable to do either. And why? Because our spiritual Nature has absorbed the Truth into itself, and none can separate it from us, or us from it. To live upon the Truth is the sure method to prevent apostasy. "Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart is established with Grace. Not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied in them." May you all be rooted and built up in Christ Jesus, and established in the faith as you have been taught, abounding with thanksgiving.

Besides, good Friend, you cannot be very useful to others if you are an unintelligent Christian. To do much good, we must have Truth ready at hand, and be apt to teach. I desire that you may grow up, you who are new-born into the Christian family, to become fathers and mothers in Israel. But this cannot be unless you, as new-born babes, desire the unadulterated milk of the Word, that you may really grow.

O for a race of Bible-reading Christians! We have long had a society for selling the Bible, but who shall found a society for getting the Bible read? A young man who never had read his Bible was tempted to do so—and led to conversion by the gift of a bookmark, presented to him by a relative. The gift was made upon the condition that it should be put into his Bible, but should never stop two days in one place. He meant to shift it, and not to read the Book, but his eyes glanced on a text. After awhile he became

interested. By-and-by he became converted, and then the bookmark was moved with growing pleasure!

I am afraid that even some Professors cannot say that they shift their bookmark every day. Probably of all the books printed, the most widely circulated, and the least read volume is the Word of God. Books *about* the Bible are read, I fear, more than the Book itself. Do you believe we should see all these parties and sects if people studiously followed the teaching of Inspiration? The Word is one—from where are these many creeds? We cry, “the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants.” But it is not true of half the Protestants.

Some overlay the Bible with the Prayer Book, and kill its living meaning. Others read through the spectacles of a religious leader, and rather follow man’s gloss than God’s text. Few, indeed, come to the pure fountain of Gospel undefiled. A second-hand religion suits most—for it spares them the trouble of *thinking*—which to many is a labor too severe. To be taught of man is so much easier than to wait upon the Holy Spirit for instruction. Remember, my beloved Children in Christ, the words of David, and make them your own. “I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your Word.”

“How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth.” “Your Testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.” “My eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Your Word.” “My soul has kept Your Testimonies. And I love them exceedingly. I have kept Your Precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.”

**III.** Thirdly, the text tells us of HAPPY CONSEQUENCES. “*Your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.*” He who has spiritually found God’s Word, and consequently feeds upon it, is the happy man. But in order to get joy from God’s Word we must receive it universally. Jeremiah first speaks of God’s “Words.” Then he changes the number and speaks of God’s “Word.” We are not only to receive *parts* of the Gospel, but the *whole* of it. Then it will afford us great joy. That man’s heart is right with God who can honestly say that *all* the Testimonies of God are dear to him.

“But,” says one, “that is impossible—parts of the Bible are full of terrible denunciations! Can they afford us joy?” In this way, Brethren. If God appoints that sin should be punished, we are not to rebel against His righteous ordinance, nor to close our minds to the consideration of Divine Justice. God’s judgments are right, and what is right we must rejoice in. Moreover, by the threats of the Word many are led to forsake their sin, and thus the warning itself is a means of Grace.

To tender-hearted Jeremiah I have no doubt it was a trial to say, “Your city will be destroyed, and your women and your children will be slain.” But when he considered that some might be led to repentance he would, with tearful vehemence, deal out the thunder of the Lord. But, Brethren, God’s Word is not all threat. How much of it consists of exceeding great and precious promises? Grace drops from it like honey from the comb. How would even Jeremiah brush away the falling tear while that face, usually so clouded, would beam as the sun when he spoke of the Messiah? Surely, if there is anything in the whole range of the Truth of God

which can make our hearts leap for joy, it is the part of it which touches upon the lovely Person and finished work of our adorable Redeemer, to whom be honor and glory forever!

Receive the whole of God's Word. Do not cut a single text out of Scripture or desire to pervert its meaning. Hold the Truth in its entirety and harmony, and then as a matter of certainty it will become to you the joy and rejoicing of your spirit. Allow me to interject another thought. No Word of God to Jeremiah would have given him joy if he had not been *obedient* to it. If he had kept back a part of his Master's message, it would have been a burden intolerable to his conscience.

What a wound it makes in the heart if we have inwardly to confess, "I have been unfaithful. I have neglected a command of the Host High." Never, I beseech you, allow any text of Scripture to accuse you of having neglected its teaching or denied its obvious meaning. There are ordinances to which some of you have not submitted yourselves which you know to be the will of Jesus Christ. How can the Scriptures be a joy and rejoicing to you when their pages accuse you of disobedience to your Master's will? In order to have the full joy of the testimony of God your mind must yield itself to what God reveals as the clay to the potter's touch—your willing spirit must be prompt to run as with winged feet in the ways of obedience to all that Christ commands.

Then the Word being found, and you having eaten it, it will be to you a song in the house of your pilgrimage. Let me refresh your memories for a moment by reminding you of certain choice Truths in God's Word which are brimming with comfort. There is the doctrine of election—the Lord has a people whom He has chosen, and whom He loved before the foundations of the world. I will suppose that you have found it out for yourself and have read the riddle. And like the Apostle Paul, can say, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. And whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified."

I will suppose that you know yourself to be called, and therefore know yourself to be predestinated. Is not this the joy and rejoicing of your heart? Is it not to you a very Heaven below to believe that before the hills were made God loved you! Before sin was born, or Satan fell, your name was in His Book, and He regarded you with infinite affection? Could any doctrine be a more abundant table, spread for you in the presence of your enemies?

Take the other doctrine, the doctrine of the Immutability of Divine love. Before you knew the secret of it, it was a mere dogma. But now you understand that Jesus never changes and therefore the promises are yes and amen. You will, you *must* rejoice! Having loved His own, He loved them to the end. Is not this music to your ears? "I have loved you with an *everlasting* love," is not this a heavenly assurance? As you sit down and consider for yourself, "God has loved me, for He has given me salvation in Jesus Christ. The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but the Covenant of His Grace cannot depart from me!" Will not your cup run over, and your soul dance before the Ark of God?

Of course it will not be so till you have found the Word for *yourself*, and have eaten it—but then it shall be marrow and fatness to you. Thousands

of God's people live in doubts and fears because they have not eaten God's Word as they should. They do not know the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel of Peace. How many are in bondage through the fear that after all, though they have been for years Believers, they are not yet saved? Whereas, if they read the Scriptures, and received their meaning they would know that the moment the sinner believes in Christ he is saved! In that very instant he has passed from death into life, and shall never come into condemnation.

If they read the Scriptures would they endure such doubts about being left to perish after having believed? The thing is impossible! Jehovah cannot cast away the people of His choice. No members of Christ's body shall be suffered to perish, or else the body of Christ would be mangled, and He Himself would be the Head of a dismembered frame. To have a clear understanding of the Gospel. To know the Covenant which, like a mighty rock, underlies all Gospel blessings. To know Christ and our union with Him. To know His righteousness, His perfection and our perfection in Him. To know the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—all these things must inevitably make us strong in the joy of the Lord!

Half our doubts and fears would vanish if we had more acquaintance with the Lord's Statutes. Other knowledge brings sorrow, but this Wisdom is the joy and rejoicing of the heart. Beloved, if there is a quarrel between you and any text of Scripture, end the dispute by giving way at once—for the Word of God is right—and you are wrong. Do not say, "We have always been of one way of thinking, and our parents were so before us." Have respect unto God, and sit at Jesus' feet. The Lord's *teaching* is in this Book, and may be opened to you by His Spirit. Test everything by the Word. Prove the spirits whether they are of God.

Do not be such fools as to take your religion from fallible men when you may have it from the Infallible God! Some who do so are not fools in other matters, but in this case it may be said of them as it was once said of the people of an Italian city, "They were not fools, but they acted as if they were." Persons who would not take the opinion of anybody else as to the goodness of a half-crown will leave their religion to be settled by an Act of Parliament, or by convocation, or by conference. What are brains given to us for? Are we forever to be the slaves of majorities and follow a multitude to do evil? God forbid!

Stand upright, O Christian Man, and be a man! God has given you a judgment, and His Spirit waits to enlighten it. Search the Scriptures! See whether the things handed down by tradition came from the devil or from God—for many an ancient maxim may be traced to the infernal pit. To the Law and to the Testimony! If they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in them. May we have Grace given us like Ezekiel to receive the roll from the Lord's hand, to eat it, and to find it in our mouth as honey for sweetness.

**IV.** The fourth point is A DISTINGUISHING TITLE. "*I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.*" This may not appear to some of you a very joyful thing—to Jeremiah it was pre-eminently so. In Jeremiah's day the name of the Lord God of Hosts was despised. The God of Hosts was the subject of derision among the rabble of Jerusalem, and the weeping Prophet of mournful countenance, who spoiled their mirth, came in for his

full share of scorn. Now, Jeremiah, instead of feeling it a hard thing to be associated with the Lord in this contempt of the wicked, was glad to be so honored!

The reproaches of them that reviled the Lord fell upon His poor servant, and he was content to have it so. O you who love Jesus Christ, never shun the scandal of His Cross! Count it glory to be despised for His sake. Let fear be far from you. Remember Moses, of whom it is written, “he esteemed the *reproach* of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.” It does not say he esteemed *Christ* to be greater riches—an ordinary Believer would do that. But he reckoned the *worst thing* connected with Christ to be better than the *best thing* about the world. The *reproach* of Christ he esteemed above Pharaoh’s crown!

Disciples of Jesus! Be willing to bear all the contumely the wicked pour upon you for your Lord’s sake, for in so doing they help to make you blessed. Through the mire and through the slough march side by side with the Truth of God, for those who share her pilgrimage shall share her exaltation. Be content to abide with Christ in His humiliation, for only so may you be sure that you shall be with Him in His Glory.

It was a comfort to Jeremiah that he bore the name of the despised God. It made him the object of very much persecution as well as contempt. The king put him in the dungeon. He was made to eat the bread of affliction, and was in tribulations often—but he took it all joyfully for the Lord’s sake. And if to serve Christ today, and bear His name should entail extreme suffering, as in the days of Rome’s tyranny—yet, my Brethren, we ought to be cheerful in the bearing of it—and glad that we are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ.

Yet I am afraid I am speaking to some who do not count it a fair thing to bear the name of the Most High. I gather this from their conduct. They have a belief in Jesus. They hope they have, but they have never avowed Christ’s *name*. You have missed, then, that which was a comfort to the Prophet. Why have you missed it? Because you imagined that it would be a source of discomfort to you? Are you wiser than the Prophet? To him it was consolation that he was called by God’s name. Do you think it would be a sorrow to you?

“Oh,” says one, “I could not bear the world’s rebuke.” Can you bear Christ’s rebuke when He will say to those who did not confess Him before men, “I never knew you”? But you say you could not live up to a profession. You are afraid your life might fall short of what it should be—a very salutary fear. But do you hope to improve your life by beginning with disobedience? If I own my Savior’s name, it is *Christ’s* business to keep me. But if I am so foolish that I think I am safer in the path of *disobedience*, then I cannot reckon upon Grace to preserve me. The warfare is arduous, but we do enter upon it at our own charges—there is One who has promised to help us.

Well, if *you* will be cowards, I will part company with you—if you were, every one of you this day, enemies of Christ, or if you were all of you lovers of Christ in secret, and none of you gloried in Him—I, for my part—could not live a moment without being an avowed Christian. I do not say this in egotism, but as fact. My heart might sooner cease to beat than cease to own the Lord. It is a sneaking thing, and utterly degrading that

my Lord should die upon the Cross for me to save my soul from Hell—and I should be ashamed to wear His livery.

Should He honor me by redeeming me with His blood, and I should deny Him the little honor that my poor name could give when it is enrolled with His people? No! Though least of all His followers, put down my name, O recording angel—and there let it stand—and if all men revile and devils rage, so let it be. It shall be my Heaven to suffer Hell for Christ, if such must be. I cannot comprehend how so many Believers remain outside the visible Church of Christ. I would not question the safety of any man who has believed in Jesus, but I do avow that I would not run the risk that non-confessors run.

For what is the Gospel? “He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him should be saved”? How dare you leave out one half of the Gospel command? What was the Gospel which, according to the Evangelist Mark, is to be preached to every creature? It runs thus—“He that believes and is *baptized* shall be saved.” I do not question the safety of the soul that has believed, but I do say again, I would not run the risk of the man who, having believed, refuses to be baptized. It is plainly his Master’s will. I question the genuineness of his faith if he starts back from obedience to the known command of Jesus Christ.

My dear Brother, to confess Christ is so easy a burden—it involves so temporary a loss, and so real a gain—that I would have you say, “I have found God’s Word, and I have eaten it: it is the joy and rejoicing of my soul. And now from this day let others do as they will, but I will serve the Lord. I bow my willing back to His Cross. I will be buried with Him in Baptism unto death. I would die to the world, and rise to newness of life through His Spirit.”

Blessed are they who go to their Lord without the camp, leaving the world’s religion, as well as its sin, in obedience to that sacred call—“Come out from among them, and be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters.”

The Lord deal graciously with you, Beloved, and lead you in a plain path, because of your enemies, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

#### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 15.**

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# THE DEEP-SEATED CHARACTER OF SIN NO. 812

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 17, 1868,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and  
with the point of a diamond: it is  
engraved upon the tablet of their heart, and  
upon the horns of your altars.”  
Jeremiah 17:1.*

IN traveling in the East, inscriptions upon the rocks are often met with, which have remained almost as sharp and clear as when they were first cut by the engraver's tool. Some of these owe their indelible character to the hardness of the rocks upon which they have been engraved. They must have been written, to use the expressive language before us, “with a pen of iron,” and engraved as “with the point of a diamond.” When such writing had been once achieved, those who had achieved their purpose might have said with Pilate, “What I have written I have written,” for there it stood, and there it stands.

The Prophet declares that the sin of Judah was as indelibly cut into their nature as the rock writings in the stone. Their hearts were as hard as rock and sin was inscribed thereon deeply and plainly—as though written with some iron instrument. Their spirits were just as senseless and hardened as stone itself, and their iniquity appeared as if engraved with the point of a diamond. What was said of Judah, may, with equal truthfulness be said of the whole human race. Circumstances here do not alter cases. Put men where you will, whether they belong to Judah or to the uncircumcised nations, as face in water answers to face, so the heart of man to man—each man is like his fellow—the hardness of Judah's heart is repeated in the stubbornness of barbarian and Roman, Greek and Scythian. It is seen, indeed, in *us*—to deal with ourselves is our main business this morning.

I. We shall commence by answering the question, WHAT IS SIN? We are always hearing about it. It is constantly dunned into our ears by the preacher. We cannot turn over a page of Holy Writ without meeting with it. What is sin? How few people have obtained a right idea of sin! How much smaller is the number who express the idea clearly! If you ask the Pharisee of old what sin was—“Well,” he would say, “it is eating without washing your hands. It is drinking wine without having first of all strained out the gnats, for those insects are unclean, and if you should swallow any of them they will render you defiled.”

His repentance dealt with his having touched a Gentile, or having come on the wind side of a Publican. Many in these days have the same notion, but with a variation. We have read of a Spanish bandit, who, when he confessed before his father-confessor, complained that one sin hung with

peculiar weight upon his soul that was of peculiar atrocity. He had stabbed a man on a Friday, and a few drops of the blood of the wound had fallen on his lips, by which he had broken the precepts of “Holy Church,” in having tasted animal food on a fast day. The *murder* did not seem to arouse in his conscience any feeling of remorse at all—not one atom—he would have done the same tomorrow. But an accidental violation of the canons of “Mother Church” excited all his fears!

I read only last night in the newspaper an account of a visit paid by a strict high churchman to a little meeting of Plymouth Brethren and I was amused with the guilt that evidently rested on the writer’s conscience in having been found in such an assembly. He tells us, in the first place, that he was not quite well enough to sit out the usual long service in the Church. And in the second place that he had been to a celebration of the “Eucharist” in the morning, and, therefore, he thought that for once he might be pardoned for indulging his curiosity. His mind was, however, evidently burdened with the weight of his heinous sin.

There are men in England to whom it would be one of the highest crimes and misdemeanors to worship God with the most holy of His servants so long as they did not meet within walls which had been superstitiously consecrated. Singular, indeed, are the ideas which many men have of transgression! But such is not *God’s* view of sin. Half of those things which mere ecclesiastics condemn are not sins at all. To break the commandments of men may be virtuous! To kick against the conventionalities of a man-made Church may be an evidence of enlightenment! To refuse homage to a proud hierarchy may be a bounden duty!

The chains of custom, the fetters of fashion, the manacles of priest craft are to be scorned by all who claim the right of manhood. To break them in sunder is no sin. *Sin* is a want of conformity to the will of *God!* Sin is disobedience to *God’s* command! Sin is a forgetfulness of the obligations of the relation which exist between the creature and the Creator. This is the very *essence* of sin. Injustice to my fellow creature is truly sin, but its essence lies in the fact that it is sin against *God* who constituted the relation which I have violated. It is surprising, when we talk with persons who profess that they have forsaken their sins, how very seldom they will give you a distinctly spiritual definition of sin. I believe they understand it in their *hearts*, but their understandings come short of the desired point.

Ask them the question, “What sin has most troubled you?” Or, “What in your sin most distressed you?” You will be amazed at their replies! Seldom enough will they answer that sin is obnoxious to them because it is an offense against *God*—rather they will light on some one offense, and indicate *that* as the weight which lies heaviest. One very sincere young man told me that nothing had previously pricked his conscience until he upset an oil can in the warehouse where he was working, and in foolish fear of his master, denied that he had done so.

He felt that he had told a lie and was so overwhelmed with a sense of his meanness that he felt thoroughly degraded, and was led to search his heart and to make the discovery of the corruption of his nature. It did not appear to have occurred to him up till that moment that he had been liv-

ing wrongly in living without God, or that he was acting meanly in his ungrateful neglect of his Maker to whom he owed his hearty service. Sin, through all those years, only meant to him mean things towards his fellow mortals! By God's Grace he now knows how ill it is to rebel against his God.

This last week an esteemed Brother minister was telling me that in speaking to a man who professed to have been converted, he asked him which sin remained as a load upon his mind. "Well," said the man, "I have to see after cows and I have often beaten the cows very badly." "What do you do now?" "Oh, I coax them instead of beating them." Now, I have no doubt that in his peculiar calling, cruelty to animals would be most strikingly laid upon his conscience, but the pastor had to say to him, "Yes, quite so. But the great sin in your fault is that the cows are God's creatures, and that He is angry if we treat His creatures unmercifully."

The guilt lies in all our offenses in our disobedience to the good Lord who has a claim to be served by us with all our heart, and soul, and strength. Conscience readily enough tells us we are wrong if we defraud our fellow men, but if we rob *God*, how feebly does the moral sense upbraid us! If we were ungrateful to our parents or friends we should feel that we had done a grievous wrong—but we confess that we are ungrateful to God—and yet our shame is not so deep as a true sense of wrong would produce. If we were disloyal to our country and rebellious against its laws, we should feel it to be a great crime—but some of us remain in disloyalty to the King of kings, and in disobedience to the best Laws that were ever framed—and yet our spiritual treason does not strike us with horror!

David touched the center of the matter when he said, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." Sin is a lack of conformity to the will of God. It is a breach either in imagination, or desire, or word, or action of the Divine Law. It is, to repeat the words I have used before, a forgetfulness of the true relation which exists between a creature and the Creator. It is but right that He who made us should have our service. It is a great and intolerable wrong that, being created by God, we yet refuse to yield to His will. It is right that He who is so good to us should have our love—it is sin that, living upon God's goodness we do not return to Him our heart's affection.

It is right that, being sustained by Divine beneficence from day to day we should give to Him constant thankfulness, but, being so sustained, we do *not* thank Him—herein lies the very soul of sin. Let it be remembered that tens of thousands of persons in this so-called Christian land live in utter neglect of God. If there were no God, it would not in any way affect the lives of most men—they live precisely as if there were none. "God is not in all their thoughts." They never pause over an action, and ask, "Will God be angry with this?" They are never moved to the performance of virtue by the reflection that God will approve it.

There is no God to them, though the table is loaded with the bounties of His Providence. There is to them no God even though the sick chamber is made to feel the terror of His rod. There is no God to them though they

walk in all the fields of Nature and behold evidences of Deity on every side—no God though they might see His finger in every event of their lives. They live like brutes in this respect and alas, many of them die the same—without God, without hope—earth grubbers buried in the earth. Multitudes of men who are occasionally stirred with the thought of God, yet, nevertheless, as often as they can, forget Him. They cannot quite be without reflections upon the existence of the Deity and their own relation to Him, but still it is so unpleasant a thought and so contrary to the general set of their nature that they shake it off as much as possible, and plunge into the frivolities and dissipation's of pleasure, or into the stormy seas of care and trouble in business—into *anything* so that they may be able to be clear of the undesirable remembrance of their Maker.

If they hear a peculiarly earnest sermon they resolve to remember their Creator, but then they have resolved before and they find it as easy to forget now as then. Sometimes an arrow from the Eternal One sticks in their loins, and oh, what crafts and arts are practiced to get that arrow out! How they would, if they could, escape from conviction and continue light-hearted and frivolous in forgetfulness of their God, His Law, His justice and the coming Throne before which all the creatures shall be summoned! Yes, and even when men are compelled to think of God, yet, for all that, they go on sinning! They think of Him and yet violate His commands! They acknowledge His Presence and yet do despite to His love.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it is a strange thing! It shows what a monster, what a diabolical *miracle* sin is, that God should be around us all the day long and yet before His very face we should dare to say and think, and do that which is contrary to His will although a word could crush us as the moth is crushed! Although His will could sink us into the profoundest Hell! What words shall denounce the arrogance and impudence of sin? Who shall sufficiently condemn an evil which defies Jehovah to His face and hurls defiance at the thundering God?

This it is which makes sin so much sin—that it is not sin against God's *creatures*, an indirect thing—but it is high treason against the Majesty of God Himself. It is a defiance of Him to His face, a stabbing of the Godhead so far as man can do it, to the very heart. This is sin. Now, in the light of this Truth of God, pausing just a minute, let me ask the Believer to humble himself very greatly on account of sin. That I have not loved my God with all my heart. That I have not trusted Him with all my confidence. That I have not given Him the glory due unto His name. That I have not acted as a creature should do, much less as a new creature is *bound* to do—that, receiving priceless mercies, I have made so small a return—let me confess this in dust and ashes and then bless the name of the Atoner who, by His precious blood, has put even this away so that it shall not be mentioned against us any more forever.

Let me invite the unconverted to reflect upon *their* state in the light of this Truth. If sin consisted only in dishonesty, in lying, in swearing, in drunkenness—many of you might plead not guilty—and it might go well with you. But if the sin which will bring upon you the punishment of Hell is a *neglect* of God, a lack of *love* to Him—then where are you? You who,

with the Pharisee, could say, "Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men," where are you? Why, this shows you that your heart may be vile and filthy and you, yourself, may be condemned while your outward conduct may be very commendable, and all who know you may be praising you for your consistency!

Let this Truth of God, then, shine right into your souls, and as you see it to be a Truth and see yourself exposed by it, remember—

***"There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."***

Fly to it, and make this the unceasing prayer of your heart, "Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great. Blot it out for Jesus' sake."

**II.** In the second place, the question, HOW IS THE FIXEDNESS OF SIN WHICH IS DECLARED IN THE TEXT PROVEN? The Prophet tells us that man's sinfulness is as much fixed in him as an inscription carved with an iron pen in granite. How is this fixedness proven? It is proven in two ways in the text, namely, that it is engraved upon the tablets of their heart, and secondly, upon the horns of their altar. It clearly proves how deeply evil is fixed in man, when we reflect that sin is in the very *heart* of man.

Man loves sin. Sin is not an accident to man—a ditch into which he falls because he cannot help it—but sin is the subject of man's deliberate *preference*. Man *selects* evil and rejects good. If a man, for awhile, falls into a habit and yet that habit yields him no satisfaction, you may very readily break him of it. But when a man finds his habit to be pleasant to his nature and even dear to him, you may rest assured that you are not likely to turn him from it. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots. When a sin becomes intertwined with the roots of the affections, you cannot uproot it. When the leprosy eats deep into the heart of humanity, who can expel it? It becomes, therefore, a hopeless case so far as human power is concerned. Since sin reigns and rules in man's affections, it is deeply ingrained, indeed.

My unconverted Hearer, the sin of forgetting God is in your heart, you know it is. You do not like to think of Him. It is not your desire to be obedient to Him. Your pleasure lies in quite another direction. You know very well that when you take up the Bible in the evening and begin to read it, it is a dreadfully dry book. You have no interest in it. And when you go to a place of worship you find no pleasure in it. Your heart does not go after God's praise—you are like the mouse which crept into the Church and, finding hymn books very dry nibbling, was glad to get away again. The larder suited her better and so it does you.

The music hall, the ballroom, and the theater are more to your taste because there you will not be worried with the things of God. God, holiness, Heaven, Hell, eternity and the Atonement—why these things are old and cheerless sounds to you! You have heard them many, many times but they ring no music into your ears—they rather beat like muffled drums in a funeral march! As soon expect a stream to flow uphill as look for a natural heart seeking after God! If it were right in this place to talk of certain sins, there are many that would blush and hide their face and say, "I pray

that I may never fall into them,” and yet they close not their ears when the evil is recited, but listen with evident interest!

When we read police reports and divorce reports, we should be deeply pained and made to shudder, were it not that our evil heart of unbelief is hardened towards evil. Everybody knows that the light literature of the day, which is pretty freely spiced with shameful sin, goes down readily and second and third editions are called for. Your very decent and moral people like a precious mouthful of scandal or uncleanness to give a flavor to their reading. Yes, there is a love of sin in the *heart*, a love of *everything* that is contrary to God! And there is a forgetfulness, a distaste, even a *hatred* to thoughts concerning the great Father of spirits!

Oh, if you loved God you would not live without prayer as some of you do! If you loved God you would not repeat *forms* of prayer as some of you do! If you loved God you would talk to your Father without your book! My child never reads a book to me when he wants anything, but he comes with his mouth and his heart ready at once, without any teaching from his brother, to ask me for what he needs. If you loved God, you would not live day by day without speaking of Him, without meditating upon His glorious works, and without seeking after fellowship and communion with Him! But, inasmuch as you love Him not Who is so worthy and Who by such gentle ways woos your love, who shall deny that your lack of love to God is deeply engraved in the very center of your heart, and cut into your nature, itself?

The second proof the Prophet gives of the fixedness of human sin is that it was written on the horns of their altars. When people are bad, at their best they must be very bad, and such were the men of Judah. They sinned in their very religion. These people sinned by setting up idols and departing from Jehovah—we sin in quite another way. When you get the unconverted man to be *religious*—which is a very *easy* thing—what form does the religion take? Frequently he prefers that which most gratifies his taste, his ears, or his sight. Yes, of course he does not object to a religion which is produced and assisted by painted windows, praising machines, elegant tailoring and fine music!

Men’s carnal appetites are pleased with these things, and it is gratifying to human nature to discover that such things may be called religion. The fact is that there is no more true religion in fine music than in discord, and no more genuine worship in a cathedral than in a hovel. Men might as well look at vestments, and windows, and carvings in the artificers’ shops where they are made—and there would be quite as much devotion as in looking at them in the place where they are fixed! Others think if their ears are pleased with listening to an eloquent discourse they are worshipping God. He who can speak well is, to them, as one who makes a goodly sound on a pleasant instrument. Their religion is to admire elocution, but there is no religion in that! There can be no more Divine Grace in listening to an eloquent minister than in listening to an eloquent parliamentary orator.

If your *heart* is touched, that is the worship of God! If your heart is drawn to God, that is the service of God—but if it is the mere ringing of

the words, and the falling of the periods, and the cadence of the voice that you regard, why, Sirs, you do not worship God, and on the very horns of your altars are your sins! You are bringing a delight of your own sensuous faculties and putting *that* in the place of true faith and love, and then saying to your soul, "I have pleased God," whereas you have only pleased *yourself*. When men become serious in religion, and look somewhat to the inward, they then defile the Lord's altar by relying upon their own righteousness. Nothing is more pleasing to human nature than the attempt to *do* something by which it may merit salvation at the hand of God.

God thunders out, "By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified," and in the teeth of that, millions of men say, "We *will* be justified by the works of the Law"! So, coming to God with the pretense of worshipping Him, they offer Him that which He abhors and give the lie to Him in all His solemn declarations. If God says that by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified, and man declares, "But I *will* be so justified," he makes God a liar—whether he knows it or not his sin has that within it. Man is much like a silkworm—he is a spinner and weaver by nature. A robe of righteousness is worked out for him but he will not have it—he will spin for himself—and like the silkworm, he spins, and spins, and he only spins himself a shroud. All the righteousness that a sinner can make will only be a shroud in which to wrap up his soul, his *destroyed* soul—for God will cast him away who relies upon the works of the Law.

In other ways men stain the horns of their altars. Some do it by carelessness. Some of you who come here are filled with vain thoughts. I thank God that I have not to complain of inattentive audiences, but still, how often during prayer your hearts are anywhere but at the Throne of God? And when the sacred song is rising up to the Majesty of Heaven your lips are moving, but your hearts are not praising God! Ah, my Friends, if secret things were testified abroad how many times it would be seen that the horns of your altar have been stained by irreverence and carelessness! Those lips must be depraved, indeed, which even in *prayer* and *praise* still continue to sin!

The horns of our altars are defiled by hypocrisy. Into our Churches there will come men who, like Demas and Judas intrude themselves, uncalled, sitting at the Master's Table. They are baptized into His name and yet for all that are hollow and rotten, deceivers and deceived. You may have seen two fencers practicing their art and noticed how they seem to be seeking each other's death—how they strike and thrust as though they were earnestly contending for life—but after the show is over they sit down and shake hands and are good friends. Often so it is in your prayers and confessions—you will acknowledge your sins and profess to hate them—and make resolutions against them—but it is all outward show-fencing, not real fighting! And when the fencing is over, the soul shakes hands with its old enemy and returns to its former ways of sin.

Oh, this foul hypocrisy is a staining of the horns of the altar with a vengeance! But I shall not detain you longer. The fact is clear that men do this and the inference is also logical that if men love sin in their hearts,

and if even in their *religion* they still perpetrate sin, then it must be deeply engraved in them as with the point of a diamond.

**III.** Thirdly and briefly, WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THIS? How did sin get such a firm footing in humanity? How is it that the Evil One has so stormed the city of Mansoul as to entrench himself in the impregnable castle of the heart, and bid the black banner float thereon? The answer is, first, we must never forget the Fall. Certain theologians ignore the Fall—but for all that it remains the saddest and the second greatest event in human history. We are fallen. We are none of us today as God made us. “God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions.”

Our first parent was the perfect man but he polluted the fountain of life, and, “Behold,” as David said, “we are born in sin and shaped in iniquity.” In sin do our mothers conceive us. The human judgment is out of balance—it uses false weights and false measures. “It puts darkness for light and light for darkness.” The human will is no longer supple, as it should be to the Divine will—our neck is naturally as an iron sinew and will not bow to Jehovah’s golden scepter. Our affections, also, are twisted away from their right bent. Whereas we ought to have been seeking after Jesus and casting out the tendrils of our affections towards Him, we cling to anything but the right and climb upon anything but the true. “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.”

Human nature is like a magnificent temple all in ruins. Where there ought to be shouts of sacred joy and rising paeans of incessant praise, you can hear the howling of the dragon and the hooting of the owl. Magnificence is there, but for all that the ruin is complete. This accounts for the depth and fixedness of sin in us—that it is a matter of *birth*. Original sin, let it be denied and explained away as it may, remains a great Truth of God and there are problems in human history which never can be explained without the belief in it. Indeed, every man is in himself such a problem that if you deny his original depravity you miss the key to his life—but if you believe that doctrine you may then understand what manhood is—and you are on the right track towards getting to find out how manhood can be made better and holier.

In addition, however, to our natural depravity, there comes in, in the second place, our *habits* of sin. Well may sin be deeply engraved in the man who has for 20, 40, 50, or perhaps 70 years, continued in his iniquity. Put the wool into the scarlet dye, and if it lie there but a week the color will be so ingrained in the fabric that you cannot get it out. But if you keep it there for so many *years*, how shall you possibly be able to bleach it? Man has continued in sin, therefore the Prophet says, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well.”

Use is second nature. Nature originally is bad, but the *use* comes in as a second mischief and makes us *doubly* inclinable towards evil. You must remember, in addition to this, that sin is a most clinging and defiling thing. Who does not know that if a man sins once it is much easier to sin that way the next time? No, that he is much more inclinable towards that sin? This is conspicuous in certain sins of the flesh which we all con-



demn. Let any person once have given way, and it becomes an awful struggle—a struggle in which the major part are defeated altogether when they attempt it—to break loose from their bands of lasciviousness. I mention that one sin because its power to return upon us is so conspicuous, but it is an illustration of the same thing in every other sin.

If you fall into covetousness, you will find it very hard to be generous. And if you *continue* to be grinding and grasping, generosity will become an impossibility. The muscles of the arm, if you never exert them except in one fashion, will become set so that you cannot move them—like the Indian Fakir who held his arm aloft so long that he could not take it down again. Man, continuing in sin, becomes fixed in its habit. Only the other day we read of a great millionaire in New York who was once weak enough to resolve to give a beggar a *penny*. He had grown old in covetousness and he stopped himself just as he was about to bestow the gift, saying, “I should like to give you the penny, but you see I should have to lose the interest of it forever, and I could not afford that.”

Habit grows upon a man. Everybody knows that when he has been making money, if he indulges the propensity to acquire, it will become a perfectly tyrannical master ruling his entire being. Therefore the reason why sin being in the nature, and secondly, coming upon us in the use and the habit, and thirdly, being in itself a thing which naturally clings to us and gets a dominance over us, it is written within us as with the point of a diamond. I may add that the Prince of the power of the air, the Evil Spirit, takes care, so far as he can, to add to all this. He chimes in with every suggestion of fallen nature. If we say “One,” he is always ready to say, “Two.” If we want a lie to help us in any of our plans, he will be at our beck and call at once.

He knows when to use the bellows when he sees that the fire is beginning to burn. He will never let the tinder lie idle for lack of sparks, nor the ground lie waste for lack of the seeds of thorns and thistles. He has an appetite for dealing with human nature for his own purposes, and so is never far away when a sin is to be produced. When we begin to fasten a nail, he is ready to drive it home and clinch it, too, so that the sin of Judah may be written as with an iron pen and engraved as with the point of a diamond.

Up to now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I have had to enlarge upon a very dreary statement. What I have said I feel persuaded is true, but I feel no satisfaction in speaking it. I have declared what I believe to be the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, but it is a burden to have to state these things. Let no man imagine that we are the inventors of these doleful doctrines. If they are not true, they certainly are among the most miserable of human conceptions. But if they are true, it is among the most honest things that man can do to tell people plainly of them, that they may be prepared against them. But we will not so finish—we will advance to a more cheering topic.

**IV.** Our fourth point will be, WHAT IS THE CURE FOR ALL THIS? Sin thus *stamped* into us, thus *ingrained* into our nature—can it *ever* be removed? It must be, or we cannot enter Heaven, for there shall by no

means enter within those pearly gates anything that defiles! None but the *perfect* can enter into the land of the perfect, where the thrice-holy God is the center of a perfectly holy company!

We must be cleansed and purified, but how can it be done? It can only be done by a *supernatural* process. You cannot do it yourself. The dead in the grave can sooner raise themselves than you, who are accustomed to do evil, can learn to do good! Even those who are saved by Divine Grace will tell you that they can do nothing without the Spirit of God, much less can you who are dead in sin. If the vessel that is well rigged and manned cannot move upon the waters without the breath of Heaven, much less can the unformed timber which lies in the merchant's yard make itself into a ship and then cross the seas!

If the living Christian needs Divine assistance, much more do you. You have destroyed yourselves, but your help is not in yourselves. In God your help is to be found. Your only help—to make short matter of it—lies in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became the Son of Man that He might lift the sons of men up from their natural degradation and ruin! How does Jesus Christ, then, take away these deeply-inscribed lines of sin from human nature? I answer, He does it first in this way—if our heart is like granite and sin is written on it, Christ's ready method is to take that heart away! "A *new* heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you."

Has it ever struck you what a wonderful thing it is for God to promise to give man a new *heart*? If you get a tree and saw a branch or two off, you may regret that the branches are gone but a new branch may come. And though you may grow a new branch on the tree, you could not obtain a new heart for it. When once the tree gets thoroughly rotten in the center you must give it up as hopeless—you cannot put new sap into it. But here God promises by the hand of His Son that He will give us new hearts— hearts in which there shall be no sin! Hearts which shall have no tendency towards evil, but which shall be pure hearts— hearts in every part renewed and filled with Divine love—perfect and right, and pure and good—a copy of His own heart!

The Lord Jesus Christ has for many now present worked this miracle! He has given them the new heart and though the old heart is still there, contending and fighting, yet the new heart will get the victory. We have now *new* loves, *new* hates—the name of God is now the sweetest bell that ever rings! The thought of God's Law is marrow and fatness to us. A sense of God's love is like honey dropping from the honeycomb. Now, the thought of Hell, solemn as it is, does not alarm us! The thought of Heaven is bright and lustrous, and cheers us in traversing this wilderness. Now, to muse upon eternity and the fact that we shall see the Lord forever, face to face, is our daily delight! We are not what we *ought* to be, nor what we *want* to be, but still our leanings and inclinations are towards better things.

The new heart has its helm turned in an opposite direction from that in which the old heart was steering. We are sailing under a new flag now—we have enlisted under a new Prince and by God's Grace we shall conquer—

and we shall enter into the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is a part of the Covenant of Grace and a part of His Gospel that Jesus can give to us hearts in which there shall not be this tendency to sin, and so the deep-seated sinfulness of our nature shall be overcome.

Next to that, inasmuch as the guiltiness of sin is as permanent as sin itself, Jesus Christ is able to take our guilt away. His dying upon the Cross is the means by which the filthiest sinner out of Hell can be made white as the angels of God, and that, too, in a single instant! You understand the doctrine of the Atonement, but let me sound it in your ears again. Sin is a thing which God must punish—the eternal laws of the universe demand that there shall never be an offense committed against the rules of God which shall escape without a penalty. The penalty of sin is *death* and God has never seen fit to mitigate this—its justice makes it *perpetual*.

The Lord has been pleased to open a way of mercy by sending His only begotten Son into this world as our Substitute. He became Man and He suffered for His people what *they* ought to have suffered. He endured at the hand of God what all the redeemed ought to have endured. Now, God, at this day, never pardons a sin without having first punished it—punished it on Christ for *us*. God never punishes the man for whom Christ died, but all besides must bear their iniquity. If you believe in Jesus Christ, then Jesus Christ died for you and God cannot put two to death for one offense, nor can He ask for payment twice for one debt—you are therefore free. Christ paid the debts of all His people and obtained their full discharge when He rose again from the dead. And now every soul that believes in Him is clear at the bar of Divine Justice, because it is written, “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died.” “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

See then, my Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ can take away the deeply-engraved inscription of our sin and can remove the horrible stains of our iniquity—justly remove them through what He has suffered on our behalf! The Holy Spirit also comes in—the new nature being given and sin being forgiven, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us—as a Prince in His palace, as a God in His temple. Oh, wondrous mystery, that God should dwell in a human heart! He who fills Heaven and earth—whom all worlds cannot comprehend! He, before whom angels bow with veiled faces, deigns to make Himself a habitation within the body of the man that trusts in Him! If you are now relying alone on Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit is in you this morning, and, being there, He controls your passions—passions which otherwise would master you.

He rules your will, a stubborn thing, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke! He guides your affections, wandering things, like wild asses of the desert not to be tamed. He sits, this day, within your soul as God’s lieutenant in the kingdom of your humanity—ruling, preventing, directing—and making you meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Do I hear any say, “Then, I would to God that I may experience the Divine process—the new nature given which is regeneration—the washing away of sin which constitutes pardon and justification, and the

indwelling of the Holy Spirit which insures final perseverance and complete sanctification. Oh, how can I have these precious things”?

You may have them, whoever you may be, by simply believing in Jesus. Does it seem too simple? Try, and you will find it effectual. The most potent remedies for disease are not always the most elaborate—the simplest may often be the most effectual. I tell you, you who gad about after your ceremonies, and repentance, and tears—you will never get in all these that which you can have by simply coming to Jesus and trusting in Him! Now have done with your own doings! Cast yourself on Him who has done everything for you! Spin no more, but take the raiment already woven! Work no more, but take the ransom already paid!

Strive no more in your own energy after the works of the Law, but take the great accomplished work which Jesus Christ has performed! Believe and live! These are the words which God emblazons across the brow of Truth—which I would gladly write across the brow of Heaven itself—which I would gladly have thunder out of every wave, whispered by every gale, and spoken by every breath of air!—BELIEVE AND LIVE!—Trust Christ and live! The remedy will meet the disease—this heavenly chisel will cut out the diamond-worked inscription! This hammer which Christ wields will dash to pieces the granite upon which the pen of iron has written your sin. Trust in the Lord to save you and you shall yet be made as Adam was at the first—in the image of God! And you shall stand before the Eternal Throne, among the white-robed, pure as they! You shall stand among the celestials as heavenly as they, and near to God, even made a partaker of the Divine Nature, “having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake!

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# OUR SANCTUARY

## NO. 1786

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 15, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place  
of our sanctuary. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that  
forsake You shall be ashamed, and they that depart  
from Me shall be written in the earth because they  
have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living  
waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed,  
save me, and I shall be saved: for  
You are my praise.”  
Jeremiah 17:12, 13, 14.*

THIS book of Jeremiah is a very thorny one—it might be called, like his smaller work, “The Book of Lamentations.” Our text is as a lily among thorns, as a rose in the wilderness. The solitary place shall be glad for it and the desert shall rejoice. The words sound like sweet music amid the crash of tempest. The bitter tree yields us sweet fruit. The weeping Prophet wipes away our tears. I do not know that the whole of Scripture contains more delightful promises than those which fell from the lips of this son of sorrow who has been to so many a son of consolation! May God grant that this lily, today, may be exceeding lovely in your eyes as you see it in the sunlight of the Holy Spirit.

It seems to me that in this passage the mourning Prophet is sitting alone in communion with his God, speaking out his steadfast faith, and washing the feet of his sorrows in the laver of the promises. The singular change of the pronoun from *You* to *Me* shows how near the Lord was to him—so near, indeed, that Jehovah not only speaks *by* the Prophet, but breaks in with personal language and speaks, *Himself!* All men who have to deal with great multitudes of people for God must be much alone or they will lose their power. Jeremiah was sick at heart, for he prophesied, but he was not believed. He entreated and persuaded, but his affectionate appeals were rejected. He saw the nation hastening to destruction and he could not avert the doom! All this made him cry out in the anguish of his soul, “I am the man that has seen affliction.”

And, therefore, he could not have lived if he had not found sanctuary in his God. He often stole away into secret places that he might pour out his breaking heart before the Lord and commit himself to the tender care of Him whom he so faithfully served. Let us imitate him and overcome our griefs by secret fellowship with the happy God! The passage before us is a very broken one. Those who are acquainted with the original tongue will

tell you that it is difficult to construe it. It is a fragmentary passage and several meanings have been given to it. Do you know the reason of this? Should not a broken heart use broken words? When you have been in great trouble and have drawn near to God, you have often had to pour out your heart in faltering accents. Nor does this destroy your prayer, or even shorten its power.

Our God can put our speech together when we cannot put it together ourselves. A sigh here and a cry there—an utterance of faith at one moment and a groan of sorrow at the next—these make up a singular patchwork to ourselves, perhaps. And even more singular, still, to anyone who should overhear us in our solitary sighs. But such supplications are not at all singular to God! He reads the meaning of His saints and understands the language of their sighs. However, it seems to me that the translators of the Authorized Version have given us the true meaning of the original, as I think they generally do. The men are not yet born who will give us a better rendering either of the Old or the New Testament than is to be found in our old English Bibles—and it is my belief that they will never be born!

These men wrote a marvelously pure English and really translated the Bible into our mother tongue, being helped of God not only to see the meaning, but to write it in words which are understood by the people. Learned men in our day, for the most part, know every tongue except English—and they fall into the error of mistaking long Latinized words for our native language. Give me plain expressive Saxon! You may place every confidence in your grandmother's Bible—whatever small improvements the translation may require—it is in the main so good that its rivals have had but short lives while it retains all its primitive power!

In this text, no doubt, the Prophet had in his eyes the Temple at Jerusalem. Seated upon the summit of a hill, with deep valleys surrounding it, the Temple stood aloft, above all, a noble structure, seen from afar. To the Jew it was, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." When God dwelt in it, the Temple might be fitly described in the language of Jeremiah as, "A glorious high throne" for God. That glittering Temple of snow-white marble, adorned with abundance of gold, seemed, as it gleamed in the sun, to be the lofty seat of Jehovah, whereon He reigned in the midst of His people. The Temple, I say, may have been in the Prophet's eyes, but I do not think that it was in the *heart* of his meaning. The passage which we read just now, in the seventh chapter of Jeremiah, shows you that Jeremiah was by no means a devotee for the material Temple, nor did he rest his confidence in its outward ceremonies.

He had reached a more *spiritual* region. That evangelical spirit which spoke by Isaiah also rested upon Jeremiah. He had come to understand that God is not to be worshipped as if He dwelt in temples made with hands, nor to be served by merely outward rites—but that God is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. It seems to me to be clear that the Prophet here speaks of God, Himself, as being to His people the place of their sanctuary and a glorious high throne. With this I shall be-

gin—the true place of our sanctuary. Secondly, I shall have a little to say about the *departers from God*, the true place of our sanctuary—they are to be ashamed and written in the dust. Then, thirdly, *the comers to God as the true sanctuary*. How do they come? They come with the language of the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, “Heal me O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.”

I. First, let us consider THE TRUE PLACE OF OUR SANCTUARY. It is not at Jerusalem, nor at Samaria. It is not at Rome, nor at Canterbury. The place of our sanctuary is not the meeting house wherein we gather. The place of our sanctuary is our God, Himself. “God is our refuge and strength.” “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

He is viewed under the aspect of *a sovereign reigning in majesty*—“A glorious high throne is the place of our sanctuary.” Many refuse to worship God as *reigning*—they have not yet grasped the idea that the Lord is King, so that they cannot understand the song, “The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice.” For that includes, first, Divine Sovereignty, and some men grow black in the face with rage against *that* Truth of God—they cannot stand it! Not even over His own mercy will they allow God to exercise any sovereignty—He is to be bound by their rules and compelled to deal the same with all—so they say. But He will not have it so, for this is His Word—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

The crown rights of God include this among the rest, that He has the power of life and death—and can punish or pardon according to His royal pleasure. While He will deal justly with all mankind, yet He has a special favor towards His chosen, passing by their iniquity through the Sacrifice of Calvary. He will make His own election and He will distribute His mercy as seems good in His sight. To all who rebel against this sovereignty He gives this answer—“Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own? Are your eyes evil, because I am good?” When any cavil at His acts, His only answer is—“No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus?”

Now, this God whose sovereignty is so much disputed is our God—a glorious high throne for absolute dominion and sovereignty is the place of our sanctuary! To Him whose Sovereign Grace is the hope of the undeserving, we fly for succor. Besides sovereignty, of course, His glorious high Throne includes *power*. A throne without power would be but the pageantry of vanity. There should be power in the King who rules over all—and is there not? Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, “What are You doing?” God is ruler even at this hour! The floods lift up their voices, yes, the great waves of the raging sea roar in their pride, but, “the Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever.” Hallelujah! Do not imagine that Jehovah has vacated His Throne or left the affairs of His Kingdom to chance, or to the free will of man. Whatever you *think* you see of chance, has an underlying order about it which shows that God is there! Whatever you see of man’s free agency—and you do see it—yet over

it and above it there is the overruling hand of Him that works all things according to the counsel of His will. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise You: the remainder of wrath shall You restrain.”

Oh, it is such a blessed thing to me that the place of our sanctuary is the reigning God! As long as He is on the Throne, it must be well with the righteous. “Oh, but,” they say, “evil reigns.” Yes, but God reigns over the evil and through the evil still produces good! Do not imagine that Satan is an independent power, a sort of second Deity, outside of the dominion of the Lord, for even *he* is subordinated to the eternal purpose. “Alas,” cries Despondency, “sorrow reigns and the effect of the curse!” I know it! But the Redeemer also reigns, lifting up His people from that curse! And the creation itself, which has been made subject to vanity, shall be delivered and rise into the glorious liberty of the children of God! Therefore, rejoice in this, that the Lord reigns as absolute Monarch, full of power to execute His own purposes of infinite love! In all times of disturbance and trouble flee to the Lord of All as to a sanctuary and find your comfort in Him.

Forget not that *the Lord reigns in extending glory*. The excellence of His dominion surpasses all other, for He is the blessed and only Potentate. Every act of His empire exhibits His glorious Character, His justice, His goodness, His faithfulness, His holiness. Other kings need the tinsel of pomp and the trickery of policy to make them great. But the Lord God is essentially glorious and those who know Him best are most struck with His grandeur. The chronicles of Jehovah’s Kingdom are honorable and glorious. The forces of His Throne are infinite; the purposes of His majesty are holy and His name is to be praised from generation to generation! We shelter beneath no insignificant principedom—a glorious high throne is the place of our sanctuary!

The text teaches more than this, however. It says, “A glorious high throne *from the beginning* is the place of our sanctuary.” It is a very blessed thing to come back to the fact that the Lord has not newly assumed a Throne from which He has newly cast out some former king. No, “A glorious high throne *from the beginning* is the place of our sanctuary.” As His is the most potent of empires, so is it the most ancient! There was a time before all times when there was no day but the Ancient of Days and then God was supreme, purposing, determining, counseling, arranging all things according to the good pleasure of His will. “With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him?”

Then there came a day when He had created worlds, I know not how many, but in them all He found no rival. Perhaps all the stars we see are worlds full of inhabitants who worship the infinite Creator—and perhaps all the stars that have ever been seen by the telescope are, to the whole universe of God, as a little dust behind the door might be to a large room! But in all these worlds, from the beginning, the Lord is a glorious high Throne. When He made this world and put man upon it, He did not make it without a plan and a purpose from the beginning. He never lifted His anger upon any work of His hand without first knowing what He was go-



ing to do and what would come of it. God is never taken by surprise! He has foreseen all things and worked them into His grand plan.

The arrangements of Providence which seem so complex to us are not complex to Him—they are simple, direct and effective. God is always working for a glorious purpose which shall, one day, make the universe and all eternity to sing with rapturous joy that ever God determined to do what He is now doing. Let us rest in that Truth of God. From the beginning, a glorious high Throne ordained everything, and it arranges all things today—this is the place of the sanctuary of God's people! Oh, be not cast down and troubled, for the Lord reigns! Beneath His royal pavilion we may rest in peace. There is evil and there is sorrow; there is sin and there is bold rebellion; but infinite goodness is still ruling upon the Throne of Glory! Be not worried as though truth would be defeated by falsehood, and goodness would be exterminated by evil—for the Lord of Holiness wears the crown—and He will break the hosts of wickedness with His scepter, as with a rod of iron.

A glorious high throne, higher than the throne of Satan, higher than the heights of pride, higher than the loftiness of ambition, higher, even, than the Heaven of heavens, is still the Throne of God forever and ever—and this is the refuge of all His saints. The Lord has graciously said of His people, "Although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary." And He has also said, "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary."

When the Prophet alludes to *the place* of our sanctuary, our mind is naturally led to feel that there must be some kind of place where God especially reveals Himself. We all know that He manifests Himself in Heaven and we expect, before long, to be there to swell the number of His courtiers! But He has also revealed Himself on earth and very significant are the places where He has done so. The place where He mainly revealed Himself among men was the Temple, to which I have said Jeremiah somewhat alludes. Now, where was the Temple built? It was built upon that mountain where Abraham took his son, Isaac, to offer him up as a sacrifice. Wonderful scene! There, all in lonely quietude—the servants left at the foot of the hill—the great Patriarch, the father of the faithful, laid the wood upon the altar and unsheathed the knife to slay his only son! There the scene ends and the curtain drops, but what a wonderful picture it was of the greater Father, the everlasting God, who did, in very deed and truth, offer up His Son, the Heir of the promise, that we might live through Him!

A ram caught in the thicket was the substitute for Isaac, but there was no substitute for Jesus, the Son of God! He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! And there, where the most instructive of all types of the heavenly Father's love was exhibited, there must be the Temple wherein God would converse with men and make a place of sanctuary for men. The Temple, itself, was built upon that site, and there it was that God dwelt visibly between the wings of the cherubim, above the Ark of the Covenant, over that golden lid which was called the Mercy Seat. What was

that Ark of the Covenant but a type of our Lord Jesus Christ in a most instructive way? There stood the cherubim above the golden lid of that coffer—and Jesus, also, was “seen of angels.” The cover made the Mercy Seat, or propitiatory, and this the Lord Jesus is to us. He, as the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat, is the place where God meets with us; hears our prayers and accepts our persons and our praises.

Look within the lid with holy reverence and, first, you see two tables of stone upon which the Law of God was engraved. Did not Jesus say, “I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart”? Looking again, you observe a golden pot filled with manna and you remember Him who is the Bread which came down from Heaven, of which if a man eats, he shall live forever. Nor may we fail to notice a rod, a rod that has budded and blossomed and brought forth almonds—for by it we are reminded that the scepter of rule is with the Lord Jesus Christ—and the government shall be upon His shoulders. This is His living and productive scepter with which He rules the souls of His people. Do you wonder that the Lord, in meeting His people, ordained as the meeting place such an eminent type of His dear Son?

The Ark of the Covenant was made according to the pattern which Moses saw in the holy Mountain and above its Mercy Seat was the place where God dwelt and communed with His people. But the sacrifice of Isaac and the Ark of the Covenant were only *types* of that greater Sacrifice when He who is the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, went up to the Cross and, on Calvary, “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him.” It is natural that the Lord should meet with us in Grace in the place where He put His Son to grief. There, where He made His Son an offering for sin, the Lord becomes well-pleased with us. O Friends, the Cross is the place where God has His Throne of salvation, and truly we may say of it—“A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.”

In the great plan of salvation by the sacrifice of the Son of God, God is indeed enthroned! Upon the Cross He is extolled and made very high. Would you see His majesty? Behold it in the Person of the Only-Begotten, full of Grace and truth. Would you see His justice? Read it written in crimson lines upon the dying Person of the Son of God! Would you see His love? Ah, I will not speak of it, but simply say—Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us! In giving us His own dear Son, He has glorified His Grace by an unspeakable gift! God is never so revealed in all the works of His hands as in the Cross of Christ. That is a glorious high Throne, indeed! Its moral excellence, its infinite love, its spiritual beauty can never be equaled! Earthly kings and princes often rule by injustice, breaking the laws which they pretend to make—but He, our God, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is lifted high—high above all censure as to His justice, His holiness, His Grace, His truth, His love. “A glorious high throne is the place of our sanctuary.”

Now then, dear Friends, *the place where we worship, God is, Himself, revealed in the Person of His dear Son.* I pray you, never try to worship

anywhere else! Christ is the one Altar, the one Temple, the one Sanctuary. Set not up your high places of will-worship! Erect not images to Baal in the form of self and sin! God in Christ Jesus should absorb all the worship of all the sons of men!

In addition, *the Lord God is our refuge*, for a sanctuary was a place to which men fled in the hour of peril. Is not Jesus our Refuge from present guilt and from the wrath to come? Does He not deliver us from the guilt of sin? Yes, He is our Refuge from temptation, our Refuge in the hour of trial, our Sanctuary in every season of sorrow, distress and pain! This glorious high Throne affords us an abiding shelter under the assaults of the enemy! I do not think I can preach on such a text—so there—I must just leave it for you to think it over, or, better still, for you to flee to it and, fleeing to it, to abide in it, worshipping in spirit and in truth!

**II.** Secondly, I am to speak but a few words, but those very solemnly, concerning THOSE WHO DEPART FROM GOD. Alas, that there should be such!—men who leave the river for the desert, the living for the dead! *Who are they?* The text says, “All that forsake You,” and, “they that depart from Me.” See, then, that this text has a bearing upon *us*, because these people of whom we are now going to speak were not an ignorant people who did not know God, or how could they be said to *forsake* Him? They were not like the heathen who have never heard His name. You cannot forsake a person with whom you have no acquaintance!

They were a people who knew a great deal about God, since He had given them His Law and sent His Prophets among them. They were the people of Israel—God had dwelt among them—in open type and visible glory He had been in the midst of their host. They had seen the sacrifice, they had beheld the great wonders which the Lord worked for them in Egypt and at the Red Sea—and yet they forsook Him. Alas, there are among His own professed people a company that forsake Him! They mix, for a time, with the people of God, but they ultimately go out from them because they are not truly of them. In this land we have a people to whom God has been very gracious in sending the Gospel to them, but they are forsaking Christ for Rome—turning aside from faith in the Redeemer’s merit—that they may trust in priestcraft.

It will not do, my Brothers and Sisters, it will not do! But there are many such and many that did run well, for a time. What hindered them that they should not still obey the Truth of God? They went back to the world for gain or for ease—because of poverty, or because of riches, or because of fear of man they turned aside and went away from God. We still sorrowfully know that an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God remains among us. Those who forsake the Lord are not altogether an infidel people, they are not a people who refuse, even, to hear His name. But their hearts are not right with Jehovah, neither are they steadfast in His Covenant. Evidently at one time, these people had something to do with the Lord, but after a while they forsook Him.

What did they do? They no longer sought after the Lord as once they did, but ceased to be fervent in their service. At first they ceased to wor-

ship Him, they took no delight in His ways. They tried to be neutral, they were lukewarm, careless, indifferent—they forgot God. After thus declining in zeal and refusing outward worship, they went further, for He says they had departed from Him—they could not endure the Lord and, therefore, went into the far country. They said unto God, “Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Your ways.” They went into open sin. They disowned their God and broke His Commandments—some of them even dared to blaspheme Him! The course of sin is downhill. The man who once forgets his God soon forgets himself—and then he throws the reins on the neck of his lusts and goes from sin to sin, forgetting his God more and more.

I may be addressing such this morning. I fear I am. To such I have to tell *what will becomes of them* one of these days. This will become of you—you “shall be ashamed.” I do not know a more painful feeling to a true man than to be ashamed. When he feels—“I was foolish and wrong,” it makes his cheeks crimson, his heart swells, his eyes overflow. The most hardened of sinners will, one day, be ashamed, saying, “I acted unprofitably to myself.” Such shame will come over you forgetful ones one of these days. You that live without God will, before long, be disgusted with yourselves for it. It may not come upon you till you die, but it is very probable that it will assail you then. When, in your dying hours, what a dreadful thing it will be to be filled with shame at the remembrance of the past, so as to be afraid to meet your God, ashamed to think that you have lived a whole life without caring for Him!

What will it be to wake up in the next world and to see the Glory of God around you—the Glory of the God whom you despised! Oh, the shame that will come over the ungodly in judgment! It is written, “They shall wake up to shame and everlasting contempt.” Every intelligent being that is right towards God will despise the man that forsook God and turned away from Him. “They shall wake up to shame and everlasting contempt.” What a waking! It is as terrible as our Lord’s word, “In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” How fearful to think that the contempt will never end! Everlasting contempt! What a word! I hope you have never acted so as to feel ashamed before your fellow men, for it must be a dreadful thing when such a charge is brought against a man that he has to appear before the judgment seat of his own country and knows that he is guilty. He has only his fellow men to face, but what a hang-dog look he has! He cannot face the jury. He is afraid to cast his eyes upon the judge! He is ashamed to be seen, even, by the meanest wretches in the court!

In the next world there will be none of that hardihood which enables big villains to bronze it out before their neighbors. Conscience will be awakened and, therefore, shame will have all the greater power. Great men and proud men will be small enough, before long—and careless and profane persons will be miserable enough when that Word of God shall be fulfilled—“All that forsake You shall be ashamed.” And then it is added that they, “shall be written in the earth.” That is, if they turn away from God, they may win a name for a while, but it will be merely *from* the earth and *of* the earth. They may obtain a fortune and enjoy outward prosperity.

They may be like David's green bay tree that spread itself far and wide—but in the end it will turn out that they were like bullocks fattened for the slaughter, or like the swine that lie down in their sty, too full to move—but all the more sure to be killed!

What an awful thing that a man should have his portion in this life and nothing to come hereafter! O worldlings, you have your riches in this poor country which is soon to be burned with fire! Your pleasures and treasures will melt in the fervent heat of the last days! Your life's pursuits are a short business, ending in eternal misery! They that have forsaken God will have their little day, but the more they prosper and the richer they become, and the more famous they grow, so much the worse for them—for the higher they mount the more desperate shall be their fall! We read that they, "shall be written in the earth," and that means that they shall go into oblivion.

If you were to go to a school in the East, you would find that the children have no slates and very few of them have wax tablets. These are rather expensive and so the schoolmaster spreads the floor with sand or earth—and you see the boys writing their copies on the ground. Then, of course, when they have finished their writing, the master just sweeps the floor and all the writing disappears. Was this the meaning of our Savior when He stooped down and wrote on the ground? When they brought to Him the woman taken in adultery, hypocrites that they were, you remember He stooped down and wrote on the ground as though He heard them not, as much as to say, "I shall rub it all out again—all that you have to say will be forgotten."

So will it be with men who do not trust in God. Their names will be written in the sand and, in a short time, the great foot of Providence will obliterate them all and they will be quite forgotten! If you get honor in this life by sin, your fame carries its death within its own heart. The greatest name that ever rung forth from the clarion of fame shall die out into oblivion or infamy if its honors are earned by an evil life. Oh, you who dread a cold forgetfulness, live unto God, and then your names shall shine on forever! But if you live after the flesh, you shall die and leave your names for a curse unto the Lord's people!

The text tells us that there shall come something besides this—they that forsake God shall, one day, be sore athirst even unto death, "because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters." There is for the soul but one fountain of water—flowing, cool, clear, always refreshing. "All my springs are in You," said David. And so may we say, for our only source of supply is the Lord our God. If a man turns away from God, he forsakes the cool fountain—he goes to broken cisterns that hold no water—and he will perish of thirst. Oh, my beloved Hearers, I wish I were able to put this very strongly before you! You are such creatures that you *must* trust and love God, or else you will never possess that which you were created to enjoy—you must always be without the grand necessity of your being. You are vessels, but what will be the use of you if you are not filled?

You are denying yourselves bread when you deny yourselves God—I mean bread for your *souls*. You must have God in Christ Jesus or else you will be as one that is parched with thirst in the Sahara. He looks around him eagerly for a shell, but sees nothing but an ocean of sand! He rushes this way till the hot sand beneath his feet burns out of him all power to move! He struggles to his feet and turns in the other direction, but with equal disappointment. He lifts his hands. He cries. He tears his hair in utter despair. He stoops down; he scoops a hole in the ground. He would gladly dig to the very center of the earth to find drink, but all in vain! He must pine away and die. His mouth is an oven. His tongue a firebrand—himself the victim of death! So, poor Heart, there is nothing for you but God! If you forsake Him, you die.

Young man, you are miserable today. You used to enjoy the theater and even baser amusement, but you cannot rejoice in them, now, and I am thankful you cannot! You are becoming dissatisfied and wretched, but you need not remain so. Here is the living water, fresh and free, and the Spirit bids me cry, “Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.” The supply for your soul is only to be found in this one well, the well of Bethlehem, the well which springs up from the depths of eternal love in Christ Jesus our Lord! God still sits enthroned in Jesus as upon a glorious high throne—He receives thirsty sinners to Himself, there—and gives them drink till they are filled to the full.

Oh, when I take hold of my God, I do not seem as if I need anything else! If I have God in Christ, then I am all content, filled with all the fullness of God. “But troubles will come.” Never mind troubles, as long as you have your God! I feel, sometimes, like Rutherford when he said he could swim through seven Hells to get at Christ. So a man might well do! You will not mind the trials of life when once you know that God is yours. A boy once said to his fellow, “John, would you like to have been Elijah? Would you have dared to get into that chariot of fire with horses of fire?” “Yes,” said the other, “I would not mind *as long as God drove.*”

That is how Believers feel about everything. If God drives, let us be fully at ease, for all must be well! If the Lord is King, those who trust in Him are safe! Since Jehovah rules, we mount the chariot of fire or walk the waves of the sea and we are secure in either case. If the worst comes to the worst, we shall be taken to the best place of all, up to the Throne of God, to the right hand of the Host High! Brothers and Sisters, comfort one another with these words if you find sanctuary in your God! But if you trust not in the Hope of Israel, you must thirst forever and never attain to satisfaction.

**III.** Thirdly, and lastly, let us look at THE COMERS TO GOD. Those who come to God—how do they come? Very briefly, *they come away from all the world*. Poor Jeremiah had nobody to help him or comfort him—the best of the men that he met with were sharper than a thorn hedge—they only wounded him. Therefore he came right out from them and confessed that Jehovah, the Hope of Israel, was his God and his Sanctuary. He set himself quite alone for God and His fear. Come, then, you that wish to

come to God, and find Him to be your Sanctuary! Come right out from the world. I do not ask you, just now, as my dear Brother Moody does, to stand up, but I believe that if I were to say, "Let those that follow after God stand up," the bulk of you would gladly rise and acknowledge your Lord.

If we do not, at this moment, adopt that mode of confessing Christ, yet we will do it in some way. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, acknowledge your Lord! "Come out from among them and be you separate; touch not the unclean thing." Come away, Lot, you cannot prosper and be happy in Sodom! You do not know or love the ways of that place. Lot settled there and thought he was going to get on first rate, but he was never happy. His righteous soul was vexed by the wicked citizens. I am glad it was so. Their ungodly conversation vexed righteous Lot and he *deserved* to be vexed. If you try to be like worldlings, I hope they will not welcome your imitation! Whenever I am told of a man's holding with the hare and running with the hounds, I am always glad to hear that the dogs bite him! What business has he with the dogs? Come right out! O Soul, if you would have peace, come away to your God! Never take your place with those who shall be written in the earth.

How did Believers of old come to God? Jeremiah *came sick and needing to be saved*, for he cried, "Heal me, O Jehovah, save me!" That is the way to come! If you want to have God and His glorious high Throne to be your Shelter, come just as you are, sick and sorry! Do not stop till you have bettered yourself—all bettering is mere battering till we come to Christ—then *He* betters us in real earnest, for He makes us new creatures in Himself! Come along, then, and say, "Heal me and save me." But *come to God with faith*. It was grand faith of Jeremiah which enabled him to say, "Heal me, and I shall be healed." Sick as I am, if You will act as physician to me I shall be cured! If You save me, lost as I am, I shall be saved! Come along, poor Sinner. "Where, Sir?" you ask. To God in Christ Jesus! This is the Gospel—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Come to your God, come to your God in Christ Jesus with the full conviction that He can and will heal you! "Heal me, and I shall be healed: save me, and I shall be saved."

And *come with this acknowledgment on your tongue*—"You are my praise." Some of you can already say, "You are my praise." "O Lord, I will praise You." "Jehovah is my strength and my song." Oh, I think if I were worn out with disease and if I had, to a large extent, lost my powers of speech and powers of thought, too, I could, if I were startled in the dead of night, sit up in my shirt sleeves and speak to the praise of the Lord my God! That is a subject upon which a child of God can surely talk in his sleep! We have a good God, a loving God, a tender God, a gracious God, a God full of long-suffering and mercy and faithfulness to us poor sinners—

***"I'll praise Him in life, I'll praise Him in death,***

***I'll praise Him as long as He lends me breath  
And say, when the death dew lies cold on my brow,  
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."***

This is good argument in prayer—"I have made my boast in You, O God. I pray You let not my glorying be stopped. Be to me as I have declared You will be."

But suppose you cannot say so much as that? Then put it this way—"Heal me, O Lord, heal me this morning! Save me, O Lord, save me at once, and You shall be my praise. Lord, I promise that I will never rob You of the honor of my salvation—if You will but save me, You shall have all the glory of it." Oh, how I used to feel, when I first sought the Lord, that if saved it must be all of Grace! I felt that I should never have a word to say in my own praise, but every syllable should be for Jesus. I was ashamed and confused, and could never open my mouth, any more, in my own defense, but all must be to my Redeemer's praise! When I get to Heaven how I will bless and magnify His name! Meanwhile I would practice the holy exercise even here. O troubled ones, come to Him just as you are! Trust Him and He will save you! Then will your heart say—

***"Now for the love I bear His name  
What was my gain I count my loss!  
My former pride I call my shame  
And nail my glory to His Cross."***

Henceforth I give myself up wholly to that one work of praising and magnifying and adoring the name of the Most High! After 50 years of life, I have no ambition but to glorify my Lord! Beloved, if you get the glorious high Throne to be your Sanctuary, I am sure you will praise the Lord, your King, forever and ever.

How is the preacher going to close with an appeal for the hospitals? This is the day for the Hospital Collection and I hope you will give largely—I think the text suggests it. If you pray for healing, help others who need healing! If your prayer is, "Save me," if you expect the Lord to have mercy upon you, have mercy upon others! As you serve a great God, have large hearts and give liberally, like followers of the generous Lord Jesus. If the Beloved Physician has healed all your diseases, show your gratitude by what you do for the sick poor in the hospitals of London this day. Amen.

***PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SECTION—Jeremiah 7:1-14; 17:1 -14.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—113,148 (PART II), 148 (PART I).***

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# **“RETURN! RETURN!”**

## **NO. 2547**

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 12, 1897,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 21, 1884.**

*“Return now every one from his evil way.”  
Jeremiah 18:11.*

As I read the Scripture in your hearing, a few minutes ago, [See the Exposition at the end of the sermon. The verse referred to is Luke 13:3—The exposition was before the sermon.—EOD.] I was greatly startled by one word in the first part of the chapter—“Except you repent, you shall all *likewise* perish.” How did those Galileans perish? I am solemnly afraid that some of you will perish just as they did. Christ says, “*likewise*,” that is to say, in the same way as they perished, so will you, unless you repent. Well, how did they perish? Their blood was mingled with their sacrifices. Will it be, can it be—shall it be—that some of you will keep on coming to the House of Prayer—that you will continue to join in all the exercises of our public service and yet that you will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, so that you will perish—and your blood will be mingled with your sacrifices? Think of it, dear Friends! Your blood on your Chapel attendance, your blood on your Church attendance—your blood on your hymn singing and on your prayers—because you have not yielded yourselves up to God, or obeyed the Word of His Gospel! If my blood must be spilt through an act of Divine vengeance, let it fall anywhere but on my religion, for that would seem a doubly dreadful thing—to die at the altar and to let one’s blood be mingled with his sacrifice! Yet I do really fear that this must and will, in the necessary order of things, be the lot of some here who never forsake the gatherings of God’s people and yet, at the same time, who have never yielded their hearts to God.

Then, think of those on whom the tower in Siloam fell—how did they die? Christ says, “Except you repent, you shall all *likewise* perish.” Why, they were destroyed by their own defenses—the tower was built to defend the place—yet it fell upon 18 of the inhabitants and slew them! It is an awful thing when a man’s self-righteousness damns him, when that which is his confidence becomes his condemnation, when the very thing in which he trusted shall totter to its fall and bury him beneath its ruins! That is the dread I have upon me, lest this calamity should happen to some of you, that your supposed tower of defense should prove to be your grave—and that you should find a sepulcher beneath your own confidences! Christ says it *shall* be so, “except you repent.”

My text is all about repentance. It is an exhortation from God, very brief and sententious, but very earnest and plain—“Return now every one from his evil way.” I want you all to notice that this is the call of *mercy*. God might have let you die to mingle your blood with your sacrifices. He might have let your tower fall upon you, to destroy you. Instead of that, the voice of Mercy still sounds in your ears—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die?” And in the words of our text he says, “Return now every one from his evil way.” God help you to listen to the call and to obey it! It is a message of mercy and it means that God would have you saved and, therefore, He cries to you, “Return,” because He is willing to receive you and to blot out all your sin!

But remember that it is equally the call of a *holy* God, the God who knows that you cannot be saved unless you turn from your evil ways. A holy God will give no salvation to the man who continues in his unrighteousness. There is no Heaven for the man who will not leave his sin. You must quit your sin, or renounce all hope of salvation. You must turn or burn! You must repent or perish. God’s unsullied holiness will never alter this Law—you must be driven from His face in the day of His wrath unless you turn from your evil way in the day of His mercy! Hope not that there shall be any exception made for you to this rule, for there shall not be. Within the gate of pearl, none who are defiled, or who would defile the holy place, shall ever enter. If you would be a partaker in the glories of Heaven, you must be washed, cleansed, sanctified. You must be made to hate your sin, or else you can never enter where God is. Listen, then, to this urgent but gracious message which I trust that God, in His mercy, has sent for many of you—“Return now every one from his evil way.”

**I.** I want you to join me in looking at the words of my text as I try to press them home by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And, first, I will answer this question, WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY? It says, “*Return.*”

The picture is that of a man who is going the wrong way. He is trespassing, he is on forbidden ground, he is advancing in a dangerous road. And if he shall continue to go in that direction, he will, by-and-by, come to a dreadful precipice over which he will fall and there he will be ruined. A voice cries to him, “Return!” What does that word mean? It is very simple and that I may make it even more plain, perhaps, for practical purposes, let me say that the first thing such a man would do would be to *stop*. If I were out in the country, on a road which I did not know, and I heard a voice crying out to me, “Return,” I would certainly stop and listen. And if I heard the cry repeated with great eagerness and earnestness, “Return! Return!” I would pause, look around and try to see who it was that had called to me. I would look in front to see whether there was any particular reason for bidding me return, but I would look all around about me to try and discover for what motive the man had bid me go

back. I wish that all of you who are wandering away from God would stop and consider where you are going. The trouble with some of you is that you will not *think*—you go blundering on, like some wild beast that cannot keep still. I beg you, just now, to stop a little while and think of what you have been doing, and to what your present course must lead, and in what woe it must end. Stop! In God's name, I would arrest you! As God's officer, I would put my hand on your shoulder and say to you, "You must stop! Pause and consider your ways. I cannot let you go on carelessly to your ruin, like a sheep into the slaughterhouse, or a bull going to be killed." Stop, I pray you!

Suppose a man *did* stop? That would not be *returning*—it is but the commencement of the return when a man stops, but it will be necessary for him, next, to *turn around*. The order for him to obey is, "Right about face." He must turn his face in the opposite direction from that in which he was traveling. I need not, perhaps, say much about what that opposite direction will necessarily be with some of you. If you are going on in sin, you know that your future direction must be the way of holiness. If you are trying to reach that refuge of lies—self-righteousness—the direction for you is, "Turn right around and look to Christ." If you are to be just the opposite of what you now are, your own conscience may be your instructor as to the particular road you are to take. When God says, "Return," it is plain that He means, "Turn your face in exactly the opposite direction from that to which it is now turned. Love what you now hate! Hate what you now love. Do what you have left undone. Leave undone what you have been accustomed to do." There must be a total, a radical change in you if you are really to obey the command, "Return." I think I hear you ask, "Who can effect this change?" And I am glad to hear that question, for I trust it will lead you to pray, "Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned!" May He, whose converting Grace can turn the sinner from the error of his ways, turn you, dear Friend, unto Himself!

There is something done towards returning when a man stops. There is still more done when he turns around, yet he does not actually return until, with persevering footsteps, the wanderer *hastens back* to him from whom he had departed. What God desires is that all His prodigal children should come home, that His stray sheep should be brought back to the fold, that the lost pieces of silver should be put into the treasury again. That, indeed, you who have wandered in sin should be as they are whom Christ has washed in His precious blood, whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated, and whom the Father has adopted and put among His children. Oh, that it might be so with you even now! I charge you, never be content until it is so. Give no rest to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you have obeyed that gracious summons, "Return," and have said to the Lord, "Behold, we come to You, for we know that it is Your love which has bid us return."

So much in answer to the question, "What does the text say?"

**II.** now I am going to dwell upon another word and ask a second question, **WHEN ARE SINNERS TO RETURN?** The text says, "Return *now* every one from his evil way."

I do not expect or wish to please you all by what I say. I should think my main purpose was defeated if I did. I want to carry out the unpleasant duty of pressing upon you that this return should be immediate. "Return *now*." Men are quite willing to promise to return when they have gone a little further—when, perhaps, they will have gone past all possibility of returning—but "*now*," is always an ugly word to them. "Tomorrow," they like much better. "Now," is a monosyllable which seems to burn into their bosom like a hot coal and, therefore, they pluck it out and throw it from them.

But listen to me, dear Friends! The voice of God bids you to return, now, and I would urge you to do so because *life is so uncertain* that if you do not return *now*, you may not live to return at all! I need not quote the many instances of men, apparently strong and healthy, who have suddenly been taken from us. I often note, as you must have done, that sickly persons are spared to us while the robust and vigorous are called away. I could quote instances where the husband lives who, I thought, would have gone long ago—and the wife who seemed the more healthy of the two—is dead and buried. But the sickly go, too, and go sometimes just when we thought they were recovering. There was great hope that they had outgrown the weakness, or that the disease would never return, but, in a moment, it leaped upon them, like a lion out of the thicket—and they were gone. He who would have his estate rightly ordered when he is dead should have his will made—everybody says that. And he who would have his *eternal* estate ordered aright should yield himself at once to the Sovereign will of the Most High, for life is uncertain.

Return *now*, for the calls of Grace may not always come to you. You sometimes hear a sermon which touches you and pricks your conscience, but, in a short time you may be removed where you will hear no such sermons, or where, though you hear them, they may no longer impress you. I am afraid my voice is so familiar to some of you unconverted ones that you are getting like the miller who can go to sleep, notwithstanding the click of the mill—no, who goes to sleep *better* in his mill than he does anywhere else! Or like some men I have heard of, over there in Southwark, who work inside the great boilers. When a poor fellow first begins to labor in such a place, the deafening noise is horrible—he thinks he must die! But, after a while, he gets so used to the reverberation that he could well-near sleep notwithstanding all the hammering. It is much the same with hearing the Word of God! Therefore I pray you, if you have long listened to one who would gladly do you good, yield to the message he delivers to you! Before you grow so familiar with it that it loses all its power over your heart, accept it as good tidings of great joy! God grant that you may do so now! While Grace calls, do not refuse.

Remember, also, that *your sin will be increased by delay*. The longer you stay away from God, the more deeply you will sin. If you keep on in the wrong path, not only will you have sinned the more, but that sin will have taken a more terrible hold upon you. Habits begin like cobwebs, but they end like chains of iron. A man might more readily have swept away the temptation when it was new to him than he will be able to do when, having yielded to it many a time, the devil has learned the way to master him. May God help you to flee from sin as soon as you perceive it, lest you be caught in its net of steel and be held in it to your *eternal destruction!*

Moreover, it is well for us to return unto our God, now, because the sooner we return to Him, the sooner we shall enjoy His favor and *the more delightful will our life become*. If to repent and to return to God involved a lifetime of misery, I would yet urge it, for it would be worth while to spend the remnant of our days in bitter grief and then to be eternally blessed—it would be worth while to give away the pleasure of time for the sake of the joys of eternity! But it is not so, for he who repents of sin loses nothing of joy when he loses sin, and he who finds God, finds Heaven! Peace with God makes even this life to be a blessed life and he who has it begins, even here, to enjoy the happinesses of the glorified! Come, then, dear Friends, you cannot too soon be happy and, therefore, you cannot too soon be holy. You cannot too soon be safe and, therefore, you cannot too soon return from the evil of your ways.

Do you not see, too, that God *will have the more service from you?* The sooner you are brought to Him, the longer will you have of life in which to serve Him. I always bless God that I was brought to Christ in my youth, for it left a good long time of life to be spent in the Lord's service. If any of you have gone past youth, into manhood and to middle age, or even to old age, then the word, "now," should come to you with a sharp, clear crack, as of a rifle! It comes like a staccato note in music, "Now! Now! Now!" It comes to you over and over again with a definite, imperious accent, "Now!" "RETURN NOW!" Why, my venerable Friend, you are already 70 years of age—I have put the number too low, for if you are spared to see another birthday, your next will find you 80—yet you are unsaved! God be merciful to you, aged sinner! Even now, may you return from your evil way!

Yet once more, return now, because, *if ever there is a reason for returning, that reason points to the present moment*. If there is a reason why you should repent before you die, that reason urges you to repent today! If it is reasonable that God should expect a man to leave his sin, it is reasonable that God should expect him to leave it *now*. If there is a hope that a man will leave his sin sometime or other, there must be a better hope that he will leave it *now* than that he will leave it in a year's time. Wisdom's voice cries, "NOW!" It is folly that says, "wait." Oh, that God Himself, by His own gracious Spirit, may *now* make you wise enough to turn

from your evil way and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved!

**III.** Now may God help me, for a minute or two, while I try to answer this third question, WHO IS THE PERSON THAT IS TO RETURN? The text says, "Return now *every one* from his evil way."

"*Every one.*" Many of you have returned, blessed be God for that! But every man, every woman, every child who has not returned should hear the voice of the Lord repeating this message, "Return now every one from his evil way." "Oh," you thought to yourself, "I wonder whether So-and-So will think of what is being said." Will you kindly forget him and think only about yourself? It would not be proper for me to point out individuals in this great crowd, but will you consider that I *do* point you out, one by one? The message of the text to each friend here who is unconverted is, "Return now *every one* from his evil way."

"Well," says one, "perhaps there will be some people converted through this sermon." Do not talk so, I pray you. Will *you* be converted through it? "You are the man," said the Prophet to David, and I would be just as personal in my address to every sinner here! I want *you*, my Friend, by Divine Grace to be turned from the error of your way. Why not? Some of you have been coming here a very long time. And there are some of you who are unhappy if you cannot come. You love the very *sound* of the Gospel and you are interested in everything which has to do with Christian work here. I cannot quite make you out, you are indeed strange people! I love you very much, but I cannot make out why you do not love your own souls better! You run about the house with the knives, the forks, the plates and the dishes, so that others may be fed, and yet you never eat anything yourself! I see you at the well and you are always ready, if you can, to turn the wheel and help to bring up the water for other people, but you never drink it yourself! What is wrong with you—some of you whom I might truly call loafers about this House of Prayer? I wish you would be real loafers, and eat of the Gospel loaf that is set on the table for all hungry sinners. Take a slice of it for yourselves this very hour!

But no, you like to be here, yet you are mere hangers-on. You take your turn in helping every good work, yet you do not give God your *hearts*. You must be fools to act in such a fashion! I do not want to say anything harsh or unkind, but that is exactly what you are! If you said that we were all wrong and laughed at our religion, I could understand you. You would be very wrong, but you would at least be consistent in it. You seem by your action to say that we are right—and yet not right! At least you seek to help us in our service, but you do not give yourself to the Lord. Why, you are, yourself, dying, and yet you run for the doctor for somebody else and all the while think yourself perfectly well! You are starving and yet you are eager to hand the bread out to the hungry—why do you not also take a bite yourself? O dear Hearts, what can be your hindrance in trusting the Savior? What is it that keeps some of you away

from Christ? I try to put the Gospel so plainly and simply that all may understand it. I have had it said to me, lately, I daresay a dozen times, by persons in spiritual trouble who have come many a mile to see me—yes, some of them from the very ends of the earth—“nobody has encouraged and helped us as you have by your sermons. You seemed as if you did not want to put any of us back, but as if you longed to bring us all to the Savior—and that is why we have come to see you.”

Well, now, I think they would not have said that so often if it had not been true. I do not frighten you away from Christ. At least, I do not mean to do so, I would much rather beckon you to come to Him. It is not fear, I think, that has kept you back. What is it, then? Ah, perhaps we shall find out before we have done, for you are staked down somehow, and cannot escape. Possibly some of you are like the man we read of in the papers some time ago. He was walking by the seaside and stepped on a large chain and slipped his foot right through one of the links. When he tried to draw it back again, he could not, for he was held fast. The tide was coming in and there he was, a prisoner. He had to call long and loud before anybody came and by the time the people arrived, he had very much hurt his foot in endeavoring to extricate himself. He begged them to run for the smith, that he might come and break the iron. He came, but he brought the wrong tools with him so he could not accomplish the task. It would be some time before he could be back and, meanwhile, the tide had come in and the water was up to the man’s feet, so he cried, “Run for the surgeon. Let him come and cut my leg off! It is the only hope of saving my life.”

But by the time the surgeon came, the water was up to the man’s neck, so the doctor could not get down to where his foot was fast in the iron chain. And there was nothing that could be done for him. There he was, poor fellow, and the tide rolled over him and he was drowned. Some of you seem to me to be just like that man, held fast by some invisible force. Yet when I try to get at the chain, I cannot find out what it is, it is so far under the water! Perhaps you do not know, yourself, what it is. I am going to make a dive to try to get at it as I ask my last question concerning the text.

**IV. FROM WHAT ARE THESE PEOPLE TO RETURN?** The text says—  
**“Return now every one from his evil way.”**

“From his evil way.” Then each man has a way of his own—an evil way of his own—some *personal form of sin*. “All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” Well now, my Friend, what is your evil way? If we can find that out, perhaps we shall learn why it is that you are not saved.

What is your own way? Is it *some constitutional sin* to which you are prone? There can be no doubt that we all have some infirmity, or weakness, or tendency to sin more fully developed in us than in other people. There is one man who is a fine fellow in many ways, but he is dreadfully impulsive and gets into furious tempers. He is soon cool, again, and he is

very sorry for what he has said and done, but there is not much good in that because if you scald anyone to death and *then* say that you are sorry, that does not bring him back to life! There are others whose tendency would be to the sins of the flesh, much more than is the case with a great many of their neighbors. Some are more inclined to pride and some to sloth, but there is something about the constitution of men, inherited from their parents, or brought on by their circumstances which leads each man towards some particular sin rather than to others. You know, dear Friends, what contrasts there are among men. There are some mean, stingy, cold-blooded fellows who would never become spend-thrifts—it is a very great difficulty to extract even a sixpence from them. They could not be prodigals and spendthrifts, and there are others who never could be misers, except by a miracle, for they never could keep a penny in their pockets—it always burnt a hole through them, directly. These observations may help some of you to see whereabouts your own evil way may lie, according to the peculiarity of your constitution, circumstances and habits.

“Well,” asks one, “what do you think is my evil way?” I will answer by putting another question to you, *What is the sin into which you most frequently fall?* I should think you can tell that—and that is the evil way from which you have most to fear. It is from that one way that you are especially called upon to return. What sin can you be most easily led into? Read the Bible through and you will find that one man was led into drunkenness, another into licentiousness, one man into anger, another into lying. Which has the greater power over you? Tonight, if you were tempted, to which temptation would you be most likely to yield? You do not know, you say. Well, then, let me put another question to you.

*When do you get most angry if anybody rebukes you?* If you are rebuked for a sin you did not commit, you need not get angry about that. You can calmly say, “My Friend, you have made a mistake.” If you are chided for having done a thing of which you feel that you are perfectly innocent, you may even say, “Now, that is a lie.” But yet you need not be very greatly provoked. But, oh, if we know your tender places and we begin just to hint at some of your private goings on—just lay bare a little of your secrets—yes, then you get furious, do you not? Now what is it about religion that you dislike most? What is it in the preaching that makes you say, “Well, I will never go to hear that man again! He curls my hair so short, he comes quite close to the skin”? Well now, that will help you to find out what is your own personal evil way—and it is from that way that you are to return.

Again, *what sin of yours eats up the other sins?* Look at a miser. He will not fall into licentiousness, because it is expensive and he cannot afford it. He is greedy for money, so he sins by covetousness, which is idolatry. He does not go and get drunk, for that is an expensive sin, and he thinks he cannot afford it. The love of money is his besetting sin. His covetousness is like Aaron’s rod—it opens its mouth and swallows up all



the other sins. Here, on the other hand, is a man who is proud. He does not try to save money, for he spends it to flatter his pride. Everything must be in grand style for such a grand man as he is! You will not find him falling into drunkenness, or into the gross sins of certain other men because he is proud of being a respectable person. He has a character to keep up, so his pride swallows up all the other kinds of sin, and people call it, "a decent pride," "a respectable pride," "a proper pride." Yes, that is one kind of devil that kills some other devils! So far, it is a good thing to have devils killed, but if he kills them by swallowing them—it only makes him so much the worse!

Ah, look next at the man who is given to the sins of the flesh. You will not find that *he* is a miser! Poor wretch, he has not anything left that he can store up. I heard but yesterday of a man who was once in a good position of life, with a wife and children. I have known him as what is called a respectable man, worth several thousands of pounds. At the present moment, he is only earning a few shillings a week and I fear he will fall lower yet. He has had another house beside his own to maintain and a house that has swallowed up all his substance. He parted with his business for £500 and within a few weeks all that money was gone—and if it had been £50,000, it would have gone, for whoredom is a deep ditch that swallows a man, body and soul, fortune and everything! Mark my words, that man will die in the streets, one day, though he could have bought some of us up not so very long ago. That sin of his, you see, has swallowed everything up—it all disappears when he once goes that way. It is the same with gambling. When a man takes to the gaming table, it seems as if his whole soul runs out at that sluice and his entire life is just nothing to him. Wife, children, substance—all must go at the throw of the dice—or be staked on the running of a horse!

So, you see, dear Friends, you can find out which is your sin if you can discover what it is that swallows up all the others and becomes the master of your entire being. Where does your money mostly go? You could have told that Joseph was Jacob's favorite because he made him a coat of many colors. And there are some sins that wear the coat of many colors and often, as it were, it is dipped in the man's own blood, for everything goes for that particular sin.

I know that I am speaking to some such people. Turn, I beseech you, for before long you will be beggars if you do not. Turn from your sins, for before long you will be where hope can never come, where no messenger of mercy will invite you to return, but where the bell of eternity shall ring out its dreadful knell, "forever, forever, FOREVER!"—

***"There are no acts of pardon passed  
In the cold grave to which we hasten,  
But darkness, death, and long despair  
Reign in eternal silence there."***

Therefore, "return now every one from his evil way."

But I have not hit on your sin yet, my Friend, have I? You have an evil way which you will not tell anyone. It is not as bad as any I have mentioned—it is a very respectable kind of evil way which you have. Your evil way is this, *the evil way of self-righteousness*. You do your very best. In fact, you think you do a little better than most people. You are not a Christian, but you are rather better than some Christians. In truth, you are so good a fellow that it is perfectly wonderful how the world bears up with such a good person as you are upon its surface! You utterly despise the evils I have been talking about and the people who commit them. You will not associate with them, nor say, “Good morrow,” to them, you are so good. Ah, yes, but do you know where such “good” people as you are go? Not Heaven, mark you, for all those who are in Heaven have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And yours, according to your own account, do not need to be washed! The day will come, I assure you, when, if this has been your evil way, it shall turn out to be as destructive as the way of the worst transgressor, for self-righteousness is an open and gross insult to God! It makes out that the death of Christ was a superfluity! It tells God that He is wrong in charging a man with sin. It raises a clamor against God—it claims as a *right*, every good thing that God has to give—it does, in fact, uncrown the Savior, bid the Holy Spirit go His way as no longer needed, and throws the Gospel, which is the crown jewel of God, into the mud!

I wish that we were all agreed, by the power of the good Spirit, that we would turn unto our God with contrite hearts. Come, dear Friends, let us first acknowledge our sin. Come, let us trust in the Great Sacrifice. Come, let us lay our hand on Your dear head, O Christ, while we stand here and confess our sin. Come, let us ask the Holy Spirit to make us strong enough to forsake our sin. Let us ask Him to give us new hearts, and right spirits, that we may turn effectually from all sin and follow on to know the Lord. Children of God, pray for the whole congregation now! Let us pray—

“O Lord, turn us! Turn us and we shall be turned! And, if You *have* turned us, help us to persevere in righteousness, and let us not turn again to folly. But oh, turn men and women tonight, for Your love’s sake—for Your mercy’s sake—for Christ’s sake! Turn the whole congregation of unsaved ones with their face to the Cross! And may they look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for their sin! And then may they look again unto Him and be lightened, as they see their sin effectually and eternally put away by the substitutionary Sacrifice of their redeeming God! Answer, O Christ, the cries of our soul, for Your own name’s sake! Amen.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
LUKE 13:1-22.**

**Verse 1.** *There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. It was a cruel and wicked act on the part of Pilate to wreak his vengeance upon the Galileans when they were occupied in offering the sacrifices of their religion.*

**2.** *And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose you that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? If men die violent deaths, if they perish in an accident, are they, therefore, to be accounted more guilty than the rest of mankind?*

**3-5.** *I tell you, no, but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think you that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No, but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.* Here, then, is a word of warning to those who have seen others die, all of a sudden, and who have wrapped themselves up in the robe of self-conceit, saying to themselves, "no doubt these people were much worse than we are. They have been taken away, but we still live." Take heed, Sirs, for God's justice is equal and unerring, and He will deal with you even as He has dealt with others! Our Lord next spoke a parable of warning to those who live in the midst of privileges, but who bring forth no fruit unto God. Let those to whom this parable belongs take note of the message it is intended to convey to them.

**6, 7.** *He spoke also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumberest it the ground?* "In the first year, it may have been a bad season. The second may have been the same, but for a tree to be fruitless for three years, to have so long a time of probation, and yet to bear no fruit, proves it to be worthless. If I had found even a little fruit on it, I would have been hopeful that more would come, by-and-by, but these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, *and find none.* Surely, there never will be any. It has had every opportunity. There is no need of any longer delay—'cut it down; why cumberest it the ground?'"

**8, 9.** *And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it, and fertilize it: and if it bears fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down.* The vinedresser has much patience, but there is a limit to it. He will not willingly lose a tree, but only one more year is to be given to this cumberer of the vineyard. Who can tell but that, in the case of some who are here, that final year is coming to a close? Oh, that the Lord would cause the fruitless to become fruitful before the year ends!

Next, in the chapter, we have a word of comfort to those who have been under the dominion of sin for many a day and who are almost in despair. Here is one of Christ's Sabbath miracles.

**10-17.** *And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and said unto the people, there are six days in which men ought to work: in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath. The Lord then answered him, and said, you hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed. So they will be again one of these days—all His present adversaries as well as all the old ones—those who deny His Deity, those who dispute His doctrines, those who refuse to yield obedience to His commands—those who know nothing of Him and who call themselves “agnostics.” “All His adversaries were ashamed.”*

**17.** *And all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.* There is a very striking contrast between the two parts of this verse—“All His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.” The next parable is full of comfort to those in whom there is at present little Grace, but, being a living seed, it will become more.

**18-22.** *Then said He, Unto what is the Kingdom of God like? And whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. With His face toward the place where He should offer an Atonement for the sin of men, which was to be the climax of all His labors!*

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—509, 605, 368.**

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

# HOPE, YET NO HOPE— NO HOPE, YET HOPE NO. 684

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 8, 1866,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“You are wearied in the length of your way;  
yet you did not say, There is no Hope.”  
Isaiah 57:10.*

*“And they said, THERE IS NO HOPE: but we will walk after  
our own devices, and we will  
everyone do the imagination of his evil heart.”  
Jeremiah 18:12.*

WHO can understand the subtlety of the human heart? Well said the Prophet, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” The physician of the body had need be skillful to track disease to its secret origin and to follow it through all its mysterious pathways in the mazes of the human body. But he who has to deal with *souls* has a task far harder, inasmuch as sin is more subtle than the virus of the most incurable disease, and the way in which it intertwines itself with every power of humanity is even more marvelous than the strange influences of plague and pest upon the human body.

Those whose business and office it is to deal with sick souls set it as their great object to be instruments in the hands of God of bringing diseased souls to trust in the great salvation which God has provided in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And simple as such a work may seem to be, every truly experienced minister is brought to confess that it needs a Divine art and Omnipotent power to bring a soul to rest simply upon Christ. All the subtlety of the human heart exerts itself to the utmost to prevent that heart from trusting in the Savior—and while evil is always cunning, it shows itself to be supremely so in its efforts to guard the Cross against the approaches of sinners. By the Cross, as the Savior said, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed. The Cross develops the subtlety of man when we see his struggles and contortions to avoid resting upon its glorious provisions of Divine Grace.

There are two phases in spiritual life which well illustrate the deceitfulness of the heart. The first is that described in my first text, in which the man, though wearied in his many attempts, is not and cannot be convinced of the hopelessness of self-salvation but still clings to the delusion that he shall be able, somehow—he knows not how—to deliver himself from ruin. When you shall have hunted the man out of *this*, you will then meet with a new difficulty which is described in the second text. Finding there is no hope in himself, the man draws the unwarrantable conclusion

that there is no hope for him in God. And, as once you had to battle with his self-confidence, now you have to wrestle with his despair.

It is self-righteousness in both cases. In the one case it is the soul content with self-righteousness. In the second place it is man sullenly preferring to perish rather than receive the righteousness of Christ. I ask the children of God to pray that I may be enabled to simply but earnestly deal with men's souls this morning! It is their conversion that I am aiming at.

I shall neither strive to please your ears nor your tastes, nor do I court an opportunity for oratorical display. All I want is to lead the sinner, by God's Grace, out of himself and then afterwards to lead him up from his self-despair. And oh, may God the Holy Spirit bring some souls by my means this morning to the foot of the Cross, and may they look up and know themselves to be saved through the finished sacrifice of our Great High Priest!

**I.** Considering the first text, we have to speak of A HOPE WHICH IS NO HOPE. "You are wearied in the length of your way; yet you did not say, There is no hope. You have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved." This well pictures the pursuit of men after satisfaction in earthly things. They will hunt the frequents of wealth. They will travel the pathways of fame. They will dig into the mines of knowledge. They will exhaust themselves in the deceitful delights of sin, and finding them all to be vanity and emptiness, they will become sorely perplexed and disappointed.

But they will still continue their fruitless search. Wearied with the length of their way, they still stagger forward under the influence of spiritual madness! And though there is no result to be reached except that of everlasting disappointment, yet they press forward with as much ardor as if a full assurance of success sustained their spirits. Worldlings seem far more resolved to die than some Christians are to live. They are more desperate in seeking their own destruction than Believers are in enjoying spiritual life. Indeed, they are content because they have found the life of their hand. Living from hand to mouth is enough for them. That they are still alive—that they possess present comforts and present enjoyments—this contents the many.

As for the future, they say, "Let it take care of itself." As for *eternity*, they leave others to care for its realities—the life of their hand is enough for them. Their motto is, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." They have no foresight for their eternal state and the present hour absorbs them. Carnal minds with all their might pursue earth's vanities, and when they are wearied in their pursuit they still say not, "There is no hope," but change the direction, and continue the idle chase! They turn to another and another of earth's broken cisterns, hoping to find water where not a drop was ever discovered before.

That, however, is not the subject of this morning. The text applies very eminently to those who are seeking salvation by *ceremonies*. This is a very numerous and increasing class. It is getting to be the current and fashionable belief that we are to be saved by going to holy places, receiving priestly baptism, Episcopal confirmation, eating consecrated bread, drink-

ing hallowed wine, and repeating devout expressions. We are going back to the beggarly elements of Rome about as fast as we can and in a very short time we shall see the whole of this country covered by an Anglican Popery which will be far more hard to deal with than the more manifest Popery of Rome.

It is surprising that in an age which was supposed to be one of thought and common sense, men should so soon be dazzled with the gaudy toys of Romanism! I marvel that the childish processions, the babyism, the effeminate millinery, the infantile nurseryisms of Rome should have charms for reasonable men and women! Some of the churches during the past week would have made little children scream with delight—they would have felt that they were in the prettiest nurseries and toyshops which they had ever seen! O it is an age of folly in which men think to worship God with displays fit only for children's sports!

There may be some hearer here who is pursuing salvation by outward ceremonies. Your path is certainly a very tedious one and it will end in disappointment. If you addict yourself to the fullest ceremony. If you are obedient to it in all its jots and tittles—keeping its fast days and its feast days, its vigils, matins and vespers, bowing down before its priesthood, its altars, and its millinery, giving up your reason and binding yourself in the fetters of superstition—after you have done all this you will find an emptiness and a vexation of spirit as the only result!

And it is probable that when you have once committed yourself to that course you will go on, wearied with the road, but too bewitched to be able to leave it! Pressing forward, you will be unwilling to confess that you have been mistaken. You will be conscious that you feel but little consolation but continue to pursue your downward course as if glory surely shone before you.

It is only Divine Grace that can enable us to follow Luther's example, who, after going up and down Pilate's staircase on his knees, muttering so many Ave Marias and Pater Nosters, called to mind that old text, "Therefore being justified by *faith*, we have peace with God." He sprung up from his knees and forsook once and forever all dependence upon outward formalities and quit the cloistered cell and all its austerities to live the life of a Believer, knowing that by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.

Yet, dear Friends, albeit that I know only Divine Grace can turn you from the delusive path of vain ceremonies, I would like to suggest a doubt or two to you which may be helpful one of these days to make you choose a wiser course. Does it not seem to you to be inconsistent with the Character of the God of Nature that He should have instituted a plan of salvation so singularly complicated and theatrical as that which is nowadays taught us by priests? Nature is simple! Her grandeur lies in her simplicity. If you walk in the fields of our own happy land, or climb the lofty ranges of the Alps, you are delighted with the beautiful simplicity of nature in which there is an utter absence of everything gaudy, showy, and theatrical.

Everything has a practical design, and even the colors of the flowers, which are not without intent and design, enable the plant to drink in cer-

tain rays of light which shall best satisfy its need. There is nothing in nature for mere display! But you step inside a place of worship dedicated to salvation by ceremonies, and I am persuaded that your taste will be outraged, if that taste has been formed upon the model of nature. Frequently, on the Continent, I turned with loathing from gaudily decorated churches daubed with paint, smothered with gilt, and bedizened with pictures, dolls, and all sorts of baby prettiness. I turned aside from them in uttering, "If your god accepts such rubbish as this he is no god to me! The God of yon rolling clouds and crashing thunder, yon foaming billows and towering rocks is the God whom I adore. Too sublime, too noble, too great-minded to take delight in your genuflections and stage-play devotions."

When I beheld processions with banners, and crosses, and smoking censers, and saw men who claimed to be sent of God, and yet dress themselves like Tom fools, I did not care for their god, but reckoned that he was some heathenish idol whom I counted it my glory as a man to scoff at and to despise! Do not fall into the notion that the God of nature is different from the God of Grace. He who wrote the book of Nature wrote the book of Revelation, and writes the book of experience within the human heart. Do not, therefore, choose a way of salvation utterly at variance with the Divine Character.

Has it never struck you that ceremonial salvation would be a very wicked way of salvation? What is there, for instance, about drops of baptismal water which could make men better? What is there about confirmation that should assure you of the forgiveness of your sins? What is there about receiving a piece of bread and drinking a drop of wine that should confer Divine Grace? Might you not remain as bad at heart and as wicked after all as ever you were? And is it not a violation of the eternal principles of morality that a man should be endowed with Grace while his soul still clings to sin?

Now, if there is no effect in water to make you hate sin, and no result from the priest's hands to make you love God, and no result from sacraments to make you holy and heavenly-minded—can you trust in them? Surely there must be some sort of congruity between the means and the result! Surely it is immoral in the highest degree to tell a man that by outward *things*, which cannot change the life, he shall have his sins forgiven! We shall have the iniquity of the Middle Ages back again if we have the faith of the Middle Ages proclaimed—and from all that may God in His Grace deliver us! The votaries of superstition have furnished us with a very solemn argument, for many of them, when they have lain dying, have turned their eyes to other places and have anxiously begged for full assurance of eternal life.

Superstition, strange to say, has been truthful enough to reply, "I have no rest to offer you." For what does Rome offer when you have done all? *Purgatory* and its pains! It tells you that when you have done all, you may have to lie for hundreds of years in a place full of misery till you have been purged from sin! How very different from the Gospel which the Word of God reveals to you—that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is saved not only from the *guilt* of sin but from the *love* of sin—is enabled to



be holy, is made a new creature, and without any purgatorial cleansing shall ascend to his Father and his God to dwell with Him forever!

So simple, so God-like, so Divine! How is it that so many cast it aside, and take up with these sillinesses which are the inventions of man? This whole Book through salvation is never said to be by anything done by *priests*—but salvation is everywhere spoken of as being by *Christ* through *faith*! There is not a place that gives a vestige of confidence to anybody who hopes to be saved by the performances of *rituals*—but everywhere salvation is presented to those humble, contrite souls who know and trust the Savior's blood.

Perhaps these words of mine may not apply to many of you, and therefore we will turn to another phase of the same thing. A great mass of people, even though they reject priest-craft, make themselves priests, and rely upon their good works. A poor and wretched man dreamed that he was counting out gold. There it stood upon the table before him in great bags, and as he untied string after string, he found himself wealthy beyond Croesus' treasures. He was lying upon a bed of straw in the midst of filth and squalor—a mass of rags and wretchedness—but he dreamed of riches!

A charitable friend who had brought him help stood at the sleeper's side and said, "I have brought you help, for I know your urgent need." Now the man was in deep sleep and the voice mingled with his dream as though it were part of it. He replied, therefore, with scornful indignation, "Get you gone! I need no miserable charity from you. I am possessor of heaps of gold. Can you not see them? I will open a bag and pour out a heap that shall glitter before your eyes." Thus foolishly he talked on, babbling of a treasure which existed only in his dreams till he who came to help him accepted his repulse and departed mournfully. When the man awakened he had no comfort from his dream, but found that he had been duped by it into rejecting his only friend.

Such is the position of every person who is hoping to be saved by his good works. You have no good works except in your *dreams*. Those things, which you supposed to be excellent are really defiled with sin and spoiled with impurity. Jesus stands by you this morning and cries, "Soul, I have come from Heaven to redeem you. If you had any good works there had been no need for Me to come to save you, but, inasmuch as you are naked, and poor, and miserable, I came to earth and this face was bedewed with sweat of blood, and these hands were pierced, and this side was opened to work out your salvation. Take it! I freely present it to you."

Will you, in your sleep this morning, make that sad reply, "Jesus, we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. We have neither cursed Your Father's name, nor broken your Sabbath, nor done anything amiss"? If so, dear Friends, you are resting upon a delusion and will find it so when it is too late! The way of salvation by works, if it were possible, would be a very wearisome way. How many good works would carry a man to Heaven would be a question very difficult to answer. It would be such a way that though a man should work his fingers to the bone, yet he would never be able to clamber up the precipice—for Sinai is too steep

and high for mortal feet to force a passage to the skies up its terrible battlements.

The way of salvation by works is totally contrary to that revealed in the Bible. If there is anything plain there, this is plain, “By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.” The way of salvation by works is a proud, rebellious way, by which man hopes to avoid humiliating himself before his God. How should the Lord bestow His favor upon the man who refuses to trust in His own dear Son? Shall the Lord yield to save men, and yet let them remain proud and boastful? Shall He save a man who refuses to owe that salvation to Divine mercy? You weary yourself, my Hearer, in your resolutions, and doings, and works, in the greatness of your way, and yet you will not confess that, “There is no hope.” May the Lord force that conviction upon you till you shall turn aside from all self-confidence and rest in Jesus Christ alone!

Many persons are looking for salvation by another form of self-deception, namely, the way of repentance and reformation. It is thought by some that if they pray a certain number of prayers and repent up to a certain amount, they will then be saved as the result of their prayers and repenting. This, again, is another way of winning salvation which is not spoken of in Scripture. This is a way by which neither Law or Gospel receive honor. To repent is a Christian’s *duty*, but to hope for salvation by virtue of that, alone, is a delusion of the most fearful kind! The reason for salvation lies not in my repenting, but in Christ’s suffering—not in my renunciation of sin, but in Christ’s having borne my sin in His own body on the tree. Oh, that by God’s Grace I may have done with relying upon anything that comes from myself!

The idea of trying to repent in order to save yourself is so ridiculous that it has sometimes reminded me of the old story of the Dutchman, who, having no family, but having a great many cousins, left his estate in this way—all the cousins were to meet in the Town Hall on a certain day, and whoever could cry for him first, and could honestly say he wept out of sorrow for his death should have the estate. Now there was a very great difficulty here, because of the remarkable mingling of feeling. Could they get themselves into a state of mind so as to lament his death? Well, the largeness of the fortune and the desirableness of the estate at once dried up the tears!

I forget how the story ends, but it sufficiently shows the impossibility of lamenting in order to gain an object. The hopeful joy and the sorrow, if both possible in themselves, would effectually neutralize each other. The tears of true repentance must be as much the gift of God as Heaven itself, and if we were to have an offer to be saved on account of our repenting, repenting would be an impossibility to us. Repentance is a part of salvation, and when Christ saves us He saves us by making us repent! But repentance does not save—it is the work of God, and the work of God alone. Now why do you weary yourself in this way? For surely in it “There is no hope.”

My drift in all this rambling talk is just this—whatever it is, my dear Hearer, that you are looking to as a ground of confidence—if it is anything

in *yourself*— pray you give up all hope, for though you have not seen it to be true, it is nevertheless assuredly so that there is no hope whatever by it. Where you have to do with the work it will be marred and spoiled and will end in confusion. Salvation is of the Lord, and your deliverance from your present state of sin and guilt must come from the right hand of the Most High! It cannot in any degree, or in any measure, come from yourself. You have destroyed yourself, that is, in your works—your help must be found in Another from the first to the last.

I shall be accused, I know, of dispiriting you. I shall desire to plead guilty to the accusation! And if it shall even be urged again that I drive you to despair, I shall again plead guilty and glory in the result! I wish to preach everyone who would save himself into utter despair! If any man is hoping to save himself, I pray God that He may smite that hope dead on the spot—that it may be renounced forever. Sinner, oh that you would consent to yield up all confidence in yourself, for then there would be hope for you!

Most men must have a secret hope somewhere of a false kind, for, look at the way in which they are employing themselves. Most men are not seeking to escape from the wrath to come—they are busy in worldly things while Hell is near them. They are like idiots catching flies on board a ship which is in the very act of going down. Surely those men must have some fictitious hope *somewhere* or they would not act like this! We see many persons busy about their persons, decorating themselves when their soul is in ruin. They are like a man painting his front door when his house is in flames! Surely they must harbor some baseless hope which makes them thus insensible!

We see men who do not quail and tremble, though they profess to believe the Bible which tells them that God is angry with them every day. Surely their quietness of heart must arise from some secret hope lurking in their spirits! The rope of mercy is cast to the sinner and he will not lay hold of it! Surely he cannot be such a fool as to love to die—he must have some hope *somewhere* that he can swim by his own exertions and it is this hopefulness of the man in *himself* that is his ruin and his destruction. Until you are totally separate from all consciousness of hope in *yourself*, there is no hope that the Gospel will ever be any power to you!

But when you shall throw up your hands like a drowning man, feeling, “It is all over with me! I am lost, lost, unless a stronger than I shall interpose.” Oh Sinner, *then* there is hope for you! If we can once get you to say, “One thing I know, I cannot save myself. One thing I feel, I must have a stronger arm than mine to rescue me from ruin.” When you have come to *this*, O Soul, we will begin to rejoice over you and may God grant that our rejoicing may not be in vain!

**II.** We shall now turn to the second text. “And they said, THERE IS NO HOPE: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will everyone do the imagination of his evil heart.” Here we have NO HOPE—AND YET HOPE. When the sinner has at last been driven by stress of weather from the road of his own confidence, then he flies to the dreary harbor of despair. He is now convinced that there is no hope in himself, and like a simpleton

he goes to the other extreme, and concludes, “Then I cannot be saved at all.”

He acts as if there were nobody in the world but himself, and begins to measure God’s power and God’s Grace by his own merit and power. Some before me, convinced of their own powerlessness, are ready to lie down in a fit of despair and die. “The preacher has been telling us there is no hope, then we will give it up.” My dear Friend, I know what will be the result if you go away with that impression—you will go off to your sins—for despair is the mother of all sorts of evil. When a man says, “There is no hope of Heaven for me,” then he throws the reins upon the neck of his lusts and goes on from bad to worse.

You will thoroughly misunderstand me if you go away with that impression. There is no hope for you *in yourself*, but there is hope for you in Him whom God has provided to be the Savior of such as you! Hopelessness in self is what we want to bring you to, but hopelessness *in itself*, and especially in connection with God, would be a sin from which we would urge you to escape. If you are sitting down in despair, I want to speak to you, first, of the God of Hope. Dear Friend, there is that in God—Father, Son, and Spirit—which may remove your fears so that you need never utter a single doubting word again!

You are saying, “I am full of sin.” That is true—you are much more full of sin than you think you are. “But I have been a great sinner.” That is likely—and you are a greater sinner than you will ever know yourself to have been. “But I don’t feel my sinnership as I ought to do.” That is very likely—and you never will do so. No man on earth ever did feel sin in all its guiltiness, for God alone knows the blackness of sin. “But I am altogether such a one that there is nothing in me to recommend me. I could almost wish I had been a great sinner, that I might feel a great repentance. I have nothing to recommend me.”

Now think of the loving kindness of God the Father. Do you remember how He revealed Himself in that parable of the prodigal son? That prodigal son had been ungrateful, wicked—very wicked. He had spent his life in all sorts of vice and had become filthy in person and loathsome in character. His associates were of the lowest race of men, and then brutes themselves. Yet the goodness which he had not in himself his father had. He was all sin, but his father was all mercy. He was all iniquity, but his father was all loving kindness. Now can you not see, if the prodigal were here, we might say to him, “There is no hope for you in yourself. Those rags cannot recommend you. The swine trough cannot be used as an argument.”

But then that would not be a ground for his stopping where he is, for “there is hope for you in your father. He is so good, so tender. He rejoices to receive his returning children.” And, Sinner, there is hope in God for *you*. His name is God That Is Good. He delights in mercy—it is His soul’s highest joy to clasp His Ephraim to His bosom. This very morning He has sent me to say to you, “Come now, and let us reason together, said 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.”

But you meet this invitation with another desponding suggestion. You say, “Why should I come before the Most High God? I have sinned, and what shall I bring as a recompense? Rivers of oil and ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts, if I could bring them, would not be acceptable to Him. If I had a mint of merits. If I had godly impressions. If I had high moral excellence I would come with that to God, and hope to obtain a hearing.”

But hearken, Sinner, do you not know the name of the second Person in the Trinity? It is Jesus Christ, the Son. Now, if you need merit, has He not enough of it? For what cause do you think He lived on earth three-and-thirty years and kept God’s Law? Did He keep that for Himself? What need for God to be a man and to become subject to Law at all? He must have kept that Law for someone, then—but not for *righteous* men, for such have kept the law themselves! He must have kept it for the *unrighteous*.

Now, can you not take that which Christ has worked out, and take it to yourself when He freely bids you take it? You talk of sin but have you never heard that my Lord Jesus died? Why Man, you have heard this hundreds of times! But I pray you open your eyes and see it! Do you see that Cross, the center one of the three? Thieves hang upon the other two, but God Himself hangs upon the one in the middle. God, in the form of Mary’s Son, hangs bleeding out His life in acute sufferings exquisite, unutterable! For whom does He die? Not for Himself! What cause that God should be a man and die? He suffers! He suffers for sin! For whose sin, then? Not for His own for He had none. For the sins of *good* people? What need of that? He dies for the sins of those who have committed sins—for the sins of transgressors such as you and I are!

Oh Soul, do you not hear the voice that said, “Look unto Me and live”? What? Jesus, am I not to *do anything* by way of merit? Am I not to *be* anything by way of preparation? Am I to stand and simply look at You and feel my sins forgiven? Blessed be Your name! What a simple plan of salvation! Now I feel my heart begin to melt. Now I hate the sins that nailed You there. Now do I give myself to You, to serve You all my life. This is good evidence of salvation when a man can thus speak: “I hate sin and I desire to serve Christ.” You can see that he is saved from the power of sin—the power of the Cross has made him a new man!

Oh Sinner, if you have no merit, you need not wish for any! Take Christ in your hands for He is made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption! And all this for every soul of Adam born who trusts in Him alone! But I hear you complaining again, “Oh, but I have not the power to *repent*. You have told me this before and I cannot believe it—I cannot soften my heart—I am so powerless I cannot do anything! You have been teaching me that.” I know I have, but there is another person in the Trinity, and what is His name? It is the Holy Spirit. And do you not know that the Holy Spirit helps our infirmity?

Though we know not what to pray for as we ought, yet He teaches us to pray. It is true you are darkness, but then He is your light! It is true you are naturally dead, but the Holy Spirit gives us life! And the light of God is the Holy Spirit as He shows Himself to you. It is clear that you can do

nothing without that Spirit—that should make you despair of self! But you can do everything *with* that Spirit! Now, lift those eyes of yours with which He has already taught you to weep! Lift them up to the Throne and say, “My Father, if I may dare to call You by that name, help me to trust Your Son! My God, I see in Yourself a Father’s love, in Your Son a Savior’s power, and in Your Spirit the Quickener’s life. Oh give me to feel Yourself within me, or, O God, if I may not feel it I will still believe it, for You cannot lie, and whether I have a comfortable evidence or not, I do this morning—utterly hopeless of anything in myself—I do this morning cast myself on You. “Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief.”

Why, Sinner, I do not know what it is that you may want, but I know one thing—it is provided for you in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and resting upon the great Savior whom God has provided, there is hope for you, my dear fellow creature! There is the brightness of a ray of hope this very morning, only may God turn it from a *possible* into an *actual* hope and give you a good hope of eternal life through believing in Jesus Christ!

Thus I have tried to turn you away from self to the Lord—but it may be I have some very hard cases to deal with—and so, two or three suggestions by way of smiting at the despair which some of you feel. A great Divine has said—and I think there is some truth in it—that a very great number of souls are destroyed through the fear that they cannot be saved. I think it is very likely. If some of you really thought that Christ could save you, if you felt a hope that you might yet be numbered with His people, you would say, “I will forsake my sins, I will leave my present evil way, and I will fly unto the strong for strength.”

Now though I have laid judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and sought to put the axe to the tree of all creature confidence, yet there is hope in Jesus Christ! There is hope in Jesus Christ, my dear Hearer, even for you! And I will give you these two or three reasons. In the first place, would it not be wise even if there were only a “perhaps,” to go to Christ and trust Him on the strength of that? The king of Nineveh had no Gospel message, He had simply the Law preached by Jonah, and that very shortly and sternly. Jonah’s message was, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” But the king of Nineveh said, “Who can tell?” And having nothing to rest upon—not a single word of promise—he humbled himself before God, he and his people, on the strength of a, “Who can tell?”

Ah, my dear Hearers, take care lest the men of Nineveh rise up in judgment against you! You have got much more than a, “Who can tell?” Oh Sinner, you are saying, “I cannot be saved.” But I ask you, Who can tell? “But I do not feel that there is hope.” Who can tell? “But I am such a sinner.” Who can tell? “Oh, but I am such a dull, heavy spirit! I cannot feel—there cannot be mercy for me.” But who can tell? Surely if but on the presumption of “Who can tell?” the men of Nineveh went and found mercy, you will be inexcusable if you do not act upon the same, having much more than that to be your comfort! Go, Sinner, to the Cross, for who can tell?

But, in the next place, you have had many clear and positive examples. In reading Scripture through you find that many have been to Christ and that there never was one cast out yet. If you had seen some repulsed, you might conclude that you must be among them, but not one has been rejected by the Savior. Why should you be? We need not turn to books—there are living people here saved by Divine Grace. I myself am one. I had no more preparation for Christ than you have. I had not the shadow of anything to trust to any more than you have. When I heard the Gospel precept, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth,” I did look, and I am saved!

Oh my Soul, I am the witness for my Master that He is true! In a moment, no sooner had I looked than I had joy and peace, and I can promise you the same! Those wounds of Christ still stream with mercy! That head crowned with thorns still beams with the splendor of Grace! Do but look into His pierced side and you shall see a fount most deep and full—still flowing with blood and water to cleanse you, even *you*, from sin! Do not say you cannot come to Christ for He is not here—you cannot come upon your feet, but then your thoughts are the feet of your soul! Come to Him in *thought*. Come to Him in confidence. Come to Him in trust, and you cannot trust Christ and yet be cast away. You have living examples.

Moreover you have comfortable promises in the Word of God. I was thinking much yesterday of this promise—I wonder whether God has sent it to my heart for any of you—“Your hearts shall live that seek Him.” I was wondering whether I should preach from it, but anyhow it kept following me about—“Your hearts shall live that seek Him.” If you seek Him your heart shall live! Leap on the back of that promise and let it bear you, as the Samaritan’s beast bore the dying man to an inn where you may rest—I mean to Christ—where you may have confidence.

Here is another. “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Now you do call upon His name. There are many others. They have been quoted in your ears till you know them by heart. “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” And you know that precious one, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” You see I had some black things to say at first—I had to tell you that the disease was incurable by natural means—but then the supernatural Physician can remove it! I had to tell you that the ship was sinking and could not be saved, but I have now to point you to the lifeboat which can never be wrecked. I had to warn you that your own arm is palsied, but I have to assure you that the Lord’s arm is not so shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear.

I had to remind you that you were hopeless bankrupts and could not pay a farthing in the pound, but I have to assure you that He has paid all Believers’ debts. I had to tell you that you were all so dirty in His sight that, in yourselves considered, you never could be accepted. But I have now to say, on the other hand, that every Believer is so clean and fair after being washed in Jesus’ blood that he is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Away, you broken cisterns! Oh, for the hammer of God to dash you into shivers! But come, come, come you thirsty ones to the ever-

flowing, overflowing fountain! Here is nothing stinted! Here is no shortness of supply, no illiberality of gift—come as you are!

The fountain flows freely and richly for you, who, having nothing in yourselves, are willing to have everything in Christ Jesus! Do not be saying, “There is no hope,” for there IS hope! There is more—there is security—there is certainty to every soul that trusts in Jesus!

To conclude, do you not know, poor Sinner, you who believe in Jesus this morning—do you not know the news? Then I will tell you a secret. Do you not know that if you now prostrate yourself at the foot of the Cross, you are God’s chosen one? Your name is engraved on the hand of Jesus, on the heart of God! Before the daystar knew its place or planets ran their round—before the primeval darkness was pierced by the sun’s first ray you were dear to the heart of Deity! You are His elect, His beloved one! And do you not know that the mountains may depart and the hills be removed but the Covenant of His love shall never depart from you? Neither shall His Grace be removed, said the Lord, who this morning has manifested His mercy towards you!

Though you are but just now converted, there is laid up for you in Heaven a crown of life that fades not away. Jesus pleads for you this very day! He this day prepares one of the many mansions for your eternal dwelling place! Be of good courage! Angels are singing, Heaven is rejoicing over YOU! The Church on earth is glad concerning you! And one day, when the great Shepherd shall appear, you also shall appear with Him in glory—and all this for you, poor helplessly ruined sinner—helpless in yourself, but saved in Christ Jesus! May God add a blessing to this simple testimony this morning and His shall be the praise.

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# THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

## NO. 395

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 2, 1861,  
BY REV. C. He. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“This is His name whereby He shall be called,  
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”*  
*Jeremiah 23:6.*

MAN by the Fall sustained an infinite loss in the matter of righteousness. He suffered the loss of a righteous nature and then a two-fold loss of legal righteousness in the sight of God. Man sinned. He was therefore no longer innocent of transgression. Man did not keep the command. He therefore was guilty of the sin of omission. In that which he *committed* and in that which he *omitted*, his original character for uprightness was completely wrecked. Jesus Christ came to undo the mischief of the Fall for His people. So far as their sin concerned their breach of the command—He has removed by His precious blood.

His agony and bloody sweat have forever taken away the consequences of sin from believers, seeing Christ did by His one sacrifice bear the penalty of that sin in His flesh. He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Still it is not enough for a man to be pardoned. He, of course, is then in the eye of God without sin. But it was required of man that he should actually *keep* the command. It was not enough that he did not break it or that he is regarded through the blood as though he did not break it. He must keep it—he must continue in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.

How is this necessity supplied? Man must have a righteousness or God cannot accept him. Man must have a perfect obedience or else God cannot reward him. Should He give Heaven to a soul that has not perfectly kept the Law? That were to give the reward where the service is not done and that before God would be an act which might impeach His justice. Where, then, is the righteousness with which the pardoned man shall be completely covered, so that God can regard him as having kept the Law and reward him for so doing? Surely, my Brethren, none of you are so drunk as to think that this righteousness can be worked out by yourselves.

You must despair of ever being able to keep the Law perfectly. Each day you sin. Since you have passed from death unto life the old Adam still struggles for dominion within you. And by the force of the lusts of the flesh you are brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in your members. The good you would do, you do not—and the evil you would not, that you too often do. Some have thought the works of the Holy Spirit

in us would give us a righteousness in which we might stand. I am sure, my Brethren, we would not say a word derogatory to the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is divine. But we hold it to be a great cardinal point in divinity that the work of the Spirit never meant to supplant the merits of the Son. We could not depreciate the Lord Jesus Christ in order to exalt the office of the Holy Spirit of God. We know that each particular branch of the divine salvation which was espoused by the Persons of the Trinity has been carried out by each One to perfection. Now as we are accepted in the Beloved, it must be by a something that the Beloved did. As we are justified in Christ it must be by a something not that the Spirit has done but which Christ has done. We must believe, then—for there is no other alternative—that the righteousness in which we must be clothed and through which we must be accepted and by which we are made meet to inherit eternal life, can be no other than the work of Jesus Christ.

We, therefore, assert—believing that Scripture fully warrants us—that the life of Christ constitutes the righteousness in which His people are to be clothed. His death washed away their sins. His life covered them from head to foot. His death was the Sacrifice to God. His life was the gift to man by which man satisfies the demands of the Law. Herein the Law is honored and the soul is accepted. I find that many young Christians who are very clear about being saved by the merits of Christ's death, do not seem to understand the merits of His life.

Remember, young Believers, that from the first moment when Christ did lie in the cradle until the time when He ascended up on high, He was at work for His people. And from the moment when He was seen in Mary's arms, till the instant when in the arms of death He "bowed His head and gave up the ghost," He was at work for your salvation and mine. He completed the work of obedience in His life and said to His Father, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do." Then He completed the work of atonement in His death and knowing that all things were accomplished, He cried, "It is finished."

He was through His life spinning the web for making the royal garment and in His death He dipped that garment in His blood. In His life He was gathering together the precious gold. In His death He hammered it out to make for us a garment which is of worked gold. You have as much to thank Christ for loving as for dying and you should be as reverently and devoutly grateful for His spotless life as for His terrible and fearful death. The text speaking of Christ, the son of David, the branch out of the root of Jesse, styles him THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Having introduced the doctrine of imputed righteousness, I proceed to map out my subject. First, by way of *affirmation*. We say of the text—it is so—Christ is the THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Secondly, I shall exhort you to do Him *homage*. Let us call Him so—for this is the name

whereby He shall be called. And thirdly, I shall appeal to your *gratitude*. Let us wonder at the reigning grace which has caused us to fulfill the promise, for we have been sweetly compelled to call him THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

First, then, *He is so*. Jesus Christ is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. There are but three words, "JEHOVAH"—for so it is in the original—"OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." He is Jehovah. Read that verse and you will clearly perceive that the Messiah of the Jews, Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the Gentiles, is certainly Jehovah. He has the incommunicable title of the Most High God. "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch and a king shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely—and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Oh, you Arians and Socinians who monstrously deny the Lord who bought you and put Him to open shame by denying His divinity—read that verse and let your blasphemous tongues be silent—and let your obdurate hearts melt in penitence because you have so foully sinned against Him. He *is* Jehovah, or, mark you, the whole of God's Word is false and there is no ground whatever for a sinner's hope. We know and this day we testify in His name that the very Christ who did lie in the manger as an infant was infinite even then. That He who cried, cried for very pain as a child, was nevertheless saluted at that very moment as God by the songs of the creatures that His hands had made.

He who walked in pain over the flinty acres of Palestine was at the same time possessor of Heaven and earth. He who had not where to lay His head and was despised and rejected of men, was at the same instant God over all, blessed forever more. He that sweat great drops of blood did bear the earth upon His shoulders. He who was flagellated in Pilate's hall was adored by spirits of the just made perfect. He who did hang upon the Tree had the creation hanging upon Him. He who died on the Cross was the ever-living, the Everlasting One.

As a man He died, as God He lives. As Mary's son He bled, as the son of the Eternal God He had the sway and the dominion over all the world. In nature Christ proves Himself to be universal God. Without Him was not anything made that was made. By Him all things consist. Who less than God could make the heavens and the earth? Bow before Him, bow before Him, for He made you and should not the creatures acknowledge their Creator?

Providence attests His Godhead. He upholds all things by the Word of His Power. Creatures that are animate have their breath from His nostrils. Inanimate creatures that are strong and mighty stand only by His strength. He can say concerning the earth, "I bear the pillars thereof." In the deep foundations of the sea His power is felt and in the towering

arches of the starry heavens His might is recognized to the full. And as for grace, we claim for Christ that He is Jehovah in the great kingdom of His grace. Who less than God could have carried your sins and mine and cast them all away? Who less than God could have interposed to deliver us from the jaws of Hell's lions and bring us up from the pit, having found a ransom?

On whom less than God could we rely to keep us from the innumerable temptations that beset us? How can He be less than God when He says, "Lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world"? How could He be omnipresent if He were not God? How could He hear our prayers—the prayers of millions scattered through the leagues of earth and attend to them all and give acceptance to all—if He were not infinite in understanding and infinite in merit? How were this if He were less than God?

Let atheists scoff, let deists sneer, let the vain Socinian boast, let the Arian lift up his puny voice—but we will glory in this fact—that He that bought us with His blood is Jehovah—very God of very God. At His footstool we bow and pay Him the very homage that we pay to His Father and to the Spirit—

***"Blessings more than we can give,  
Be Lord forever Yours."***

But the text speaks about righteousness, too—"Jehovah our righteousness." And He is so. Christ in His life was so righteous that we may say of the life, taken as a whole, that it is righteousness itself. Christ is the Law incarnate. Understand me, He lived out the Law of God to the very full and while you see God's precepts written in fire on Sinai's brow, you see them written in flesh in the Person of Christ—

***"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,  
I read my duty in Your Word,  
But in Your life the Law appears  
Drawn out in living characters."***

He never offended against the commands of the Just One. From His eye there never flashed the fire of unhallowed anger. On His lip there did never hang the unjust or licentious word. His heart was never stirred by the breath of sin or the taint of iniquity. In the secret of His heart no fault was hidden. In His understanding was no defect. In His judgment no error. In His miracles there was no ostentation. In Him there was indeed no guile. His powers being ruled by His understanding, all of them acted and co-acted to perfection's very self so that never was there any flaw of omission or stain of commission.

The Law consists in this first, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." He did so. It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. Never man spent Himself as He did. Hunger and thirst and nakedness were nothing to Him, nor death itself if He might so be baptized with the baptism wherewith He must be baptized—and drink the cup which His Father had set before Him. The Law consists also in this, "You

shall love your neighbor as yourself." In all He did and in all He suffered He more than fulfilled the precept, for "He saved others, Himself He could not save." He exhausted the utmost resources of love in the deep devotion and self-sacrifice of loving.

He loved man better than His own life. He would sooner be spit upon than that man should be cast into the flames of Hell and sooner yield up the ghost in agonies that cannot be described than that the souls His Father gave Him should be cast away. He carried out the Law, then, I say to the very letter. He spelt out its mystic syllables and verily He magnified it and made it honorable. He loved the Lord His God, with all His heart and soul and mind and He loved His neighbors as Himself. Jesus Christ was righteousness impersonated. "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" He might well say.

One thousand eight hundred years have passed since then and blasphemy itself has not been able to charge Him with a fault. Strange as it may appear the most perverted judges have nevertheless acknowledged the awful dignity of His character. They have railed at His miracles. They have denied His Godhead. But His righteous character I know not that they have dared to impugn. They have hatched jokes about His generation. They have made His poverty a jest and His death has been the theme of ribald song. But His life has staggered even the most unbelieving and made the careless wonder how such a character could have been conceived even if it be a fiction and much more, how it could have been executed if it be a fact.

No one that I know of has dared to charge Christ with unrighteousness. Or with a want of devotedness to God. See then, it is so. We do not stay to prove His righteousness any more than we did to prove His Godhead. The day is coming when men shall acknowledge Him to be Jehovah and when looking upon all His life while He was incarnate here, they shall be compelled to say that His life was righteousness itself. The essence, however, of the title, lies in the little word "our"—"Jehovah *our* righteousness."

This is the grappling iron with which we get a hold on Him—this is the anchor which dives into the bottom of this great deep of His immaculate righteousness. This is the sacred rivet by which our souls are joined to Him. This is the blessed hand with which our soul touches Him and He becomes to us All in All, "Jehovah *our* Righteousness."

You will now observe that there is a most precious *doctrine* unfolded in this title of our Lord and Savior. I think we may take it thus—When we believe in Christ by faith we receive our justification. As the merit of His blood takes away our sin so the merit of His obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. We are considered, as soon as we believe, as though the works of Christ were our works. God looks upon us as though that perfect obedience, of which I have just now spoken, had been performed by ourselves—as though our hands had been busy at the loom, as though the

fabric and the stuff which have been worked up into the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints, had been grown in our own fields.

God considers us as though we were Christ—looks upon us as though His *life* had been our *life*—and accepts, blesses and rewards us as though all that He did had been done by us, His believing people. Accordingly, if you will turn to the thirty-third chapter of this same Prophet Jeremiah and look at the sixteenth verse, you will see it written, “This is the name wherewith she shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” I know that Socinus in his day used to call this an execrable, detestable and licentious doctrine—probably it was because he was an execrable, detestable and licentious man.

Many men use their own names when they are applying names to other persons. They are so well-acquainted with their own characters and so suspicious of themselves that they think it best, before another can express the suspicion, to attach the very same accusation to someone else. Now we hold, you know, that this doctrine is not execrable, but most delightful. That it is not abominable, but Godlike. That it is not licentious, but holy—and let others say what they will of it—we will repeat the praise which we have been singing—

**“Jesus, Your perfect righteousness  
My beauty is, my glorious dress”**

and we will wait for the day when all things shall be tried by fire, for we feel confident that—

**“Bold shall we stand in that great day,  
For who anything to our charge shall lay,”**

when we are clothed with the righteousness divine?

Imputation, so far from being an exceptional case with regard to the righteousness of Christ lies at the very bottom of the entire teaching of Scripture. How did we fall, my Brethren? We fell by the imputation of Adam’s sin to us. Adam was our federal head. He represented us. And when he sinned we sinned representatively in him. And what he did was imputed to us. You say that you never agreed to the imputation. No, but I would not have you say thus—for as by representation we fell—it is by the representative system that we rise. The angels fell personally and individually—and they never rise.

But we fell in another and we have therefore the power given by divine grace to rise in another. The root of the Fall is found in the federal relationship of Adam to his seed—thus we fell by imputation. Is it any wonder that we should rise by imputation? Deny this doctrine and I ask you—how are men pardoned at all? Are they not pardoned because satisfaction has been offered for sin by Christ? Very well, then, but that satisfaction must be imputed to them or else how is God just in giving to them the results of the death of another—unless that death of the other be first of all imputed to them?

When we say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to all believing souls we do not hold forth an exceptional theory but we expound a grand Truth which is so consistent with the theory of the Fall and the plan of pardon, that it must be maintained in order to make the Gospel clear. I think it was this doctrine which Martin Luther called the article of standing or falling of the Church. I find a passage in his works which seems to me to refer to this doctrine rather than to justification by faith. He ought certainly to have said, "Justification by faith is *the* doctrine of standing or falling of the Church."

But in Luther's mind, imputed righteousness was so interwoven with justification by faith that he could not see any distinction between the two. And I must confess, in trying to observe a difference, I do not see much. I must give up justification by faith if I give up imputed righteousness. True justification by faith is the surface soil—but then imputed righteousness is the granite rock which lies underneath it. And if you dig down through the great Truth of a sinner's being justified by faith in Christ, you must, as I believe, inevitably come to the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ as the basis and foundation on which that simple doctrine rests.

And now let us stop a moment and think over this whole title—"THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Brethren, the Law-giver has Himself obeyed the Law! Do you not think that His obedience will be sufficient? Jehovah has Himself become man so He may do man's work—do you think that He has done it imperfectly? Jehovah—He who girds the angels that excel in strength—has taken upon Him the form of a servant that He may become obedient—do you think that His service will be incomplete? Let the fact that the Savior is Jehovah strengthen your confidence. Be bold. Be very courageous. Face Heaven and earth and Hell with the challenge of the Apostle. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

Look back upon your past sins—look upon your present infirmities—and all your future errors and while you weep the tears of repentance, let no fear of damnation blanch your cheek. You stand before God today robed in your Savior's garments, "with His spotless vestments on, holy as the Holy One." Not Adam when he walked in Eden's bowers was more accepted than you are—not more pleasing to the eye of the all-judging, the sin-hating God than you are if clothed in Jesus' righteousness and sprinkled with His blood.

You have a better righteousness than Adam had. He had a human righteousness. Your garments are divine. He had a complete robe, it is true, but the earth had woven it. You have a garment as complete but *Heaven* has made it for you to wear. Go up and down in the strength of this great Truth and boast exceedingly and glory in your God. And let this be on the top and summit of your heart and soul—"Jehovah, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

You will remember that in Scripture Christ's righteousness is compared to fair white linen. Then I am, if I wear it, without spot. It is compared to worked gold. Then I am, if I wear it, dignified and beautiful and worthy to sit at the wedding feast of the King of kings. It is compared, in the parable of the prodigal son, to the best robe. Then I wear a better robe than angels have, for they have not the best. But I, poor prodigal, once clothed in rags, companion to the nobility of the sty—I, fresh from the husks that swine do eat, am nevertheless clothed in the best robe and am so accepted in the Beloved.

Moreover, it is also *everlasting* righteousness. Oh, this is, perhaps, the fairest point of it—that the robe shall never be worn out. No thread of it shall ever give way. It shall never hang in tatters upon the sinner's back. He shall live and even though it were a Methuselah's life, the robe shall be as if it were woven yesterday. He shall pass through the stream of death and the black stream shall not foul it. He shall climb the hills of Heaven and the angels shall wonder what this whiteness is which the sinner wears and think that some new star is coming up from earth to Heaven.

He shall wear it among principalities and powers and find himself not a whit inferior to them all. Cherubic garments and seraphic mantles shall not be so lordly, so priestly, so divine as this robe of righteousness—this everlasting perfection which Christ has worked out—and brought in and given to all His people. Glory unto You, O Jesus, glory unto You! Unto You be hallelujahs! Forever, Hallelu—jah! You are You—"Jehovah, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

**II.** Having thus expounded and vindicated this title of our Savior, I would now APPEAL TO YOUR FAITH. Let us call Him so. "This is the name whereby He shall be *called*, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Let us call Him by this great name which the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has named. Let us call Him—poor sinners!—even we, who are today smitten down with grief on account of sin. I want this text to be fulfilled in your ears and in your case today. You are guilty. Your own conscience acknowledges that the Law condemns you and you dread the penalty. He that trusts Christ Jesus is saved and he that believes on Him is not condemned.

To every trustful spirit Christ is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Call Him so, I pray you. "I have no good thing of my own," you say? Here is every good thing in Him. "I have broken the Law," you say? There is His blood for you. Believe in Him, He will wash you. "But then I have not kept the Law." There is His keeping of the Law for you. Take it, Sinner, take it. Believe on Him. "Oh, but I dare not," says one. Do Him the honor to dare it. "Oh, but it seems impossible." Honor Him by believing the impossibility. "Oh, but how can He save such a wretch as I am?"

Soul! Christ is glorified in saving wretches. As I told you the other day, Christ cures incurable sinners—so I say now He accepts unacceptable



sinners. He receives sinners that think they are not fit to be received. Only trust Him and say, "He shall be *my* righteousness today." "But suppose I should do it and be presumptuous?" It is impossible. He bids you, He *commands* you. Let that be your warrant. "This is the commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent." If you cannot say it with a loud voice, yet with the trembling silence of your soul let Heaven hear it—yes, Jesus, "All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but sin, yet I dare with fervent venture of these quivering lips to call You and to call upon You now, as the Lord my righteousness."

And you who have passed from a state of trembling hope into that of lively faith, I beseech you call Him so. Let your faith say, as you see Him suffering, bleeding, dying, "Thus my sins were washed away." But let not your faith stop there. As you see Him sweating, toiling, living a self-denying laborious life, say, "Thus the Law was kept for me." Come up to the foot of Sinai now and if you see its lightning flashes and hear its thunders roar, be brave and say like Moses, "I will ascend above those thunders, I will stand enwrapped within the storm-cloud and I will talk with God. I have no cause for fear, there are no thunderbolts for me. For me no lightning flash can spend its arrow, I am perfectly, completely justified in the sight of God, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ."

Say that, child of God! Does yesterday's sin make you stammer? In the teeth of all your sins believe that He is your righteousness still. Your good works do not improve His righteousness. Your bad works do not sully it. This is a robe which your best deeds cannot mend and your worst deeds cannot mar. You stand in Him, not in yourself. Whatever, then, your doubts and fears may have been, do now, poor troubled, distressed, distracted Believer, say again, "Yes, He is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

And some of us can say it yet better than that—for we can say it not merely by faith, but by fruition. We remember well the day when we first called him "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Oh, the peace it brought, the joy, the gladness, the transport! Since then we have proved it to be true, for we have had privileges we could not have had if He had not been our righteousness. We have had the privilege of reconciliation with God. And He could not be reconciled to one that had not a perfect righteousness. We have had access with boldness to God Himself and He would never have suffered us to have access if we had not worn our Brother's garments.

We have had adoption into the family and the Spirit of adoption and God could not have adopted into His family any but righteous ones. How should the righteous Father be God of an unrighteous family? Our prayers have been heard and we have had gracious answers and that could not have been—for He could not hear the prayer of the wicked. He could not have heard us—if it had not been that He seemed to hear Christ

crying through us and to have seen Christ's merits in us. And therefore He granted the desire of our hearts. We have had in daily rich and sweet experience such manifestations of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ that to us it is a matter of fact as well as a matter of faith—a matter of praise as well as a matter of profession—that Jesus Christ is “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Brethren, your divinity must be experimental or it will not profit you. I would not give a straw for your theology if you learned it merely out of a college, or out of a system of man's teaching. No, no, we must prove these things to be true in our lives. I can say it and I must say it—the testimony is not egotistical—I *know* there is a comfort in the faith of Christ's imputed righteousness which no other doctrine can yield. There is something that a man can sleep on and wake on, can live on and die on, in the firm conviction that he is received by God as though the deeds of Christ were his deeds—and the righteousness of Christ his righteousness.

Take away his filthy garments from him, set a fair miter on his head, array him in fine linen. O, Joshua, priest of the Most High, greatly Beloved, come forth now in your garments and offer acceptable sacrifice, seeing you wear the garments of Jesus, our great High Priest.” Let *us*, then, call upon His name and extol Him in our worship as “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

And now let the whole universal Church of Christ, in one glad song call Jesus Christ the Lord their righteousness. Wake up, you isles of the sea. Shout, you wilderness that Kedar does inhabit. You people of God, scattered and peeled, banished among the heathen, vexed with the filthy conversation of the idolaters—from your huts, from the destitute places that you inhabit, sing—“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!” Let no heir of Heaven be silent at this hour. Let every soul be stirred. Though tempest-tossed and half a wreck, yet, mariner in Christ, say, “You are the Lord my righteousness.”

Though cast down into the deep dungeon, you despairing soul yet say, “The Lord my righteousness.” Let no one of the entire believing family keep back his song but together let us sing, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” You, you spirits that walk in white, you glorious ones that, “day without night circle His Throne rejoicing.” You saints that before this day beheld Him and died, not having received the promise, but having beheld it afar off—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David and Solomon and all the mighty host, sing you, sing you, sing you unto Him today—and let this be the summit of your song—“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Our spirit bows before Him now. Sweet fellowship beyond the stream! We clasp our hands with those that went before. And while the cherubim can only say, “Holy, holy, holy. He is righteous,” we lift up a higher note and say, “yes, thrice holy, but THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS is He.”

Let none, then, of all His saints in Heaven and in earth, refuse to call Him “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

**III.** I now conclude, in the third place, by appealing to your GRATITUDE. Let us admire that wonderful and reigning grace which has led you and me to call him “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

When I look back some ten or twelve years upon a foolish boy who cared little for the things of God. Who was burdened with an awful sense of sin and thought that he never could be pardoned—a lad so often driven to the borders of despair that he was willing to make away with his own life because he thought there was no happiness on earth for him. I can only say for my own self, “O the riches of the grace of God in Christ, that ever I should stand not only conscious that He is the Lord my righteousness, but to preach Him to you!”

O God, you have done wonderful things! You said by the mouth of Jeremy, “This is the name whereby He shall be called.” I call Him so this day from my inmost soul. Jesus of Nazareth! Suffering Man! Glorious God! You are the Lord my righteousness! If I were to pass this question round these galleries and down below, oh, what hundreds of responses would there be from such as joyously obey the summons of gratitude! And among those about to be added to the Church (I am sure they would permit me to tell for the honor of the glorious grace of God), there are very many who are special instances of that grace which has sweetly constrained them to call Christ their righteousness.

Some of them, according to their own confession before us at the Church meeting were not only reveling in drunkenness, one until he had well near drank away his reason by thirty years of habitual intoxication. But others of them were unclean and unchaste till they had rioted in debauchery and gone to the utmost lengths of crime. There are many in this place today who would not, though they would blush for the past, refuse to tell to the honor of redeeming grace, that once they had committed every crime in the catalogue except murder.

And if they have not committed that, it was nothing but the sovereign grace of God that restrained them. Some members of this Church have sinned in every part of the world—have sinned in every quarter of the globe—have committed every form of lust and vice—and if you had asked them ten years ago whether they should ever be in a place of worship they would have repelled with an oath what they would have thought an insult and would have cursed you for supposing that they should so degrade themselves as to profess the faith of Christ. Brothers and Sisters, I should not be surprised if you were to stand up now and say, “Yes, still Jehovah Jesus is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Oh!—

***“Wonders of grace to God belong;  
Repeat His mercies in Your song.”***

Who would have thought that the lip of the blasphemer should fulfill that very prophecy—that the tongue that could scarce move without an oath should, nevertheless, glorify Christ—that the heart that was black with accumulated lust—the mouth which must have become a very sepulcher, breathing forth deadly fire, has now become a place for song and the heart a house for music, while heart and tongue say, “Yes, He is the Lord my righteousness this very day!”

It would be a wonder if God should vow that the devils should yet sing His praise. But I do not think it would be a greater wonder than when He makes some of us sing His glorious praise. Brethren, you and I know that there is nothing in free-will doctrine. For in our case, at any rate, it was not true. Left to ourselves, where should we have been? What could Arminianism have done for us? Oh, no, it was *irresistible* grace that brought us to call him “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” It was that divine *shall* that broke in pieces our *will*. It was that strong arm that broke the iron sinew of our proud neck and made us bow, even us, who would not have this Man to reign over us. It was His finger that opened the blind eye. For once we could see no beauty in Him. It was His breath that thawed our icy heart.

Yes, once we felt no love to Him—

**“But now, subdued by Sovereign Grace,  
Our spirit longs for His embrace;  
Our beauty this our glorious dress,  
Jesus the Lord our righteousness.”**

And this shall be our glory here and our song forever—“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

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# WINNOWER TIME

## NO. 862

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 17, 1867,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.”  
Jeremiah 23:28.*

IT is remarkable that God has traced so much of the misery of the children of Israel in the period of their degradation to the unfaithfulness of those governors, priests and prophets who ruled over them. The crying evil of a nation's crimes lay at the door of these foolish shepherds. At first it would seem that the main stress of calamity rested on the common people—and the time-serving rulers enjoyed ease and affluence as the fruit of their own corruption. But when the Most High arises to judgment, He begins with those “pastors” who have foully betrayed their sacred trust. As one who has seen their way with His watchful eyes and heard their lies with His ever-listening ears, He denounces them with terrible threats.

While, on the other hand, He looks with compassion on the unhappy victims of strange delusion and cruel oppression—and compares them to a flock hard driven and mercilessly scattered. No, more, He claims this people as His own flock, whose wrongs He will avenge, whose rights He will restore, whose fears He will relieve and whose prosperity He will secure. The sin of those false prophets is exposed in terms which leave them no shadow of excuse. It was a profanity that dared to invoke the Divine name for their horrible wickedness. It was a folly that perverted every kind of truth—and it was a mischief that made the land mourn and dried up all its pleasant places. Therefore the anger of the Lord went forth like a whirlwind in its fury, yet like arrows shot from His bow it singled out the head of the wicked and executed vengeance on the real offenders.

Here, then, in this chapter, we have some of God's most withering threats and some of His most gracious promises. The abettors of sin are made a prey and the victims of sin are delivered. Is not this according to the manner of God? Whenever God's Word deals with things truthful, be they material objects or living persons, however weak and feeble they are, it always speaks of them tenderly and handles them gently. God Himself has an eye of respect for everything that is real and veritable. Notwithstanding a delicacy of texture or an infirmity of constitution, He considers the things that are in their own order with generous condescension. His care is lenient and His mercy very tender—He does not quench the smoking flax, nor will He break the bruised reed.

But God hates every false thing. He scorns the hypocrite and the dissembler. The words of Jehovah are keen and cutting, sometimes even sar-

castic, as He withers the specious with a laugh of ridicule. There is a sacred bitterness in the tone with which the Prophets and the Apostles—and far above them, the Lord and Master of Apostles and Prophets—speak of everything that is false and feigned, hollow and equivocal. You find no sparing in the rod of His hand, nor any gentleness in the rod of His mouth. What words could be more terrible than such denunciations as these—“O generation of vipers, who has warned you to escape from the wrath to come”? “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte and when he is made you make him twofold more the child of Hell than yourselves”?

The Savior cannot endure specious guile, however fair its show. True image of the invisible God, Himself, He hates the cursed trailing serpent. He speaks right—but when beneath that which seems to be honest and of good report, treachery lurks unseen—He conceals not such a holy detestation as becomes One whose eyes are too pure and holy to look upon iniquity or countenance a fraud. Let me beg you to notice the peculiar sharpness and biting severity of the text—“What is the chaff to the wheat?” says the Lord.” Like the edge of a razor it cuts. As a saber flashing over one’s head—a sword gleaming to the very point, a fire lurid with coals of juniper—we are appalled as we glance at it! It strikes with implacable resentment.

There is no word of mercy towards the chaff—not a thought of clemency or forbearance. He blows at it as though it were a worthless thing, not to be accounted of, a nothing that vanishes with a puff. The wheat He gathers and stores up. He houses it in His garner, for there will be many a plowing of the fields and many a sowing of the seed and many a harvest-time to follow for the precious grain. But as for the chaff, He has nothing to say of it—He scatters it with the blast—“What is the chaff to the wheat?” Let this apprehension of the severity of God towards everything that is fictitious, counterfeit and false, move us to enquire scrupulously into those matters concerning which our truthfulness must be brought into judgment.

**I. IN APPLICATION TO ALL MINISTRIES** of God’s Word, let us, first of all, face the question, “What is the chaff to the wheat?” It is quite certain that there always have been some faithful ministries—weighty, powerful, full of thought and emotion—ministries ordained of God, by which the Spirit of God works and through which the saints are gathered together, edified, sanctified and perfected. On the other hand, in all ages of the Church’s history there have been ministries which, with much appearance of well-doing—much glitter of oratory, much garnish of eloquence—have yet never been serviceable to the Church of God!

These ministries may have been of service to the outside world. They have been ministries, indeed, which have preached, “Peace, peace,” where there was no peace. They have been ministries dispensing sedatives and narcotics to men’s consciences—ministries that have not appealed to the hearts—but pandered to the tastes and passions of the hearers. In every age and in every place that the Gospel has been proclaimed, some have

been found ready to mistake the force of *rhetoric* for the *power* of the Holy Spirit—the persuasiveness of impassioned speech for the convictions of saving faith.

Nor can we doubt, no, we *know* without doubt that it is so now—even at this present time there is the ministration of wheat and the ministration of chaff. If the spiritual man, who discerns all things, should just traverse the streets of this metropolis—take the round of its religious Meeting Houses and begin to examine the ministry in each—he would soon find that there are some which bear the stamp of Divine Truth and energy, while there are others, alas, which stand only in the wisdom of men—equipped with the learning of the schools, but destitute of the power which comes from above!

What comparison, now, can these two vocations bear in the sight of God? He has in His heart a high esteem for that ministry which He has ordained and for every minister whom He has anointed. But as to the other, He accounts it as a thing of *nothing*—less than nothing and vanity. “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.” What is it? Of what use is it? What service can it render? Men follow it with much approbation and applause and accept it as though it were a service to be thankful for—an institution to be highly prized! But God snuffs it out and He says, “To what end? Where is the profit? What is the chaff to the wheat?” O that some of us who are called to preach and some who are called to teach here in different ways, may remember that we, as well as others, are being tried and tested by the Most High God! And that the question which, perhaps, we are ready enough to apply to our neighbors, is no less suitable to ourselves! God may be saying concerning us, “What is the chaff to the wheat?” if our ministry is also chaff, as well as theirs.

Well, it behoves us to take heed, for the day shall declare it. He that has built wood, hay and stubble shall find his work perish in the fire! And happy shall it be for him if he, himself, shall be saved, for it shall be in his case, “so as by fire.” That ministry which comes from God is distinguished altogether from that which is not of His own sending by its effects. *It is sure to be heartbreaking.* Have you been from your childhood under the ministry of the Word and have you never been made to loathe yourself in the sight of God? Has the sword of the Spirit never pierced you? Have you never felt rebuked, accused? Has the rebuke of the Almighty never staggered you as with a heavy blow which felled you to the earth? Have you never gone out of the sanctuary to weep, to be ashamed, to clothe yourself in sackcloth and ashes and to be afraid to look up to Heaven?

If this has never been your case, either you must be a hardened one, indeed, or else the ministry under which you have been sitting is not a true ministry at all, for God says, “My Word is like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces.” If the Word, therefore, which you have been accustomed to listen to has never broken you in pieces, it matters not how melodious the voice you may have been listening to! The external accessories of worship may have been provided with ever so much care and taste and lavish expenditure. Yes, and the solemn swell of the organ, the gor-

geous pomp of architecture and the comely array of vestments may all have helped to charm you! Yet be sure of this, it is *not* the voice of God to you if it has not broken your heart! If you have not been made to feel yourself lost, ruined and undone by the Word of God, I charge you by the living God to be dissatisfied with yourself, or else with the ministry under which you are sitting! For if it were *God's* ministry to your soul, it would break your heart in shivers and make you cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Not less, also, is a God-sent ministry *clothed with power by God's Spirit to bind up the heart so broken*. Oh, this is a test of many ministries! A sinner who never had a broken heart on account of sin can sit down comfortably in any place of worship. But he who has ever really felt the plague of sin, will soon distinguish between the true physician and him who, though he pretends to have the diploma, knows nothing of the art of heavenly surgery! When God sends peace and pardon and mercy to your soul through a ministry, that ministry will be proven at once to your satisfaction to be of God's appointment! It is the instrument through which God's voice has spoken to you! Have you ever found it so when the Word has been preached?

I know that those ministries which consist only of fine sounding words, stories, stage productions and all the ornate strains and paltry tricks of actors, can never satisfy the thirst of a living soul! These are not true preachers, but mimics who retail that empty stuff—that scum upon the pot—that froth which will never satisfy a bleeding heart! O Beloved, you may sing what songs you will to a sad heart, but no music can charm away its griefs! Only let a ministry be full of Jesus—let Christ be lifted up and set forth, evidently crucified in the midst of the assembly—let His name be poured forth like a sweet perfume and it shall be as ointment to the wounded heart! And then it will be recognized as the ministry of wheat, and not a ministry of chaff to your souls.

Further, *the ministry which God does not send is of no service in producing holiness*. Dr. Chalmers tells us that when he first began to preach, it was his great end and aim to produce morality and in order to do so he preached the moral virtues and their excellences. This he did, he says, till most of the people he thought honest turned thieves and he had scarcely any left that knew much about practical morality. But no sooner did Chalmers begin to understand, as he afterwards did so sweetly, the power of the Cross and to speak about the atoning blood in the name and strength of the Eternal Spirit, than the morality, which could not be developed by preaching moral essays, became the immediate result of simply proclaiming the love of God in Christ Jesus!

After all, dear Friends, we look to you as our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. If the members of our Church are unholy, our ministry must lack power. Or if, on the other hand, the ministry is, by the Grace of God, blessed to the promotion of holiness in the hearers so that they cannot sin cheaply, or transgress in any way without doing violence to an enlightened conscience—and if many are led, step by step, to the at-



tainment of purity and excellence through the power of the Truth of God which is delivered—then the ministry is proved to be a ministry of wheat and not a ministry of chaff.

Now, I do not, in saying this, intend an incriminating criticism upon any particular Christian man, or any individual Christian minister. I make a close search into my own ministry, now, and the ministry of others necessarily comes in view while so doing. I counsel you, my dear Friends, when you have a *choice* of the ministry you can attend, do not select a man merely for his learning—nor according to his standing in society—nor according to the excellence of his speech. Remember, all these may be but as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal—they may mean nothing and less than nothing! But, on the other hand, should the preacher be illiterate, if God’s Spirit evidently rests upon the man and he speaks from his heart to your heart and God has blessed his message to you, it will be better for you to frequent the most humble shed where God is present than to worship in the most respectable edifice where you will have nothing but the words of *man*, without the living power of the living God!

My soul is growing more and more convinced that the great need of some of us is not to cull the flowers of rhetoric tastefully and polish our sentences till they glide daintily into your ears, but to let the speech come forth with unchecked freedom—the outpouring of our hearts in simplicity under the power of the Spirit! When we have really put ourselves into God’s hands to feel the Truths of God that we have to say, we need not be overly nice about picking our words. To come up into our pulpits without thinking both of the subject itself and the order of stating it would seem to me a species of presumption. But, having well pondered the matter, we should come with this stern resolve—“I will cast off that glittering metaphor. I will neglect that glowing period.

“I will not seek any sort of oratorical praise for myself, but I will deliver God’s Word in such words as shall seem to be nearest to my own heart and most likely to get at men’s hearts and men’s consciences. And with God’s help, whether they shall have the ring of the cymbal, or the tune of the tinkling brass about them or not, I shall be able to truthfully say that I have not made your faith stand in the wisdom of man, nor in the power of words, but in the power of the Gospel itself and of the Divine energy of the Holy Spirit, which *must* go with that Word, or else it will not be a savor of life unto life unto your soul.”

O dear Hearers, what you need—what we all need—is to have less and less of that which comes from *ourselves* and savors of the creature, and to have more and more of that which comes from our *God*, who, though we cannot see Him, is still in our midst—the Mighty to will and to do—for His power is the *only* power and His life is the *only* life by which we can be saved, ourselves, and those that hear us!

**II.** Turning aside, now, from that point with all the lessons it might suggest, let us for a few minutes APPLY THE TEXT, AS INDIVIDUALS, TO OURSELVES. “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.” Beloved, I

trust there are many of us here who are genuine in our profession of religion—who cannot and who dare not allow the suspicion of hypocrisy to rest upon us! We feel that, unless we have been awfully deceived, we have put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are the subjects of a very great change—we know we are—we would be false to our own consciousness if we were to say that we doubted it.

Moreover, we are at the present moment in the possession of enjoyments which will not let us think ourselves to be in the gall of bitterness. We know what communion with Christ means. We know the power of prayer. We have had such answers to prayer that for us to hesitate in avowing it would be perfidious mock-modesty, wicked deception, lying before God. We know Christ and we are found in Him, not having our own righteousness, but wrapped about with His righteousness. No doubt, we are all well aware that if we have wheat in us, there is chaff, too. Which is more, it may be difficult for us to tell.

Some Christians are greatly puzzled when we begin to talk about the experimental riddle which the Christian finds in himself. But, if they are perplexed, we cannot help them out of the difficulty except by describing the case. I know in my own soul that I feel myself to be like two distinct men. There is the old man—as base as ever. And the new man that cannot sin, because he is born of God. I cannot, myself, understand the experience of those Christians who do not find a conflict within—for my experience goes to show this, if it shows anything, that there is an incessant contention between the old nature—O that we could be rid of it!—and the new nature, for the strength of which God be thanked! Do you not find it so?

Though old Ralph Erskine's remark, in his, "Believer's Riddle," may be a little strong, still we can find the marrow of truth in it. He says—

***“Down like a stone, I sink and dive,  
Yet daily upward soar and thrive.  
To Heaven I fly, to earth I tend,  
Still better grow, yet never mend.  
As all amphibious creatures do,  
I live in land and water, too.  
To good and evil equal bent,  
I'm both a devil and a saint.”***

You know how he means it—not that the Christian is such in his life—but that he finds within himself very strong tendencies to evil, as well as powerful tendencies to good. Though in his general character faith overcomes, for he is so kept that the Evil One touches him not, yet while he is preserved among the godly he cannot help discovering his kindred with the children of disobedience—among whom he sometime walks. I know that saying of Solomon's, "I am black, but comely," would suit me. I have serious doubts, sometimes, about the latter part of it, but never much doubt about the former, "I am black."

It strikes me that the more we look at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word and in the light of God's Holy Spirit and compare ourselves with the blessed Person and the perfect Character of the Lord Jesus, the more we

shall have to hold up our hands and say, "Look not upon me, for I am black, because the sun has looked upon me." I think we cannot have looked into our hearts and not find chaff to be there as well as wheat. This suggests great searching of heart in connection with the question, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" O Brethren, let us feel that the chaff is to be all gotten rid of! Let us feel that it is a heavy burden to moan and groan under—that it is not a grievance we should be content with! Let us make no provision for the flesh! Let us not ask that any chaff may be spared to us! May such a strong and mighty hurricane of Divine Grace go through our souls that every particle of chaff shall be taken from us and only the pure wheat be left in the garner, to the glory of God!

I hope that although we feel the tendency to sin, there is not one sin that charms or enslaves us. That every vain thought shocks us. And that there is not one particle of evil which we would not be happy enough to lose—

***"The dearest idol I have known.  
Whatever that idol be.  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only You!"***

The principal thought I have on this subject, however, is that there is not only a great deal of our sin which is palpably chaff, but that a great *deal of our religiousness is chaff, likewise*. Do you ever find yourselves borrowing other people's experience? What is that but chaff? Do you ever find yourselves at a Prayer Meeting glowing with somebody else's fervor? What is that but chaff? Does not your faith sometimes depend upon companionship with some fellow Christians? Well, I will not say that your faith is chaff, but I think I may say that such growth in faith as is altogether the result of second causes and not immediately of God is very much like chaff.

I wonder how much religion some of us would have if it were all set to cool! There seems to be a great volume of it now while we are living in a warm and genial atmosphere with our friends and comrades in the Gospel. Suppose we were exposed to the trial of a bleak night? Suppose we were taken away from the Church of which we are members and made to live in the country where we had no fellow Christians to talk with? I wonder how much of the substance and fervor of our religion we should preserve! It is wonderful how great appearances often diminish and grow small when circumstances change. Remember, Christian, just so much and no more than would survive such an ordeal is the total that you possess now! The rest that seems to be, counts for nothing.

I am afraid we sometimes think we grow very fast, when, in fact, our progress is like the growth of the mushroom rather than the growth of an oak. When the Christian sees not his signs and fears that he does not grow, he often is growing in Divine Grace—growing downwards, being rooted in humility, getting a deeper sense of his own nothingness and unworthiness—and consequently a higher sense of his Lord's fullness and loving kindness. Then he is truly growing! Alas, that he should sometimes

think, "Now I am strong. Now I am rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing." Then it is he deceives himself. He is priding himself in chaff where he needs to have wheat. I would pray the Lord, dear Brethren, that you and I may never cheat our own souls with shams. O that our attainments may stand the test! Let us ask God to take out of us everything that is not real!

Depend upon it, that is a great prayer to offer, "Lead us not into temptation." All temptations are treacherous. But self-congratulation is the very essence of guile. "Lord, take from me all the gilt. Leave me nothing but the gold. Take from me all the paint, the graining and the varnish and leave me nothing but what is veritable and *bolla fide*." It is a prayer for every Christian to offer. "Search me, O Lord, let me know the worst of my case. Do not let me stand dressed in borrowed plumes, but let me be to my own consciousness, so far as may be, what I really am." "He that thinks himself to be something when he is nothing," says the Apostle, "deceives himself." The Lord grant that we may not perpetrate that folly. We may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive *God*. "What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord."

Perhaps, Brethren, some of you are passing, just now, through a severe ordeal. You have been tried, exercised, tempted, and much tossed about, and you think you are losing a great deal. So you are, but what a blessed loss if you are only losing your chaff! When the goldsmith puts the lump of gold into the firing pot, he may perhaps think, "Now, the precious metal is dissolving and getting smaller and smaller in quantity." But, oh, what beautiful losing it is, when the loss is nothing but the withdrawal of the dross and the pure gold shines and sparkles with a yet brighter luster because of that loss which it has endured! May your loss and mine be only the loss of our chaff!

**III.** And now, very briefly, THIS TEXT MAY HAVE A VERY STRONG BEARING UPON THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. "What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord." What a vision is that which salutes the eyes of the seer as he now looks upon the visible Church of God! It is a great threshing floor! Was there ever such a one before? On it are piled heaps and heaps upon heaps! Men rejoice and are glad and they say, "This is the threshing floor of Zion, and these are the sheaves from Israel's garners." Be it so.

Soon the threshing time arrives and the wheat and the chaff are there. Do you see these men congregated and massed together? You may call them by different names, but God regards not that. He looks upon that threshing floor as *one* and He sees lying together the heaps of chaff and of wheat. Now, imagine that we could have, back again, among us the days in which Popery was rampant. Suppose that a strong blast of persecution were to come and sweep through our Churches, whether established or nonconforming—where would they be? Do you believe that all those multitudes who go up to a House of Prayer, now, would go there if by so doing their lives were placed in jeopardy?

Take any of our Churches. Take *this* Church and do you suppose that all of you who now profess to be Christians would be willing to burn at the stake for your Master? I wish we could believe it, but we cannot. I dare not tell you we believe it, because some of you have been put to much smaller tests than that—and what has become of you? There have been Church members who, because they have been laughed at—and laughter breaks no bones—have been ashamed of their profession! There have been some who could not bear even a taunt or a jeer—and many a young man has not dared to pray at night, lest those who slept in the same room should ridicule him.

“If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, how can you contend with the horses?” And if, in this land of peace, you have grown weary under a little temptation, what will you do when the floods are out—how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? The nautilus is often seen sailing in tiny fleets in the Mediterranean sea, upon the smooth surface of the water. It is a beautiful sight! But as soon as ever the tempest wind begins to blow and the first ripple appears upon the surface of the sea, the little mariners draw in their sails and betake themselves to the bottom of the sea and you see them no more. How many of you are like that?

When all goes well with Christianity, many go sailing along fairly in the summer tide, but no sooner does trouble, or affliction, or persecution arise—where are they? Ah, where are they? They have gone! “They went out from us, because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us.” Yes, in all Churches there is no doubt that the wheat and the chaff are mixed together. I think those whose lot it is to look after the Church—and, my dear fellow Members, you have all an interest in it—ought to guard well the admissions into the Church. We must not shut out *one* of the Lord’s lambs, but, at the same time we must watch that we do not in any way add to the Church without due care and anxious prudence, for “what is the chaff to the wheat?”

I do fear that sometimes, during revivals, there have been great additions which have been no enriching of the Church. Names have come only to encumber the Church books and persons, also, have come only to disgrace the holy name by which we are called. O may God grant that if there must be chaff with the wheat, it may not be our fault—that we may not encourage it! The Savior says that while men slept, the enemy came and sowed the tares among the wheat. I suppose the best farmers do sleep and must sleep sometimes. And, consequently, the enemy comes in and the tares spring up among us, let us watch as we may! But, at any rate, let us not suffer these tares to be sown in open daylight before our very face. Watch and pray, as a Christian Church, each one of you as members of it, that we may not be allowed to flatter ourselves with a nominal increase unless it is a real increase from God, for “what is the chaff to the wheat?”

Suppose the report should be that there are so many added to the Church, but suppose that they are not added to the Lord, now, nor found in Christ hereafter? We have done those people serious damage by, as it

were, endorsing their pretensions to Christianity when they have no real claim to it. We may have helped their delusion! We may have sewed pillows to their armholes, yes—we may have rocked the cradle of delusive slumber into which they have fallen and out of which they will never wake until they open their eyes in Hell! “What is the chaff to the wheat?” I wish that such a text as this would go whistling through some of the Churches! I would like to hear of its being preached from every pulpit in London and I would pray the Holy Spirit to make the application of it to the conscience of every hearer.

Your admission into the Church by infant sprinkling. Your admission into the Church by confirmation. Your admission into the Church by the right hand of fellowship, or your admission into the Church by Believers’ immersion—all go for nothing unless you have been admitted into union with Christ! Your sitting at the Lord’s Table. Your coming often to holy communion. Your being found regularly occupying your place in public worship. Your joining in the solemn hymn. Your bending with others in earnest prayers—these things are all nothing and less than nothing and mockery—unless your heart has been renewed! Unless you have the Spirit of Christ you are none of His. “You must be born again.”

O that some such a protest as this would go through professing Christianity! Alas, that so much of it is only ginger-bread—nothing but mere confectionery-religion! Many of our spiritual fortifications are like the Chinese forts that were made of brown paper. O for a single shot from Christ’s cannon of Gospel Truth—and how much of our nominal Christianity would stand? People say, “How severe! How uncharitable!” No, Sirs, everything that falls, falls because it ought to fall. Whenever the preacher is stern and severe and tries the Truth of God in the crucible, that which melts *ought* to melt. That which crumbles *ought* to crumble. But God’s Truth never can be overthrown. It can stand any test! “The grass withers and the flower thereof fades away, but the Word of our God endures forever.”

True religion has nothing to fear from discussion and criticism. It is only the false and the pretentious that have to fear when God sends the winnowing fan into His Church—for, “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.”

**IV.** And now, lastly, we may use this text and use it sorrowfully and solemnly WITH REGARD TO THE WHOLE MASS OF HUMAN SOCIETY. The whole mass of our population may be divided into the wheat and the chaff. Both are mixed up together now, and it would be impossible for you or for me to divide them. They are in courts of law and the houses of commerce. They are in the Exchange and in the committee rooms. They are in busy thoroughfares with their various shops and in the open streets among those that ply different callings. They are in here in this Tabernacle and in the many Churches and Chapels where multitudes assemble. We are all mixed up together—the wheat and the chaff.

And it is amazing how united the chaff is with the wheat, for look, the wheat once slept in the bosom of the chaff! The chaff was the outward

husk which was necessary to the wheat's production and yet the very chaff in which the wheat was nursed is to be burned—while the wheat is to be saved! Think of that, mother! Think of that, father, if you have godly children and you yourselves are not saved. Your children were nursed upon your knees and were cherished in your bosom and yet if that fair girl, if that dear boy shall find Christ, while you shall be left, unsaved—the nearness of the relation between the father and the child will not avail you any more than the nearness of relation between the husk and the grain! The wheat and the chaff must be separated—*must* be!

In this world the separation does not take place, but when this passing world is done, it will surely occur. The farmer is not always in a hurry to separate his wheat from the chaff, but when the due time comes it must be done. You do not find him indulging in any hesitant thought, or saying to himself, "I will not tear away that chaff from the wheat, after all." No, but without a touch of pity, when the winnowing fork has to be used, the chaff is driven away while the good wheat is secured. You have a godly wife, but you are unconverted. Oh, how will you like to be separated from her whom you love? Ah, you have babes in Heaven, taken away from some of you before you ever heard their speech in an audible sound—or perhaps taken away as soon as they could lisp their first plaintive syllables and give the tokens of their loving recognition of your relationship.

They have gone up to Heaven—and, Father, will *you* be lost? Mother, will you be divided from them? You must be! You must be unless you find the Savior, through whose precious blood they also have been saved! God makes short work with you, you see. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" as if He had nothing to say to it, but just lets it go. It is the *wheat* He cares for. Let the harshness of the expression, which is apparent rather than real, awaken you and make you ask yourselves—

***"When You, my righteous Judge, shall come  
To fetch Your ransomed people home,  
Shall I among them stand?  
Shall such a worthless worm as I,  
Who sometimes am afraid to die,  
Be found at Your right hand?  
I love to meet among them now,  
Before Your gracious feet to bow,  
Though vilest of them all.  
But can I bear the piercing thought—  
What if my name should be left out,  
When You for them shall call?"***

There is chaff on the best threshing floor. There are ungodly sons and daughters in the best families. Unconverted persons are to be found in intimate association with the holiest men and women. Two shall be grinding at the mill—one shall be taken and the other left. Two shall be in one bed and one shall be taken and the other left. God will make a division—sharp, decisive, *everlasting*—between the chaff and the wheat. O you thoughtless, frivolous, light, chaffy, giddy spirit—can you bear the thought of being thus separated forever? When the farmer parts the wheat from

the chaff, I suppose it is not reasonable to expect that he ever does it perfectly. Let him do it as well as he may, there will be some portion of chaff left in with the wheat.

Not so when God holds the fan in His hand! He dispatches the work with inimitable precision. None of the chaff shall escape, nor shall a grain of the wheat be lost! No specious professor shall be spared, nor shall the humble disciple be driven away. God will make all the sheep pass under the hand of Him that tells them, "The Lord knows them that are His." In that day He will soon detect the impostor and sever him from the real saints. And this division, when it is made, will be final! The chaff and the wheat will never come together again! Saint and sinner will have no more communion with each other! Ponder well the distinction between their state. There is the wheat—there, in that blessed land we love to sing of, where there are robes of whiteness and eyes that know not tears—there, there is the wheat!

And there is the chaff—there, in that land of which we cannot speak without alarm—a land of darkness, as darkness itself. A land of confusion, where there is no order. A land of death and ruin and despair. A land that eats up the inhabitants with pain and anguish and lamentation! That is where the chaff must go! Are you prepared to go there? Alienated from God. Out of Christ. You will be out of Heaven and out of Heaven means to be in Hell! There are but two places of destiny. Are you ready for this? "No," you say, "God forbid it!" And so say I, too—God forbid it! May you and I be found in peace in the day of His appearing, for, "What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord."

The way of salvation is to trust Christ, trust Jesus! Jesus died for our sins! Jesus took our guilt upon Himself and was punished for all who trust Him. Trust Him! Christ was the sinner's Substitute and took the sinner's guilt and now God can be just in punishing Christ instead of you, and in saying to you, "Go free, through the blood of My dear Son." God give you Divine Grace to trust in Jesus. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Jeremiah 23:23.***

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# GOD'S FIRE AND HAMMER

## NO. 2460

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 12, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 28, 1886.**

***“Is not My Word like as a fire? says the LORD; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”  
Jeremiah 23:29.***

As we noticed while reading the chapter, there were a great many pretenders in the times of Jeremiah, so that when the true Prophet of God came forth and declared, “Thus says the Lord,” he was met by false prophets who contradicted him and said something the very reverse of what he had to say and yet prefaced their utterance with the same declaration, “Thus says the Lord.” This, of course, tended very much to harden the hearts of the people against the Divine message, and it also grievously embarrassed Jeremiah. He hardly knew how to meet it—it seemed to checkmate him.

This evil also greatly grieved the Lord, for it was not according to His mind that these men should pretend to speak under His Inspiration and to speak as if they felt the burden of the Lord, when He had never sent them and they had not delivered His message. He therefore gave a test by which the true could be distinguished from the false. In the verse before our text, the Lord asks, “What is the chaff to the wheat?” That which these false prophets said was but chaff compared with the Divine message delivered by Jeremiah, which was as wheat—so the Lord puts the matter thus, “You hear these men speak and you are interested and pleased, and you say to yourselves, ‘This is fine oratory, this man has a grand way of speaking.’ You admire his style, his eloquence, his depth of thought and all that, but I say to you, ‘Is not My Word like as a fire?’ It comes not as a thing of beauty, but with force, with energy. It comes to you, not that you may stand and look at it, but it has within itself a burning and consuming force. And by this shall My Word be known from the word of man—that it has a mystic power about it which cannot be found in the words of men. And it is a breaking force, as when a mighty hammer strikes the rock, and strikes it again and again till even the solid granite is compelled to yield.”

The false prophets had no such force in their words. They did not pretend to have any fire in what they said. They spoke very pleasingly and very flatteringly—they made the people vain—they told them, in effect, that nothing would happen but what would delight them! They might go on in their sins, but it would be all right. They might indulge the most bland hopes that everything in the future would be according to their own wishes. That was man's word, but when the Lord spoke by His servant, Jeremiah, His Word was “like as a fire.” There was something burn-

ing about it—human nature did not like it—but human nature was made to feel its force and power! When the false prophets spoke, they would bow and cringe to the people and say all manner of soft and pleasing things. But when Jeremiah spoke, in the name of Jehovah, every Word seemed to tell upon his hearers! It was as when a mighty man lifts up a sledgehammer and brings it down with all his force upon the stone he means to break. The message did not comfort the ungodly, but it broke their hearts, for the Prophet was seeking, if possible, to separate them from their sins.

We will begin with the statement which is made so plainly here, *the Word of God has power in it*. It is like fire. It is like a hammer. It is like fire and hammer combined and it operates upon men's hearts much in the way in which the fire and hammer of the smith operate upon the iron, fashioning and shaping it according to his design. When I have spoken upon this point, I will seek, first, to *illustrate this statement*. And then to *put it to a practical test*.

#### I. First then, THE WORD OF GOD HAS POWER IN IT.

And first, the Lord Himself says *it is like a fire*. I am now speaking of God's Word. Not, mark you, God's Word as it is declared by certain men. Not as it may come to you garnished with force of eloquence, beauty of poetry, animation of expression and the like—but the Word of God *itself*—the Truths of God which are revealed in this wonderful Book, the Truths which the Holy Spirit has been pleased to make known to the sons of men. These are “like as a fire.” You who are the people of God must often have felt greatly comforted, encouraged and cheered when you have been hearing the Gospel, just as when, on a cold day, and you are half numbed with cold, if your eyes are blindfolded you know when you are coming near a fire by the genial glow which you feel. You delight yourself in the Word of the Lord as you warm your hands at a bright cheery fire! Is it not so when God's Word is preached? Men may laugh at us and say that we have a very sweet tooth for certain doctrines, but even dogs know when they are well fed. “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib”—and we are not so foolish that we do not know what Truth it is that cheers and comforts our heart and what kind of teaching it is that makes us glad in the midst of the winter of our discontent.

There is far too much teaching, nowadays, that will not comfort a mouse! You might hear it to all eternity and never be relieved of a single ounce of the burden of life. You might come in and out of the House of God and you might, perhaps, say, “Yes, it is very pretty,” but what is *that* to a man who has the burden of life to carry and the battle of life to fight? But when you hear the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, it lifts you up out of your discouragements and makes you say, after all, “It is worthwhile to live, it is worthwhile to suffer, it is worthwhile to press forward, for we see the great love the Lord has toward us, and what good things He has laid up in store for them that love Him.” The Word of the Lord is like a fire, for it warms and comforts the hearts of His people. There is such a thing as unction—I cannot tell you what it is, but I can tell you when I hear a sermon from a man who has it—and I can tell you when I hear a sermon that is without it. And I know that if it is God's Word,

there is a savor, an unction, a sweetness, a delightfulness about it that makes our very hearts leap and dance within us because of the blessed and glorious sound of the Gospel of God! Happy are the people that know this joyful sound!

But next, fire is only at work very moderately when it yields us comfort. It has also the effect of paining and awakening. You put your finger in the fire and you will know that it burns! You lay your hand upon a red-hot bar of iron and you will not need anybody to tell you that there is fire within it! So, even if you are an unconverted man—if you have, as yet, no knowledge of the power of the Gospel of God—yet if you come in contact with it, I will guarantee you that you will know it! Very likely you will show that you know it by getting very angry, growing very indignant. Men do not like being singed and scorched by the Gospel! When a fellow has burnt his hand, he does not feel pleased with the hot iron—and the Gospel often operates upon men most beneficially when it excites their wrath. I have not much hope of the sinner who keeps on hearing the Truth of God and saying, “Yes, I like that kind of preaching. I quite enjoy our minister’s sermons.” I have a great deal more hope of a man when he says, “I will never hear *that* fellow again, I cannot bear to listen to him,” and goes out in a rage! He will come back before long—the hook is in his jaw—he is feeling the sharpness of it and he will not be able to get away from it.

The Word of the Lord is as a fire and if a man touches fire, it will burn him and he will be made to know that he has come into contact with it. Have you not, dear Friends, felt it to be so? If you have sat for years under a ministry and have remained not only unconverted, but unmoved—if you have always felt perfectly pleased and satisfied with yourself and with what you have heard—I should think it cannot have been the Gospel of Jesus Christ! If it has been the true Gospel of the Grace of God, I am sure that it will either make you angry with yourself, or angry with your sin, or angry with *itself*, for, if you do not hate your sin, you will hate the Gospel with all its lovingness! God’s Word is so stern a witness against everything that is evil, that it is like fire, in that it pains, startles and awakens. Men cannot go to sleep when their fingers are on fire—neither can they when the true Gospel is sounding aloud in their ears!

Fire also has a melting power and so has the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, dear Friends, there are some of us who once had hearts of steel—nothing seemed able to move us and melt us but we came under the influence of the blessed Spirit of God and under the sound of the Gospel—and soon we began to feel, we began to tremble, we began to be in distress, we began to lament, we began to seek the Savior, we began to trust Him! All things were changed under the influence of this Divine fire. Oh, that we could get the hearts of many hardened ones into the very center of the blessed flame till the holy heat should make them flow like melted wax before the Presence of the God of Israel! Certainly the Gospel has a wonderful power to melt the heart of man.

More than that, the Gospel has a consuming power. When it first comes into a district, it finds people indifferent to it, but possibly it begins by burning up some one of their vices. It may be that drunks are reformed. Then, straightway, the men who get gain out of this evil mer-

chandise are sure to be indignant about it! They see the demon of drunkenness cast out of men and they cry, "Our gains are gone!" And they are angry, but they cannot stop the fire. Once fairly set alight, it will burn, blaze and spread till others shall cast away their evil habits and turn unto the living God!

I cannot help noticing in history the consuming power of the Gospel of Christ. There have been old systems of iniquity that have been hoary with age, but when, at last, they have been attacked by the Church of God with the sword of the Spirit and the Gospel of Christ, they have been utterly destroyed! There was, for instance, that abominable institution of slavery—and there was a part of the Church of Christ which tried to palliate it and spoke of it as "a Divine institution, a peculiar institution," and I know not what! But when the Church of God denounced slavery as a thing utterly inconsistent with Christianity, the thing was burnt up right speedily and passed away! There are many more social and political wrongs that will have to perish through the burning power of the Gospel—and there is much in our *hearts* and much in our *lives*, and much all round about us that will have to go as the Gospel fire burns more and more vigorously! But remember that it must be God's Word that will burn out the evil. We cannot do much with our poor thinking and tinkering—it is the eternal Truth of God, the everlasting verities brought to bear upon the sons of men that shall soon separate between the dross and the gold, consuming the one and leaving the other pure!

But our text also says that *God's Word is like a hammer*—"and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces." So that, whenever a minister has the Gospel to use, this simile should teach him how he ought to use it—with all his might, let him strike with it mighty blows for his Lord! I should think that it does not require any great education to learn how to use a hammer. I do not know, it may, but it seems that to use a hammer aright, one has nothing to do but to strike with it. A stone-breaker, for instance, gets a good strong hammer and a heap of stones to strike at—and he has but to hit them as hard as he can and to keep on hitting till all are broken. Brothers, when you preach, take the Gospel hammer and strike as hard as you can with it!

"Oh, but I must try to improve the look of my hammer! It must have a mahogany handle!" Never mind about the mahogany handle! Use your hammer for striking—hammers are not for ornament—they are meant to be used for real hard work! And when you come to use the Gospel as it ought to be used, the result is wonderful! It is a rock-breaking thing. "Oh," you cry, "there is a very obdurate man there!" Strike at him with the Gospel! "Oh, but he ridicules and scoffs at the Truth of God!" Never mind if he does—keep on smiting him with the Gospel. "Oh, but, in a certain district, I have wielded this hammer against the rock for years and nothing has come of it!" Still go on wielding it, for this is a hammer that never failed! Only continue to use it! Everything is not accomplished with one stroke, nor, perhaps, with 20 strokes. The rock that does not yield the first time, nor the second time, nor the third time, nor the 20<sup>th</sup> time, will yield at last! There is a process of disintegration taking place at every stroke—the great mass is inwardly moving even when you cannot see that it is doing so. And there will come, at last, one blow of the hammer

which will seem to do the deed. But all the previous strokes contributed to it and brought the rock into the right state for breaking it up at last. Hammer away, then, Brothers—hammer away with nothing but the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The heart that is struck may not yield even year after year, but it will yield at last!

I trust that I am speaking the truth about some of my hearers who have been listening to me for a long time. I have hammered at you with all my might—I do not see that I have done much, yet, but I *do* know that this hammer does not go to be beaten and, as long as you live, and I live, it will do the same work! In the name of the everlasting God, the Gospel shall still be brought to bear upon your heart and conscience! O God, grant that we may not be disappointed at the result of our labors, but may the hard hearts yield, after all, to the blows of the Gospel hammer!

If any of you are in the habit of hearing sermons which are very fine, very elegant, very logical, very proper, yet if they never strike you as the hammer strikes the rock—if they never aim at breaking your hearts—do not waste any more Sundays in hearing them, for they are not God's Word! This Word is a hammering Word and if the preacher's message does not strike you—if it does not ultimately break you in pieces—it is because it is not the Word of God to which you have been listening! This is the test which God, Himself, gives to distinguish the true from the false, "Is not My Word like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"

Now put the two together—*the fire and the hammer*—and you will see how God makes His servants who are to be instruments for His use. He puts us into the fire of the Word! He melts, He softens, He subdues! Then He takes us out of the fire and welds us with hammer strokes such as only He can give, till He has made us fit instruments for His use! And He goes forth to His sacred work of conquering the multitudes, having in His hands the polished shafts that He has forged with the fire and the hammer of His Word!

So far I have dealt with the statement of our text, that the Word of God has power in it like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

**II.** Now I want, in the second place, to ILLUSTRATE THIS STATEMENT by noticing certain parts of God's Word which have, to our personal knowledge, operated both as a fire and a hammer upon the hearts of men.

A large part of God's Word is taken up with the revelation of His Law and you cannot fully preach the Gospel if you do not proclaim the Law of the Lord. Men will never receive the balm of the Gospel unless they know something of the wounds that sin has made. If the Law of God is faithfully and fully preached, what a fire it is! What a hammer it is! That Law which takes cognizance of our words and our thoughts. That Law which we are constantly breaking by sins of omission and sins of commission. That Law which declares that God will by no means clear the guilty, that Law which must be followed by punishment upon those who disobey it—for the Lord our God is a jealous God and He will not have His Law trampled upon—that Law is both a fire and a hammer! When once the Spirit of God blesses the solemn declarations about the Law of God so as to

bring them home to the conscience, what a hammer it is! What a fire it is!

I shall never forget the time when I felt that fire so that I could not rest day or night and when I felt that hammer till I seemed broken in pieces with its tremendous blows! That Law which will justify no man till he keeps it perfectly. That Law which condemns every man who has violated it but once. That Law which demands death as the penalty for each offense. That Law which casts man into prison, out of which he can never come till he has paid the uttermost farthing—that Law is, indeed, a fire and a hammer and many have been burned and broken by it! Remember how John Bunyan felt its force for years? Many of us for briefer times have, nevertheless, realized that there is no teaching in the world that is so terrible as the proclamation of God's Law—nothing that so breaks the heart in pieces as a true revelation of the just demands of the Most High God.

But, beloved Brothers, have you not also felt that there is fire-work and hammer-work *in the teaching of the Gospel?* Oh, how often have we seen men who have not been moved, even by the Law of God, at last won to Christ by the preaching of the Gospel—the Gospel of Free Grace and dying love, full forgiveness for the greatest sinners—immediate, irreversible pardon given in a moment to every sinner who believes in Christ! Oh, how this Gospel has acted like a fire and burned up all the sinner's opposition! How this Gospel has also been like a hammer to break down human obstinacy! The Gospel of redemption through the precious blood of Jesus. The Gospel which tells of full Atonement made. The Gospel which proclaims that the utmost farthing of the ransom price has been paid and that, therefore, whoever believes in Jesus is free from the Law, free from guilt and free from Hell—the proclaiming of this Gospel has made men's hearts burn within them and has dashed out the very brains of sin and made men joyfully flee to Christ! So, preach the Gospel, then—the Gospel of justification by faith, the Gospel of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the Gospel of final perseverance through the unchanging love of God. Preach the whole of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God as it is revealed in the Covenant of Grace and you will be doing fire-and-hammer work of the very choicest sort!

Above all, Brothers, what fire-and-hammer power there is *in the doctrine of the Cross!* The ever-blessed Christ of God has the sins of all His people laid upon Him and He is fastened to the Cross of shame. He whom angels worshipped is hanged up as a felon! He bleeds and dies for guilty men. When every other piece of artillery has failed to break open the gates of the city of Mansoul, the battering ram of the Cross has made every timber start. Man must yield when the power of the Spirit of God applies to his heart the doctrine of the precious blood! The old, old story of the Cross has more power in it to melt the heart of man than all the other stories that were ever told! You must often have felt it to be so, you who are servants of God! Have you not often been melted and broken down by the story of the Cross? Yes, and you are not ashamed to be so broken down—rather do you strike upon your breasts with indignation that your hearts should be so hard to break—and your wish is that you may always be deeply sensitive to that sacred tragedy, that Divine story

of Him who was “found guilty of excess of love,” but guilty of nothing beside. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, one might go on to illustrate the Truth of this statement, that everywhere God’s Word has power as a hammer and as a fire, but especially those parts of it which speak of the Law, the Gospel and the Cross!

**III.** Time fails me, so I must close my discourse by asking you to PUT THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT TO A PRACTICAL TEST—“Is not My Word like as a fire, says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”

Let us, first, *try it upon ourselves*. You are very sad, are you? Your heart is cold. Now, Brother, read a chapter from the Word. Open the Bible. Sit down and study it. Ask God to bless it to you and I am sure you will soon be delighted to find that it is like a fire to warm and comfort you. When you are sad, do not run into your neighbor’s house, do not sit down, alone, and weep in sullen despair—get to the Word of the Lord! There is such sweetness in it, there is such power in it that in a short time you shall have beauty instead of ashes and songs instead of sighs.

You say that you are not sad, but you are very sleepy. You have become very drowsy and dull in the ways of God. You have not the earnest spirit you used to have, nor half the spiritual life and vigor you once felt. Very well, then come to God’s Word—read it, study it, listen to it, find out where that Word is faithfully preached and go there! Oh, how quickly the Lord has blessed some of us in times of great barrenness! A single sentence has brought us out of our lethargy into holy energy. One chapter of that Word has operated upon us more swiftly than a charm. “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Cling to the Gospel, whatever the state into which your heart gets—if you would again enjoy your first love, remember where you received it—it was in the hearing of the Word! Therefore, go and hear it, again, and search the Scriptures for yourself, that you may be revived and restored.

Perhaps another friend says, “I have lost so much of my comfort, assurance and joy, that I feel as if I had grown quite cold and hard and insensible.” Why need you be cold when God’s Word is like a fire? Why need your heart remain like a rock when God’s Word is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Get back to the Gospel, dear Friend—that is the cure for your hardness and coldness! I saw, the other day, a man whom I used to know as a very energetic Christian. He went away from us and joined another church where the pastor is an eloquent man, and he has been there for years. I said to him, “Well, how are you getting on?” He answered, “Oh, I hardly know! I always like to hear the minister preach.” “But how does your soul prosper?” I enquired. “Ah,” he replied, “you have puzzled me, now, for ever since I have been there I have not dared to think whether I have a soul or not! The fact is, that kind of preaching does not do for people who have souls.” “Oh, dear, me!” I said to him, “if I were you, I would flee from the place! If the preaching does not feed your soul and make you grow in love to God and in likeness to Christ, what is the good of it?” We must feel the power of the Word upon our hearts if we would be strong and active in service for our Lord! But it is according to the nature of God’s Word that he who feeds thereon should be changed into its nature. As the Word of the Lord is quick and

powerful, if you feed on it, it shall make you live and it shall fill you with true power—it shall sanctify and purify you, and make you to reflect the Character of God.

And next, Brothers and Sisters—still using our text practically—as God's Word is like a fire and like a hammer, if we have used it upon ourselves, *let us try to use it upon others*. I have an opinion that there are a great many persons in this world whom we give up as hopeless, who have never really been tried and tested with the Gospel in all their lives. I am afraid that there are in this place persons of whom we speak as unlikely to be converted, who have never been fully brought under the influence of the fire of God's Word, or beneath the fall of the hammer of the Gospel. "I brought one person," says somebody. I am glad you have, my dear Friend, but have you ever spoken faithfully to that person about his soul? "Well, I do not know that I have. I have said a *little* to him." Have you ever plainly put the Gospel before him? "Well, I do not think he was quite the person to be spoken to in that fashion." Ah, I see that you thought you were going to burn him without using fire and to break that rock without lifting the hammer! The fact is, you believed that something better than the Gospel fire was needed in his case, or that something gentler than the Gospel hammer was needed. Will you not try that old-fashioned hammer upon him? Will you not try that old fire upon him?

I have heard of congregations where men have said, "There is no good to be done there." And I have wondered if they were to try preaching one of the old-fashioned sort of Gospel sermons—if they could get Mr. Whitefield to preach, or have someone to preach the same truth as Whitefield preached—what results would follow? When people say that the hearts of the people are not affected by the preaching in any place, I ask, "But was it the *Gospel* with which you tried to affect them? Was it the very Word of God that was preached?" *Our* words are like paper pellets thrown against the wall—they effect nothing! But God's Word is like a shot fired from one of the greatest Woolwich cannons! When it comes, it crashes through every obstacle and destroys everything that is opposed to it.

Why should we not always set the whole Truth of God before those whom we seek to save? I believe that sometimes, even in Sunday schools, children are taught "to love gentle Jesus," and so on, as if *that* were the way of salvation. Why not tell them to *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ? Why is love to take the place of *faith*? Let it be the same Gospel for the children that you give to the adults! Try them with the same Gospel and see what will come of it—and let this work be attempted everywhere.

"But," says someone, "there are certain districts where you cannot do any good if you try to preach the Gospel. You must fiddle to the people and drum to them—and then you must have amusements and entertainments for them, you must have penny readings and concerts." Very well, convert sinners that way if you can, dear Friends—I do not object to any method that results in the winning of souls! Stand on your head if that will save the people, but still, it seems to me that if God's Word is like a fire, there is *nothing* like it for burning its way! And if God's Word is like a hammer, there can be *nothing* like that Word for hammering down everything that stands in the way of Jesus Christ! Why, then, should we not continually try the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel?



“Well,” says one, “but the poor people are dirty—we must have various sanitary improvements.” Of course we must! Go on with them as fast as you can—the more of such things, the better! There is nothing like soap-suds and whitewash for dirty people and dirty places, but you may whitewash and soap them as long as you like, yet *that* will not save their souls without the Gospel of Christ! You may go to them and plead the cause of temperance with them and I hope you will—the more of it, the better. Make teetotalers of every one of them if you can, for it will be a great blessing to them! But still, you have not really done anything permanent if you stop there. Try the Gospel! Try the Gospel! Try the Gospel! When the Gospel was tried against the world in the days of Paul—when the power of the great empire of Rome had crushed out liberty and when lust of the most abominable kind made the world reek in the nostrils of God—nothing was done but preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified! And the common people heard of Jesus Christ, heard of Him gladly, and believed in Him! And very soon, down went the false gods, down went the brutal lusts of the Roman empire and a great part of the world was permeated with the Gospel! And it *needs* to be done again and it *must* be done again! But remember that it is only to be done by that same Word of the Lord which did it the first time. And the sooner we get back to that Word, the better. And the more we throw away everything else but the simple proclaiming of that Word, the more speedy will be the victory and the more swift and sure will be the triumph for our God and for His Christ!

O Sirs, if you want to have your hearts renewed, it is the Gospel that must melt them! If you want to be saved, it is the Gospel that must save you! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” This is the substance of the Revelation from Heaven—accept it and God bless you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 23:1-32.**

**Verse 1.** *Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! says the LORD.* What a dreadful woe this is upon all false shepherds—those who profess to be sent of God to instruct the people, but who are not sent of God at all, whose labors only result in the scattering of the sheep and destroying them instead of gathering them to Christ for their salvation!

**2-4.** *Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed My people: You have scattered my flock, and driven them away, also have not visited them; behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, says the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them who shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, says the LORD.* If the under-shepherds do not feed the flock, God, Himself, will do it, for His own redeemed flock shall not be torn of wolves, nor left to perish in the lands where they are driven. That Great Shepherd of the sheep will do what others fail to do, but this does not take away from them their responsibil-

ity and it must be the most solemn responsibility that rests on mortal man to profess to be a shepherd of souls, yet not to be sent of God.

**6.** *Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.* We are looking for that glorious King! Oh, that He would soon come! He is the great Monarch who shall absorb all other monarchies, for, "He shall reign forever and ever."

**6.** *In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.* What a glorious name for our King who is made of God unto us "righteousness." We may well rejoice to think that all the perfect righteousness of our great King and Lord shall belong to us, for this shall be His very name, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

**7, 8.** *Therefore, behold, the days come, says the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD lives, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, the LORD lives which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries where I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.* There are better times for Israel than Israel has ever known as yet! The glories of Egypt and of the Red Sea are yet to be eclipsed. And there are better times in store for the Church of God than she has seen as yet!

**9.** *My heart within me is broken because of the prophets.* In Jeremiah's day there was a set of men who pretended to be prophets, yet who contradicted the Lord's servant at every point.

**9.** *All my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of His holiness.* Jeremiah had really received the Word of the Lord and it seemed to overpower him—as that Word was full of terror, he felt like one who was overcome with wine.

**10, 11.** *For the land is full of adulterers, for because of swearing the land mourns; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yes, in My house have I found their wickedness, says the LORD.* It is an awful thing when wickedness abounds even in the House of God and it is to be feared that, in many places, the Church of the present day is not clear in this matter.

**12.** *Therefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness.* What an awful description of the doom of the profane prophets and priests! Slippery ways are bad enough in the light, but, "their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness."

**12-14.** *They shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, says the LORD. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused My people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing.* It was bad enough for Samaria to go astray. There was a mixed race there, so it was no wonder that their prophets were foolish, but oh, that in Jerusalem, the city of the great King, there should be false prophets—that was worst of all! This was the style of these prophets—

**14, 15.** *They commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none returns from his wickedness: they are all of them unto Me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.* When preachers are bad, who wonders that people are worse? If the prophets go astray, how shall those who follow them find the right road?

**16.** *Thus says the LORD of Hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain.* That is one mark of a false Prophet—he makes you feel that you are a fine fellow, that there is something good in you—“They make you vain.”

**16.** *They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.* That is another of the marks of a false Prophet. Such a man as that is a great thinker—he has thought out his theology, himself, he has imagined and invented it, himself—“They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.”

**17.** *They still say unto them that despise Me, The LORD has said you shall have peace; and they say unto everyone that walks after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.* This is yet another mark of the false Prophet. He always tries to smooth down the consequences of sin. “In the future state,” he says, “sin may occasion some temporary inconvenience, but all things will come right, sooner or later.” That is a man sent of the devil! He is no servant of the living God! By these three tests you may prove who are the false prophets—they make you vain, they speak out of their own heart, not out of the mouth of God, and they try to make it easy for you to sin by denying the greatness of the penalty attached to it.

**18, 19.** *For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD, and has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word, and heard it? Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.* This is God's Word—He does not prophesy smooth things to the wicked! He does not promise slight consequences of sin, but “a whirlwind” and, “a grievous whirlwind.”

**20-22.** *The anger of the LORD shall not return, until He has executed, and till He has performed the thoughts of His heart: in the latter days you shall consider it perfectly. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.* False prophets are futile and vain—no good result comes of all their teaching. But oh, if they had known the Word of the Lord! If they had really been sent of God, what a difference there would have been! God grant that none of us may pretend to teach others what we have never learned, or to speak for God if God has never spoken to us!

**23-26.** *Am I a God at hand, says the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the LORD. Do not I fill Heaven and earth? says the LORD. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in My name, saying, I have dreamed,*

*I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? Yes, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart. They profess to be prophets of their own heart, but “they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart,” for that which comes out of man’s heart is like the heart, itself, and man’s heart “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”*

**27, 28.** *Which think to cause My people to forget My name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten My name for Baal. The Prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream. Let him tell it as a dream, for it is nothing more than that! If he has dreamt it, let him say, “This is a dream that I have dreamed, but it is only a dream.”*

**28.** *And he that has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully. Let him speak it as the Word of the Lord.*

**28.** *What is the chaff to the wheat? says the LORD. Man’s thoughts, man’s conceptions, at their very best, are but as chaff—only the Word of the Lord is the true wheat.*

**29, 30.** *Is not My Word like as a fire? says the LORD; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, says the LORD, that steal My Words every one from his neighbor. Borrowed sermons—pages of other people’s experience—fragments pulled from old or new divines—nothing of their own, nothing that God ever said to them, nothing that ever thrilled their hearts or swayed their souls—God will not acknowledge such teaching as this!*

**31.** *Behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He says. They have not any hearts—they only use their tongues. They say, “He says,” as if God had said to them something which He has never said.*

**32.** *Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, says the Lord, and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the LORD. See how heavily God deals with the false prophets of Jeremiah’s time? He will deal with equal severity with any who preach or teach anything other than the Gospel of His blessed Son—the pure Revelation which is written in this Book! God grant that none of us may be deceived by them, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.*

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—386, 484, 447.**

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.**

# HEART-KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

## NO. 1206

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 6, 1874,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord."  
Jeremiah 24:7.***

WITH what blindness has sin struck the heart of man, for man does not know his own Maker! It is implied in the text that in his heart he is ignorant of Jehovah, though in Him he lives, and moves, and has his being. What an impotence has sin brought upon the mind of man, since being ignorant of God he is also incapable of finding Him out! This, also, may be most readily gathered from the text. The fact that a promise is made in the Covenant that to the chosen shall be given hearts to *know* the Lord is a clear proof that without the Divine teaching and without the reception of a new heart from the Lord, man not only does not know, but cannot find out his God!

You boast of your intellect, O vain Man, but your foolish heart is darkened so that you stumble in the noonday as at midnight. You have eyes, and you say, "I see," but your eyes are closed, your ears are dull of hearing and your heart has waxed gross. And your soul has become so dull that only He who formed the ear can make you hear. And only He who fashioned the eye can give you sight.

How can we sufficiently admire the condescension of God, that He should stoop to instruct the heart of man? Man forgets his God, but God does not forget him. Though man knows not God, yet God knows him and, seeing that his powerlessness to grasp Divine knowledge lies in his *heart*, He visits him in Grace and renews the fountain of his strength and the center of his nature by giving him a new heart and a right spirit.

The infinitely glorious God might have regarded it as a matter of indifference whether such an insignificant creature as man knew Him or not. He might well have said, and it had been consistent with the majesty of His justice to say it, "Seeing that you do not desire to know Me, you shall not perceive Me. And inasmuch as you close your eyes to Me, you shall continue in outer darkness. Because you will not glorify Me as God, your hearts shall abide in midnight, I will leave you to your own devices."

But the Lord of Love said not so to the sons of men, upon whom His heart was set! On the contrary, He has made a Covenant of Mercy on our behalf and His speech is the reverse of what we might have expected. He declares in the words of the text, "I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am Jehovah." What is meant by this great promise of the text is not merely that God will lead the converted to know that there is a God, because that may be known without a new heart. Any man possessed of

reason may know that there is a Supreme Being who created all things and preserves the universe in existence.

The heavens declare the Glory of God and the firmament show His handiwork. The tokens of Divine skill and power are so abundant that, "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are already seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." The knowledge intended here is much deeper than that which comes from observation—and only affects the intellect. To know that there is a God is a lower step which every man takes except the fool who has said in his heart, "There is no God." The text promises that the favored ones shall know that God is Jehovah! So the original text has it, "I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am Jehovah."

God leads men to see that the God revealed in Scripture and manifested in the Person of the Lord Jesus, is the God who made Heaven and earth. Man fashions for himself a god after his own liking. He makes to himself, if not out of wood or stone, yet out of what he calls his own consciousness, or his cultured thought, a deity to his taste who will not be too severe with his iniquities or deal out strict justice to the impenitent. He rejects God as He is and makes other gods such as he thinks the Divine One ought to be. And he says concerning these works of his own imagination, "These are your gods, O Israel."

The Holy Spirit, however, when He illuminates our minds, leads us to see that Jehovah is God and beside Him there is none else. He teaches His people to know that the God of Heaven and earth is the God of the Bible, a God whose attributes are completely balanced, Mercy attended by Justice, Love accompanied by Holiness, Grace arrayed in Truth and Power linked with Tenderness. He is not a God who winks at sin, much less is pleased with it, as the gods of the heathen are supposed to be. No, He is a God who cannot look upon iniquity and will, by no means, spare the guilty.

This is the great quarrel of the present day between the philosopher and the Christian. The philosopher says, "Yes, a god if you will, but he must be of such a character as I now dogmatically set before you." But the Christian replies, "Our business is not to *invent* a god, but to obey the one Lord who is revealed in the Scriptures of Truth." The God of Holy Scripture is Love, but He is also possessed of justice and severity. He is merciful and gracious, but He is also stern and terrible towards evil. Therefore unregenerate hearts say, "We cannot accept such a God as this," and they call Him cruel and I know not what besides.

Herein they are idolaters—they set up another god and forsake the true God—and it does not alter the case if they plead that they make no graven image, for the First Commandment says, "You shall have no other gods before Me." The Lord teaches His people that He is Jehovah, who brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. He teaches them He is the Jehovah who smote Pharaoh with plagues and drowned his hosts in the Red Sea. The Jehovah who led His people through the wilderness, but cast out their enemies from before them with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. The Jehovah that redeemed His people,

but chastened them for their iniquities and took vengeance upon their inventions.

The God of Sinai is the same God as the God of Calvary. "I am Jehovah your God," is His solemn proclamation, and it is well for the soul when it understands and knows that Jehovah, He is God, yes, Jehovah, He is God alone. When the heart is content to believe in God as He is revealed and no longer goes about to fashion a deity for itself according to its own fancies and notions, it is a hopeful sign. The main stress of the promise lies, however, in this—"I will give them a heart to *know* ME." That is, not merely to know that I am and that I am Jehovah, but to have a *personal* knowledge of Myself. I can scarcely express the idea which I wish to convey to you, but you all know the difference between knowing who a man is—what his character is and all about him—and knowing the man himself.

There are hundreds of people of whom we know a great deal. We are favored by some prying gentleman or other with stories of how our great men dress, what they say, what they eat, when they eat and all sorts of minute details of their personal habits. Still, despite all this information, we do not *know* these people—we should speak falsely if we said we did. To know them we must be on speaking terms with them. There must be a mutual recognition. There must be dealings of some kind between us.

Now, it is so in the far higher matter of which we now speak. It is not enough to know that our Creator is the Jehovah of the Bible and that He is perfect in Character and glorious beyond thought—to *know* God we must have perceived Him—we must have spoken to Him! We must have been made at peace with Him. We must have lifted up our heart to Him and received communications from Him. If you know the Lord, your secret is with Him and His secret is with you. He has manifested Himself unto you as He does not unto the world. He has made Himself known unto you by the mysterious influences of His Spirit—because of this you know Him.

I cannot explain this knowledge, but it is delightful to remember that many of you understand what it means by experience. Is it not sweet to traverse the world discerning God on every side? Your Father ever near! Is it not a blessing to be in trouble and find Him helping us? To be in a dilemma and to hear His voice saying, "This is the way, walk you in it"? To be depressed in spirit and to feel that His comforts rejoice our souls? To be exulting in joy and to feel that His Presence calms and sobers us and keeps us from undue delight in created things? It is inexpressibly honorable and joyful to walk with God as Enoch did, to speak with Him as Abraham did of old, as a man speaks with his friend, or to be hidden in the hollow of His hand, as Moses was in Horeb! This is to know God after the manner of the text.

My Hearer, do you know God? Have you beheld the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Have you discerned the Father in the Son? Do you see all the attributes of God shining mildly through the Mediator, toned down to our capacity, lest the effulgence of the Deity should blind our finite sense? Do you know God by going to Jesus as your Savior? He that

has seen Christ has seen the Father! “No man knows the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.” If you know Christ and are found in Him, then, Beloved, you know the Lord and are among the blessed company who are taught of the Spirit, for flesh and blood have not revealed the Lord unto you!

We will consider our text in the following manner. We will first of all describe *the seat of this knowledge*—“I will give them a *heart* to know Me.” Then *the necessity of this knowledge*. Then *the excellency of this knowledge* and, lastly *the source of this knowledge*. May the Holy Spirit aid us in speaking upon each topic.

**I. THE SEAT OF THIS KNOWLEDGE**—“I will give them a *heart* to know Me.” Observe that it is not said, “I will give them a *head* to know Me.” As I have already said, man’s great stumbling block in coming to God does not lie in his reason—there *is* a difficulty in his reason, but not the major one. The first and primary impediment to his knowledge of God lies in the *affections*. Man’s *heart* is set upon that which is evil—consequently he wants a God after his own fashion—who will smile upon sin, or at least tolerate it.

The Lord complains in the Psalm, “You thought that I was altogether such an One as yourself”—it is the tendency of man to think that God is like himself. The impure in heart cannot conceive of a pure God! If he *could* conceive Him, he would detest, rather than worship Him. “The pure in heart shall see God,” is one of the opening benedictions of the Savior’s ministry. But the impure in heart cannot see God and cannot, therefore, know Him! The *heart* is the seat of the blindness—there lies the darkness which beclouds the whole mind. Hence to the heart the light must come and to the heart that light is promised.

I understand by the fact that the knowledge of God here promised lies in the heart, first, that God renews the heart so that it *admires* the Character of God. The understanding perceives that God is just, powerful, faithful, wise, true, gracious, long-suffering and the like. Then the heart, being purified, admires all these glorious attributes and adores Him because of them. You can in a measure test your knowledge of the Lord by the enquiry—Do you approve the Character of God? Perceiving the God of the Scriptures to be the true God, do you admire Him as He reveals Himself? I must repeat what I have already said. There are many who have imagined God to be what they would like Him to be and then, of course, they admire the image which they have set up.

But to see God as the Scripture reveals Him, especially in His holiness, is a gift of His Divine Grace! Have you noted how David sings in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His *holy* name”? It would have sounded more in accordance with the context to have said His gracious name, for he goes on to speak of the Lord’s deeds of Grace—“who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.” But that which the Psalmist most admired was the Lord’s holiness in all this—the way in which He could deal mercifully with the guilty and yet retain His spotless holiness. Holiness is the great terror of the ungodly



and, therefore, it is a token of our knowing God in our hearts when we can bless His holy name.

How do the angels praise Him? Do they sing, “Mighty, mighty, mighty, Lord God of Hosts”? Or, “Bounteous, bounteous, bounteous Creator of the universe”? No, but, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.” They adore the *whole* of God and God as a whole—holiness means completeness of character, the absence of everything like excess, the presence of everything that is perfection. O my Soul, can you, in some measure, see the infinite perfection of the Lord in all points? And seeing, do you admire? Do you see Him as a consuming fire, burning up evil? And do you approve Him as such? Do you see His sovereignty, His hatred of sin, His immutability, His jealousy and yet admire Him? Do you, indeed, delight in even the sterner traits of the Divine Character, knowing that under all aspects the Lord is good?

Then in you is fulfilled the promise, “I will give them a heart to know Me”! The heart-knowledge promised in the Covenant of Grace means, however, much more than *approval*. Grace enables the renewed heart to take another step and *appropriate* the Lord, saying, “O God, You are my God, early will I seek You.” All the saved ones cry, “This God is our God forever and ever. He shall be our God even unto death.” The man who only knows the Lord with his head regards Him as anybody’s God, or another man’s God. But the man who knows the Lord with his *heart* exclaims with Thomas, “My Lord and my God.”

By an act of appropriating faith the gracious man cries out, “The Lord is my Portion says my soul,” and then in return he dedicates himself to the service of his God. And there is fulfilled in him that other promise of His, “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.” Admiration of God leads on to appropriation and this to something higher, still. All true knowledge of God is attended by *affection* for Him. In spiritual language, to know God is to love Him. “He that loves not, knows not God, for God is Love.” “I love the Lord,” says David, “because He has heard my voice and my supplication.” He had been no stranger to the Lord, but had conversed with Him in prayer and received tokens of favor and, therefore, his love overflowed.

He cries out in another Psalm, “I will love You, O Lord, my Strength,” and then he goes on to heap up and pack together a host of words of love and praise—“The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” Where the Lord is fully known, He is intensely loved. The spouse first described her Beloved as the apple tree among the trees of the woods, and then she cried out, “I am sick of love.” At another time, after drawing a full-length portrait of her Lord, she could not refrain from exclaiming, “His mouth is most sweet, yes, He is altogether lovely.” Such is our love of God when we know Him—that we feel bound to glory in Him before others.

“My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.” It is the great passion of the renewed soul to glorify

God, whom He knows and loves. Knowledge without love would be a powerless thing, but God has joined this knowledge and love together in a sacred wedlock—and they can never be put asunder. As we love God we know Him—and as we know Him we love Him. Admiration, appropriation, affection are crowned with *adhesion*. To know a thing by heart is, in our common talk, to know it thoroughly. When a child knows his lesson by heart, we hope that he will not forget it.

That which is learned in the head may be unlearned, for our understanding is very fickle and our memory frail, but that which is written upon the heart cannot be erased. Holy Scripture asks, “Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire?” These she dotes upon and, therefore, she will not forget them. Can a woman forget her sucking child? No, she cannot, because her knowledge of her child is *heart* knowledge. Memories of the heart abide when all others depart. A mother’s love, a wife’s fondness, a sweet child’s affection will come before us even in the last hours of life. When the mind will lose its learning and the hand forget its cunning, the dear names of our beloved ones will linger on our lips. And their sweet faces will be before us even when our eyes are dim with the shadow of approaching death.

If we can sing, “O God, my heart is fixed, O my heart is fixed,” then the knowledge which it possesses will never be taken away from it. To know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, is not a fleeting attainment, but shall abide with us and increase until we know even as we are known. This is not the knowledge which shall vanish away, but that which shall be perfected when the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

Now, beloved Friend, have you such a knowledge of God? Do you admire, appropriate, love and cleave to the Lord, your God? Can you hope that you have been taught of the Lord according to that promise, “They shall know Me from the least even unto the greatest.” Do not say, “I am so little in Israel that I cannot be expected to know.” Does not the Covenant promise imply that the *least* must know the Lord as well as the greatest? This blessed knowledge is essential to every Christian! Do you possess it? If not, do you *desire* it? If so, plead for it, and say, “I beseech You show me Your Glory. Let me know You as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin.” He will hear you if you plead for Jesus’ sake.

**II.** This brings us at once to the second point, namely, THE NECESSITY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. If we think a minute we shall see how necessary it is. To know God is a necessary preparation *for every other true knowledge* because the Lord is the center of the universe, the basis, the pillar, the essential force, the All in All, the fullness of all things. Not to know God is as if a student should attempt to construct a system of astronomy and be altogether ignorant of the sun! Or a mariner should be a stranger to the sea! Or a farmer should not know the existence of seeds! The place which God occupies must be settled in our minds or we shall have no arrangement in our knowledge—and our science will be nothing but a conglomeration of truth and error.

You may learn the doctrines of the Bible, but you do not know them truly till you know the God of the doctrines. You may understand the precepts in the letter of them and the promises in their outward wording, but neither precept nor promise do you truly know until you know the God from whose lips they fell. The knowledge of God is, at once, the beginning and the end of wisdom. The ancient sage said, "Man, know yourself." He spoke well, but even for this, man must first know his God. I venture to say that no man rightly knows *himself* till he knows his *God*—because it is by the light and purity of God that we see our own darkness and sinfulness.

There must be a perfect model before us before we can discern our own departures from perfection. You must have a standard by which to weigh yourself or you cannot tell whether you are lacking or not. God is the Standard and until a man knows the Standard he does not know how far he has fallen short of it. The proper study of mankind is God. And that attended to, the next appropriate subject of study is man. We must know God, or our other knowledge may be dangerous to others and certainly will be hurtful to ourselves. It will puff us up or load us with responsibilities which we shall not be able to meet. For the highest and most practical purposes, without the knowledge of God, we abide in utter ignorance.

The knowledge of God is necessary *to any real peace of mind*. Suppose a man is in the world and feels that he is right in every way except with regard to God, and as to Him he knows nothing? Hear him say, "I go about the world and see many faces which I can recognize and I perceive many friends upon whom I can trust, but there is a God somewhere, and I know nothing at all about Him. Whether He is my friend or my foe I know not." If that individual is thoughtful and intelligent he must suffer unrest in his spirit, because he will say to himself, "Suppose this God should turn out to be a just God and I should be a breaker of His Laws? What a peril hangs over me. How is it possible for me to be at peace till this dreadful ignorance is removed?"

The Old Testament Scripture says, "Acquaint now yourself with God and be at peace." There is no peace to the heart while God is unknown. He is the God of peace and there can be no peace till the soul knows Him. Does it not strike you as being most certainly so? To leave this point unknown would be to leave in jeopardy the most vital part of happiness, the hinge upon which our eternal destiny must turn. Are you doing this? Or is the Lord known to you? That this knowledge of God is necessary is clear, for how could it be possible for a man to have spiritual life and yet not know God? The very first being which a man discerns when he is quickened into spiritual life is the Father of Spirits. His first cry is, "Father, I have sinned," and all his life he cries, "Abba Father."

Prayer is his breath, but he cannot truly pray to an unknown God. Faith is his life, but how shall he believe in Him whom he does not know? I cannot imagine such a being as a spiritual man who knows not God. It is a self-evident impossibility—to be of the sons of God and not yet know the Father! To be pressed upon the Father's bosom. To receive the Father's

forgiveness and yet to be an utter stranger to that forgiving God is impossible—it is utterly inconceivable! The knowledge of God is an absolute necessity of the spiritual life, without which we cannot see or enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Certainly it is necessary for the spiritual life when fully developed above. In Heaven and not know the King who reigns there? The golden harp in your hand and not know for whom to sweep its melodious strings? White-robed in Glory and not know the Redeemer in whose blood our robes were washed? Absurd supposition! It cannot be endured for a moment! Sinner, you *must* know the Lord! If you do not know Him you are not a partaker of His Grace, but you abide in darkness. Into His Heaven you can never enter till He has given you a heart to know Him! Do not forget this warning, or trifle with it.

**III.** Our third theme is THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. And here I shall spend a little longer time and I hope I shall not tire you. I shall not weary those who care more for sense than sound. One of the first effects of knowing God in the soul is that it *turns out our idols*. Paul tells the Galatians in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter and 8<sup>th</sup> verse of his Epistle, that it was when they knew not God that they did service unto them which by nature are not gods. But when they knew God, or rather were known of Him, they turned from their idols at once.

A knowledge of God! O my Brothers and Sisters, it creates an abhorrence of idols—especially of those which have enslaved our own hearts. It seems to us most monstrous that the ancient Greeks and Romans could have worshipped the deities which their poets fabled for them. And yet, at this very time, as I have said, men imagine for themselves a god such as they would choose and then they worship this god of their own fabrication. Only let the Lord reveal Himself to the soul. Let the heart know the true God and away these idols go! With loathing are they cast to the moles and to the bats. Get a view of the Jehovah of Revelation—shining through the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you say—“What have I to do, anymore, with idols?”

With holy scorn you pour contempt upon the gods of man’s invention and glory, instead, in the living God, the God of Israel! Your hearts burn with the jealousy of Elijah and flames with indignation against the rivals of the Lord of Hosts! You would take the prophets of Baal and let not one escape, because they have dared to set up “the image of jealousy” in the temple of the Most High and have seduced the minds of men to pay their worship to the gods that are not God! Beloved, God so enamors the soul of the converted man, so engrosses every spiritual faculty, that he cannot endure an idol, however dear in former times! And if, perhaps, in some backsliding moment an earthly love intrudes, it is because the man has withdrawn his eyes from the splendor of the Deity. When once he gets his eyes back, again, to the God of Love, then does Dagon fall before the Ark of the Lord and not so much as the stump is left! Blessed Lord, let us know You, for then we shall know our idols no more.

The second good effect of the knowledge of God is that it *creates faith* in the soul. To prove this I might give a great many texts, but one will suffice. From Psalm 9:10, “they that know Your name will put their trust in You.” We cannot *trust* an unknown God. But when God reveals Himself to us by His Spirit, then to trust Him is no longer difficult. It is, indeed, inevitable! Whenever a man does not *believe* God, it is because he does not *know* Him. If you doubt His willingness to pardon sin, you do not know the abundance of His mercy. If you doubt His skill to bring you through your present difficulties, you do not know the infinite resources of His wisdom. If you dream that He cannot deliver you in this, your time of need, you have closed your eyes to the unlimitedness of His power. If you think He has forsaken you, you have failed to know His immutability. Know Him and you must *trust* Him!

Thirdly, this knowledge of God not only creates faith, but creates *good works*, also. Turn to 1 John 2:3 and you read, “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments”—meaning it is absolutely certain that wherever there is a knowledge of God there must follow the keeping of His commandments. And it is certainly so—know the Lord and with holy reverence you will obey Him. See what a great deal the Apostle ascribes to the knowledge of God in Colossians 1:9—“For this cause we, also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” What was to be the benefit of this? Let us read on—“That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.”

See what a string of excellent Graces spring out of our being filled with the knowledge of God?! It is a tree which bears 12 manner of fruits! The soul that knows the Lord is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which brings forth its fruit in its season. Daniel says (11:32), that “The people who do know their God shall be strong and do great exploits,” so that courage, valor and prowess are learned in this sacred school! A heart to know the Lord begets and nurtures every virtue and every Grace—and is the basis of the noblest character—the very food which feeds Divine Grace till it matures into Glory!

Brothers and Sisters, to know God has over us a *transforming power*. Remember how the Apostle writes (in 2 Cor. 3:18), “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” The knowledge of God is the most effectual influence under Heaven, for the Spirit works thereby, and by its means we are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created us. Everything that we learn and know affects our character in some measure, even as the flesh of an animal tastes of its food. A constant sight of any object, good or bad, tells upon us.

We heard a German missionary say, last Monday night, that when he was in Coomassie, the sight of dead bodies and of mangled corpses from

week to week so hardened him to it that the horror was almost gone. Every thought which crosses the mind affects it for the better or the worse. Every glance is molding us, every wish fashions the character. A sight of God is the most wonderfully sanctifying influence that can be conceived of! Know God and you will grow to be like He. Dear Hearer, have you beheld this marvelous vision?

The knowledge of God has a further effect. It *causes us to praise Him*. Here is a proof text—"In Judah is God known; His name is great in Israel." Wherever the Lord is known He must be magnified! It is not possible for us to have low thoughts of Him, or to give forth mean utterances concerning Him, or to act in a miserly way towards His cause when we know Him *practically*. There are some men whom we know whose presence renders paltry actions impossible—you feel that you could not act towards them in any but a generous manner. To know them elevates you! You must do the good and the great and the generous thing when they are concerned.

So, when once we know God it is much more so, for to know *Him* constrains us to praise Him, not only with our lips, but with our lives! It makes us feel that nothing is good enough for Him and we would even die for His name's sake. We wish for a glorious high throne on which He may be exalted above the highest heavens, King of kings and Lord of lords. The knowledge of God brings *comfort* and that is a very desirable thing in a world of trouble. What does the Psalmist say? "God is known in her palaces for a refuge." Do you know Him? Then He is your refuge. Blessed be God, in days of storm we put into this harbor and in days of battle we fly to this castle and dwell in this high tower. If you know God you will not be ruffled, or if for a little while you are disturbed, your heart will soon come back to its rest. You will cast your cares on Him, wait patiently for Him and rejoice in Him at all times—and surely it shall be well with you.

To know God also brings a man great honor. I cannot attempt, at this time, to explain the noble text which I am about to quote. I throw it out as a pleasing theme for meditation. It is the 14<sup>th</sup> verse of the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm. "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he has known My name." Think of it—"set on high"—and set on high by the Lord Himself! And all as the result of *knowing* the name of the Lord! There is no getting on high and staying there, no dwelling above the world and sin, no sitting in the heavenlies, no triumphing over death and Hell except by knowing God! When we do know Him, our meditation of Him shall be sweet. Then shall our head be lifted up above our enemies round about us. Then our heart shall mount above the cares and sorrows of the world and our soul shall dwell on high, where our place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks.

One thing more, and that is, the man who knows the Lord will have *usefulness* given him. And to prove that I will quote a passage in 2 Corinthians 2:14—"Now thanks be unto God which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest *the savor of His knowledge* by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish." Do you not see that the Apostle knew

Christ and Christ's name was in him as ointment poured forth? The man who knows God has a savor about him and wherever he goes he will be a power among men! The savor of Christ will come streaming out of him, as incense from a censor filled with glowing coals!

Our usefulness very much depends upon our knowledge of God. We cannot teach others of things that we do not know ourselves. If we have no savor in us there cannot be a savor coming out of us. We shall only be a drag upon the Church in any position if we are destitute of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. But if we are filled with a knowledge of Christ, then the sweet savor of His name will pour forth from us as perfume from the flowers!

Thus I have put together many things upon which we cannot expatiate, but they will make you see how excellent a thing it is to know the Lord in the heart.

**IV.** Our fourth point is, THE SOURCE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. Upon this I will dwell but briefly. We are clearly taught in the text that it is *a Divine work*—"I will give them a heart to know Me." None but the Creator can give a man a new heart. The change is too radical for any other hand. It would be hard to give a new eye, or a new arm, but a new heart [intellect] is still more out of the question! All the preaching, teaching and reforming in the world cannot do it. The Lord Himself must do it!

As surely as God made you, God must make you new or you will never know Him. It is evidently *a work of pure Grace*. "I will give them a heart," not, "They shall grow into it, or purchase it," but, "I will give it to them." He freely gives to whomever He wills, according to His own declaration, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." It is evidently *a work which is possible*. All things are possible to God and He says, "I will give it to them." He does not speak of it as a desirable blessing, but unattainable. On the contrary, He says, "I will give them a heart to know Me."

It is *a work which the Lord has promised to do*. How many precious passages there are in Holy Writ in which the Lord declares that this shall be done? I have lately read them with much sweetness to my own heart. Here are some of them. In *Hosea 2:19*, "I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness and in judgment, and in lovingkindness and in mercies, I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord." Then in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the prophecy of Hosea, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse we read, "Israel shall cry unto Me, my God, we know You."

That wonderful passage in Jeremiah 31:33-34, is so nearly reproduced by the Apostle in the 8<sup>th</sup> of Hebrews that I need only read the New Testament version (Heb. 8:10-12). "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no

more.” So then it is a promised blessing! A blessing all Divine and Divinely guaranteed to those with whom Jehovah has entered into Covenant.

The sum of my discourse is this. If you have received this heart to know the Lord, bless Him every minute of your existence for this choicest of all blessings without which you could not enjoy any other Covenant blessing! Never cease to praise the Lord, for He has favored you above measure in giving you so priceless a blessing. But suppose you stand in doubt as to whether you know God? How should you act? Listen to good counsel—consider your ways and turn unto the Lord your God, even now. Confess your ignorance, dear Friend. A sense of ignorance is the very vestibule of knowledge.

Go before God this very day with an acknowledgment that you know nothing. Tell Him how ignorant, blind and stupid you are. Confess it all before Him. That being done, remember that it is by the *knowledge* of Christ that you are to be justified—“By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many” (Isa. 53:11). Study the Character of Christ. Contemplate, with eager attention, His work and Person. See God in Christ Jesus and when you have done so, cry mightily unto the Lord, saying, “You have given this promise in Your Covenant! Lord, let it be a promise unto *me* and do You fulfill it. You have said, ‘I will give them a heart to know Me.’ Lord, give *me* a heart to know You!”

“For this,” He says, “I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” Go and inquire of Him concerning it. He will give you that heart! He will reveal Himself to you and you shall yet have to bless and praise His holy name, that He has turned you from darkness to light, and from the ignorance of your natural estate unto the true knowledge of His name. God grant it may be so with you this very day!

Time flies, we are almost at the end of the year and some of you still remain ignorant of God! Shall the year return to Heaven to accuse you? Let not this blessed Sabbath go until you have thought upon your ways and turned your steps unto His testimonies! May His Spirit sweetly incline you to seek His face and He will be known of you. God grant His blessing, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Jeremiah 31:18-37.*  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—908, 231, 489.**

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# THE TWO YOKES

## NO. 1032

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 14, 1872,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Thus says the Lord: You have broken the yokes of wood, but you  
have made in their place yokes of iron.”  
Jeremiah 28:13.***

ALL through the book of Jeremiah you will observe that the Prophet taught the people not only by words, but by symbols. At one time he took his mantle and hid it in the earth till it was soiled and worn, and then taught them something by wearing it. At another time he took an earthen pot and broke it in their presence. And on this occasion he put a yoke about his own neck as the token that Israel should be subdued beneath the power of Nebuchadnezzar. This was a strange method of teaching. I have sometimes heard complaints made by those who are fond of criticizing things they know nothing about—when a teacher puts a Truth of God very plainly, if he shall, as it were, *act* what he says—he is upbraided at once as being histrionic.

I know not what ungenerous words are hurled at him. Yet after all, this was what Jeremiah did. He taught the people by signs and symbols. So, too, our Lord Himself. I doubt not that when He uttered those words, “Consider the lilies,” He stooped down and plucked a lily. And when He said, “Consider the ravens,” He pointed to the ravens flying overhead in the sky. At any rate, we know that once He took a little child, and set it in the midst of them. What an outcry there would be if I were to take a little child and set him here and preach about him! If we used any kind of symbol, to what ridicule we should expose ourselves! The fact is, we might do much more good if we regarded less the general current of public opinion and ventured to do strange things that the Truth of God might come home to a slumbering generation, and the Word of God, which must be learnt by them or they must perish, were made to stick in their minds.

The Prophet Jeremiah, though exceedingly faithful in his mission which he discharged as God would have him discharge it, and with many tears in great love and deep anxiety, nevertheless had a great obstacle in his way. He was met by false prophets who withstood and contradicted him to his face. Not so very surprising either. It must ever be expected that it will be so. If God shall speak by any man, there shall be some other who proclaims that God speaks by *him* to the contrary. If there is a Christ, there will be an Antichrist. If there is a Simon Peter, there will be a Simon Marcus. If there shall be raised up by God a Luther, there shall be an Eckius, or some other controversialist who shall seek to resist and overthrow him.

Let no man's heart, then, fail him if he is flatly contradicted when he bears testimony for God. Let him rather expect it and go on never caring, for the fact is, the Truth of God will outlive error. In the long run the Word

of God, before which all other things are as grass and as the flower, the perishing flower of the field—the Word of God shall endure forever and triumph over the ruin of all the words of men! Tremble not, you feeble adherents of the Truth who fear lest your weakness should make the Truth, itself, weak, and the strong logic and the powerful rhetoric of its adversaries should overturn the oracles of God! It cannot be! The gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Gospel, mighty though they are both in power and in sophistry. The Truth of God shall abide! The right shall prevail, for God is faithful, and Christ must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

With this, by way of preliminary observation, we will now come to the text and endeavor to make some use of it for ourselves. Hananiah took off the symbolic yoke, the wooden yoke, from Jeremiah's neck and broke it. Jeremiah comes again, and says, "You have broken the yoke of wood, but God has commanded that you shall now wear yokes of iron." They were not benefited, therefore, by the change, but the reverse. This is suggestive of a broad principle. From the symbol, which was applicable in one case, we draw a general Truth of God. Whenever men say of God, "Let us break His bands asunder, and cast His cords from us," they may do so if they will—but instead of the yokes of wood they will be sure to get yokes of iron. If they will not submit to the government of Christ, they will have to submit to the tyranny of Satan.

Some yoke they will have to wear, and if they reject the easy yoke of the Christ of God, the wooden yoke, as it were, which He puts on men, there shall be made for them yokes of iron which they shall neither be able to break off nor yet to support. So our thought will run this way. First, that men must wear some yoke or other. Secondly, that the yoke of Christ is a very easy one. And, thirdly, that when it is refused, it is inevitable that men should wear a heavier one.

**I. MEN MUST WEAR SOME YOKE.** It is so naturally. There is no stage of life in which this is not the case. The child must bear the yoke in his youth. He is an unhappy child that is under no control. Probably there is nothing so ruinous to a man as to be allowed to have his own way while yet his judgment is not ripe enough to guide him. And when we advance into youth we are usually placed in some position of life where we are under obligations to some superior, be he parent, or guardian, or employer.

Nor if we become what is called our own masters, does it make much difference. As things go now, I think there are no people that are their own masters, for the masters are bound to yield to the terms which the servants dictate—and this condition of things is getting more and more rife. I shall not discuss the right or wrong of this—where questions arise between capitalists and skillful laborers—but I will say that if the employed claim liberty, the masters might very well be allowed a portion of that choice prerogative. As it is now, I am sure he that says, "I am a master," is as much under the yoke to his servants as the servant is under the yoke to his master!

That a man who lives in the midst of society should hold some relationship to all around him is indispensable. But men are always for

changing their forms of government. Some nations have a revolution almost with every moon, but for all that there is still a yoke upon them. And if it were ever to come to anarchy, to mob rule—ah, I guarantee you, it would be a yoke of iron, and of red hot iron, too. God save us from it! No yoke is so hard to bear as that yoke which a people put upon themselves when they reject all order, break through all law, and will not submit to any principle or any government, however just or righteous.

You cannot get on in this world without a yoke of some sort. We are not going to wear a tyrant's yoke, any of us. Let lords and lands have what masters they will—in this land of ours we will be free and our own masters still. The selfishness of individuals or of classes must never determine the boundary lines of power or of privilege—for we can only maintain our freedom by every one of us paying that right obedience to the law which is due from every citizen—if we would promote alike his own comfort and the common good. Away from those lower grounds into higher spheres—it is certainly true that we must wear the yoke. God has made us, and not we ourselves—and God has made us to be His servants.

We are daily in dependence on Him for the bread we eat. If any man shall say he is not dependent upon God, I will at least reply to him, "You are dependent for the air you breathe and the power to breathe it. The life that is within you hangs upon a thread, and that thread is in the hand of the Most High." Every moment each one of us is most certainly sustained by God. And in return for this support, there is something asked, namely, that we would submit to His will. That we would obey His Law, which is perfect, and just, and right, and that having sinned against Him we should rebel no longer or continue His enemies, but be reconciled to Him. We are *made* dependent creatures, and from that very fact we must wear a yoke unto God.

Moreover, dear Friends, we are all so constituted as creatures with such passions and propensities that when we break one yoke—the yoke which it is meet we should wear, and do not serve God—we at once bend our necks to another yoke and begin to serve something else—we serve ourselves, and oh, the slavery of serving one's self! He that makes his belly his god and bows down to the lusts of the flesh serves a tyrant, indeed! Something or other we must serve, not only because we are dependent creatures, but it seems to be stamped upon us that we must follow some great principle, and must yield ourselves to some *spiritual* influence. A yoke of some kind or another we must submit to.

The man who shall say, "I am perfectly free, and I live for nothing but myself," is so mean an animal that he is hardly worthy to be called a man. In his boasted exemption from all regard to his fellow creatures and to his God, he sets himself up in his own esteem—and that after a diabolical model—alone and apart in his awful selfishness like an iceberg to melt away, and maybe to crush others as he moves along his course. What is he but a beacon against which all are to be warned? Sir, the yoke fits the human neck, and the human neck was made to wear it. We must have some God, we must have some ruler, we must have some principle which shall master us, and be it ours, in God's name, to choose the right and the best master, or else, woe be unto us!

**II.** Not to dwell longer upon our first point, I proceed to notice THAT THE YOKE OF CHRIST IS AN EASY YOKE. It is, as it were, a yoke of wood. Let us dwell upon this awhile. God grant that some who have never worn that yoke may, by the Holy Spirit's power, be led to carry it. If you become a servant of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Man of Nazareth, He asks of you nothing but what is absolutely right. His life, which is the Christian's Law written out in living characters, is perfection itself! His precepts which distil like dew from His lips are all pure and good, just and kind.

It ought to be enough for a man, and would be enough for him if he were not fallen, to know that all Christ's rule is right and to submit to it at once. When God gives a man a noble spirit, he pants to enlist in honorable service. He craves a post in the council or the camp. His heart's enquiry is, "Where can I find a leader who will always lead me aright? Where shall I discover a Law which will never lead me into evil if I obey it? Where can I discover an example which I may imitate in its very jots and tittles, and yet never be found any other than I ought to be?" I commend to such spirits, Jesus, the Christ of God, for there is nothing in His precepts or His practices, in His profession or His life that is not consonant with righteousness of the highest order, majestic in its compass, and scrupulously minute in its obedience.

The yoke of Christ is framed in our interest. The Law of Christ is drawn up and dictated by our Counselor for our welfare. If man were infinitely wise and could draw up a code for himself which would involve no hardship and entail all that was happy, he could devise no regulations more healthful, more profitable, or more pleasant than those of the Savior. He would discover that to believe in Jesus was the highest wisdom. To repent of sin the most delightful necessity. To follow after holiness the most blissful pursuit and to serve God the greatest delight! Service and Sovereignty blend here, as when Joseph became Prime Minister of Pharaoh he was lord over all the land of Egypt.

To serve God, in very truth, is to reign—and to become a servant of Christ is to be made a king and a priest unto God—to be ennobled with as much dignity as human nature can bear! Jesus Christ, if He forbids you anything, only forbids you what would harm you. Say any of you of sin—"Tis sweet"? Ah, and so are many poisoned things! Your nature goes after it. Yes, and many a sick man's nature craves for that which would be his poison! The Lord Jesus denies to those who take His yoke nothing but that which would be injurious to them. His is a blessed yoke because it is the yoke of righteousness, and it is the yoke of personal benefit.

Moreover, Christ's yoke is not exacting. If He assesses us with one hand, He more richly endows us with the other hand. He, in His Grace, always gives to us of His bounty what He asks of us as our duty. Under one view of Divine Truth, faith is man's act. The Holy Spirit never believes for anybody. A sinner must believe himself. It is a personal act. But yet in another phase of it, it is the Holy Spirit's work *in* the man—He gives the faith which the man exercises towards God. If, then, faith in Jesus is required, it is not a hard thing because the Spirit works in men the very faith which Jesus seeks of them!

If to repent of sin is thought difficult—how shall we get tears out of a rock?—the reply is, true repentance is the *gift* of the Holy Spirit, and when it is sought of the Lord it is never denied. Christ is exalted on high to give not only the *pardon* of sin, but to give the *repentance* which comes before the pardon! To give repentance and remission of sins is the very office of Christ. If, then, the precepts should seem difficult, the difficulty is removed because the virtues and graces which are a matter of precept are also a matter of promise. What is commanded in one Scripture is conceded in another as an absolute gift of God according to the Covenant of His Grace. It is an easy yoke, then, Sinner!

Do you say, “I cannot believe”? Have you asked for faith? Is your heart hard? Have you asked to have it softened? If you cannot come to Christ with a broken heart, come *for* a broken heart, for it is His gift. He will give you all—all that His Gospel demands, for He is Alpha and Omega, the Author and the Finisher of our faith. It is an easy yoke, then, since He gives what He requires! That the yoke of Christ is easy, I might call to witness all those who have ever proved it. Never did a man wear it but he always loved to wear it!

I think I have heard that Queen Elizabeth carried the crown in the procession of her sister, Mary, at the coronation, and she remarked that it was very heavy. but someone standing by told her it would not be heavy when she had to wear it herself. So the precepts which some men do but carry in their hands seem very heavy—but when a man comes to know Christ and to love Him—those very precepts become light and easy. “I could not,” says one, “be a Christian as I am. It would be very hurtful to me—I should have to give up much that I have learned to prize.” Ah, but suppose you were made a new man in Christ Jesus? There would be nothing irksome at all about renouncing old habits.

Here is a raven. To tutor it into cleanly living, it must forego all carrion—it must feed upon these sweet and pure grains. The raven might pine and repine at this as a hardship unless by some transmuting influence the raven were turned into a dove. Then it would be no hardship to forsake the carrion which its new nature would loathe! Nor would it be grievous to feed upon the clean winnowed grain, for its appetite would crave it. And, O Beloved, the life of the true Christian is not a life chafed and galled with vexatious prohibitions! Pursuits which to the non-Christian heart are distasteful and repulsive, to the renewed heart are a matter of intense delight! A man shall carry a bucket of water on his head and be very tired with the burden, but that same man, when he dives into the sea, shall have a thousand buckets on his head without perceiving their weight because he is in the element and it entirely surrounds him.

The duties of holiness are very irksome to men who are not in the element of holiness. But when once those men are cast into the element of Divine Grace, then they bear 10 times more and feel no weight but are refreshed with joy unspeakable! Christ’s yoke is easy, for the new heart rejoices in it. The yoke of Christ is rendered easy by the bright example of Christ and by the blessed fellowship with Him to which His people are called. Christ Himself carried it. Have you never read in Grecian history—I think there are one or two cases to the point—how the Grecian soldiers,

on their long marches grew exceedingly weary and wished that the war were over, they felt so dispirited. But there was a man whom they almost adored as a god—Alexander himself—and they saw him always sharing their toil. If the road were rough, the monarch walked with them—if they were short of a draught of water, Alexander would share their thirst. At the sight of him every man grew strong!

Oh, it is grand to the Believer to feel that if there is a trial or a difficulty in the Christian, Christ has borne it and Christ is with us bearing it still! Not like the scribes and Pharisees who laid heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, upon men's shoulders and they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers. Our Lord has taken the load Himself and carried it, and He now says to the disciples, "Take My yoke upon you—the very yoke I carried—and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: I have borne the trial which you have to bear and endured to the end, as you shall do through My Grace."

There is one remarkable fact about the yoke of Christ which I should like to mention. All who have borne it have always had Grace given equal to the weight of the burden. I have never yet discovered one cross-bearer among the children of God who ever expressed regret that to become a Christian he had to take upon himself the yoke. I have been familiar with deathbeds—I have witnessed strange scenes—the bony hand of Death pulls back many curtains and plucks off many masks from faces that were accustomed to wear them. One thing, however, I can solemnly say I have never seen. I have never seen a Christian weary of His Master's service. I have never heard from an aged pilgrim a word of complaint against Christ, or against His yoke.

There have been a great many Christians beyond all suspicion of fanaticism, of whom none would suppose that they strove to act a part inconsistent with their true character—yet not one has had to regret that he served Christ. You know the words so often quoted of him who regretted that he had not served his God with half the zeal that he had served his kind! But I never remember, nor do any of you ever remember having heard of one who, in life's last hour, bemoaned his allegiance to God or bewailed the ardor with which he followed Christ. Surely, if remorse had ever begotten such a thought, someone would have been bold to utter it! And, verily, verily, if such an incident had ever occurred, there would have been no lack of historians to record it!

Another thing I think tells strongly in favor of this yoke of Christ. The servants of Christ are always anxious to get their children into the same service. Often do I hear men say, "I don't want to bring my boy up in my trade. The work is dirty, the hours long, and the pay small." I have heard them say, "I should not like to see my boy in our office. There are so many temptations," and so on. Did you ever hear a pious man say, "I should not like my boy to be a Christian"? Did you ever hear a godly matron say, "I should deeply regret to see my daughter become a follower of Christ"? No, but what they have possessed for themselves they have longed to have for their children!

I remember well hearing my grandfather's earnest prayer for all his household. It always lay near his heart that his children and his

children's children might fear the Lord. I have lively recollections of his devotions. My father, whose prayer you heard just now—how often have I heard him pray for his children! And I can truly say the prayer that is nearest to my heart is for my sons, that they may serve the Lord. There is nothing I desire so much beneath the skies! Now if Christ's yoke were hard, we could not wish to bring our children under it. We have natural affections and common sense as well as you, and having tried Christ so long ourselves, that is our desire for our posterity.

I have tried Him now (what shall I say?) these 20 years. Had I found Him a hard Master I would not beguile you or belie my own conscience. I speak the truth—there is no lord like Christ—and no service like Christ's. I would that every young man and every young woman here believed in His name and submitted to His authority, and that they would take upon themselves, through His Grace, His easy peace-giving yoke.

**III.** If not, what then? **THOSE WHO REFUSE TO WEAR THE EASY YOKE OF CHRIST WILL HAVE TO WEAR A WORSE ONE.** "You have broken the yokes of wood, but you have made in their places yokes of iron." Observe! Adam wore an easy yoke in Paradise—he broke it. He and his posterity have had to wear yokes of iron ever since! Death has come into the world with all its train of woes. I need not enlarge enough that it is a case in point. Whenever a child of God, a true child of God, under pressure of temptation, turns aside from the right path, he is always made to feel that after he has broken the yoke of wood, he must wear a yoke of iron.

John Bunyan's illustration will serve me well here. The two pilgrims, Christian and Hopeful, when they went on their way, came to a place where the road was full of flints that cut their feet, and there were thorns and briars in the way. By-and-by one of them said, "Here is a meadow on the other side of the hedge, and if we were just to pass through the gap we might save a corner—it would be sure to come out in the way again—and so we should be certain to avoid the rough places." Bunyan well describes how, when they got into By-Path Meadow the night and the flood overtook them, and they wished to find the road again—longing for it, rough as it had been! But Giant Despair laid hold of them, took them to his dungeon and beat them within an inch of their lives! And it was only by mighty Grace that they escaped.

Take care, Christian, take care! Though you shall not utterly perish, you may often have to go with broken bones through a sin. David—ah, you remember his sin, his repentance, and his life of sorrow—how he went to his grave halting, still, as a consequence, an entail of his crimes! Do not, therefore, shrink from Christian duty because it is onerous. Never, O Christian, turn aside from the straight road, the highway of rectitude because it threatens you with shame or loss. That first loss will be vastly less than the later losses you will incur by seeking to avoid it!

Jonah resisted the word of the Lord that came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh," but he had to endure the perils of a voyage, encounter the fury of the tempest, and at length to sink to the bottom of the sea—and yet to Nineveh, after all, he must go! If you shirk a duty you will be brought up to it, yet, but it will be with bitter pain. Be not as the horse or

as the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near you.

The principle of our text is very applicable to all backsliders. We have known men that set out, apparently, on the road to Heaven—made a profession of being Christians—but after awhile they tired and fainted, and walked no more with us. Christianity was to them a yoke, and they put it off. I wonder whether they have improved their condition. I believe not. I will single out a person here—may his conscience single him out. When you lived in the country, every Sabbath you went with your wife and family to the House of God. Were you a Methodist then? Never mind—you were very earnest, whatever place it was you attended. And you and your little family were very happy, too.

But you came to London and after awhile the general idle habits of our London people in the morning came over you. You were content with one service a day. You did not seek Church membership nor cast yourself in the way of God's people. By-and-by it was not one service a day you attended, it was none at all—or else you called it religion to go and hear the music and see the religious theatricals in certain great houses in London. I know not if you called that worshipping God when you were only whiling away the hour with sensual gratifications. And at last you gave up all presence of being a Christian or of frequenting places of worship.

Now I will ask you a question. You have got rid of the yoke of *wood*—how about your shoulders now? Your Sundays, are they very pleasant? Your family, is it very happy? Your mind, is it very much at ease? Oh, no! I know while I am talking to you, you wish yourself back in the little village again listening to the minister's voice once more. I know your Sundays are distasteful and comfortless, and your week days, when you think about your condition, are wretched and reproachful, and your children are not growing up in the way you could wish. Ah, Sir, I pray God to make that yoke of iron very heavy to you! Do you long to get rid of that and come back and take the yoke of wood again? May God, in His infinite mercy, bring you back if you are His child! Or if you are not of His family may He put you among His children and teach you to walk worthily.

We have known those who have backslidden in another way. Here you are now. Perhaps you used to be a professor of religion but the little shop was situated in a neighborhood where a good deal of trade was done on Sunday. You heard it said by the neighbors, "I do not know how it is you can shut up as you do." The wife did not like it, nor the husband either. It was, however, done by slow degrees, but now it is always done, and you cannot both come together—there is only one can come, and the other must stay at home. Well, you have given up Christ's yoke, and Sabbath-keeping seems to be too hard a thing for you. Are you better off? Are you *really* better off? Are you happier? Are you really happier? Something in your soul answers my question—you know you have a yoke of iron now, instead of a yoke of wood. May God help you to break away from your present slavery, and may you become a true heir of Heaven.

It may be I have here before me one who was led into backsliding by a very common occurrence. Young woman, I knew you once when your face



was radiant with happiness while we preached Christ and sung the hymns of Zion! But you married, and your marriage was not in the Lord. An unbelieving husband was *your* choice. You thought the yoke of Christ was hard when we reminded you of the precept, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." You rejected the yoke of Christ. How have you found it since? I have seen a great many such marriages, and I have only seen one—I have seen one, it is fair to say that, but I assert I never saw but one—in which I could get anything like an acknowledgement of happiness from the ill assorted pair.

Here and there it has happened perhaps, that God has forgiven the fault, but it almost always leads to alienation of heart and to utter departure from the living God! And often, too, to disappointment and heart-breaking—and to wretchedness such as I shall not attempt to describe. Those that break Christ's yoke and become backsliders shall find an iron yoke given in its place! To take another class of illustrations. There are those in the world who will not have the yoke of Christ in the matter of religion—they prefer another. For instance, there are superstitious persons who are not satisfied with the Bible—they need *tradition*. They are not content with the teaching of the ancient Church of Christ, as we find it in the Acts of the Apostles—they hanker after those modern upstart Churches that call themselves Catholic and Apostolic, and amuse themselves by raking up the grotesque fashions of the Middle Ages.

What is the consequence? Do these perverts, who cast off the yoke of the true Christian religion, get an easier yoke? Ask them. Their penances and their mortifications—their fast days and their festivals—their communions and their celebrations—oh, what do they get for them all? Is there one of them who can say he is saved? It is one of their cardinal doctrines that *no man can know he is saved*, so that the only position they get in this life is to slave on with a dim hope and to die with a grim rite! And, according to one faith, when they die they go—even if it were the best man in the Church—they go to "purgatory"! Ah, cheerless prospect! If I were a Roman Catholic I would turn a heretic in sheer desperation because I would rather go to Heaven than go to "purgatory"!

I cannot see any advantage that is offered to a man—if he gets all he can get—it is not worth having. Who among you would slave his life away in voluntary humiliations, buoyed up with the cheering faith of purgatorial fires as the goal of your days? Where is the gain of it? And there is no Church under Heaven, except the true Church of Christ, that says to men, "Believe, and live. Lay hold on Christ, and you are saved." We present to you, in Christ's name, the greatest gift beneath the sky—and other Churches dare not pretend to offer it! They will only tell you that you may get into a state in which you may be saved, perhaps, but they do not know quite certainly. It may be you shall fall away and perish after all, but as to an absolute *certain* salvation in perpetuity, received by an act of faith, they know not what it is! They put upon a yoke of iron most grievous to their necks.

And look at self-righteous men and women who try to work their own way to Heaven. The Pharisees of old—what a slavery their life was! Any

man who is seeking to be saved by his good works makes himself a slave. He must know in his conscience that his good works are imperfect and therefore he has no title, no sure, clear title to Heaven! Only the man who takes Christ to be his Wisdom, his Righteousness, his Justification, his Redemption, his All and in All—knows that he is saved! And he that gets Christ has all that God asks of him. He has his sins punished in his Savior. He has had the Law fulfilled by his Savior and he is thus saved. Those who will not have Christ, put upon their necks a horrible yoke! Oh, beware of superstition! Beware of self-righteousness! These are iron yokes, indeed!

But what remonstrance shall I address to the unbeliever who says, “I shall believe nothing. I am a skeptic. I will not bow my neck to Revelation”? Well, Sir, you will be sure, before long, to bow your neck to some tremendous absurdity. If you can once get a skeptic to tell you what he *does* believe, you will generally find that his credulity is on a par with his infidelity. What he relishes he feeds on without question—what he dislikes he rejects because somebody shrugged his shoulders at it. I have sometimes tried to muddle my way through chapters of German neology. Thank God I have felt this is not the way of life, or else certainly I should never find it, though I had a doctor of divinity on either side to assist me!

It is too hard and difficult for any intellects unless they happen to be of the German type, to be able to find a way through its labyrinths, and even they miss it, I am afraid. The men who do not believe in God believe that this world was not made at all, but grew. If you were to sow some mustard and cress in your garden, in the form of the initials of your boy, and it came up as A or B, and you took him into the garden and said, “Now, nobody ever sowed that seed. It grew there in that way,” you could not make him believe it. But these philosophical speculators believe that this big world, and sun, and moon, and stars came forth without a Creator! They can believe anything. You cannot convince the simplest boy in the street that somehow or other he was developed from an oyster, or some creature inferior to that, and yet these profound thinkers bow themselves down to such a belief as this! Verily, it is fulfilled in these days as of old, professing themselves to be wise, they become fools! He that will not believe the simple Revelation of God will presently find himself committed to systematic misbelief which distracts reason, oppress the heart, and shackles the conscience. He wears a yoke of iron instead of a yoke of wood.

Still giving but a word to each case, we have hearers who, when they listen to the Word of God, are haunted with reproach but never softened with repentance because of their sins. They go on hardening their necks and persevering in their iniquities. Impenitent Sinner, mark this word. The day will come when inasmuch as you have rejected the easy yoke of repentance, you will have to bear the iron yoke of remorse! A man under remorse in this world is a dreadful sight. Horrified with the past and alarmed with the future, yet having knees so stubborn that they will not bend, and blood-shot eyes that will not weep because, alas, his heart is like adamant that cannot feel! Of all the pangs convinced and repentant sinners bear, there are none so dreadful as the gloomy torment of

remorse! I could unfold scenes that I have witnessed with my own eyes, paint the visage, and repeat the expressions of men dying in fell despair, but I will spare you. God grant that you may never have to endure that foretaste of Hell upon earth, for such it is.

And what shall I say to the lover of pleasure? There are those who say, "I shall not bear the yoke of Christ. I shall live in pleasure." Pleasure, in some instances, means lust, and gaiety means crime. Have you ever seen the young man who was respectably brought up in his youth, after leading a life of pleasure, shivering at your door in rags? One I knew whom I had often clothed. I supposed that he was dead. But I saw him return in his loathsome filthiness, squalid and tremulous—he came begging yet again, stranger still to virtue and to shame. The poor soul still lives—a life more like death than life—a prodigal whom none can help because he does not return unto himself, nor desire to return unto his Father.

London dens have in them many hapless profligates that are terrible warnings that men who seek their own pleasure put upon themselves a yoke of iron. Oh, what revelations the infirmaries of our hospitals, and the wards of our lunatic asylums might disclose of men who have played the wanton and rioted in sin—and have worse than a yoke of iron upon their necks now! Oh, if there should have come into this House some fallen woman, about whose neck there is that yoke of iron—because she rejected a mother's precepts and disdained a father's counsel—Sister, that yoke of iron from your neck may yet be taken off! But beware lest it grow heavier still!

There are those who would help you escape from your sin in the Christian Church. Arise, and flee from this evil that has made you captive, for there is still hope! The Christ of God is willing to receive the foulest of the foul. Persevere not in your criminal course, or that yoke of iron will grow heavier and heavier and heavier, and be riveted to you till at last you shall perish in it—perish, and that forever! All unholy persons who break the Law of God and break away from the Gospel's holiness, in the long run get a yoke of iron about their necks. There are those in this place, perhaps, who once used to sit with us at the Lord's Table, having made a profession of religion, but they gave way to drink. I know that if they could break away from that habit, now, they would.

If it could be done with a *resolution* they would do it at once, for somehow they love this House and slink into it still. And when they pass me in the streets, half-ashamed, they still remember him for whom they yet retain a love, and who retains a love for them, and would gladly see them back again. But ah, you drunkards, when you once fall into this sin, how seldom are you restored! May God help you! May the eternal God deliver you! For this, this iron yoke, is often hard to break. Resolve now, and *pray* also in God's name that you may be free! Have done with the accursed thing! God can enable you to come clear of it. May He do so now!

Another form of the same evil not often spoken of, but quite as bad, is that of avarice. We have known those who professed to be Christians who succeeded in business and from that time they grew greedy. The gold they had stuck to their fingers, burned into their flesh, yes, into their very

souls and turned their hearts to steel. They have no pity, now, for the poor and they little care for the Church of God. Ah, Sirs, what an iron yoke avarice puts upon a man's neck! You see a man grown old still scraping, still yearning for more—afraid that he shall lose what he has—trembling in the night lest the burglars should make a forcible entrance, and fearing we know not what! His heart is in his iron safe, and is as hard as the iron of which it is made. O God, forgive them! For the covetous man can no more enter Heaven than the drunkard! The covetous have no place in the kingdom of God! There is a mark set upon the covetous man. Covetousness is idolatry. It is a heavy burden, the burden of avarice. Happy they who wear the yoke of Christ, for all their giving is a delight, and what they sacrifice is no loss to them but becomes true storing—the laying up of treasure in Heaven where neither moth nor rust does corrupt.

Enough of this! The general principle running through every case is that he who rejects the yoke of Christ bows his neck to something worse by far. Mark you, the day comes—I know not how soon—perhaps as I stand here and rudely talk of these mysterious things! Soon may this hand be stretched, and dumb the mouth that lisps this faltering strain. Before this service is over the sight of the Son of Man may be seen in the clouds of Heaven and the trumpet may ring out loud as that of Sinai of old, "Awake, you dead, and come to judgment! And you living sinners, come you also, for the Great White Throne is set."

And in that day the yoke of Christ will be a chain of gold about each Believer's neck! To have served Christ will be our honor and our delight! But ah, to you sinners, the sin that once was pleasure—how it will turn to misery! How the rod of your joy will become a serpent and seek to devour you! How you will flee away from yourselves, and that which you courted and you loved, to ask the hills to hide you and the rocks to engulf you that you may not see the face of the Redeemer! Come to Him now, before that last tremendous day dawns! I lift Him up to you now. Whoever looks to Christ shall live! Jesus, the Son of God has died, and he that trusts Him shall not die. There is life in a look at the Crucified One! Pardon and peace come at once to the soul that trusts the Savior!

May you now trust Him before you leave this House, and God shall have the Glory of it, both now and evermore. Amen.

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# **GOD'S THOUGHTS OF PEACE AND OUR EXPECTED END NO. 1965**

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 29, 1887,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord,  
thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”  
Jeremiah 29:11.***

I HAVE already explained to you, while expounding the 24<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> chapters of this Prophet, that these words were written by Jeremiah in a letter to the captives in Babylon. A considerable part of the people of Israel were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar into a far country. They were exhorted by the Prophet to build houses, form families and to abide peaceably there till the Lord should lead them back at the end of 70 years. But at that time there was a general uneasy feeling among the Jews and other subjected nations who did not rest quietly under the iron yoke of Babylon. They were plotting and planning continual rebellions and certain false prophets in Babylon worked with them, stirring up the spirit of revolt among the exiles. Jeremiah, on the other hand, assured them that they had been sent of God into the land of the Chaldeans for good, bade them seek the peace of the city wherein they now dwelt and promised them that, in due time, the Lord would again plant them in their own land.

A people in such a position as the Jews in Babylon were in danger in two ways—either to be buoyed up with false hopes and so to fall into foolish expectations, or to fall into despair and have no hope at all—and so become a sullen and degraded race who would be unfit for restoration and unable to play the part which God ordained for them in the history of mankind. The Prophet had the double duty of putting down their false hopes and sustaining their right expectations. He, therefore, plainly warned them against expecting more than God had promised and he awakened them to look for the fulfillment of what He had promised. Read the 10<sup>th</sup> verse, and note that pleasant expression, “and perform My good word unto you.”

At the present time, the Church has need of both admonitions! Expectations which are not warranted are being raised in many quarters and are leading to serious delusions. We hear men crying, “Lo here!” and, “Lo there!” This wonder and that marvel are cried up. It would seem that the age of miracles has returned to certain hot heads. Take no heed of all this! Go not beyond the record. On the other hand, we need to be urged to believe our Lord implicitly and to hold on to His Word with a strong, hearty,

realizing faith—being assured that while God will *not* do what we propose to Him, yet He *will* do what He has promised. False prophets will be left in the lurch, but the Word of the Lord will stand.

This morning my desire shall be to comfort any of God's people who are in a state of perplexity and thus are carried away captive. I would assure them of the Lord's kindness to them and urge them to trust and not be afraid. God's thoughts towards them are good, though their trials may be grievous.

The text puts me upon two tracks. First, let us *consider the Lord's thoughts towards His people*. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Secondly, let us *consider the Believer's proper attitude towards his Lord*. What should we think of our gracious God who thus unveils His heart to us?

**I.** First, then, dear Friends, CONSIDER THE LORD'S THOUGHTS TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE.

It is noteworthy, first of all, that *He does think of them and towards them*. Observe that this Scripture says not, "I know the thoughts that I have thought toward you." That would be a happy remembrance, for the thoughts of God concerning His people are more ancient than the everlasting hills! There never was a time when God did not think upon His people for good. He says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." But the point here brought forward is that *He still thinks of them*. It would be possible for you to have thought out a plan of kindness towards a friend—and you might have so arranged it that it would henceforth be a natural fountain of good to him without your thinking any more about it. But that is not after the method of God! His eyes and His hands are continually towards His people. It is true He did so think of us that He has arranged everything about us and provided for every need and against every danger, but He has not ceased to think of us. His infinite mind, whose thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth, continues to exercise itself about us. "I am poor and needy," says David, "yet the Lord thinks upon me." We love to be thought of by our friends. Indeed, thought enters into the essence of love. Delight yourselves this morning, O you who believe your God, in this heavenly fact, that the Lord thinks upon you at this moment! "The Lord has been mindful of us," and He is *still* mindful of us.

The Lord not only thinks *of* you, but *towards* you. His thoughts are all drifting your way. This is the way the south wind of His thoughts of peace is moving—it is towards you. The Lord never forgets His own, for He has engraved them upon the palms of His hands. Never at any moment does Jehovah turn His thoughts from His beloved, even though He has the whole universe to rule. He says 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."

This Truth of God, although it is easily spoken, is not readily comprehended in the fullness of its joy. Nor is it always believed as it should be. These people in captivity were likely to fear that their God had forgotten them and, therefore, the Lord repeats His words in this place and speaks

of thoughts and thinking *three times*. His words are so repeated as to seem almost redundant, out of a desire to make His people feel absolutely sure that not only did He act towards them, but that He still has thoughts towards them. To the banished, this would be a grand consolation. The Lord thought of them when they walked the strange streets of "the golden city" and heard a language which they understood not. He thought of them when they were buffeted as aliens by those who marched in the proudest pomp and danced in cruel derision to the sound of their viols. The Lord thought of His exiles when their sole solace was solitude by the brink of the Babylonian canals where, among the willows, they remembered Zion.

All that the Lord was doing towards them was done thoughtfully. His thoughts of peace and not of evil towards them had suggested their captivity and the continuance of it for 70 years. If any of you are in trouble and sorrow today, do not doubt that this is sent you according to the thoughtful purpose of the Lord. It is in this fixed intent and thoughtfulness that the real character of an action lies. A person may happen to do you a good turn, but if you are sure that he did it by accident, or with no more thought than that wherewith a passing stranger throws a penny to a beggar, you are not impressed with gratitude. But when the action of your friend is the result of earnest deliberation and you see that he acts in the most tender regard to your welfare, you are far more thankful! Traces of anxiety to do you good are very pleasant. Have I not heard persons say, "It was so kind and so thoughtful of him!"? Do you not notice that men value kindly thoughts and set great store by tender consideration?

Remember, then, that there is never a thoughtless action on the part of God. His mind goes with His hands. His heart is in His acts. He thinks so much of His people that the very hairs of their heads are all numbered! He thinks not only of the great thing, but of the little things which are incidental to the great thing, as the hairs are to the head. Every affliction is timed and measured and every comfort is sent with a loving thoughtfulness which makes it precious in a sevenfold degree. O Believer, the great thoughtfulness of the Divine mind is exercised towards *you*, the chosen of the Lord! Never has anything happened to you as the result of a remorseless fate, but all your circumstances have been ordered in wisdom by a living, thoughtful, loving Lord!

Brothers and Sisters, if I said no more you might go on your way rejoicing! Remember that the infinite God has thoughts of peace towards you—and your own thoughts will be thoughts of peace all the day.

To go a step further, let us next note that *the thoughts of God are only perfectly known to Himself*. It would be a mere truism for God to say, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you." Even a man usually knows his own thoughts, but the meaning is this—when *you* do *not* know the thoughts that I have towards you, yet I know them! Brethren, when we cannot know the thoughts of the Lord because they are too high for our conception, or too deep for our understanding, yet the Lord knows them! Our heavenly Father knows what He is doing—when His ways towards us appear to be involved and complicated and we cannot disentangle the

threads of the skein, yet the Lord sees all things clearly and knows the thoughts that He thinks towards us. He never misses His way, nor becomes embarrassed.

We dare not profess to understand the ways of God to man—they are past finding out. Providence is a great deep. Its breadth exceeds the range of our vision and its depth baffles our most profound thought. “Your way, O Lord, is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known.” When we are overwhelmed with wonder at what we see, we are humbled by the reminder, “Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him!” “Truly no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God.” God alone understands Himself and His thoughts! We stand by a powerful machine and we see the wheels moving this way and that, but we do not understand its working. What does it matter? He who made the engine and controls it, perfectly understands it—and this is practically the main concern, for it does not matter whether *we* understand the engine or not—it will work its purpose if he who has the control of it is at home with all its bands and wheels.

Despite our ignorance, nothing can go wrong while the Lord, in infinite knowledge, rules over all. The child playing on the deck does not understand the tremendous engine whose beat is the throbbing heart of the stately Atlantic liner, but all is safe, for the engineer, the captain and the pilot are in their places and well know what is being done! Let not the child trouble itself about things too great for it. And you leave the discovery of doubtful causes to Him whose understanding is infinite—and be you still and know that Jehovah is God! Unbelief misinterprets the ways of God. Hasty judgment jumps at wrong conclusions about them. But the Lord knows His own thoughts. We are doubtful where we ought to be sure and we are sure where we have no ground for certainty—thus we are always in the wrong. How should it be otherwise with us, since vain man would be wise and yet he is born like a wild ass's colt? We are hard to tame and to teach! But as for the Lord, “His way is perfect.”—

***“His thoughts are high, His love is wise,  
His wounds a cure intend.  
And though He does not always smile,  
He loves unto the end.”***

Let us go a step further—*The Lord would have us know that His thoughts toward us are settled and definite.* This is part of the intent of the words, “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord.” Sometimes a man may hardly know his own thoughts because he has scarcely made up his mind. There are several subjects now upon the public mind concerning which it is wise to say little or nothing because it is not easy to decide about them. Upon a certain matter, one asks you this question and another asks you another question. And it is possible that you have so carefully weighed and measured the arguments both pro and con that you cannot come to a conclusion either way! Your thoughts differ from day to day and, therefore, you do not yet know them.

You need not be ashamed of this—it shows that you have a just sense of your own imperfect knowledge. A fool soon makes up his mind because



there is so very little of it! But a wise man waits and considers. The case is far otherwise with the only wise God. The Lord is not a man that He should need to hesitate! His infinite mind is made up and He knows His thoughts. With the Lord there is neither question nor debate—"He is in one mind and none can turn Him." His purpose is settled and He adheres to it. He is resolved to reward them that diligently seek Him and to honor those that trust in Him! He is resolved to remember His Covenant forever and to keep His promises to those who believe Him. His thought is that the people whom He has formed for Himself shall show forth His praise. The Lord knows them that are His. He knows whom He gave to His Son and He knows that these shall be His jewels forever and ever.

Beloved, when you do not know your own mind, God knows *His* mind. Though you believe not, He abides faithful. When you are in the gloom, He is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Your way may be closed, but His way is open. God knows all when you know nothing at all! When Moses came out of Egypt, he had no plan as to the march of Israel. He knew that he had to lead the children of Israel to the promised land, but that was all. He probably hoped to take them by the shortest route to Palestine. Their journey was far otherwise, but it was all prearranged by the Divine mind! It was by no error that the tribes were told to turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. The Lord knew that Pharaoh would say, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in." There was no going back, for the Egyptians were there—and no going forward, for the Red Sea was there—but the Lord had the way mapped out in His own mind. He was not taken by surprise when the enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil," since for this purpose had He raised Pharaoh up, that He might show forth His power in him!

The passage of the Red Sea was no hurried expedient—Jehovah knew what He would do. When our blessed Lord was surrounded by the hungry crowd, He asked His disciples, "How many loaves have you?" But "Jesus knew what He would do." He had His thoughts and He knew them! "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." "Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us." You have said, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure"—and it is even so! Brothers and Sisters, you do not know what is to be done, but the Lord knows for you. O body of Christ, let your Head think for you! O servant of Christ, let your Master think for you. "I know," says God "the thoughts that I think toward you."

Now we have advanced some distance into the meaning of our text and we are prepared to go a step further, namely, that *God's thoughts toward His people are always thoughts of peace*. He is at peace with them through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. He regards them in Christ with perfect complacency. The Spirit of God speaks peace to their troubled conscience and works in them the spirit of adoption and desires after holiness—thus the holy God is able to commune with them and have thoughts of peace toward them. The Lord delights in them! He seeks their peace, He creates their peace, He sustains their peace and thus all His thoughts toward

them are peace! Note well the negative, which is expressly inserted. It is very sweet to my own heart. It might have appeared enough to say, "My thoughts are thoughts of peace." Yes, it would be quite sufficient when all things are bright with us, but those words, "and not of evil," are admirably adapted to keep off the goblins of the night, the vampires of suspicion which fly in the darkness! When under affliction we are sorely depressed—and when conscience perceives that there are reasons why the Lord should contend with us, then the enemy whispers, "The Lord has evil thoughts toward you and will cast you off forever." No, Beloved, His thoughts are *not of evil*. Though the Lord hates your sin, He does not hate *you*. Though He is the enemy of your follies, He is your own firm Friend—yes, He is all the truer a friend because He fights against your faults.

He would have you pure and holy, therefore does He bathe you in the rivers and baptize you in the fires. Not in anger does He afflict you, but in His dear Covenant Love. The hardest blow that He ever laid upon His child was inflicted by the hand of Love. You may rise from your bed in the morning to be chastised and before you fall asleep in the night you may smart under the rod—and yet be none the less, but all the more, the favorite of Heaven! Therefore, Beloved, lay hold upon the negative, "not of evil." God has no evil thought towards His chosen! He has no desire to grieve us, but to save us!

There shall not a hair of your head perish, but yet that head may ache with weariness. It is for good and only for good that God thinks of us and deals with us. Oh, that we could settle this in our hearts and have done with dark forebodings! Though your way may now lie through dark ravines where the crags rise so steep above you as to shut out the light of day, yet press onward, for the way is safe! Follow the Lord, for where the road is rough, you will be less likely to slip than in more smooth and slippery places. If the way is steep, you will the sooner ascend on high—or if your way inclines downward, you will the sooner feel the necessary humiliation and the more readily cease from yourself—and cast yourself upon your Lord. Though I am not yet so old and gray-headed as many here present, yet one thing I know—that God has done unto me good, and not evil, all the days of my life—and I bear my public witness at this hour, that in very faithfulness He has afflicted me and not one good thing has failed of all that He has promised me!

No, His thoughts are "not of evil." The next time the devil comes to you with a dark insinuation, tell him that the Lord's thoughts are "not of evil." Drive him away with that! When he hisses his foul suggestions, say, "Not of evil." God cannot have an evil thought towards His own elect! He that gave His own Son to die for us cannot think anything but good towards us!

Once more and then we shall have fully compassed this text. *The Lord's thoughts are all working towards "an expected end,"* or, as the Revised Version has it, "to give you hope in your latter end." Some read it, "a future and a hope." The renderings are instructive. God is working with a *motive*. All things are working together for one objective—the good of those who love God! We see only the beginning—God saw the end from the be-

ginning. We spell the alphabet out, Alpha, Beta, Gamma—but God reads all, from Alpha to Omega, at once! He knows every letter of the Book of Providence! He sees not only what He is doing, but what will come of what He is doing! As to our present pain and grief, God saw not these things exclusively, but He saw the future joy and usefulness which will come of them. He regards not only the tearing up of the soil with the plow, but the clothing of that soil with the golden harvest. He sees the consequences of affliction and He accounts those painful incidents to be blessed which lead up to so much of happiness! Let us comfort ourselves with this.

God meant in Babylon to prepare a people that should know Him, of whom He could say, "I will be their God and they shall be My people." At the end of 70 years, He would bring these people back to Jerusalem like a new race, who, whatever their faults might be, would never again fall into idolatry! He knew what He was driving at in their captivity and in our case the Lord is equally clear as to His purpose. We do not, ourselves, know, for, "it does not yet appear what we shall be." You have never seen the Great Artist's masterpiece—you have only seen the rough marble. You have marked the chippings that fall on the ground. You have felt the edge of His chisel, you know the weight of His hammer and you are full of the memory of these things, but oh, could you see that glorious image as it will be when He has put the finishing stroke to it, you would then understand the chisel, the hammer and the Worker better than you now do! O Brothers and Sisters, we would not know *ourselves* if we could see ourselves as we are to be when the Lord's purpose is accomplished upon us! We know that we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is, but what is He like, "as He is"? What is that Glory of the Lord which is to be ours? We can picture Him in His humiliation, but what is He like in His Glory? He is the First-Born and we are to be conformed to Him! God is working, working, working always to that end, and so all His thoughts tend towards this expected end.

Here I pause to make a practical application. I may be addressing some person here who is in great distress under conviction of sin. You despair because the Lord is bringing your sin to remembrance, but indeed, there is no cause—the Lord is sending you into captivity for a purpose. You are being shut up by the Law of God that you may be set at liberty by Christ! You are being stripped in order that you may be clothed! And you are being emptied that you may be filled! If you could see the end from the beginning, you would rejoice that you are made to know the burden of sin, for so shall you be driven to the Cross to find rest from your load! This sorrow shall be the death of your pride and self-righteousness. By this way the Lord is working out for you "a future and a hope." When clean divorced from *self*, you shall be wedded to Jesus and dowried with His salvation!

I am probably also addressing many a child of God who is vexed in daily conflict with his inward corruption. Alas, we find the old man yet alive within us! The old nature in the Christian is no better than the old man in the sinner—it is the same carnal mind which is enmity against God—and is not reconciled, neither, indeed, can be. The new nature has a

hard struggle to hold its own against this embodied death. We are, as it were, chained to a rotting carcass and we cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" Now, do not despair because of this experience! It is better to mourn over imperfection than to be puffed up with the idle notion that there is no sin in you to be watched and conquered. Certain of the children of Israel remained with Zedekiah at Jerusalem and boasted of their position, but they were none the better for their pretensions. You have been carried away into captivity and you are sighing and crying because of indwelling sin—but the Lord's thoughts towards you are thoughts of peace and not of evil—and He will "give you an expected end." You will come to true holiness by this painful process and so shall you glorify God!

I may also be addressing some child of God in very deep trouble. Everything goes wrong with you at home, in business and, perhaps, in the Church, too. Very well, you will never have to raise that question, "How is it that I am not chastened?" That will never trouble *you!* Chastening for the present is not joyous, but, nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them which are exercised thereby. Therefore gladly endure it. God's thoughts are towards you, for He is refining you—believe, also, that His thoughts are peaceable and that He designs your highest good.

So far have I tried to justify the ways of God to men. May His own Spirit make you feel that the thoughts of the Lord are peace!

**II.** In the second part of my discourse I would ask you to CONSIDER THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF GOD'S PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR LORD. You will all agree with me when I say that our attitude should be that of *submission*. If God, in all that He does towards us, is acting with an objective and that objective a loving one, then let Him do what seems good to Him. Therefore let us have no quarrel with the God of Providence, but let us say, "Your will be done." Who would not yield to that which works his health, his wealth, his boundless happiness? "My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by Him: for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

Next, let our position be one of *great hopefulness*, seeing the end of God, in all He does, is to give us "a future and a hope." We are not driven into growing darkness, but led into increasing light. There is always something to be hoped for in the Christian's life. Let us not look towards the future nor regard the present with any kind of dread. There is nothing for us to dread—

***"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure;  
Death has no sting beside;  
The Law gave sin its damning power,  
But Christ, my ransom, died."***

The death of Christ is the death of evil to the child of God! Let us trust and not be afraid. Let us not be content with sullenly making up our minds to stoical endurance. We must not only bear the will of the Lord, but rejoice in it! It is a blessed thing when we come to rejoice in tribula-

tions and to glory in infirmities. It is fine music when we can sing, "Sweet affliction."

"Hard work," says one. Yes, but it is worth the pains, for it secures perfect peace. If your will is brought to your circumstances and if, better still, your will is brought to delight in God's will, then the fangs of the serpent are extracted! The sorrow is sucked out of the sorrow by the lips of acquiescence. When you can say, "Not my will, but Yours be done," you shall have your will. There is always something "better on before" for those who believe in Jesus. You can be sure of that—

***"You fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
With blessings on your head."***

Welcome clouds, if showers of mercy are to come of them! God forbid we should always have sunshine, for that would mean drought. Let the clouds come if they bring a blessed rain.

Our relation to God should, next, be one of *continual* expectancy, especially expectancy of the fulfillment of His promises. I call your attention again to the 10<sup>th</sup> verse—"I will perform My good word toward you." I do so love that expression—we must have it for a text one of these days—"I will perform My good word toward you." His promises are good words! Good, indeed, and sweetly refreshing. When your hearts are faint, then is the promise emphatically *good*. Expect the Lord to be as good as His good Word!

Brothers and Sisters, do not heap up to yourselves sorrow, as some do in these days, by expecting that which the Lord has *not* promised. I earnestly warn you against those who have been led by a fevered imagination to expect, first, perfection *in* the flesh and then perfection *of* the flesh—and then an actual immortality *for* the flesh. God will fulfill His promise, but He will not fulfill *your* misreading of it! I should not wonder if there should arise a race of people who will believe that they can live without eating, because it is said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live." If healed without medicine, why not fed without food? What absolute need of any visible means when God can work without them? Those who think it necessary to lay aside all outward means in order to a true faith in God are on the way to any absurdity!

Truly, if God had bid me live without eating, I would fast at His command and expect to live! But as He has not done so, I shall not presume! Faith that is not warranted by the Word of God is not faith, but folly! And folly is not the faith of God's elect! The Lord will perform His own Word, but He will not perform the delirious declarations of madmen. If it needs a million miracles to fulfill God's promises, they shall be forthcoming, but we are not anxious for miracles because our larger faith believes that the Lord can overrule the ordinary ways of Providence to perform His good word and bring us the expected end.

Again, Beloved, our position towards God should be one of *happy hope as to blessed ends being answered even now*. In the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter we ob-

serve one of the ends of the Lord's sending His people into exile. I noticed in the fifth verse that the Lord said, "So will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah." Their sorrow would bring about *the Lord's acknowledgment of them*. Thus do we, Brothers and Sisters, bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Affliction is the seal of the Lord's election!

I remember a story of Mr. Mack, who was a Baptist minister in Northamptonshire. In his youth he was a soldier and, calling on Robert Hall, when his regiment marched through Leicester, that great man became interested in him and procured his release from the army. When he went to preach in Glasgow, he sought out his aged mother whom he had not seen for many years. He knew his mother the moment he saw her, but the old lady did not recognize her son. It so happened that when he was a child, his mother had accidentally wounded his wrist with a knife. To comfort him, she cried, "Never mind, my bonnie bairn, your mither will ken you by that when you are a man."

When Mack's mother would not believe that a grave, fine-looking minister could be her own child, he turned up his sleeve and cried, "Mither, mither, dinna you ken *that?*" In a moment they were in each other's arms! Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord knows the spot of His children! He acknowledges them by the mark of correction! What God is doing to us in the way of trouble and trial is but His acknowledgment of us as true heirs and the marks of His rod shall be our proof that we are not bastards, but true sons! He knows the wounds He made when He was exercising His sacred surgery upon us. By this, also, shall you, yourself, be made to know that verily you are a piece of gold, or else you would not have been put into the furnace! This will be one "expected end" of the Lord towards us—let us rejoice in it!

God's dealings with us work out *our good in every way*. The Lord said (Jer 24:5), "I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good." We know that, "All things work together for good to them that love God." Thus, from day to day the Lord gives us "an expected end."

In the 12<sup>th</sup> verse of the chapter from which we have taken our text, we see that *prayer is quickened* by the Lord's work towards them. "Then shall you call upon Me." Our troubles drive us to our knees! If it had not been for Esau, Jacob had never wrestled at Jabbok. I hope we usually go to our closets of our own accord, but often we are whipped there. Many of the most earnest prayers that ever rise to Heaven come from us when we are in bondage under grief. Yes, yes, we must thank God that His trying ways with us have produced in us a prayerful spirit and a full conviction that we do not pray in vain.

The Lord's end with us is also *our sanctification*. "And I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart." See the value of sanctified afflictions! God grant that from day to day we may feel the expected ends of His corrections! O that we may *grow in Grace* and *may our Graces grow!* May we increase in faith, hope, love, pa-

tience, courage and joy! Surely our knowledge ought to widen out, our consecration should be confirmed, our insight should be clearer, our outlook steadier! We ought, by all our experience, to become more Christ-like, better reflectors of the heavenly Light of God, more fit temples of the Holy Spirit! Therefore, let us be of good cheer and rejoice that from day to day we receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls and thus the Lord's end is being answered!

But to close. We have kept the best wine until now. The thoughts of God towards us are that He will give us "an expected end." *An end*—there is good cheer in that! We do not wish to remain here forever. We would be diligent in running the race, but we long for the end of it! I should be satisfied to preach here throughout all eternity if I might always bring glory to God, but yet I am glad that there is to be an end of preaching and a season of pure praise. You, my Brothers, love the Lord's work, but still, you look forward to the time when you shall take your wages and have done. It is a comfort that there is an end.

Blessed be God, *it is an expected end*. You ungodly people can only look forward to a *dreaded end*—an end of your foolish mirth, an end of your carelessness, an end of your boasting. You *fear* your end! But God will give His people an *expected end*. Suppose that end should be the coming of Christ! Oh, how we long for it! Oh that the Bridegroom would now appear! Oh that He would descend from Heaven with a shout and gather His chosen from the four winds of Heaven! "Even so, come quickly!" That is our *expected end*.

If our Lord does not come and we must be taken home by death, we feel no alarm in looking forward to that expected end. One by one our dear friends go Home from this Church. As I have often told you, there is never a week without some of our number being taken up. Although I have visited a large number of dying Believers, I have never yet visited a member of this Church who has expressed the least fear in their dying moments, or the slightest dismay in the hour of departure. It makes me feel happy to see how the Brothers and Sisters die—they pass away as if they were going to a wedding rather than to a tomb—as if it were the most joyful thing that ever happened to them to have reached their expected end! Doubts are all driven away when you see how Believers die! Divine Grace is given them so that they surmount the weakness of the hour. The Lord Jesus in them triumphs over pain and death!

Our venerable Brother and Elder, Mr. Court, who has just passed away at a great age, looked forward to his departure with peaceful hope. He used to speak of it as of a thing from which he had no shrinking. There was no discontent or murmuring about him—no feverish eagerness to quit the infirmities of this life—but, on the other hand, a happy foresight of his end and a joyful expectation of it. Some of the Lord's saints have not yet received dying Grace, but then they are not going to die yet. Brethren, saints are prepared to go before they go! Our Lord does not pluck His fruit unwisely. Foolish people may tear the green apples from the tree with a pull and a wrench—and bruise them as they throw them into the basket—but our Lord values His fruit and so He waits until it is quite ripe and

then He gathers it tenderly. When He puts forth His hand, the fruit bows down to it and parts from the bough without a strain. When the Believer comes to die, it will not be to an end which he feared, but to an end which he *expected*.

Brothers and Sisters, when death is past, then comes that expected end which shall never end! What will the first five minutes in Heaven be? There is a bigger question—what will thousands of years in Heaven be? What will myriads of ages be? My disembodied spirit will, at the first, be perfectly happy in the embraces of my Lord. But in due time the Resurrection Day will dawn and this body will rise again in full glory! Then there will be a re-marriage of soul and body—and we shall be perfected, even as our risen Lord. Oh, the glory of that expected end!

What will it be when our completed manhood shall be introduced to the society of angels, to the presence of cherubim and seraphim? What will it be to see Him whom we have loved so long? What to hear Him say, “Come, you blessed of My Father”? What joy to sit at His right hand! Yesterday my heart was ravished with that text, “They cast their crowns before the Throne.” If ever I am privileged to have a crown at all, how gladly will I lay it down at the feet of my Lord! Is not this your mind? How sweetly will we sing, *Non nobis, Domine!* “Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Your name give glory.”

Brothers and Sisters, what singing it will be when we shall be loosened from the deadening influence of the flesh! How will we praise when we have done with these tongues of clay which hamper us so much! I would speak greatly to my Lord's praise, but I fail. Strip me of this house of clay and I will sing as sweetly as any of the birds of Paradise that carol forever in the Tree of Life above! Do you not feel a longing to be up and away? Indulge those longings, for thus you will be drawn nearer to the understanding of the text—“to give you an expected end.” All that you are suffering, all that you are enjoying, all that God sends you has this one design—to make you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

Ending this discourse, I would ask you to pledge that you will meet me where Glory dwells, in Emmanuel's land! We shall soon be with the angels. The Lord is thinking of us and He is expecting us Home. Our Lord Jesus is waiting for His wedding day which is *His* expected end. “My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.”

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Jeremiah 24, 29.*  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—737, 731, 746.**

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# A SECOND WORD TO SEEKERS

## NO. 1313

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And you shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall  
search for Me with all your heart.  
Jeremiah 29:13.*

LAST Sabbath morning [See Sermon No. 1312, “*Good News for Seekers.*”] we gave forth words of good cheer to those who seek the Lord, dwelling upon those encouraging words of the Savior upon the Cross, “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” We aimed only at the one point of encouraging seekers, for a single objective is always enough for one discourse and the impression made is more likely to be permanent. We had neither time nor desire to qualify our language with discriminating remarks which would help to show who are true seekers and who are not. One cannot reap and winnow with the same machine. I think it is right, therefore, that we should follow up that discourse by another in which we shall discern between those who truly seek and those who only nominally seek the Lord.

Such discrimination will be useful in many ways. Perhaps, dear Friend, after last Lord's-Day you said, “I do not understand this promise that seekers shall praise God, for I have been seeking for many months but I have not been able to praise Him. Surely the promise cannot be true for me.” Rest assured, dear Friend, that the promise *is* true for you if you are true to it. The Word of the Lord is sure. There can be no question upon that point—the questions to be raised must deal with yourself and your searching—either you do not seek or else you seek amiss. Always conclude that if a general promise does not turn out to be true in your particular instance, there is something in *you* that hinders it. You must have fallen short of the character to which the promise is made—the promise, itself, cannot be suspect. “Let God be true and every man a liar.”

You may account for your not obtaining the blessing which you have asked upon any theory which *humbles* yourself, but you must never suppose that the Lord will break His promise, for that were to dishonor His holy name, deny His faithfulness and pour contempt upon His Truth! If His good Word appears to fail towards you, is there not a cause? Does not *sin* lie at the door? Is there not some idol in the inner chamber which must be searched for and taken away? “Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?” It is a general truth that proper food will build up the human frame, but if food is eaten and yet no nourishment whatever is obtained from it, we conclude that the system is thrown out of order by some inward disease. The meat is good—it must, therefore, be the stomach or some other organ that ails and turns that which is good into evil.

If a fire is kindled and a person is placed close to it, and yet he declares that he is not warmed by the heat, we do not, because of this, entertain any doubt of the power of *fire* to warm the human body! We conclude that the man has a chill or some other malady which prevents his feeling the natural warmth of the fire. The failure of warmth cannot lie in the *fire*—it must be in the man—for fire must warm any healthy limbs which are held near to it. If a medicine which has been known to produce a cure in hundreds of cases is taken by an individual and it is found to have no result, or to work in a manner contrary to its natural and ordinary effect, we conclude that either the state of the case has been badly judged, or that there is present some other potent drug which neutralizes its effect.

The man, himself, may not be aware that he is eating or imbibing that which acts in an opposite direction to the prescription of his physician and yet it may be so and, therefore, the medicine is not to be distrusted, but the interposing substance must bear all the blame. For this reason we will try, this morning, to discriminate a little, with no wish whatever to grieve any seeking soul, but with a strong desire to indicate any weak point in the seeking, any counteracting habit which may be, at this time, preventing the soul from entering at once into the peace and joy for which it is seeking.

“He that seeks finds” is an indisputable fact. But, as all is not gold that glitters, so all is not *seeking* which bears the name! We come at once to our point by noticing *the quality required in every true seeker*. The verse tells us—“You shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” Whole-heartedness is the quality required. Secondly, we shall show *the reasons why wholeheartedness is required*. And, thirdly, *indicate one or two of the main hindrances to it*, which we pray the Lord to remove.

**I. THE QUALITY REQUIRED IN THE SEEKER** is whole-heartedness—he must search for the Lord with all his heart. This means, I take it, three things. First, in order to find the Lord there must be *an undivided Object in the seeker’s mind*. See how the text runs—“You shall seek *Me*, and find *Me*, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” The Object is one and only one. The sinner is at a distance from God and guilt divides him from his God. He longs to draw near to the heavenly Father and to be reconciled—he therefore seeks after God and God, alone. “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” “O that I knew where I might find HIM!”

Now, the Lord is to be found by the guilty only in Christ Jesus, who is the Mercy Seat where God meets sinners and hears their prayers. It is there that the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily and there the fullness of Divine Grace and the Truth of God are stored up so that we may receive of them. We must turn our eyes, then, to God in Christ Jesus, and keep our eyes fixed there. “My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” If the eyes are not only on Christ and in desire of salvation through Him, it will be no wonder if we seek for mercy but seek in vain! How can a man run in two ways at the same time? Brothers and Sisters, you must shake off from you all trust in *self*, for God will have none

of it! You must not seek God by the works of the Law, or by any supposed merit that is or ever can be in yourself, for this He utterly refuses.

If you attempt to mix Law with Gospel, self with Christ and merit with mercy, you will certainly miss your aim—your whole soul must concentrate itself upon this—to find God as He is revealed in Christ, a God of Grace and love, the God who justifies the ungodly when He looks upon the merit of His Son and sees the sinner's confidence in Him. You must so seek the Lord as to make no provision for the lusts of the flesh and the desires of the mind. If it cost you the giving up of every pleasure that you have, yet in searching after the Lord you must seek Him so entirely that you would cut off right arms and pluck out right eyes sooner than you should miss Him and so miss eternal life! However sweet the sin may have been to your palate, you must cast it out of your mouth, for it is as poisonous as it is pleasant and, therefore, it is to be put away far from you.

“Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof,” for if you do, you have not sought the Lord with all your heart. There must be one Object and that must be neither self nor sin, but you must feel and say, “in God is my salvation, and my glory. The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. Therefore with strong desire do I follow after the Lord, even the Lord, alone.” Moreover, there must be no reservations made in this search to gratify pride in any of its shapes. If you say within your heart, “I will only accept mercy if it come to me in a certain way”—you put yourself out of all hope of Grace, for God is a Sovereign, and will do as He wills with His own. Some will not have Christ without signs and wonders—they demand singular experiences, horrible depressions, or delirious excitements—and they will not believe unless some marvelous thing is worked in them or before them.

You must make no conditions with God, either of this or of any other kind. You shall find Him if you will seek Him without bargains and terms and demands—for what are you that you should demand anything of your Maker—and lay down rules and regulations for the dispensing of a mercy to which you have no claim? Come as you are, poor Sinner, and without any reservation submit yourself to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, only desiring this one thing—that you may find God and His love in Christ Jesus—

***“Lord, deny me what You will,  
Only ease me of my guilt.  
Suppliant at Your feet I lie,  
Give me Christ, or else I die.”***

You shall find the Lord to be your help and your salvation if you seek Him as the one sole Object of your desire. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.”

The phrase, “with all your heart” means, next, *with the entire faculties of our being*. A man must seek after God in Christ Jesus with his entire nature. David said, “My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You.” If one part of the man refuses to seek the Lord and remains reserved for Satan, then the Evil One has a lien upon the whole man! Here is a little bird and it tries to fly into the open air, but it is not free. And why not? Its wings are loose, see how it flutters! Its head is not bound, hear how it

sings! And this foot is free, too—why is it not at liberty? Do you not perceive that the other leg is bound by a thin twine? True, it is only held by that single thread, but it is not free. The whole bird is bound, because that *one foot* is held by that single thread!

And so long as a man of free choice gives up any part of himself to the power of sin and keeps back any part of his nature from seeking after God, he is not really seeking the Lord at all, but remains a slave of sin. O man, if you would find God, set your faculties upon the search! Marshal your powers, muster your forces and let your entire nature, body, soul and spirit search after Jesus Christ as the merchantman seeks goodly pearls! Set your thoughts at work and let them search the Scriptures! Awake your understanding and endeavor to comprehend your danger and to know your remedy. Set your wits to work—let your ingenuity and your research be brought to bear on heavenly things, for perhaps when you *do* understand the Gospel you will believe and have peace.

An enlightened judgment is a great help towards faith. Many a man remains without peace because his understanding has never been exercised upon the Gospel and Divine things. But if he would think them over, meditate upon them and ponder them in his heart, by the enlightening of the sacred Spirit, new light would flash into his soul and he would see and believe. “Do you understand what you read?” is an important question and suggests that in the search after salvation the understanding should be called into play. Do not expect to be saved as dumb driven cattle, but as a reasonable man and, therefore, use your reason and understanding upon Divine things, asking the Lord to teach your reason right reason—and to give your understanding a right understanding of His Word.

It will be well for a man, in seeking the Lord, to use his *memory* and his conscience. Let him go over the list of his past sins and recall the wanderings of his heart, the follies of his tongue, the iniquities of his hands. Perhaps memory will call up conscience and become the mother of repentance! The recollection of the sinful past will, by the Spirit’s Grace, create a penitent. Forget not, I pray you, to remember your former days, for God requires that which is past. Remember, too, what God has done by way of mercy to others. Think of friends and companions saved. Remember the grand old records of Inspiration—turn to the Bible and see how God has saved seeking souls—and your memory may thus beget faith in you by the work of the Spirit of God.

The text bids you search “with all your heart,” and your memory, as one of the faculties of your mind, should assist in the search. As for your *will*, how necessary that this, also, be captured and compelled to join heartily in the pursuit. It is a stubborn thing and will not readily bend, but how can you expect to find mercy if you are not willing to submit to God’s rebukes and accept His methods of salvation? Bring forth my Lord Will-Be-Will and let *Grace cause him* to submit himself! Though he was once Lord Mayor of Mansoul, he must bare his neck to the yoke of Christ and admit that the will of the Lord is higher than man’s will! Make him say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” As to every other faculty that you

have, if you are, indeed, in earnest, let it be awakened! Leave not a single part of your nature behind you when you come to God, but seek Him with your whole heart, with intense eagerness and strong desire.

“My son, if you will receive My words, and hide My commandments with you; so that you incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then shall you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” I have now given you two meanings for the phrase, to seek the Lord with all our heart—it indicates an undivided Object and the entireness of our faculties in the search.

But, thirdly, it signifies, mainly, *awakened energy*. “When you shall search for Me with all your heart you shall find Me.” It includes the getting out of that dull, sluggish, indifferent spirit which seems so common. Indifference to eternal realities seems to impregnate the very air we breathe in this sleepy world—sleepy I mean as to things spiritual and Divine. We are busy about a thousand things, but sluggish about our souls! Yet be not deceived, if men are to be saved, it will not be accomplished while they slumber, nor will mercy be found by listless, careless, lackadaisical searching after it.

When the Spirit of God sets a man searching, he becomes earnest, intense, fervent, vehement and strives to enter in at the strait gate, “for the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” He who would be saved must be resolved to escape from the wrath to come. It must come to this with you—that you will not rest till you find Christ and eternal life, for you can not endure to be damned and, therefore, you are determined that if there is on earth or in Heaven any remedy for your soul’s sickness, you will have it if seeking can obtain it! When the Lord has made you thus resolute, you will need to have perseverance to follow hard after Him till you have beheld His face in peace.

If you have once read the Scriptures to find Christ in them, you will read them again and again—and dig the field of the Word over 10 times till you find the hidden treasure! If you have once prayed for Grace and peace you will pray again and again, and again, and again till your knees are calloused rather than you will miss the blessing! If you have heard the Word preached many times and yet it has not brought peace to your soul, you will be early and late in your waiting at the posts of Jehovah’s doors to hear those glad tidings of which it is written, “Hear, and your soul shall live.” There will be in your spirit a determination that cannot be shaken, a desire which cannot be appeased!

We must be importunate, like the widow with the unjust judge, or the man at midnight with his friend, for importunity prevails. “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the Lord.” If you cannot rest till you receive the kiss of pardon, you shall soon obtain it! If you cannot be easy until you are taken into the Father’s house and acknowledged to be His child, you shall soon rejoice in the adoption! May the Lord be pleased to awake all seekers to passionate earnestness, for when they are filled with travail of soul they shall obtain

mercy! If you are content to go without salvation you shall go without it, but if your soul longs, yes, even faints for it, you shall have it.

There are some poor souls who will, perhaps, be distressed with these remarks upon energetic seeking. They are constitutionally weak and feeble in all that they feel and do and, therefore, they will say, "Alas, Sir, I am afraid I never was so earnest as you describe. I am a poor feeble soul and very low in spirit. I fear I have no such eagerness and energy." No, dear Trembler, and I would not have you misunderstand me, for the force I am now commending is not physical, but *spiritual* and rather that of *weakness* than of strength! Have you not heard that once upon a time two knocks were given at Mercy's door and he who kept the door, opened to one in an instant, but to the other there was no reply. The knock to which the door was opened was but a gentle one and scarcely could be heard by those outside the gate, yet it evidently struck some secret spring upon the door, for the sound thereof thundered along the palace halls!

The second knock was very loud and was heard by all who stood around the door, but it commanded no answer from within. Then he who thus had knocked marveled and enquired of him that kept the gate and said, "How is it that I have knocked so loudly and yet have not entered, while the trembling woman whose knock was very soft and low obtained immediate admittance?" Then he that kept the door answered, "She who knocked so feebly, yet knocked with all her might. Her strength was little, but it was all she had and, therefore, it sounded powerfully within these palace walls. As for you, you have put forth much energy, but it was not your all and, therefore, there is no response to you. Take you the hammer of the gate with both your hands and throw your whole soul into each blow, and see if the door does not yield you admittance."

He did so, the gate flew open to him, and he entered into the place which his feeble Sister had already gained. If you seek God with all your heart, be your heart strong or feeble, you shall find Him!

**II.** Secondly, we have to consider THE REASON FOR THIS REQUIREMENT. The requirement is so natural that it needs no excusing—it must recommend itself to every thoughtful person. But since it may help us to be earnest if we are told why it is required of us, I would answer first, that *in every other pursuit where the object is at all worthy of a man's efforts, whole-heartedness is required.* I knew a man who had a business, but if you called to see him upon any matter you seldom found him in—he was taking a holiday, or else he had not risen. He made an appointment with you, but he never kept it, or came in so late that you were weary with waiting. Commissions that he was entrusted with were often left unexecuted by the week together, or attended to in a slovenly manner. Do you wonder that when I passed by his shop one day I saw the shutters up and learned that he had failed?

Do you not know that success in life depends upon *earnestness* in it? Do you not teach your sons this important lesson? And if it is so in the lower things of this mortal life, how much more is it in the matters of the world to come? No man becomes learned by sleeping with a book for his pillow, or famous by slumbering at the foot of the ladder of honor. You

find, everywhere, that the kingdom of this world suffers violence and never more so than in these days of increasing competition. Surely you cannot expect that if you must run for this world, you may creep and win the next! No, no, you shall find the Lord, Seeker, if you seek Him with all your heart, but no other way! Spiritual sluggards shall starve! Labor, therefore, for the meat which endures to eternal life.

The danger from which the need to escape is so great, that the utmost earnestness is none too much! Consider for a moment the imminence of our peril and the overwhelming nature of it. The unsaved man lies under the wrath of God and if any man did but know what the wrath of God is, he would think Nebuchadnezzar's furnace to be cool compared with that burning oven! He is, in instant danger of death and of the Judgment, and of that Second Death which follows on the heels of condemnation and consists in banishment from the Presence of God and the Glory of His power. Oh, if a man did but know, while he lived, what it is to *die*—if he could but guess what it is to stand before God's bar and if he could have an inkling of what it must be to be cast where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched—this would surely make him seek the Lord with all his heart!

O Man, if you were in a burning house you would be eager to get out of it! If there seemed a probability that you would sink in a river, you would struggle desperately to get to shore! How is it, then, that you are so little moved by the peril of your soul? Man is awakened when his life is once known to be in peril—how much more earnest ought he to be when eternal life or eternal death are the solemn alternatives! “What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon your God!” Look, moreover, at *the greatness of the mercy* which you are seeking. It is none other than pardon of all your sins, perfect righteousness in Christ Jesus, safety through His precious blood, adoption into the family of God and eternal enjoyment of the Presence of God in Heaven!

They that seek for pearls, gold and precious stones, use all their eyes and all their wits, but what are those gaudy toys compared with these immortal treasures? How ought a man to seek after Heaven and eternal life? Should it not be with all his heart? Remember that in this matter *everybody else is in earnest*. Poor Seeker, everyone that you have to do with in this matter is in earnest! Look down on Hell's domain and see how earnest Satan is to hold you and to ruin you! How diligently the enemy baits his hooks and sets his traps to catch the souls of men! How does he compass sea and land to hold his captives lest they escape. See how earnest, on the other hand, Christ is! He proved His earnestness by a life of toil by day and of prayer by night—by hunger, thirst, faintness and bloody sweat.

The zeal of God's House had eaten Him up. He was earnest even to the death for sinners. And God is in earnest—there is no mockery with Him, or carelessness or indifference about human souls. When He speaks of the sinner's perishing, He cries out with a solemn oath that He has no pleasure in their death. But if they, to the last, refuse His love and defy His justice, He will not trifle with them, but will judge in earnest and punish in earnest. Has He not said, “Beware therefore, you that forget God,

lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” The majesty of His power is revealed in flaming wrath against transgressors! Hell is no trifle and His wrath is no small matter.

Heaven and Hell, then, are in earnest, and so must you be if you would find salvation. Shall we, who have to tell you to escape from the wrath to come, pray to be in earnest and shall we never feel earnest enough, but always cry that we may be seized with a yet more intense passion for your welfare? And shall it seem to you to be a common-place affair—a thing that you may let alone and let happen as it may? Oh, Sirs, if you talk so, the madness of sin is very manifest in you! May the Lord make you sane! Where everything else is in earnest, you need to be in earnest, too.

*You have been earnest enough and whole-hearted enough in the ways of sin.* Think of yourself as engrossed with those things of which you ought to be ashamed. Have you not been earnest, indeed, *there?* Concerning this world you have risen up early and sat up late, and eaten the bread of carefulness. When you went into sin, did you not sin with both your hands? Perhaps I speak to some here who could never sin enough. When they were in company they were ahead of all others—ringleaders in every sort of wickedness. It was not enough for them to be as *common* sinners, but they were known by everybody to be the boldest and most daredevil of all the crew. They led the van in the march to Hell!

Ah, Sirs, are you going to manifest all that earnestness in reviling and rebelling against God and is there to be no warmth, no ardor, no strong excitement of your nature when you seek the Lord and His Grace? Think of this and chide your laggard steps! Besides, look, Sirs, *how can there be anything true about your seeking if it is not whole-hearted?* Here is a man who *almost* repents of his sin, or half repents of it. Does not that mean that he does not repent of it at all? How can there be repentance of a deed to which half the heart is still wedded? If only half the heart seems to be separated from sin, it is but a *seeming*—the man’s whole heart, in truth, still loves his sin.

And how can there be half-hearted faith? He that half believes, believes not at all. If you say, “I almost believe,” where is your faith? If you believe with all your heart you may be baptized and added to the Church. But if you believe half-heartedly, what sort of faith is this? For a man to turn half from sin and half to God, is that conversion? No, he has not turned to God who has turned but half to God. He abides where he was, only probably he has added hypocrisy to his other sins. He who leaves half his heart behind him when he comes to God comes not at all. “Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty.”

And also, my Brethren, you that are seeking the Lord, there must be whole-heartedness in your seeking because *that which you seek, if you obtain it, is a whole-hearted thing.* Hear how true Christians *pray.* Do they pray with half their hearts? No, for one said, “with my whole heart have I sought You.” So say all the saints. They know that if they ask in a chilly style they are asking to be denied and, therefore, they besiege Heaven with all the *power* of prayer. They knock and knock again with fervor and importunity when they would obtain what they need. They say with wres-



ting Jacob, "I will not let You go unless You bless me." Prayer is the vital breath of the Christian and if he cannot pray without whole-heartedness, then it is clear that to have spiritual life, you, O Seeker, must give all your heart to it.

*Obedience* to God in the Believer is whole-hearted. What did David say? "I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart." There is no doing the will of God with half a heart. That would be such an obedience as He could not, in any way, accept. It would be a sign of formality and hypocrisy, but not of sincerity. Genuine Christians love God with all their heart. What is the demand of the old Law, but, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul"? To love God with half your heart would be another name for not loving God at all! Love to God is the proof and test of a Believer, but how can you have it if even in your seeking your heart is divided?

When Believers praise God, they do it in the style of the Psalmist who said, "I will praise You, O God, with my whole heart." What other songs can have music in them to the ears of the God of Truth? Vain must all ten-stringed instruments be if the heart praises not. "Unite my heart to fear Your name," said the holy man, and we must pray the same, for the Christian life is impossible without wholeness of heart. Only imagine for a moment that I were permitted to come here and say to you sinners, "God is very easily entreated and if you seek Him, no matter in what cold and careless way, He will be found of you. You may be half asleep, but yet so long as there is a little desire in your soul, it will go well with you. You need not be very earnest or specially prayerful, or whole-hearted—you may take it very easy—it will all go well with you"?

What pretty preaching that would be! Some might like it, but what sort of Christians should we produce by it? Even when we preach earnestness, a great number of professors are drowsy enough! But what would they be if we had such a slumbering Gospel as this to preach? I have known persons go to sleep in the House of Prayer when the seats have been hard. But suppose we provided pillows for all armholes and downy cushions for drowsy heads? Who would wonder it you all went to sleep? What sort of a Church should we build up if we did not bid the enquirer seek with his whole heart, but urged him to be indifferent from the very first? Have I not reduced the whole thing to an absurdity? And do you not see, at once, that there must be a seeking of the Lord with all your heart if, indeed, you are ever to find Him? May the Divine Spirit, who comes as a rushing mighty wind and as a consuming fire, come upon all wavering hearts at this hour and cause them to be eager after the things which make for their peace!

**III.** I am going to mention, in the third place, one or two of THE HINDRANCES which stand in the way of a sincere, whole-hearted, persevering search after the Lord and His salvation. I verily believe that a principal hindrance is *presumption*. The ungodly say within themselves, "God is very merciful and ready to forgive. We like to hear the preacher set forth the abundant mercy of God. We are pleased to hear him show how willing

the Father is to forgive and how He delights to receive returning prodigals.”

Yes, and after saying this you continue in sin—your mean, dastardly, worse than brutish heart resolves to sin because God is merciful! I know not how to find adjectives sufficiently strong to set forth the degradation of a nature which can multiply offenses because the offended One is of a forgiving spirit! How worse than brutish are they who say, “Because God is so merciful, therefore we will go on in sin!” Are you not ashamed of yourselves? I am sure I am ashamed of you, that such a thought should ever dwell in your mind! It is so ungrateful, so ungenerous—I was going to say, it is so devilish—but the devil himself has never been so guilty, for he has never had any *hope* of mercy!

To sin because of mercy is a step lower than even the devil has descended. Because God is merciful, therefore, you will not seek His mercy, but will continue in sin. Ah, be ashamed and be ashamed! You hear us continually say that whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned. And you say to yourself in the secret of your heart, “This is very easy. Only believe, and you shall be saved. Simply put your confidence in Christ,” and from this you take license to go on in sin! Let me put this to you again that you may see the meanness of such a course. Do you say, “Because the way of salvation is so simple, therefore I will not attend to it at present. Any day will do. I will put it off”?

Oh, Man, can it be that you have fallen so low as this? Oh, the deep depravity of your spirit, that if God is so ready to forgive, you are, therefore, all the more unready to be forgiven! And because He puts it on such easy terms, you, therefore, turn upon your heels and refuse His love! What is this but virtually to crucify Christ afresh by sinning because He is gracious? What is this but mocking Him and spitting in His face by refusing His salvation because it is so free? Oh, do not do this! Be not so unmanly, so cruel to yourself, and so ungenerous to the Christ of God.

“Ah,” says one, “a few words of prayer at the last will do.”—

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

Ah, I have often wondered how men can venture to speak thus within themselves! They seldom talk like that to others because they dare not! But they flatter themselves in secret. How do you know that you will have the few minutes in which to utter those pious words? “God be merciful to me a sinner,” may be more than you will be able to say! Beware, lest He take you away with a stroke, for then you will not be able to raise even the shortest prayer! Some have been smitten down in their sins and those have been the very men who said, “Any time will do. I can turn to God when I please and make my peace with Him.” Many men have fallen from a height, or been killed on the railway, or drowned at sea, or seized with an epileptic fit and their souls have stood in all their naked shame before the bar of God to answer for their ungodly speeches! Presumption upon the mercy of God is the reason why so many wrap themselves up in the garments of carnal security and put far from them the evil day. God deliver you from this great evil!

Secondly, many are hindered, I doubt not, by *remains of self-confidence*. If they knew that they could not save themselves they would be in earnest to seek after God and His righteousness. But they still harbor some vain notion that there must be at least a little good thing about them, at least a spark—and a great fire may come from a spark. They never were as bad as some—they were not swearers or drunks—they have never plunged into actual lust and defiled themselves with uncleanness. Somewhere or other they have hoarded up a little store of native goodness and upon this they dote in a timorous, half suspicious way and, therefore, they do not cry out to God with the energy of those who must find mercy in Christ or be forever lost.

He who thinks that he can swim will never seize the life buoy with the clutch of a drowning man. How fierce is the grasp of a man who is drowning and knows that his fast hold is his only chance! How he clutches, as if his fingers were made to be welded to the buoy! When a man feels that nothing is left for him but God in Christ, then with earnestness he seizes upon the hope set before him! I am afraid that some are hindered by a very opposite evil, namely, *despair*. Ah, some of you do not believe that you can be forgiven! You fancy that you never can be God's people. If you were quite sure that you could obtain perfect peace with God—if you knew that before the sun goes down today you might have the bright eye which looks up to Heaven and say, "There is a throne there for me," and the placid heart that feels perfect rest in Christ—if you knew that these could be yours, would you not seek them?

Well now, I want to read you a verse which comes before my text. And as I read it, I pray the Holy Spirit to apply its comfortable assurance to your soul. Look at the 11<sup>th</sup> verse—"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Oh, if God's thoughts towards you are good, come to Him now and kiss His feet! The prodigal, when he was returning home, did not doubt that his father would receive him somehow or other, even if it were as one of his hired servants. He knew that he would be received, somehow, and he was willing to be received!

Come, poor Soul, the Lord will receive you, whoever you may be! If with your whole heart you do consent at once to trust the Lord Jesus, He will receive you! Yes, He will show you how to trust! He will give you faith and give you the blessing which your faith seeks. Why should you not meet your Lord in these pews this morning? Why, before you descend the steps of the Tabernacle, should you not breathe the prayer of faith and lean your weight upon the Cross of Christ, and find the mercy which our text declares you shall find if you seek it with all your heart?

Lastly, I am afraid that some people have been kept from whole-hearted seeking by *the conduct of Christian professors*. Let me urge you never to take your pattern—you that are coming to Christ—from those who *profess* to be His followers, for some of them are a sorry sort! Yet let them be as bad as they may, what is that to you? You have your own soul to look after—and you have to seek Christ with all the more earnestness because some who think that they have found Him have been mistaken! It is a

great pity when there are Christian people about, or those who *say* that they are Christians, to whom a poor seeking soul is unable to appeal because he would get no sympathy from them.

I heard of one who, being ill, desired someone to visit him, occasionally, and pray with him. A young man, a professing Christian, was mentioned as one who would willingly do so. “No,” said the other, “I do not want *him* to pray with me, for his *life* does not pray.” There are people of that sort about, many of them. There are some such here. One would not have much faith in their prayers, or derive much comfort from their conversation, for, though you may hope, charitably, that there may be Grace in them, it is like coal in a pit—it is a long way down and hard to get at. Their hearts are lukewarm at the best and, therefore, they never boil with warm and loving expressions.

The genuine and healthy Christian is one who is so full of love that his heart boils over with a good matter and others are compelled to feel that the fire of God is burning in his soul, for they see and feel the effects. O Christian Brothers and Sisters, I do trust that you will see to this, because if you are half-hearted, the chill which surrounds you will freeze the hearts of many who are seeking the Savior! Father, mother, may you not fear that you are hindrances to your children? Sunday school teachers, if you go to your class like blocks of ice this afternoon, you will have cold attention when you come to talk of Christ! If the minister preaches with icicles hanging on his lips, how can he expect that men’s hearts will be thawed by his icy words? No, we must set the example of seeking God with our whole heart—we that are His people—and then God, by the Holy Spirit, will bless our example to others and they will come to seek Him with their whole hearts, too.

The Lord make us to be in downright earnest, so we may hope that toward us He will fulfill that ancient promise, “I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.”

Think of God thus blessing us with His whole heart and His whole soul. Amen, Lord, so let it be!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 11:1-28*.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—427, 594, 605.**

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# SEEKERS DIRECTED AND ENCOURAGED NO. 1457A

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

***“And you shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search  
for Me with all your heart.”  
Jeremiah 29:13.***

THIS was a part of the direction which God gave by His servant to the captives in Babylon. They were to remain quiet in Babylon until the set time came for their deliverance and then there would be granted to them a gracious visitation from God which would move them to repentance and incite them to prayer. Then might they be quite sure that the time had come for their deliverance, when they sought the Lord with their whole heart. It is a general principle that a blessing is about to come from the All-Merciful One when we are moved to *pray* for it with all our heart. The Lord of Grace may send us blessings before we search for them, for He is a Sovereign and often far outstrips what we might have expected, but His promise runs, “Seek and you shall find it,” and it is with the promise that we have most to do. A cheering assurance is given to those who seek in hearty earnest and to this requirement of heartiness we must give earnest need.

At this time I shall not attempt instruction, but strive to drive home the Truth of God into the heart and conscience. I pray the Holy Spirit to help me and I ask the prayers of those who have power with God, that the Word may be as a goad to waken, bestir and urge onward those upon whom it is used. Our address will be, first, to the *unconverted*. Secondly, to *backsliders*. And thirdly, to *this Church*, or any other Christian people.

**I.** And first TO THE UNCONVERTED. Our text has a word for you. “You shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart” You have lost your God—you are at a distance from Him. Your sins have separated you from your Maker and nothing will ever be right with you—really right—till you get back to your God. You are a sheep away from its shepherd; you are a prodigal son away from his father and you will never be right, I say, till, as a sheep, you get back to the fold, and as a son that has rebelled, you are reconciled to your Father.

You need your God and you will never be right till you find Him. You are therefore stirred up by the text to “search for” Him. You are not to sit still with folded arms and say, “He will come if He will.” The prodigal said, “I will *arise* and *go* to my father,” and some such spirit must be in you, or we cannot hope well of you. You must *search* for the Lord. In this search it will be of no use for you to look within your heart, for it is empty and void of anything godlike and altogether estranged from God. Expect not to find the remedy in the disease! No one turns to his empty purse in the hope that it will supply his necessities, for poverty is not the source of riches! It were vain to look for the living among the dead, therefore look not for Grace and salvation in yourself!

Neither will it be the path of wisdom to endeavor to perform good works of your own, hoping to set yourself right by your own exertions in gaining merit. Man, the whole mischief is that you are *separated* from God and you must get back to Him! The best works done while you are at enmity with your Lord and King are only part and parcel of the proud, presumptuous sin which rejects the Savior and sets up itself in His place. It would have been quite right for the prodigal to wash himself and cease from feeding the swine! It was most desirable that he should leave the harlots and the riotous living in which he had indulged, but if he had done all that and nothing more, the great mischief would not have been cured, for the radical evil lay in his being away from his father's house.

That is the essential wrong in your case, O unconverted man, unconverted woman! You will never be perfectly happy and right till you are reconciled to God! You are allowed to search for Him and what a privilege that is! When Adam sinned, he could not go back to Paradise, for with a flaming sword in his hand there stood the cherub to keep the way that he might not touch the Tree of Life. But God, as far as the garden of His mercy is concerned, has moved that fiery sentinel and Jesus Christ has set angels of love to welcome you at Mercy's gate! You may come to God, for God has come to you! He has taken upon Himself your nature and His name is Emmanuel, God With Us!

Yes, the Infinite became a man and He that built yonder arch of Heaven and hung it with those starry lamps, came down below to be subject to lowly parents, to work in a carpenter's shop and to die upon a felon's gallows, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Search for Him and you must find Him, for so stands His own Word, "You shall seek Me and find Me." The text, however, demands that our searching after God should be done with all our heart. There are several ways of seeking God which must prove failures. One is to seek Him *with no heart at all*. This is done by those who take their book and read prayers, never thinking what they say, or who attend a dissenting place of worship and hear another person pray, but never join in it.

This is done by those who bend the knees at eventide and mutter pious words, but never *think*—who rise in the morning and repeat sacred sentences and never *consider*—who with regard to Divine things are as little thoughtful as if the Gospel were all a legend or an old wives' fable, not worth an hour's meditation. I have seen young women, sometimes, when I have been traveling, reading those trashy novels which they purchase at the railway stall. And I have seen them waste their tears on some imaginary heroine or hero and yet they and others hear about the majesty and the love of God without emotion and read of Heaven and Hell—and Christ and God—with scarcely a tear or a thought! Dear Friend, you will never find the Lord if you seek Him in a heartless, unthinking manner. God is not mocked! If any of you have fallen into a formal religion and seek the Lord without your heart, you are seeking in vain!

Some seek God *with a false heart*. They flame with zeal and would have their friends know it, for they say as Jehu did to Jehonadab, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord!" But their heart is not true towards God. Their piety is an affectation of *feeling* and not deep soul-work. It is

sentimentality and not the engraving of God's Spirit upon the heart. Beware of a false religious excitement—of being borne up with religious gas as some are, inflated like balloons by a revival, only to burst, by-and-by, when they need something to support them. God grant us to be saved from a lie in the heart, for it is a deadly canker, fatal to all hope of finding the Lord.

Some seek Him, too, *with a double heart*—a heart *and a heart*, as the Hebrew puts it. They have a heart towards God and they have a heart towards sin—they have a heart towards the pardon, but they have, also, a heart towards the transgression. They would gladly serve God *and* Mammon. They would build an altar for Jehovah and still keep Dagon in his place. If your heart is divided, you will be found lacking. Those prayers will never get to Heaven which only fly upward with one wing. If one oar pulls towards earth and the other towards Heaven, the boat of the soul will revolve in a circle of folly and never reach the happy shore. Beware of a double heart! And some seek God *with half a heart*. They have a little concern and are not altogether indifferent. They think when they pray, or read, or sing, but the thought is not very intense. Superficial in all things, the Seed is sown in stony ground and soon it is withered away, because there is no depth of earth. The Lord save us from this!

Now, you that are seeking Christ, remember that if you would find Him you must neither seek Him without heart, nor with a false heart, nor with a double heart, nor with a half heart, but "You shall find Me," says the Lord, "when you shall search for Me with *all* your heart." Nobody gets on in the world who is half-hearted. If a man needs money, he must hunt for it morning, noon and night. If a man longs for knowledge, he cannot take a book and ladle it into his brain with a spoon—he must read and study if he is to be a scholar. If a man desires to rise in such an age as this, he cannot do it without stern labor. Great discoverers, eminent artists and powerful orators have all been men of hard work. Handel, who composed such majestic music, practiced so often on his harpsichord that he hollowed out the keys like spoons through his constant use of them!

Nothing is to be done without earnestness and you may not expect that God is to be found, pardon is to be received and Grace to be had while you have only one eye open and are not half awakened out of sleep. What did Jesus say?—"The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." Heaven's celestial bastions must be stormed by downright importunity! You must take the knocker of Heaven's gate and not drop it from your fingers with a dainty tap, but hammer at Mercy's door again and again till you make the infernal deeps of despair resound with your desperate knocks and cause Heaven, itself, to echo with your hopeful determination that you will enter in, or know the reason why! Oh, knock and knock and knock and knock again, for the door shall be opened when you knock with all your hearts!

Surely, dear Friends, if any men have reasons to bring their whole hearts into action, you unconverted people are the people! I am sure that if I were to intimate to you that a hundred pounds of gunpowder were stowed away in yonder center seat and the probability was that it would soon explode, you would not remain very long in this Tabernacle, but

would hurry out with all your heart! But any destruction that could be caused by gunpowder, as far as its effects on earth are concerned, could be *nothing* at all as compared with the overwhelming destruction which will come upon body and *soul* to men who are under the wrath of God! That wrath of God abides on every one of you who are not converted!

God is angry with the sinner every day and if it is so, your position is the most perilous one conceivable! You will soon die! Do not be vexed with my reminding you of it. We are compelled to see it, some of us, who watch large congregations. Never does the same assembly meet in this place twice and I suppose between Sabbath and Sabbath it happens almost invariably that some hearer goes to his account. Certainly in this Church we lose all the year round more than one per week of our friends. It is true, then, that you will soon have to die—how will you bear to close your eyes on all mortal things without a hope of immortal joy?

To go before the dread tribunal of your Maker and your Redeemer unwashed in the precious blood—with all your sins from the first day of your life till now about your neck like millstones—to sink *forever*—how can you bear it? Think of this and if you do, you will have good reason for seeking your God with all your heart! Remember, also, that after death comes judgment. We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ! And after the Judgment comes the final award, which to those who have rejected Christ will be eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the Glory of His power. Do not, I pray you, defy the wrath of God or dare His infinite displeasure! He, Himself, has said it, “Beware you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.”

Surely every man in his senses who knows that he is exposed to such an imminent risk as this will, with his whole heart, seek the Lord! But why is it that when men search with all their heart they find God? I will tell you. The only way in which we can find God is in Jesus Christ. There He meets with men, but nowhere else, and to get to Jesus Christ there is nothing on earth to be done but simply to *believe* in Him. It is a matter which does not take a moment. Believe God’s testimony about Jesus Christ—trust yourself with Jesus Christ and salvation is yours! The saving Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart, and that is why when men seek the Lord with their whole hearts they find Him, for before they called, the Lord was ready to answer!

Jesus was always ready, but other wishes and other thoughts made the seeker unready. Sins were there and lusts of the flesh and all manner of obstacles to hinder the man. When a man comes to seek God with all his heart, he lets those things go and soon sees Jesus. Then, too, a man becomes teachable, for when a man is in earnest to escape from danger he is glad enough to be told by *anybody*. If I had lost my way and feared I might fall over a precipice, I should be glad for the tiniest child to tell me the right road and a man is likely to *learn* who is willing to be taught! This seeking God with all his heart makes a man quick in understanding. Before, he was a dolt, because his heart was not in it, like a boy at school who does not want to learn.

When a man seeks God with all his heart, you do not need to preach fine sermons to him—he does not crave elegance or eloquence—no, tell



Him Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that “there is life for a look at the Crucified One,” and he jumps at it! “That is what I want,” he says. The Spirit of God has made him eager to learn and so he catches, at once, at the blessed message and believes in Jesus. Half a heart, or no heart, or a double heart will not see what is as plain as a pikestaff and will not accept a Gospel which is as glorious to God as it is simple to man! I charge you, then, you that seek the Lord, to be whole-hearted in it, for you cannot expect peace and joy in the Holy Spirit till all those straggling affections and wandering desires are tied up into one bundle and your entire being is eager in the search for God in Christ Jesus.

**II.** I cannot spare the seeker any more time, for I need to have five minutes with THE BACKSLIDER. Backsliders, you have left your Lord. Perhaps you have left the Church, or the Church has left you by putting you outside its pale and deservedly so, because you were a dishonor to it. I am glad you come among us to worship. You have had to be cut off from our fellowship because of your sad conduct, but you still stick to us and I am glad to see you. I always feel hope for you as long as you love the old house. I am glad that though you are not recognized as a child in it, and do not feel that you ought to be, yet you still wait under the window to hear the family sing.

When the children of God are feasting together at the Table I have marked you looking on and wishing you were again in the happy household. I do not know whether you are God’s children or not. I cannot judge your hearts. I call you backsliders, not because I am sure you are really so, for it is very possible that you made a false profession and you afterwards did what was natural you should do—you broke down in trying to carry out a practical lie. I will not try to judge that, but I will say this to you—surely, if there are any people in the world who ought to be whole-hearted in seeking after God, you are the people!

If I am to be lost, I pray God I may not perish as an apostate or a backslider! O you who once made a profession of religion, I cannot understand how you can dare to think of the Judgment Day, for you will not be able to plead ignorance, for you knew the Truth of God and *professed* to believe it! You will not be able to say, “I never heard of these things.” No, but you came to the Communion Table and you joined the Church! You even preached to others, or you taught in the Sunday school! You ran over at the mouth about Divine things though you were empty at the heart. How speechless you will stand at the last dreadful day with your old regimentals hanging about you to prove that you were deserters! You will not be able to lift a finger or utter a word in defense of yourself!

And what will you do when you go down to Hell? The Prophet represents the king of Babylon as going there and as he descended the little petty princes whom he put to death, who were lying there in their dungeons in the prison of Hell, rose and, leaning on their elbows, looked at him and said, “Have *you* become like one of us?” I think I hear the drunk rising up and saying to you, “What? And are *you* here after all? You used to preach sobriety to me and warn me of the drunk’s doom.” Ah, my Hearers, hypocrites are damned as well as drunks! Then will speak the

woman whom you talked about reclaiming and what a sneer she will meet you with and say, "You needed a refuge yourself, you hypocrite!" Then, too, will speak your neighbors who never went to a place of worship, whom you thought were so very bad because you went there and forgot what you heard.

They will say, "This is what came of your going to the Tabernacle and hearing Spurgeon! Is this the result of your joining the Church and going to the Communion Table?" What answer can you give when those eyes shall leer on you and those lips shall hiss in derision at you? Others shall say, "I never had the opportunities you had. I was never warned as you were. I never rejected Christ as you have done—I never stained the robes of His Church and wounded Him anew in the house of His friends as you have done." Then they will insult and triumph over you! If a prince of the blood were sent to a common jail, what a misery it would be to him.

I pity every man who has to work upon the treadmill, so far as he can deserve pity, but most of all the man who has been delicately brought up and scarcely knows what labor means, for it must be hard, indeed, for him. Ah, you delicate sons and daughters of Zion—you whose mouths were never stained with a curse and whose hands have never been defiled with outward sin—if your *hearts* are not right with God, you must take your place with the profane and share with them. What do you say to all this? Do you say, "I would gladly return and find acceptance in Christ"? To you the text expressly speaks! Then shall you "find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart."

**III.** My last word is to you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and especially to you, the members of this Church. Thus says the Lord, "You shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart." Brethren, we need the Lord to be always among us. We have had His Presence very graciously, but I am always troubled lest any sin of ours should cause Him to depart. I dread anything like a decline in zeal and ardor, generosity, prayerfulness and holy living among any of us, lest the Glory should depart and Ichabod be written on our walls. We hunger for our God, for I trust we can say we love Him.

Can you say that? I heard this last week a story about that mighty preacher, Robert Hall, which touched me as I heard it. A friend related that Robert Hall was riding, one day, through a little hamlet on his way to preach at a country town. It snowed very heavily and Mr. Hall was passing through the village, unaware of the state of the road beyond. A Christian man who knew him well, cried out, "Mr. Hall, you must not go farther! The snow is very deep! You cannot get through it, you must come in." Mr. Hall stopped at the house and rested awhile. He looked out of the window and saw that it kept on snowing. He looked out again and it snowed more heavily than before and his friend said to him, "You cannot go, Mr. Hall, you cannot get there."

"But," he said, "Sir, I must go." "Sir," said the good man, "you cannot. It is impossible. You cannot get to the place; the roads are blocked up." So the great preacher agreed to remain if he could deliver his sermon. "I must preach, Sir; I must preach, Sir. I cannot remain unless I preach." His host went round the hamlet, knocked at the doors of the cottages and got a few

people together into his home. Mr. Hall preached a wonderful sermon. The good man seemed to mount to Heaven in preaching from the words, "I saw no temple therein." When the people had gone home he said to his friend, "My dear Sir, I am afraid I am not a child of God." "Why, Mr. Hall, how can you say such a thing as that?" "But I am afraid I am a hypocrite, Sir."

"Well, nobody else is afraid of that about you, Mr. Hall. And I cannot think how you can give way to such a notion." "Ah, but I want to ask you a question, Sir. What do you think is a sure sign that a man is a child of God?" "Mr. Hall," said the good man, "you ought to know better than I do. I cannot undertake to instruct *you*." "I need to know, Sir, and shall be obliged by your judgment," said Mr. Hall. "Well," said the man, "this is what I think is a sure sign—if a man really loves God, he must be a child of God and there must have been a change in Him." "Thank you, Sir. Thank you, Sir, for that word," said Mr. Hall, "that is just what I needed. Love God, Sir? I love Him with my whole soul."

"And," said the good host, in talking to my friend, "you should have heard how Mr. Hall went on about God! It was wonderful to hear him, Sir. He praised Him above all things. He said all that was good about Him and he kept saying, 'I cannot help loving such a Being as God is, and if that proves that I am saved, then I am sure of it, for I must love Him.'"

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, we love God with all our hearts and, therefore, we desire to have Him glorified in our midst. Do you not, my Brethren, vehemently desire this? I know you do! How, then, shall the Lord be honored? He may be glorified by holier living. How is that to be done? The text says we shall find Him if we seek Him with all our hearts and in finding Him we shall find holiness. I have given up the idea that I shall ever get a Church in which all hearts will seek God earnestly. I know you will not all be alive and full of fervor, for some of you are a dishonor to the Church! You will never help us, but you will remain among us as dead weights. How I wish I could hope otherwise, but I dare not deceive myself or you.

I do expect, however, that all who have the life of God really in their souls will give their whole hearts to the Glory of God and will do it intensely. I look to them to seek the Lord by prayer, praying much for God to be glorified and to back up their prayer by *effort*, cheerfully seeking to take their full share in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. Brethren, did Christ die for you? Yes or no? If He did, then, in the name of common honesty, *live* unto Him, for you cannot be your own—He has bought you with a price! When you were baptized in the name of The Sacred Three, did you mean it? If you did, in the name of the Truth of God, live unto God, for you confessed that you were dead to the world and buried with Christ and that you should always live unto Him!

When the last time you came to the Communion Table, did you really believe that Jesus gave Himself for you and did you know that you feasted upon His flesh and drank His blood by faith? Then, I say, in the name of both honesty and the Truth of God, live as souls should live who have eaten better than angels' meat and have Christ within them! I try to speak as earnestly as I can, but usually when I reach my home I say to myself,

“What are you doing? You did not awaken those people, or yourself either! You are getting dull and old—you are not half so zealous as you used to be in your younger days.”

I try to stick big pins into myself in a spiritual fashion, to wake myself up, again, for fear I should fall into the same drowsy state as some I know of, whose preaching is little better than articulate snoring. They are sound asleep and as a natural consequence their people are asleep, too. If this Book is true, the most of us are not living as we ought to live! If there is a Heaven, we are not living in the joy which the hope of it ought to inspire! If there is a Hell and some of our own children are going down to it, we do not act towards them as if we believed in their danger! We are acting like *monsters* and not like men if we suffer our fellow creatures to be lost without lifting a finger for their salvation! Awake! Arise, my Brothers and Sisters!

Oh, Church of God in this place and Church of God everywhere, shake yourself from the bonds of your neck! Arise and sit down on your throne of power, O daughter of Zion! Put on your strength as in the ancient days, for strength shall be yours if you search after the Lord with all your heart! God grant that as a Church we may be thoroughly earnest in seeking for a display of His saving power and He shall have the glory! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 11.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—429, 503, 549.**

**TO MY CHURCH AND PEOPLE:**

DEAR FRIENDS—I am hoping and praying that the special services at the Tabernacle may excel all that have gone before. To urge you to the utmost earnestness about them, I have written the short sermon of this week. It would give me great joy to hear, as I feel sure I shall, that in this as in all the other works of the Church, you are abundantly filled with zeal and constancy.

My one concern is lest the Lord’s work should suffer by my absence. I entreat you, do not permit it to be so in any point or degree. The damp and dull weather, which has reached us even here, has somewhat retarded my progress to health and strength, so that I remain a very feeble traveler, but yet I am greatly improved and feel that my mind and spirits are the better for the rest.

To all of you, from the bottom of my heart, I send my sincere love in Christ Jesus. Yours to serve while there remains any life in me,

**C.H. SPURGEON,**  
Mentone, February 6, 1879.

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# **“THE TIME OF JACOB’S TROUBLE”**

## **NO. 2645**

**A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DRY, OCTOBER 22, 1899.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 29, 1882.**

***“It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”  
Jeremiah 30:7.***

GOD here calls the Jews by the name of Jacob. These were His people in a very special sense, for He had chosen them from among all the nations of the earth and had brought them near Him that they might be His own portion, His inheritance. Yet upon these people He laid many stripes and visited them with sore chastisements. It is true that they were a sinful people, though they were, in many respects, better than other nations who were, for a long while, allowed to go unpunished. Year after year, the heathen prospered in war and had success in other ways—but as for God’s own people, waters of a full cup were wrung out to them. As soon as the Lord had a people, they began to suffer. We learn this very early in their history, for, after Isaac, the child of promise, was born, it was not very long before Ishmael—“he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.”

And, as that persecution began early, it has continued late, for the Apostle adds, “Even so it is now.” There is still an enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman—and the seed of the woman is made to feel the serpent’s malice so that, what with a chastising God and a biting serpent, the children of God are pretty sure to be often in trouble! And when, by Grace, you see them in their glittering ranks above, and ask, “Who are these which are arrayed in white robes, and from where did they come?” This will be the summary of the answer concerning them all, “These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” “The sacramental host of God’s elect,” in its march through the world, may be tracked by its own blood! Read both ancient and modern history and what will you find but an account of the suffering and the triumphs of the people of God? Even to this day we have to cut a lane through the enemy and fight our way to Heaven in a stern hand-to-hand conflict. God has not yet prepared “flowery beds of ease” for any of us, nor shall we be “carried to the skies” in ambulances of luxury. We shall have to fight if we are to reign and we shall have to suffer if we are to ultimately reach the land of perfect blessedness!

This is “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” even this day, this present life! Thank God it is but a day and will come to an end. But this is not the

time of Jacob’s joy. He does have some delights, even here, but his great joy is reserved for the hereafter. This is rather the time in which the sinner rejoices and fattens himself as for the slaughter. But God’s people must expect to find that this is “the time of Jacob’s trouble.”

But, dear Friends, the other Truth in our text is equally attested by history—“he shall be saved out of it.” How gloriously God’s people have been saved all along their line of march! Their campfires still show their trail and those campfires have been the burnings of the furnace that God has set up for the trying and purifying of His chosen people. But nowhere have they been destroyed, though everywhere they have been in affliction! They had a very narrow escape from destruction in Haman’s day—the enemy then thought that he would utterly cut off the people of God from the face of the earth. Haman thought that he had managed everything so well that his wicked scheme had to succeed. The king’s mandates had already gone out and on a certain day all the Jews would be put to death. But you know how Esther, at the peril of her life, went into the king’s presence to plead for her nation and, soon, new edicts were sent out and the chosen people put their enemies to death! And they, themselves, were not destroyed.

Haman was hanged on the gallows that he had fixed for Mordecai, for the hated Jew belonged to the seed which cannot be crushed, to the immortal race which can never die out! God’s people may be often trodden down, like the grass of the field, but, as the grass springs up again and even outlive the men who tread upon it, so will it be with God’s people even to the end! This is “the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” Christ’s Church shall live and flourish when her persecutors lie in ignominious graves! Herod thought that he could crush the chosen seed, but he was eaten by worms—while the Church of God still lived on. The tyrant was soon swept away and so shall all be who lift their puny hands against the people of the Most High!

It would be a very profitable subject, if one had the time to work it out, to see how true this verse is in relation to the Jewish people and to God’s own elect ones. “It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” But I want at this time, to get at *individuals*. You know that God’s Truth, in Scripture, is like a crystal. You may take a great mass of it and if you break that crystal into fragments, every little piece will be of the same form, for every division of the crystal is crystallized after the same fashion! In like manner, you can split God’s Truth up so as to apply it to individuals, and then you can further divide it and apply it to each separate incident in the life of every man—and it will still hold good—for the Truth of God is always true and the faithful promise of God is applicable to every part of the Christian’s life.

I am going to speak to persons who are in trouble and I thought I would take up a series of trials as illustrated by the life of Jacob—not so much referring to his descendants, who are here called, Jacob, but speaking concerning Jacob, himself. He was a much-tried man and one reason for that was that he had a great deal in him that had to be driven out. And much of it could not be gotten out of him except with a severe shaking. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was a far grander man in

every way. Isaac was of a calm and quiet spirit, but Jacob was naturally a worldly man. He is the father of the Jews, a business man, a scheming man, a man who is determined not to be overreached, but who is, perhaps, more likely to overreach others. Jacob was too much of a man until God broke him down—he certainly was a man of a very distinct type—and he has perpetuated that type in the whole Jewish nation to this day. I sometimes think that the Jews seem rather to have descended from Jacob than from Abraham, though, of course, they have really come from Abraham, *through* Jacob. I have already reminded you that Jacob was a man who had great trouble. There was a great deal of husk to that corn and, therefore, it needed a good deal of threshing.

**I.** Now, looking at Jacob’s career in detail, I note that he began his life as an individual apart from the family by a trial which must have been a very heavy one—HE HAD TO LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER. It must have been especially painful to him to go away from his mother, Rebekah, who had had so much of the handling of him, so much of the making of him and, I must add, so much of the *spoiling* of him. And now, because he has treated his brother Esau unfairly and has robbed him of his blessing, coming before his father with a lie in his right hand, he must leave his home and go among strangers. Possibly I am addressing some who are now undergoing that experience. To leave home for the first time, whatever your age may be, is usually very painful. Some of us have known what it was to lie awake at night, when we had said good-bye to father and mother and were far away from them. Some of you have, perhaps, crossed the sea and left dear ones behind—that first night on board ship, away from all you loved—you sobbed yourself to sleep. These changes must come. We cannot always live in the family nest—we must go out of it and make nests of our own. But when the parting comes, it is often a hard task—not to coarse, rough natures—but then I do not suppose such people are here. Gentle, kind, delicate souls—these are they who most feel the separation from those who are dear to them!

In Jacob’s case there was a bitter ingredient which I hope is absent from yours. *The separation came very much as the result of his own fault and his mother’s fault.* They must have felt it very keenly when they were caused to part from one another. Their scheming had won the blessing away from Esau, but now they had the shady side of the blessing—and the shady side of a blessing is, for a while, not materially different from a *curse*. Yet, by-and-by, that very shady side becomes a marvelous blessing to the soul! When Jacob started off alone upon his weary way, he journeyed on till, at night, he lighted upon a certain place and took of the stones of that place for his pillow, for that was “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” But, ah, dear Friends, how sweet was the second part of our text to him! May it be equally precious to you—”but he shall be saved out of it.”

He lies down to sleep and he is saved out of his troubles as soon as he has fallen asleep, for, in his dream, he sees a mystic ladder, the foot of which is on earth, but the top reaches to Heaven—a marvelous vision of that way by which we shall ascend to God—the Lord, Himself, having first come down to us in the Person of His dear Son. It was worth while being away from home and having such lodgings as that—to have such a

dream! Jacob did not mind the cold and heavy night dews, for there was a dew from the Lord that refreshed his spirit! It mattered little to him that the beasts of prey might be round about him, for the angels of God were ascending and descending between him and the Throne of the Infinite One! Let it be the same with you, also, dear Friend. If it is with you, “the time of Jacob’s trouble” because you are separated from those you love, now get into all the closer union with your God! Now begin to use that ladder, that wondrous means of communication between your immortal spirit and the immortal God! Through Christ Jesus, look up to your Father who is in Heaven—carry on a sacred commerce between your soul and the heavenly world and seek to be spiritually enriched thereby!

It would be a blessed thing if you were no longer able to rely upon an arm of flesh, that you might be obliged to come and rest upon the unseen arm of God. It shall be a gainful loss to you to have lost your mother’s care, but to have come nearer to the Most High! I grieve, sometimes, when I see how God’s people manage to live a great way off from Him and yet appear to be quite comfortable, and to have all that they could wish. But I am glad when any one of them is thrust right out of all harmful associations and so is drawn nearer to God, for when God says, “Come you out from among them, and be you separate,” if we do not at once obey His command, He has many ways of *making* us come out and it may be that we have to come out in a fashion that is exceedingly painful. Yet, however trying it is, it matters little if we but get nearer to Him! We may even sing—

**“Nearer, my God, to Thee—  
Nearer to Thee!  
Even though it be a cross  
That raises me,  
Still all my song shall be,  
‘Nearer, my God, to Thee —  
Nearer to Thee!’”**

Dear young Friend, you who are just now all alone, in trouble and have come in here in the hope of receiving some comforting message, I trust that God has meant this part of the sermon to be a word especially for you.

**II.** Jacob’s next trouble was that HE GOT TO HIS UNCLE LABAN. “*Laban*”—read his name backwards and it is “*Nabal*.” There was not a great deal of difference between the two men, for they were both of a churlish disposition. Laban was a hard, grinding taskmaster to Jacob. He cheated him whenever he could, robbed him in all manner of ways, changed his wages when he thought his remuneration was too large, while, by night, the cold devoured the poor shepherd—and by day, the heat was most trying. Yet Laban never had such a faithful servant as his nephew Jacob—and God blessed Laban for Jacob’s sake. I really think that I may say of that period in the Patriarch’s life, “This is the time of Jacob’s trouble,” for it is a very hard thing to work for an unthankful master and, after all your trouble and pains, to get no word of gratitude or love. Laban ought to have loved Jacob, for he was both his nephew and his son-in-law. Jacob’s wives were the daughters of Laban and their father ought to have



been kindly disposed towards him. But both the father and the sons seem to have treated him rather as an enemy than as a friend and so he had hard times all the while he was with them. Perhaps some of you are saying, “Ah, Sir, you do not know *my* circumstances! Mine is hard and grinding labor. I am bowed down by it and I seem to have no sympathy whatever, even from those who ought to be kind to me.” Well, dear Friend, Jacob, you see, went that way, and you may be content to endure, for a while, the same lot as that eminent Patriarch. But, truly, it is a bitter grief and I can understand your saying, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” “Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then I would fly away and be at rest.”

Now listen to the second half of our text and believe that as it came true to Jacob, it shall also come true to you—“It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” And he *was* saved out of it! He might have never left Padanaram if he had not been forced out of it—and it was his duty to get back, as soon as he could, into the promised land—and there live the separated life. The very hardness of the burdens that were put upon him weaned him from the house of Laban and made him willing to bear the hardships of a wandering life—which must have seemed little compared with those which he endured with churlish Laban. My dear tried Friend, God is working out some great end for you through your troubles! It is good for young people to bear a certain amount of burden—not that this excuses those who oppress them and exact more than is right from them, but, “it is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth.” I believe that the drinking out of the bitter cup early in life is often followed by a long stretch of peaceful rest, besides teaching us many a useful lesson which, otherwise, we might never have learned!

You would like to have all things arranged according to your own wishes, would you not? And then you would grow up and be like a bull unaccustomed to the yoke! But that is not God’s method. You have to be tamed and trained while you are young—you have to bear the yoke and, oftentimes, you may cry to God because it seems to gall your unwilling shoulders. But then, in later years, you will be of a tender spirit, yourself, and so you will be the more ready and able to sympathize with those who are down-trodden and persecuted. And you will often have to bless God for those early afflictions which taught you wisdom and fitted you to be the helper of others. Be always more earnest to do your duty than to be at ease. Be more concerned to be right than to be happy! Be more determined to act uprightly than to secure the rewards of your work. God will lay them up in store for you and you shall have them in due season. Bear, and forbear, and still bear—remember how the saints of God have often had to endure harsh usage from those who ought to have loved them—and be content to bear the cross which they carried before you.

**III.** Now I must pass on to notice Jacob’s next trouble. He has got away from Laban and he starts off with his family and his flocks and herds. Now HE REMEMBERS HIS BROTHER ESAU whom he had treated so badly and, behold, Esau is coming to meet him with 400 armed men! Now, if it were “the time of Jacob’s trouble” when he was under Laban’s

power, surely *this* is even worse than any trial that went before, for will not Esau come with his armed men and smite Jacob and destroy the mothers and the children? Is he not full of wrath against him for what he did long ago? And has he not *just cause* for that wrath?

This is, indeed, “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” He sends all that belong to him across the brook and he spends the night in prayer—not sweet and tranquil prayer such as is our privilege to often enjoy, but we read, “There wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day.” We generally lay the stress upon the thought that Jacob wrestled with the Angel. No doubt he did, but the Bible does not say so—it says, “There wrestled a Man with him.” There was a great deal in Jacob that needed to come out and this Angel came and wrestled with him in order to get it out! And Jacob’s victory was not won until the Angel had touched the hollow of his thigh so that he should always need to lean upon a staff even till he died. His weakness had been proven and he had been overcome—and then it was that *he* overcame and became a prevailing prince, having power with God and with men!

But, oh, that was a dark night for Jacob! Try to put yourselves into his position, when, even in his prayers, he was disturbed, “and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day.” His heart, surely, must have been ready to break within him, yet the whole of our text is true of that memorable night, “This is the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” And was he not? Ah, yes, and the joys of Peniel shall always exceed the sorrow with which the wrestling of Peniel is commenced! When he went, limping upon his thigh, to join his family, his grief was gone and his fear was removed. God had appeared to him, so all would be well, all was safe, all must be right, for God had heard his cry and he had obtained the blessing!

He was delivered out of his trouble, but how strangely it came about! When Esau came, he was full of love. Instead of war being in his heart, sweet words were upon his lips! If he had not altogether forgiven Jacob, yet, at any rate, he was willing to say nothing about the past and he spoke like a true and noble brother! This is a Truth of God which we often forget—that God has absolute power over men’s hearts. You say that somebody is going to betray you—that is more than he can do unless God *lets* him. Somebody threatens to do a very dreadful thing to you and you feel that you are quite in his power. Yes, but so is that man quite in *God’s* power—and God can turn him whichever way He likes! You are afraid to meet him, you say. Well, just pluck up your courage and go to him—and you shall, perhaps, find that he is now your friend—the very person that you have looked upon as your worst enemy! This has frequently happened. God, who struck down Saul of Tarsus when he was about to destroy the saints at Damascus, is quite as able to strike down the most violent person when he is about to do mischief to any of His children. Never mind about Esau—be more concerned to give up what the Angel intends to wrestle out of you and to hold Him fast, and say, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” God will speak to Esau and He will take care of you and you shall yet go on your way rejoicing!

**IV.** Jacob goes on till he gets to Succoth and he is so pleased to be quiet, and at rest, that HE SEEMS TO FORGET HIS GOD, for he builds a house for himself and booths for his cattle, and does not continue to live the wandering life that he should! Therefore God soon sends him a trouble. His sons, in the most brutal manner, destroy the men of Shechem, taking them at unawares and murdering them, so that Jacob’s name was made to stink, as he said, among all the tribes. And any *one* of those tribes was quite able to come and destroy him—but if they had banded together, they would have swept him and his family off the face of the earth! Jacob is very much afraid concerning this and now, I think, when he is going into the midst of the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land are justly indignant against his sons, we may again say, “This is the time of Jacob’s trouble.” It is a trouble and no mistake about it. There might be some sentimentalism about his sorrowing on leaving home. There might be some compensation for his hard treatment by Laban. We may suppose that there was too much suspicion of Esau in his third trouble—but now this is a *real* trial—“I shall be destroyed, I and my house.”

“It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” And, oh, how wonderfully was he saved out of it, for the Lord put a fear on all the people round about! He seemed to say to them, “Touch not My anointed” and, though willing enough to fall upon Jacob, and to slay his wives and children, and take his property, they left them all alone! It is truly marvelous how God can make our enemies to be at peace with us! There are more people than Daniel who have slept in the lions’ den—yes, and found soft pillows on the lions’ manes and slept soundly among them! “My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me,” said Daniel, and often have others of God’s servants felt that they have been delivered in the same way! I remember a poor man who used to preach and who, in a sermon, once gave a description of Daniel in the lions’ den. He said, “I do not think the painters make the lions look as fierce as they really were. In most of the pictures, they look as if they could not possibly have eaten Daniel, they are so meek and mild, as if they had padlocks on their jaws. But they were real lions and hungry lions, too, as was proved by the way in which they ate up Daniel’s enemies.” He said he believed that when Daniel was thrown into the den, they all came rushing towards him to devour him, but an angel flew down from Heaven and said to them, “Hush!” And they all lay as still as possible at the Prophet’s feet.

No doubt it was something like that and, sometimes, when the enemies of God’s people are most infuriated, He seems to say to them, “Hush!” and they cannot touch them. Why did the Romanists not burn Luther? I never could make that out. If I had been the Pope, I think I would have got rid of him someway or other. Yet nobody could touch Luther! They made short work of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, but, even when the princes and prelates had Luther before them at the Diet of Worms, they did not destroy him! It could not be, for God meant that Luther should die in his bed, notwithstanding all the rage of the enemy!

Therefore, if it is a time of trouble with us, let us rest and be quiet, for surely we shall be saved out of it.

**V.** Was this the end of Jacob’s troubles? Oh, dear, no! All his life he must have troubles of one sort or another. HE HAS A DEAR SON WHOM HE FAVORS and he has made a coat of many colors for him, such as young princes wear. This young man is different from all his brothers. He has a gentle spiritual nature. God has spoken to him and worked upon him most graciously. The Lord is evidently with him and his father’s heart goes out to the young dreamer and he dotes upon him. You know the story of how his brothers, after a while, bring Joseph’s coat dipped in sheep blood and hold it up before the poor old father. And they say, “This we have found: know now whether it is your son’s coat or not.” Oh, this—*this* is “the time of Jacob’s trouble”!

All those other troubles are nothing at all compared with this one which will surely break the old man’s heart! Joseph! Dear Joseph, worth more than all the others, is taken away, “an evil beast has devoured him. Joseph is, without doubt, torn in pieces.” Jacob will go to his grave sorrowing because his beloved Joseph is taken away from him. Now shout it to the ends of the earth—“This is the time of Jacob’s trouble!” If any of you have had a favorite child and you have allowed all the tendrils of your heart to entwine themselves about it. And if that child is suddenly taken away, it leaves a mark upon the heart that will never be erased in time. I have known the father, if he has been an ungodly man, become rebellious against God from that time forth—there is a bitterness infused into his unbelief that was never there before. But even a gracious man has gone sorrowfully and sadly all his days after some dear child has been taken away—a child of so much promise—a child who was so gracious and who seemed to be such a help to the father, and likely to lift the family up to a better condition of things. Yet, Joseph is gone, and this is “the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”

And was he not? It took a long time for him to see it, but when he wept on Joseph’s neck and when he saw him as the second ruler over all the land of Egypt—and when Joseph came down to him and brought his two sons, and Jacob said, “I had not thought to see your face: and, lo, God has showed me, also, your seed”—then did he know that God had delivered him out of his trouble and multiplied the blessing exceedingly abundantly above what he asked or even thought!

Now, dear Friends, if this is your case, be satisfied about the dear child whom the Lord has called Home to Himself. “Ah,” you say, “there is no mistake about it. I know that my child is dead.” Yes, but I also know that your child is alive! Come, shall we quarrel over it? You say that he is dead—I say that he lives. God knows that that dear one, taken away in infancy, or taken away as a gracious child, lives! Did you ever notice that passage which says that God gave Job twice as much as he had before? “Yes,” you say, “but He did not give him twice as many children, did He? He gave him exactly the same number again, did He not? Then how did He give him twice as much as he had before?” Why, because those first ones that were dead were still his! You know how Wordsworth puts it, “We are seven.” Though some were gone, yet they were still seven—and

Job counted all those that were gone as his—and then, with the others, he *did* have twice the number in his family than he had before!

So, Beloved, count your dear ones as though they were still with you, and wait patiently till you meet them again. Refrain from undue weeping, for they shall come again from the land of their captivity. Your dead ones shall live again! Mother of mortals, you did well to weep, but your children live, so you are the mother of *immortals*! Then why do you sorrow? Dry your eyes and bless God that you have another link with Heaven and that you have helped to fill the choirs that, day without night, circle the Throne of God with hallelujahs!

**VI.** Is Jacob through with his troubles yet? No, no, no! He has got out of one trouble, but he has got into another—

**“A Christian man is never long at ease—  
When one trouble’s gone, another does him seize,”**

which, if it is not good poetry, was written by John Bunyan, and is good sound truth! JACOB’S NEXT TIME OF TROUBLE AROSE THROUGH A FAMINE IN THE LAND. The death of Joseph, as his father thought, seemed a dreadful thing, but a famine of bread that will kill the whole family is a great deal worse trouble! There is nothing to eat, so what will become of them? There is corn in Egypt, however, and the good old man sends his sons down there to buy food. And on the back of that comes another trouble, for when they return home, they say that the lord of the land will not let them have any more corn unless they take Benjamin back with them. But Jacob cannot spare Benjamin and, depend upon it, this is the last ounce that will break the camel’s back! Says the old man, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away? All these things are against me.” This, *this* has to be “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” Surely, he is now in the very depths of it! But Benjamin must go, notwithstanding all that his father may say. Jacob must part with his last idol and God will make us part with our last idols, too. Therefore mind what you set up in your house as idols, for it is written, “The idols He shall utterly abolish.”

That was “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” but the Lord delivered him out of it! You need not that I should stay to tell you how sweetly the Lord was working on Jacob’s behalf all the while. Joseph was in Egypt to keep the whole family alive in the time of famine. Benjamin came back all right and they *all* went down into Egypt and sojourned there. And just as surely as Jacob was delivered, so shall you be. When the worst comes to the worst, then the best of the best will come. When the whole store of bread seems gone, then shall you find this promise true, “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.”

**VII.** Well, that is the end of Jacob’s trouble unless I add what I hardly think I dare call a trouble. JACOB HAD TO GATHER UP HIS FEET IN BED AND DIE. I do not think that it was a trouble to him. The few and evil days of his pilgrimage were now over and he was to meet his fathers, and his fathers’ God. Yet still, it matters not who we are, if we look only at the *earthly* side of death, it is a trouble to die. No one can go down into the disembodied state without having some sort of fear. The immortal tenant, however badly lodged, still seems to love the house of clay. But

whether it was a trouble to Jacob, or not, certainly he was saved out of it. He dies with benedictions on his lips and he falls asleep to awake in Glory and there to sit down with Abraham and Isaac at the feast of everlasting blessedness! It was well with Jacob and it shall be well with you who believe in Jesus! You, also, shall say, "I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord." And that salvation will come at *exactly* the right time! You have tarried till the fourscore years are ended. You are getting somewhat weary amidst the toil and infirmities of a body that is inclining to the tomb. Be of good courage! To such as you are—

***"It is not death to die."***

If you are in Christ, you shall fall asleep in Him and then you shall be "forever with the Lord."

But perhaps there is some poor soul here saying, "I have not got any comfort out of the sermon because all my trouble is about my *sin*. I have not lost a child. I am not suffering through a famine. My great sorrow is concerning my sin, my sin, my sin! It haunts me. It eats like a canker into my spirit. It withers all my joys. It turns my life almost into a Hell." I know where you are, dear Friend, for I have been that way myself. "This is the time of Jacob's trouble." There is no trouble like genuine conviction of sin! Racks, scorpions, death—these are troubles to be laughed at compared with the weight of guilt pressing on the conscience, the sight of an angry God and the fear of the wrath to come! "This is the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." The Lord Jesus Christ has come to save just such as you are! To you He extends His pierced hand. He waits to receive you just as you are. Look to Him! Look to Him! Look to Him, you lost and ruined! Look and live, for in a look at Him there is life for you! Your trouble is great, but you shall be saved out of it though your sins were more numerous than the stars and each one more weighty than the world! Do but look to Him—take your eyes off yourself and fully gaze on Him who bore your sins in His own body on the Cross!

Do you trust Him? Then you are saved! Your sin is gone—it is buried in His sepulcher. God has forgiven you all your transgressions for Jesus' sake! Go on your way rejoicing! "This is the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 31.**

***To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.***

This Psalm was meant to be sung, therefore it was dedicated to the chief musician. Yet it is a Psalm of which at least half is very sorrowful. All our hymns were not meant to be joyous ones. God permits us to take a wide range in our Psalmody and to express the feelings of our heart whatever they may be. You will see here and there the Light of Christ shining on this Psalm. If it does not shine on Him, at any rate He shines on it.

**Verse 1.** *In You, O LORD, do I put my trust.* Is that true of you, dear Friends? Never take your trust upon trust, but be quite sure that you

trust in God. If it is so, acknowledge it and never be ashamed to say, “In You, O Lord, do I put my trust.”

**1-3.** *Let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me; deliver me speedily: be You my strong rock for an house of defense to save me. For You are my rock and my fortress; therefore for Your name’s sake lead me, and guide me.* See how logical David is with his, “for,” and, “therefore”? It is the very essence of prayer to be able to urge pleas with God and to say to Him, “Do it for this reason,” or, “Therefore, do it for such another reason.” I would that we, all of us, studied more fully this blessed art of pleading with God—bringing forth sound arguments as we approach Him.

**4.** *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privately for me: for You are my strength.* How sweetly and blessedly he pleads! “You are my strength.’ I cannot get out of this net, I am entangled in it, but You can pull me out, for, ‘You are my strength.’”

**5.** *Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth.* This is a blessed prayer—a holy resolution which we may use every day in the week all through our lives.

**6.** *I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.* “In Jehovah.” David had no patience with those who trusted in gods of wood and stone. He knew very little, indeed, of that spurious charity which leads some men to speak respectfully even of idolatry! David was “a good hater” and there is something gracious about that when the thing hated is really hateful and something which ought to be hated!

**7.** *I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy.* David makes the cymbals clash together—“I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy.”

**7.** *For You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities.* It is said to be the highest wisdom to know yourself, but, to my mind, it is a much better thing for God to know you! You may know yourself and fall into despair—but if God knows you and you know God, there is abundant room for you to hope in His mercy.

**8.** *And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: You have set my feet in a large room.* “You have given me a broad place to live and You have given me abundance to eat there.” So David praises and blesses his God. But now see how the note falls. From the highest point of the scale, he suddenly descends to the very lowest. “We spend our years as a tale that is told”—and such a tale is sometimes very joyful—but sometimes it is full of woe.

**9, 10.** *Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: my eyes are consumed with grief, yes, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief and my years with sighing.* Sighing is better than sinning, any day. Though we may deplore that our life melts away in sighs, it is better that it should go so than that it should be wasted in sins.

**10, 11.** *My strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to my acquaintance: they that did see me outside fled from me.* He was in such a sorry plight that men would not acknowledge him! They were afraid that they should be disgraced by being found

in his company! It is a sad condition for a man of God, like David, to be found in—for others to be afraid to be seen speaking to him.

**12.** *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. An old pot, flung on the dunghill, as of no further use.*

**13, 14.** *For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: awhile they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in You, O LORD.* Now the strain will mount again! It is faith that tunes the royal singer so that he rises to heights of joy though just now he had sunk so low!

**14, 15.** *I said, You are my God. My times are in Your hands.* He had put his spirit there—“Into Your hands I commit my spirit.” And now he says, “My times are in Your hands.”

**15-19.** *Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make Your face to shine upon Your servant: save me for Your mercies’ sake. Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon You: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. Let the lying lips be put to silence which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You.* If he was not tasting of it, just then, he blessed God that it was laid up for him, put by in store.

**19, 20.** *Which You have worked for them that trust in You before the sons of men! You shall hide them in the secret of Your Presence from the pride of man: You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.* What a blessing that is—to be separated from the noise and strife and the malignant calumny of wicked men! God has a blessed way of keeping His servants away from all such evils.

**21, 22.** *Blessed be the LORD: for He has showed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes: nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You.* “If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” The Psalmist was full of doubts and he said, “I am cut off,” but, nevertheless, God heard the prayer of His poor mistrusting servant and brought him out of his distresses!

**23, 24.** *O love the LORD, all you His saints: for the LORD preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD.*

—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.**



# **BLESSED PROMISES FOR DYING OUTCASTS NO. 1753**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 2, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds,  
says the Lord; because they called you an outcast, saying,  
This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.”  
Jeremiah 30:17.***

THE promises of this verse will be exceedingly sweet to those who feel their personal need of them. But those who boast that they are neither sick nor wounded will take no interest in this comfortable promise. Those who are charmed with themselves will see no charm in the beloved Physician. I have heard of certain hungry travelers, lost in the wilderness, who came upon a bag which they longingly hoped might yield them a seasonable supply of food. They were near to death's door by starvation and eagerly opened the bag, but, alas, it contained nothing but pearls—which they poured out contemptuously upon the desert sand as things of no use to them! Even so, when a man is hungry and thirsting after the things of this life and all his thoughts are taken up with carnal appetites, carnal sorrows and carnal joys, he will reject as worthless the priceless promises of God, for he considers that they are of no immediate use to him.

Let his hunger be of another sort; let his heart hanker after unsearchable riches; let his soul pine for eternal love and then his are views of things entirely changed—and to buy the pearl of great price he would gladly sell all that he has! Oh, you that are sick at heart, here is a word for you from the God of all Grace! Jehovah Rophi, Himself, says, “I will restore health unto you.” Oh, you that have felt the shafts of God pierce your inmost souls, here is a word from Him who heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds—“I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord.” Here is music for your ears, honey for your mouth, comfort for your heart!

But if you feel you have no sickness and no wound, no weakness and no spiritual need, then the Words of sacred consolation will pass over your ears as a meaningless sound, having no voice for you. Neither shall we wonder at this, for the whole have no need of a physician! Only they that are sick! Healthy men care not to hear of medicines and remedies, for they feel no need of them. This thins my audience, but improves it, for while it drives away the conceited, it draws the needy to a more careful listening!

Our text describes a serious plight, mentions a special interference and records a singular reason for that interference. When we have spoken

upon each of these, we shall close by giving you suitable advice. May the Spirit of God bless the discourse.

I. First, then, taken in connection with the verses which precede it, our text describes a class of men and women who are in A SERIOUS PLIGHT. These people suffer under two evils. First, they are sick through sin, for they need to have their health restored. And, secondly, they are wounded for their sin by the chastisements of the Lord, so that there is necessity for their wounds to be healed. They are afflicted with the distemper of evil and, also, by dismal disquietude of conscience. They have broken God's Commandments and now their own bones are broken. They have grieved their God and their God is grieving them.

Let us carefully look at the first part of their sad condition—they are sick with sin and that disease is one which, according to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> verses, brings great pain and trouble into men's minds when they come to their senses and know their condition before God. At first, iniquity numbs the conscience, and its tendency is to sear it as with a hot iron. It may be compared to a stroke of paralysis, which, when it falls upon a man's body, takes away from him all pain and makes him as one dead in the parts which it affects. Sin paralyzes the consciences of the ungodly. At first they do not know it to be an exceedingly great evil. They trifle with it—it is a serpent whose very *look* is poisonous and yet they sport with it as though it were a bird! It is a deadly disease, causing the soul to be full of leprosy and yet men will exhibit the marks of it as though they were the spots of God's children.

But after a while, when the conscience is awakened by judgments, or awakened by God's Word, then this disease ceases to stupefy and becomes the source of intolerable pain. Read these Words—"For thus says the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear and not of peace. Ask you, now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?" The fiercest form of bodily pain is here selected as the type of the anguish caused by strong conviction of sin. Believe me, there can be nothing in the world so terrible as to feel sin without feeling pardon—to know yourself to be guilty and not to know how to get the guilt removed!

Conviction without faith is an earthly Hell! Brothers and Sisters, you have, many of you, felt it, and you know that death itself, if there were no hereafter, would be preferable to life under the pressure of guilt. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Sin is a disease of the spirit which embitters the central fountain and wellspring of our life till gall and wormwood flavor all things. Sin felt and known is a terrible killjoy—as the hot wind of the desert smites the caravan with death and as the sirocco withers every herb of the field, so does a sense of sin dry up peace, blast hope and utterly kill delight! If those who hear me are oppressed with the disorder of sin, they will rejoice greatly as they dwell upon the Words of our text, "I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds."

This disease, moreover, is not only exceedingly painful when the conscience is smarting, but it is altogether incurable, so far as any human ill is concerned. We are told in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse, “Thus says the Lord, Your bruise is incurable, and your wound is grievous.” It would be much easier to heal a man’s body of leprosy than to heal a man’s soul of sin. It is a disease which takes such fast hold upon the nature and so entirely impregnates the mind with a deadly virus, that it abides in the very essence of manhood and can only be removed by a miracle. It is far more possible for the Ethiopian to change his skin, or the leopard his spots, than for a man who is accustomed to do evil, to learn to do well—especially to *love* to do well and find pleasure in it. If this were a matter of custom, or practice, it might be fought with and overcome, but inasmuch as it is a matter of *nature* and the whole head is sick—and the whole heart faint with it—no human power can possibly effect a cure.

Some have wept over sin, but tears are a poor lotion for a disease which penetrates to the core of the heart. Others have shut themselves up alone and retired as hermits to escape from evil by solitude—but they have found no secret place which evil could not enter! Where shall we flee from the presence of *sin*? When it has once laid hold upon our nature, if we take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, our depravity will still be with us. If we cover ourselves with multiplied midnights, sin will only be the more completely in its element. Where can we fly and what can we do to escape from this terrible force, this ever-present mischief? This poison has penetrated all our nature, so that we must confess—

***“It lies not in a single part,  
But throughout my frame is spread!  
A burning fever in my heart,  
A palsy in my head.”***

Neither body, soul, nor spirit is free from its taint. At all hours it is our curse and plague. Over all places it casts its defiling influence. In all duties it injures and hinders us. To those who know this, there is a music sweeter than wedding bells in these words—“I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.” The incurable shall be cured! The insatiable malady shall be stopped!

Further on we are told that this disease is one for which there is neither surgeon nor medicine—“There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up: you have no healing medicines. Why do you cry for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of your iniquity: because your sins were increased, I have done these things unto you.” What a disease this must be for which there is no physician! The most dire forms of human disease have found, each one, its specialist who has at least *attempted* to perform a cure—but here is a sickness for which there is no physician! Bad men do not pretend to heal the disease of sin. They do not consider it to be a disease and they care not to make men holy. Good men are very far from thinking that they can conquer sin in others, for they cannot even overcome it in themselves and, therefore, they never set up to be physicians in such a case as this. No human hand can bind

up this wound! No earthly skill can touch this deeply seated complaint! It is past all mortal surgery. Yes, and the Prophet adds, "There is no healing medicine"—none has ever been known!

The question is often asked, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" The answer to that question is, No, there is no balm in Gilead; there never was! Balms for soul-mischiefs do not grow in the fields of Gilead, no, nor on Carmel and Sharon. Physicians of sin-sick souls are not to be found beneath the skies! The other question proves it—"Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?" If there were balms and physicians for her disease, she would have been healed long ago! But neither salve nor surgeon can be found among the sons of men. Search through all the lore of the ancients and you shall discover no remedy for sin! Examine all the inventions of the moderns and you shall light upon no medicine for the love of evil!

Nothing can touch it but one thing, and that is not of earth. The Lord from Heaven, upon the Cross, bled a balm that can cure this wound and by His death He was the death of this disease! But apart from Him no one can bind up our wounds, or mollify them with ointment. He is the one and only Good Samaritan for the spiritually bruised! He, alone, has wine and oil suitable for our wounds! Are my Hearers brought to feel this? Are there any here who have not yet discovered God's way of salvation and still are well aware that they have none of their own? I am thankful you are brought so far! May it not be long before you go much further and find the Lord Jesus able to heal you of every disease. You are forever lost unless you go to Him, for your sickness is unto death! Your wound is breeding corruption! No one can give you health for your sickness, or healing for your wound but the Lord Jesus, who is able to save unto the uttermost—

***"When wounded sore the stricken soul  
Lies bleeding and unbound.  
One only hand, a pierced hand,  
Can save the sinner's wound."***

This disease is exceedingly dangerous because it impregnates itself into the heart and takes up its abode there. If apparently it is, for a time, driven out, it returns when we least expect it. Like the tree which is cut down, it will sprout and bud, again, at the *scent* of water. It annoys us in every way—it hinders our aspirations—for how to perform that which we would, we find not. It robs us of comfort and makes us groan, being burdened. It enters into our holiest things, chills our prayers, freezes our praise and hampers our usefulness. It is evil, only evil, and that continually! How gracious is it on God's part to pity a creature infected with this vile distemper! How good of Him to regard our iniquity rather as a sickness to be healed than as a crime to be punished!

I told you of a double mischief in this plight and the second mischief is that this person has been wounded for his sin. His wounds are of no common sort, for we are told in the 14<sup>th</sup> verse that God Himself has wounded him. The Lord says, "I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquity; because your sins were increased." God, in infinite mercy, deter-

mines to make the sinner see and feel the evil consequences of his sin. And in doing this He makes deep wounds, such as an enemy would give who felt no pity, but only wished to cause pain. The Lord knows that in this work, pity is of no avail and, therefore, He strikes home and cuts deep. He does not play with consciences, but His chastisement is so severe that men think Him cruel.

There is such a thing as cruel kindness and the opposite to it is a loving cruelty, a gracious severity! When the Lord brings sin to remembrance and makes the soul see what an evil it has committed in transgressing against God, then the wound bleeds and the heart breaks. You could not tell the blows of our greatest Friend from those of our worst enemy if you only judged by present feeling. Under the Lord's hands, the soul is well near driven to despair. Vain hopes are dashed in pieces like potsherds! False lights are quenched in gloom and joys are ground to powder! It is in love that the Lord thus judges us and chastens us that we should not be condemned with the world. The smart is sharp, but salutary. The Lord wounds that He may heal—He kills that He may make alive. His storms wreck us upon the Rock of Salvation and His tempests drive us into the fair havens of lowly faith.

Happy are the men who are thus made unhappy! But for the present they know this not and, therefore, they need the promise, "I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord." The blows are not only on the conscience, for when God is in earnest to make men flee from their sins, He will smite them anywhere and everywhere. He takes away the delight of their eyes with a stroke—the child, the husband, the wife, or the friend is laid low—for the Lord will fill our houses with mourning sooner than leave us in carnal security! He takes away the silver and the gold, for He will make us beggars sooner than leave us to worship the idols of the world. The oil vat is burst and the barn is burned, for He will not permit us to bury our souls in earthly things. He brings the body into sickness and the mind into distress. Health departs and the robust worker is stretched upon a sick bed—he groans and moans under the hand of God.

God is, in all this, smiting most cruelly according to the shortsighted judgment of men—but in very truth He is tender and gracious—and is working out the eternal good of the sufferers. Like the surgeon uses a sharp knife and cuts far down into the flesh when he would eradicate some deadly ulcer, even so does the Lord, in true severity, wound the heart until He gets at the root of our self-love. Surely, a man is in a wretched plight when he is diseased with sin and then bruised by Divine chastisement! But, it may be he adds to this, wounds inflicted by himself, for falls into sin are falls that break bones. Many a man will have to go limping to his grave because of his transgressions. Doubtless David did—he never recovered what he lost when he sinned with Bathsheba.

Much pain comes of broken bones, especially when you have broken them, yourself, through your own folly. When you cannot trace an affliction to second causes, nor look upon it as an affliction from God—when you hear Conscience whisper, "You have procured this unto yourself"—then the wormwood is mixed with gall and the suffering knows no solace.

If you are poor because you have squandered your substance—if you are sick because you have indulged your appetites or passions—who can give you a word of cheer? If you have lost godly friends whom you did once despise. If you are by sickness, prevented from going up to the house of the Lord which was formerly a weariness to you, is there not a special sharpness in your grief?

Now, put these three things together—bones broken through your own sin; God dealing with you in the way of chastisement—and sin felt in the conscience like a grievous disease—and I think I did not say too much when I described the soul as in a serious plight! God help the man who is in such a case, for none else can. The comfort is that the Lord Jesus *does* help such, for so His gracious promise runs, “I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.” May the Holy Spirit bless this first head to many of you!

**II.** Our second consideration fitly falls under the title of A SPECIAL INTERFERENCE. The poor creature is in desperate straits, but the God of pitying Love comes in and I beg you to notice the result. This interference is, first of all, Divine. “I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.” Only the Infinite Jehovah can speak with that grand Ego and say, “I will,” and again, “I will.” No human physician who was worthy of the name would speak thus. He would humbly say, “I will *attempt* to give you health; I will *endeavor* to heal your wounds.” But the Lord speaks with the positiveness of Omnipotence, for He has the power to make good His Words.

All others fail, but the Lord will do it. You can not heal yourself, but the Lord will heal you. And who is this great “I” that speaks so exceedingly bold? It is none other than He that made the heavens and the earth and sustains all things by the power of His hands! It is the “I AM,” the everlasting Jehovah whose Word has boundless power in it. He appears in the moment of man’s extremity and when there is no helper—His own arm brings salvation. Blessed be the Lord who forgives all our iniquities, who heals all our diseases! Note that because this interference is Divine, it is effectual! The Lord effectually heals all those on whom He lays His hands. How could it be otherwise? What can baffle the Lord? Can anything perplex Infinite Wisdom? Is anything difficult for Almighty Power?

“If it is marvelous in your eyes, should it also be marvelous in My eyes?” says the Lord of Hosts.” He speaks and it is done! He commands and it stands fast! Therefore, when God says, “I will restore health unto you,” health will visit the wretch who lies at Death’s door! When He says, “I will heal you of your wounds,” the deep cuts and gashes are closed up at once! Glory be to the name of the Beloved Physician! Poor, troubled Heart, where are you this morning? Do you say, “Nobody can cure me”? You say truly but you can make one exception and that exception is your God! I tell you He can heal you *now*, so that the bones which He has broken shall rejoice! He can take away this disease of yours and give you back wholeness as though your flesh were the flesh of a little child! And you shall be clean—only have faith in Him. He that made you can make you anew!

Do you believe this? Observe that this interposition performs a work which is most complete, for it meets the two-fold mischief. "I will restore health unto you"—that is a great matter. When a man grows healthy, he can bear a wound or two without being too much overburdened. But God does nothing by halves, for having restored health, He then adds, "I will heal you of your wounds." He will heal both disease and wounds! There is no condition into which the heart can sink but what the Lord is equal to the raising of it from the depths. If you are on the borders of Hades, yet as long as you have not passed the iron gates of Death, your salvation is possible with God! Yes, *simple* and sure with God if you will but trust in His well-beloved Son! What a mercy it is that the Redeemer does not half save us and leave us to finish the work!

He does not commence and do a part of the cure and then say, "I must leave Nature to work out the rest." No, the cure is absolutely complete—"I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds." Oh, sick and wounded one, go just as you are and throw yourself at Jesus' feet and say to Him, "Keep Your promise, Lord! I have come with Your Word in my mouth and in my heart. Be as good as Your own declaration and restore health to me! And heal me of my wounds." Notice, too, how sovereignly free this promise is. It does not say, "I will restore health unto you if—." No, there is no, "if," and there is no mention of a fee! Here is healing for nothing! Jesus comes to give us health without money and without price, without pence or penance, without labor or merit!

I admire, for my part, the splendid, unconditional character of this promise made by Jehovah to His Covenant people. Its tenor is, "I will." There is no sort of condition or demand. "Perhaps" is banished—it is not so much as hinted at! Come, poor guilty Soul, you who have no claim on God, come and plead the Divine, "I will"! You can not have a better handhold of the Covenant Angel in wrestling with Him! God's promise is an unconquerable plea—to use it well will put you among the invincibles. Come then, I pray you, and just say, "Lord, it is so written in Your Word. Therefore, write it, I pray You, on the page of my experience." Notice that although it is thus free and unconditional, yet it is now a matter of Covenant certainty, for God has made the promise and He cannot turn from it.

To every guilty sinner conscious of his guilt, who will come and confess it before God, this promise is made today, "I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds." To you, dear fellow sinners, as much as unto Judah and Israel of old, is this promise sent—if you will bring your sorrow and your sin before the eyes of the all-merciful Father—and plead the precious blood of Christ. No sick one shall be shut out from this hospital of love. If, like Job, the sinner is covered with sores from head to foot and if he only feels at home when he sits on a dunghill and begins to scrape himself with a potsherd, yet the Lord says, "I will heal you"!

If your sins have made you loathsome to yourself till you cry out with one of old, "My wounds stink and are corrupt," still the Lord Jesus is able to save you—no, He *promises* to save you! Grasp the promise by the hand of faith and you shall be made whole! All manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven unto men—yes, and all tendencies to sin and all taint of

iniquity shall be removed from men if they will trust the power and promise of the faithful Lord! Sinner, His touch can make you clean at once! Trust that touch, I say, and the miracle shall be worked!

**III.** But now I come to a third point which is this—A SINGULAR REASON. “I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord; because they called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.” God never finds a reason for mercy in the sinner’s supposed goodness. He looked upon this sick one and He could not find a redeeming feature of beauty by which the blessing might be won. Therefore He did not look at the sinner at all, except to pity him. Is it not a singular thing that the Lord will sooner find a reason for mercy in the lying mouths of the wicked than He will attempt to find it in the supposed righteousness of those who count themselves righteous? He says not, “Because you were holy,” or, “Because you had good desires,” but, “Because they called you an outcast”!

Who were *they*? Why, the jeerers, mockers and blasphemers! The Lord actually transforms the venom of asps which was under the tongues of the malicious into a reason for His mercy! This clearly shows how God hates the very *notion* of man’s *merit*—but it also shows that He will find a reason for mercy *somewhere*! They called poor Zion, when God seemed to have given up on her, “an outcast.” They said, “Nobody goes to Jerusalem—there was a temple there once, but it is a wretched heap! Princes once dwelt there, but now the inhabitants of Jerusalem are a set of beggars—no man cares to mix with them—they are the world’s castaways.”

This awakened the Lord’s pity. “Oh,” He said, “has it come to this? Have they dared to call My Beloved, ‘an outcast,’ and say that no man seeks after her? Then I will seek her, and heal her, and restore her, for I cannot endure such taunts.” Now, if there is a poor sinner in the world upon whom other sinners, who are just as bad in their heart, begin to vent their scorn and say, “She is an outcast,” then the God of Mercy seems to say, “Who are you that you should talk like this? You are as vile, yourselves, and yet you dare to look down upon this poor, selected one, as if she were so much worse than you? Therefore I will save that despised one and will have mercy upon the rejected.” God’s tastes and man’s differ very much. Whom man despises, God delights in—and whom man delights in, God despises.

It often happens that when a transgressor has been put out of the synagogue, Jesus finds him directly. When certain offenders happen to transgress in a particular way, which particular way is observed and denounced by the bulk of ungodly people and when, like so many hounds, they unite to hunt the wretched being to death, the Lord Jehovah interposes to save, as if He would say, “Why do you do this, you hypocrites? Why do you denounce those whose sins are no viler than your own?” I believe the Lord Jesus often stands as He did with the woman taken in adultery, and cries, “He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her.” Still, He convicts men in their consciences and in sweetness of mercy turns to the poor, condemned one, and says, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”



Where are you, poor hunted Sinner? You are somewhere or other in the crowd, I know. They told you yesterday that they would never associate with you again. You do not deny your wickedness—still, it is not for your fellow sinners to be hard with you, for they are not your judges. By faith take this promise to yourself—“I will restore health unto you because they called you an outcast.” You may get a good deal out of it if you have but faith to do so! Now that the world has cast you out, the Church shall take you in! Now that the devil seems tired of you, Christ shall begin with you! Now that the door is shut against you by those who once delighted in you, Christ’s door is open to receive you! “Because they called you an outcast,” He calls you to approach Him!

But this is not the full meaning of the text. I think it means that God’s jealousy is awakened against those who despise His people and speak ill of them. Whatever Zion might be, it was still the palace of God. However guilty Jerusalem might have become, it was still the Holy City, the dwelling place of the great King. The Lord, for a while, when He was very angry with Jerusalem on account of its great iniquity, gave it over to the destroyer and it was laid waste and burned with fire. But when He heard the heathen everywhere saying, “As for those people, they are outcasts, and as for that city, no man seeks after it”—then the Lord said to Himself, “But they are My people and I will not have them called outcasts. And this is My city and I will not have it said that no man seeks after it. Her name shall be called Hephzibah and her land Beulah, for the Lord delights in her.”

His love burned like fire and kindled into a flame of jealousy. And He said, “I will restore health to her, and shut the mouths of her adversaries.” It is one thing for a father to chasten his boy, but if, when he is out in the streets, a stranger begins to kick him, his father declares that it shall not be. He awakens himself to defend his child, the same child that just now he smote so heavily! A man might complain of his wife if she has vexed him, but I suppose the quickest way to put him in good temper with her would be for somebody else to find fault with her! “What business is that of yours?” he asks. “I will not have my wife abused—no man shall speak against her in my presence.” That is a fair parallel to the case of our God. He will chasten His people in measure, but the moment that their enemies call them outcasts, He turns His anger another way and releases His people!

Oh, how blessedly does good come out of evil! How graciously He causes the wrath of man to praise Him! He restores health to Zion and heals her wounds because she is called an outcast. I always have great hope for the entire Church of Christ when the ungodly begin to rail and revile. They say, “Christianity has lost its power! The Church is an old efete institution! No people of culture and intelligence keep to the old Book and the old faith. The religion of Jesus is a by-word and a proverb among learned men.” And then I am confident that God will return to His Church and magnify His truth! As surely as He lives, He will give us bright days and glorious days because they call His true Church an outcast, whom no

man seeks after. I like to read in man's black book, for man's reviling will lead to the speedier fulfillment of God's glorious promises—

***“Let Zion's foes be filled with shame—  
Her sons are blessed of God!  
Though scoffers now despise their name,  
The Lord shall break their rod.  
Oh, would our God to Zion turn,  
God with salvation clad,  
Then Judah's harps should music learn,  
And Israel be glad.”***

Appropriate the text personally, any of you who have been made to feel that you are outcasts. One said to me the other day, talking of her sin and of her repentance, “Yet, Sir, I am an outcast.” That word pierced my heart like a dagger. I said, “Yes, but the Church of Christ was made on purpose to be a home for outcasts—here is a new household for you, new Brothers and Sisters for you, a new future for you—for now you are one of the solitary ones whom the Lord will set in families.” Some of us were never called outcasts by other people, but we thought ourselves such. I once felt like Cain, as if God had set a mark upon me, never to bless me. I felt like an outlaw, condemned and cast away. But when I reached that point, the Lord's mercy revealed itself to me! He seemed to say, “Because you have called yourself an outcast, therefore will I restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.”

I should like to say a word that would be comforting to poor hearts that are greatly downtrodden. I do not feel able to preach at all, for I am weak and weary. But I always find, when I am weak, the Lord says something by me which is just the thing needed by some poor devil-hunted soul that cannot find rest. I think the Lord puts the trumpet out of order on purpose to draw from it a different note from what it gives when it is in proper condition—a note that may precisely suit some weary ears that could not listen to any other sound. May the Holy Spirit cause it to be so now!

**IV.** I am going to finish, in the fourth place, by giving A LITTLE SUITABLE ADVICE. I will suppose that I have those before me who have felt their disease and their wound and have been healed by the God of Mercy. I would recommend them to attend to certain matters. The first thing is take care that you live very near your Physician. I notice that patients come up from the country, when they are suffering with serious complaints, and they take lodgings near a medical man who is in high esteem for such cases as theirs. They leave the comforts of home and let their business go because life is precious—and they need a helper close at hand. No one blames them for this. In fact, we count them wise. Let us learn wisdom from their example.

Now, the Lord has healed your wound and restored health to you, therefore abide in Him. Never leave Him, nor live far away from Him, for this old disease of yours may break out, all of a sudden, and it will be well to have the Healer close at hand. It will be best to constantly entertain Him beneath your roof and within your heart, for His Presence is the well-spring of health to the soul. Abide perpetually with Christ and then the sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night! Dwelling in the se-

cret place of the Most High, there shall be no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling. This disease of sin may cause eruptions when we least expect them—when we suppose that the evil leaven will work no more, it may suddenly gather force and the whole body of our nature will be in a ferment with iniquity. The danger is near. Abide, therefore, near your Security. Live with Him who renews your youth like the eagle's and restores your soul!

I recommend you often put yourself under His searching examination. Go to this great Physician and ask Him to look into your hidden parts—to search you and try you—and see what wicked way may be in you, that He may lead you in the way everlasting. A man may have a deadly disease upon him and scarcely be aware of it because no skilled person has looked upon him and observed his symptoms! And in spiritual things this is a common mischief to which multitudes fall prey! Invite, therefore, the eyes of the Lord Jesus, for in our most honest searches we miss much and we are naturally prejudiced in our own favor, so that we are pretty sure to give a verdict on our own side—and this may lead to final and fatal self-delusion! If we entrust the search to Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, we shall not be deceived! I recommend to you, from personal experience, to consult with this Doctor every day.

It is a wise thing, before you go downstairs into the world's tainted atmosphere, to take a drink of His *Elixir Vitae* in the form of renewed faith in Him. I am sure, at night, it is an admirable thing to purge the soul of all the perilous stuff which has accumulated through the day by full confession and renewed confidence. Lay bare your case before Him! Conceal nothing. Beg Him to deal with you according to His knowledge of your case. Make a clean breast that Christ may make a sure cure. Conceal no symptom, however threatening, but tell Him the truth. He cannot be deceived—do not attempt it—but tell every secret thing before His all-surveying gaze. Entreat Him to search both thoughts and affections, designs and motives. The evil may gather in secret places unless His discerning eyes shall detect the growing danger and prevent it by immediate action.

Then I very strongly recommend you always to obey the prescriptions of the great Healer. "Whatever He says unto you, do it." Do not follow a part of His orders and neglect the rest. The Lord Jesus must be received as a whole, or not at all. Say not, "This is non-essential," for such a speech is flat rebellion! I do not believe in any Words of our Lord being non-essential. They may not be essential to our *salvation*, but every Word of Christ is essential to our spiritual health! Neither can we disregard the least of His precepts without suffering loss through our disobedience. Be very careful that you follow the Lamb wherever He goes—no other kind of walking is safe in such a world as this. Do *what* He bids you, *as* He bids you and it shall be well with you.

Take care, also, to exercise great confidence in this Physician. Rely upon Him without stint or question. Your cure is working wondrously when you trust in Jesus heartily. Never doubt the Savior's power to make you perfectly whole. Our Lord can never be baffled—though all diseases

should meet in one person, He would overcome them all! Stick to this with unyielding assurance. Let not the devil force you to doubt the boundless power of your Lord. When our Lord Jesus set up to be Savior, He understood the work upon which He entered. His is no apprenticed hand. He has never had a failure! Never did a soul trust Him for salvation and remain unsaved—and you shall not be the first to defeat His skill! Trust Him with all your heart. There is no cause to doubt. *Distrust* is what you have to fear—faith is your strength.

When you are healed, as I trust you are, already, speak well of your Benefactor. Make a point of going round to your neighbors, if you find them sick, and telling them how you have been healed! Thus will you make to your Lord a name of honor and renown. Tell all men what the Lord has done for you. I know you can tell them that story though you are no orator. When you were restored from sickness the other day, you were quite able to inform your friends as to that new medicine which acted like a charm—and you found a tongue to speak well of your doctor—and I am sure you have ability enough to declare the wonderful works of the Lord in your case.

“Oh, but I could not embellish the tale!” Do not attempt to *embellish* it, for that would only spoil it! Tell the story as simply as possible. I think it is of Mr. Cecil that I have read the following incident. A friend came from some distance to inform him of a medicine which was to relieve him of his disorder. This friend told him all about it and, having done so, entered into conversation upon the current matters of the day. The result was that Mr. Cecil was greatly interested in the talk and when his friend was gone, he quite forgot every ingredient of the wonderful medicine. Beware of allowing the many things to drive the one thing necessary out of your friend’s mind! When we preach fine sermons our hearers say, “That was prettily put.” They do not so much notice *what* we taught as *how* we taught it—and this is a great evil! Even so, if you go and talk about your salvation to your neighbor and narrate it eloquently, she will say, “Mrs. So-and-So has been here and told me about her conversion in such beautiful language! I do not know that I ever heard such elegant sentences. It was most delightful to hear her.” What did she say? “I do not know what she said, but it was very beautiful.”

Thus many a sermon or Sunday school address is overlaid and buried under its own robes! Pity that those we seek to bless should be more taken up with our pretty words than with our adorable Master! I hope I have not, this morning, fallen into the evil which I lament. Lest I should have done so in any measure I would make my text, my banner, and display it again. The Lord has said, “I will restore health unto you, and heal you of your wounds.” I believed that Word of God when I was sick and wounded and, “the Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.”

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# WHO IS THIS? NO. 1673

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 6, 1882,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“For who is this that engaged His heart to  
approach unto Me? says the Lord.”  
Jeremiah 30:21.*

I MENTIONED in the reading that there is a very remarkable change of tone in the Book of Jeremiah, at the 30<sup>th</sup> chapter. You read on through the 29 chapters and you hear nothing but “a weeping and wailing,” while the Prophet stands before you, girt with sackcloth, bidding Israel, “lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us.” When you come to the middle of the 30<sup>th</sup> chapter, all is changed—you have left the dungeon for the pleasant meads and you hear “thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry.” Here flowers of promise glorify the fields and birds of praise sweeten the air with music. The people are first made to tremble and fear on account of sin and all faces are turned into paleness—and then the Lord declares His immeasurable Grace, saying, “I am with you to save you: though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you.”

The condition of the sinful people is brought home to them and the nation is solemnly told—“Your bruise is incurable and your wound is grievous. There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up: you have no healing medicines. Why do you cry for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable, for the multitude of your iniquity—because your sins were increased, I have done these things unto you.” And then man’s extremity of misery becomes God’s opportunity of mercy! When and where sin abounds, Grace does much more abound, and the Lord displays His wonders of love. He graciously declares—“I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.”

The reason for the change is not difficult to find. The Prophet is led to speak of Covenant promises, such as that in the 22<sup>nd</sup> verse, “You shall be My people, and I will be your God.” No wonder that Jeremiah’s strain grew more cheerful and jubilant! Was there ever such a box of perfume as the Covenant? Was there ever such a harp of golden strings, all tuned to the music of consolation, as the Covenant? Inspired by this subject, he exclaims in the next chapter—“For thus says the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish you, praise you, and say, O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel.”

Moreover, he introduces to us that glorious Messenger of the Covenant whom we delight in. He speaks of the Messiah, who is the Glorious One, who has engaged His heart to approach unto God and, as when the sun rises, darkness flees, so when the Savior appears, his sorrows vanish and Jeremiah becomes as eloquent with joy as Isaiah himself! Think no more of Jeremiah as exclusively the weeping Prophet, for the flashes of

his delight make the night of his sorrow brilliant with an aurora of heavenly brilliance! The answer to the question of our text is the reason why Jeremiah put away his dust and ashes and girt himself with beautiful array.

God had, for a while, on account of their great sin, put away His people and wounded them with the chastisement of a cruel one for the multitude of their iniquities. They could not walk with Him, for they were not agreed with Him. He could not accept their sacrifices, for they were polluted. He could not listen to their prayers, for they were hypocritical. He could not dwell with them, for they were proud-hearted and rebellious. So Zion came to be called an outcast whom no man seeks after. God, Himself, seemed to have given her a bill of divorce and to have put her away—but it only *seemed* that way.

In Jehovah's heart of hearts He was still bound to His people whom He loved with an everlasting love. He could not cast away the seed of Abraham, His friend, and His heart yearned towards the people whom He had loved of old and borne with in great long-suffering. He had put them under a cloud because of their sin, yet He did earnestly remember them, still, for He bears witness, saying, "I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born." The Lord loathed the distance which separated His people from Him and He longed to see them approach Him that He might comfort them and satiate their souls with His goodness. How was this to be done? This was the problem of that age, as it is the problem of all ages!

How can guilty man return unto the Holy God? How can there be peace and amity, love and concord between the Judge of all the earth and His revolting and polluted creature, man? It was necessary that one should arise who would approach God on the behalf of the people, so that God might be well pleased with them for his righteousness' sake. But where was he to be found? Someone must come to God and, by his coming, make a way through which those whom he represented might have access. But where was this representative to be found? Paradise was lost—who was he by whom it could be regained? The question was asked and in man's ears it seemed to be asked in vain, for it is written, "There is none to plead your cause; all your lovers have forsaken you." "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord."

One was needed to bridge the chasm which divided man from God. Who could do it? God, Himself, asked the question because He had, Himself, found the Person and would have us see Him and understand His glorious Character. My text comes from Jehovah's own lip—"Who is this that engaged His heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord." He sets the Mediator before us and asks, "Who is this?" We are sure that the Lord does not need to ask questions of us that He may gain information from us. "Known unto God are all His works," and much more must He be known by whom His most grand work is accomplished! Speaking in the name of Wisdom, our glorious Mediator says of the Lord, "I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him."

So that the Lord only asks the question for our good, to set us thinking. This enquiry is fitly the *sinner's* question, when, trembling and convinced of sin and led to seek his God, he needs an Interposer, One of a thousand, who can put His hand upon the offender and the Offended and reconcile the rebel to his Lord. Therefore, in love the Lord takes up the sinner's question and answers it by Another. Behold a Daysman of Jehovah's own providing, who can lay His hands upon both—look at Him and answer, "Who is He?" The enquiry is made, I think, with three great designs—upon which I shall speak as I am enabled of the Spirit of God.

First, to direct attention to this glorious Person—"Who is this?" Secondly, to excite admiration of His wondrous work "that engaged His heart to approach unto Me, says the Lord." And then, thirdly, to awaken our interest in the result of this marvelous approach unto God—for by it we are permitted and enabled to approach unto the Lord, ourselves, and we become His people and He confesses Himself to be our God. O for the Holy Spirit's own teaching, that I may speak aright to you upon this transcendent subject!

**I.** The question of our text is asked TO DIRECT ATTENTION TO THIS GLORIOUS PERSON. "Who is this that engaged His heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord." We read the chapter and if you have read it attentively, or will do so, you will learn that the Person who must draw near to God must be one of ourselves. "Their nobles," or their Glorious One, "shall be of themselves, and their Governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach unto Me." It is clear that a fit representative for men must be, himself, a man. It would not have been seemly that Adam, the representative of our race, should have been an angel—it was natural that he should be a man. In the same way, as man blocked up the road of communion with God, it was fitting that a man should make a new road and reestablish Divine communion.

In Adam we transgressed and died to God—in another Adam must we be restored. If an angel were capable in all other respects of drawing near to God, yet it is clear that he could not do it on *man's* behalf, for an angel can only represent angels. Each order of beings must be represented by its own kind. Our Lord, as Man, took not up angels, for He was not made in *their* nature, but He took up the seed of Abraham because He had assumed their nature. It needed a man, perfect in his manhood, to head us up and stand as our federal head and representative, or otherwise we could not be restored by him.

Now, then, Brothers and Sisters, where is this man to be found? "Who is this?" If he is to come of ourselves, where is he? Not among *this* assemblage—nor if all the myriads that dwell on the face of the earth could be gathered together would there be found one who could undertake this enterprise—"For all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God." We have, none of us, that perfection which is required for such a work! How shall a sinner atone for sinners? He cannot make atonement for his *own* sin! He cannot render unto God for himself and on his own account the righteousness which Justice demands of him! How, then, can he have anything to spare for his fellow men? The best of men are, each one, in

the condition of the wise virgins who, when the foolish virgins said, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps have gone out," replied, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go you rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves."

If the whole roll of history is searched, from Adam's fall to this moment, there is not one mere man to be found who could represent the race and make an approach for them to God on the ground of personal perfection! This is God's own verdict—"All have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God." The Lord looked from Heaven to see if there were any among the children of men that had not transgressed, but He found none, for, "they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable. There is none that does good, no, not one." Nor is it merit, alone, that is needed, for he that would approach unto the Lord as mediator must be prepared with strength to suffer. Who can sustain the load of human sin? Who can endure the indignation of the Lord against iniquity?

Assuredly none of *us* could do it—the fire would consume us as stubble! O for an Interposer! But where can he be found? Who is this who can, as man, appear for men, and by his personal righteousness and sacrifice render man acceptable with God? There was a Man of matchless birth, at whose coming, angels sang, for they were told that He would bring Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace. Find Him in Bethlehem's manger—there He lies, the son of Mary, truly Man, one of ourselves, partaker of our flesh and blood, subject to human needs, weaknesses, woes and able, therefore, to sympathize with us and have compassion upon us! That Man grew up in this world without taint or spot, free from sin whether natural or acquired, and yet He was, in the truest sense, one of ourselves, so that He is not ashamed to call us brethren!

When the malicious eyes of Satan searched Him through and through, he found nothing of evil in Him. He was without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and He it is—glory be to His name—He it is that has engaged His heart to approach unto God on our behalf! He is the Son of Man, most truly, anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, but still truly fellow with men! Though He counted it no robbery to be equal with God, yet He took upon Himself the form of a Servant and was made in the likeness of men that He might redeem us from our sin! Now look at the context and you will see that the Person who must approach God for us must be a Prince-Priest, for He is called "their Glorious One" and "their Governor," and yet it is said of Him, "I will cause Him to draw near," which work of drawing near is in other places ascribed to *priests*, for these God had set apart for the service of His sanctuary!

The Hebrew word, "to draw near," signifies that peculiar action of a priest when he stands dealing with God on the behalf of men. The person, then, must be a priest and yet a prince. Who is he and where is he? It is not David, for if David would approach unto God in the office of a priest, he must not—he must resort to the priest who has the Urim and the Thummim—and the priest of the house of Aaron must inquire of God *for* David. This was one distinction between David and Saul, that David knew the limits of his office and never thought to over step it. David and



Solomon never attempted to intrude into the holy office—they knew that they were not priests, but only kings—and when Uzzah stood to sacrifice like a priest, you know how the leprosy fell upon him. And they drove him out of the house of God which he was desecrating by intruding himself into the priestly office. He had to be shut up in a separate house all the rest of his life!

Where shall we find one that even as a priest can really draw near to God for mankind? For remember, Brothers and Sisters, that the priests of old only drew near to God in *figure* and in *metaphor*—they could not actually and in very deed do so—for God is a consuming fire! Even when Moses went up unto the mount with God and did draw near in a certain sense, yet he never saw the face of God, for the Lord said, “You cannot see My face and live.” The brightest vision that Moses ever had was that he saw the skirts of Jehovah’s robe, or what Scripture styles, His back parts, for the face of God could not be seen. Mercy draws us near to God in Christ Jesus, but apart from the Mediator, an approach to absolute Deity means destruction!

Neither among kings nor priests could the one man be found who could open the way to the Father! And certainly no king-priest could be found—the combination of the two offices falls not to the house of Aaron. A reverend personage had passed before the camera of history and left a shadowy trace of himself. But where now is he who was named Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, to whom Abraham gave tithes of all? He was raised up for a special purpose and no one has inherited his peculiar call. That vision taught us what to look for, but it did not supply the Object of our search! It has prophesied the coming of the *true* Melchisedec, the Man without beginning of days or end of years, the Man without predecessor or successor, who is greater than Abraham and abides as both Priest and King forever, having once and for all drawn near to God on our behalf. You know Him—the true Priest of God, not of the order of Aaron—and the King eternal, immortal, invisible, King of kings, and Lord of lords! It is He that engaged His heart to draw near to God on our behalf!

The question, however, may be answered in another way, so as to bring out more clearly the matchless Person whom our hearts adore at this moment. It was necessary that he who should draw near to God should be chosen to that office by God, Himself, and should be qualified for it by Divine power. “I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach to me.” Now, is there anyone among us all that God has ever chosen to represent our fellow men as their mediator, acting as the head of the race and, as such, entering into the immediate Presence of God on his own merits? We have not, I hope, the presumption to imagine such a thing! “There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus.” He it is that takes upon Himself our nature and our sin, and then goes in onto God and stands there, amidst the blaze of the ineffable Light, to represent manhood—and there is none else!

On Him rested the Spirit of God without measure. The Dove descended on Him in the waters of His baptism and the Father said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This was the great One

elect of Heaven, ordained of the Father before the foundation of the world—and the Spirit of Glory and of might did rest upon Him—that He might be equipped for His mighty service and might engage His heart to approach unto God. This is He who said, “I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore My own arm brought salvation unto Me.”

Moreover, to close this description, He was not only appointed of God and qualified, but He was one who was willing to undertake the task and ready to pledge Himself to it. He voluntarily covenanted to do it, as it is written, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, to do Your will, O God: yes, Your Law is My delight.” He engaged His heart to this gracious office, resolving to carry out to a happy issue the work of reconciliation. Moved by inconceivable, immeasurable love and counting all the cost, He devoted Himself to the supreme effort. “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” Of His own free will He placed Himself before offended Justice to meet its claims and so He removed every barrier which stood between us and the Throne of God! He is that Breaker who has gone up before us, that King who is at the head of all His chosen ones.

Now, where is such an One to be found unless it is the Lord Jesus? I trust many of us have given ourselves up to God and to His fear, drawn by almighty love. But it was never in our hearts to imagine that by giving up ourselves to holy service we could stand before God and open a way to Him for our fellow men! We are well aware of our incompetence for so grand a task. None of us have struck hands and covenanted with God to mediate, for we could not do it! I dread the thought of seeming to intrude into so Divine a work! We are priests unto God, but not mediators for men! When I hear of men pretending to hear the confessions of their fellow men and absolving them of their sins, I wonder that they sleep nights after professing so tremendous an act!

I am amazed at what the power of Satan over them must be that they can rest after having assumed to act as vicars of Jehovah, He having given them no warrant and no authority for such a mediatorial position! Brothers and Sisters, this blasphemy of blasphemies may well become the Mother of Harlots, but the Bride of Christ abhors it! But oh, when my eyes rest upon Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, in human flesh, then I cry, “This is He! Glory be to His name!” And, lost in wonder, my soul exclaims, “Who is this? Who is this? What manner of Man is this? Who is a God like unto You?” All this in wonder, but not in doubt, for the Lord Jesus can do this great work and He wills to do it! He has resolved and He will not fail nor be discouraged!

Glory be to His name, He has done it! He has approached with engaged heart unto God on our behalf and, by His Sacrifice, He has made a way by which each one of us who is willing to do so may now approach unto God, even the Father, without fear. “Who is this?” Our soul is filled with amazement, but not with ignorance, for we answer this question in a word—He is God, Himself, Light of Lights, very God of very God, veiled in human flesh who has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers. “Who is this?” I answer, it is the Lawgiver, Himself, who has put Himself

under the Law and who has borne the penalties of the Law that the Law may be glorified, while sin is pardoned and Law-breakers are justified! "Who is this?" It is infinite Holiness which has burdened itself with human sin, "For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Oh, if I had but words to speak with, I would try to extol Him who, being infinitely pure, nevertheless was numbered with the transgressors! Who, being incapable of spot, yet did bear upon Himself the enormous and horrible load of human guilt! In His own body on the tree, in flesh and soul, He suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! Mark those words, for they show His end and objective—"to bring us to God." This is the way by which He brought us near, even by His own most precious blood! Yes, it is the heavenly One, who is blessed forevermore, who was made a curse for us! On whom, being everlastingly the object of Jehovah's love, there fell Jehovah's wrath on our account! Mystery of mystery! Miracle of miracles! This has astonished Heaven and earth and Hell!

Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews and Son of the Highest, engaged His heart that He might wait upon the Judge of all the earth and answer for rebellious man with His own life—and so complete a way of access by which we may rise from our abyss of woes to the bosom of the Eternal! Though I have thus spoken to the best of my knowledge, I know that I cannot set out before you the full Glory of the Person of our Covenant Head. I shall go home saying to myself, "Who is this? Who is this?" and I shall have succeeded in my endeavor if you will, each one, say, "He could not tell us who He was. He could not reach the height of that great argument, but we shall, all through time and in eternity, go on wondering and saying, Who is this?"

The more we wonder, the more shall we love and praise the Lord Jesus with our heart of hearts and say, "He has done all things well. We are made near by Him, never more to be separated from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Thus much upon the Person. How freely could I weep because I speak in words so poor and ill-chosen! I do but hold a candle to show the sun!

**II.** I come now TO EXCITE ADMIRATION OF HIS MATCHLESS WORK. If Jesus Christ is to approach God for us, it is clear that He must come down into our condition, for He must, first, descend or He cannot ascend. Naturally there is such a Oneness between the blessed Persons of the Trinity that there can be no approaching, in their case, to one another, but Jesus, though He was forever in the highest sense, with God, left His place of Glory and took the position of our shame. "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." There He stands, even where we stood by nature! Where we lay in our blood, there He came and engaged His heart to deliver us!

He stood at the Judgment bar because we had brought ourselves there. He was rejected of the people because we were rejected as reprobate silver. He was condemned because we were condemned and He was put to death because such was the sentence upon us! He descended into our depths to engineer a way from the lowest to the highest, to come back from Bashan, and from the depths of the sea, leading the van of the

armies of His chosen as they return unto God with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads!

This lowly place being taken, behold our Lord actually approaching unto the offended Majesty on high! Though found in fashion as a Man, by reason of His becoming a curse for us, He was denied the Presence of the Father, so that He cried in anguish, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Yet He did approach unto God! He did come near! No, He *remains* near—able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him! He has passed under the cloud and the darkness and through the consuming fire—and now He is the Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God! He has gone into the Holy of Holies and revealed the Mercy Seat. He has bridged the great gulf which sin had made! "It is finished," He said, before He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

As a result, the pathway is open! Every gulf is filled! Every valley is exalted and every mountain and hill laid low! It is finished—the way from man to God has been already trod by myriads of cleansed feet, for our Glorious One has cast up the king's highway and made straight paths for our feet! Come, let us tread the road. With holy confidence let us draw near unto God! Our Lord, with all His heart, desired to do this. He "engaged His heart" to perform it. Before all worlds, His master purpose was to approach unto God as man's Representative. He is styled, "the Lamb slain from before the foundations of the world," because this was the firm resolve and bent of His entire Being, before ever the earth was!

He had vowed in His soul that He would restore the banishment of the Fall and bridge the distance between man and God. When God would not have sacrifice and offering at man's hands, then Jesus said, "Lo, I come." He says of Himself, "The Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." His heart was determined and resolved, for so the expression means, when the text says, "He engaged His heart." But why this readiness, this eagerness? *Love* is the one reply! His heart was occupied with love to God and love to man and He could not rest till He had restored the broken concord between these divided ones. With all the forcefulness of His Divine Nature and with all the energy of His perfect Humanity, He was resolved to bring men back to God.

While He was yet a boy He felt bound to be about His Father's business. When He first appeared among the multitude it was by submission to the Father's ordinance to fulfill all righteousness. He could not hold His peace or take rest because His mission was urgent and His heart was in it. Many a time He set aside a crown to bear a cross. All the kingdoms of this world could not bribe Him from His sacred purpose, though displayed before Him by the arch-tempter in a sudden blaze of brightness. If any endeavored to dissuade Him from His purpose, even though they did it out of love, He saw the evil spirit who was using them as his instruments and, with indignation, He broke the snare! Even though it were the beloved Peter, He looked on him as the devil's advocate, and said, "Get you behind Me, Satan."

How full of meaning is that sigh, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!" He was shut up like a

man in a narrow prison and His only enlargement was to be by anguish and death. He was straitened till He could give Himself up as a Sacrifice and so open a door for us to our God! The insatiable desire of our Lord's vehement spirit was the finishing of the work which the Father had given Him to do. It was His meat and His drink to accomplish the purpose of love. "Who is this?" "Who is this?" The more I turn it over and think of it, the more I am astonished that so condescending, gracious and glorious a work should engage the heart of the Lord of All!

We had not loved Him, but He loved us! We were His enemies, but what a Friend was He! Our hearts were set on wandering, but His heart was engaged to bring us near to God! Let us each pause, here, and admire as we say, "He loved me and gave Himself for *me*." Who is this that thus has spent His love upon so poor a being? Having thus determined that He would approach unto God on our behalf, He took all the consequences. A correct reading of the passage would be, "Who is this that has pledged His heart or His life to approach unto Me, says the Lord?" If you take the meaning of the word, "heart," to be "life," since the heart is the *source* of life, then we read that our Lord pledged His life, put His life in surety that He would approach unto God, the Judge of All, and bring us near to Him.

When He came as the Representative of sinful men—then vengeance with its sword must smite Him—and He was willing to be smitten. Voluntarily He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. He did not hide His face from shame and spitting. He must die if He draws near to God for sinful men, for such is the penalty due. But He willingly laid down His life and, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost. He must be deserted of God and He even submits to that, till He cries, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He might have drawn back from His undertaking if He would, but He never thought of drawing back. With desire He desired to eat that Passover!

In order to die, He broke off in the middle of a discourse, saying, "Arise, let us go therefore." His slogan was, "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" He saved others, but Himself He could not save because Love held Him bound in her chains. How intensely ought we to love Jesus since He thus reckoned nothing too hard or heavy, that He might appear in the Presence of God for us and make a way to God for poor sinners such as we are! He even delighted in suffering and dishonor for this end. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame." He made pledge, not merely of hands or eyes, but of His heart and life! He came with His life in His hands before Jehovah's face and gave up that life that He might remove from us the death penalty due to justice—and so reconcile us to the Lord of All!

Tune your harps, you angels! Make this Sabbath on which we think of this sublime mystery a special festival of song! Oh, sing unto the Lord, you redeemed ones who see His face! You are before the Throne of Glory because He stood before the throne of vengeance and made it possible for your robes to be washed white as snow! As for you, you redeemed with blood who are still below, bring forth your loudest notes and praise Him

who has once and for all cleared the way and opened an avenue of Grace for you! Who is this wonderful Savior? Who shall declare the generation of Him who pledged His life that He might draw near to God for us and endured all the consequences to the bitter end?

And now, today, Beloved, Jesus Christ rejoices to think that He has approached unto God on our behalf and made eternal amity between God and man! Let us rejoice with Him! Let us become happy in fellowship with our God—

***“Tis finished all; the veil is rent,  
The welcome sure, the access free;  
Now then, we leave our banishment,  
O Father, to return to Thee!”***

This is the joy of Christ’s heart forever! He welcomes our return to God! He is glad when our communion is hearty and continuous! By His Holy Spirit He draws us near! Blessed be His name!

**III.** Let me try, and may the Spirit of God help me, TO AWAKEN YOUR INTEREST IN THE SWEET RESULTS OF JESUS CHRIST’S HAVING APPROACHED GOD FOR US. The first result is found in the chapter. Read that 22<sup>nd</sup> verse. Read it with your own eyes and wonder that it should be put there. “Who is this that engaged His heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord. *And you shall be My people, and I will be your God.*” That is, because our royal High Priest approached unto God for us, therefore we who were called outcasts; we whose wound was incurable and grievous; we that were utterly ruined and undone—we, believing in this Jesus—shall, in Him, become the people of God!

Let me speak plainly with you, beloved Brothers and Sisters—how many of you have realized this? It is all idle for me to talk about Christ making the way unless you run in the way. Are you the Lord’s people? Many of you humbly rejoice in this high honor, but there may be a few here who are of another mind—you care nothing for having the Lord to be your God. Possibly you sneer and call it cant. Yes, but if you knew the Truth of God you would not do so. When we hear you speaking contemptuously of being God’s people, all we can say is, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Will you mind thinking just for half a minute? Will you try to think justly and rightly? Must it not be good and right that the creature should love the Creator? Must it not be a wise thing that the children whom God has formed should love their heavenly Father and be on good terms with Him? Is it not likely that it would be a happy thing for you if you were one of God’s people? You can never rest till you are!

But you ask, “How can I be?” Why, it all follows upon what I have been talking of! Jesus Christ went to the Father for us, that we might approach unto the Father in Him and through Him, that we might become the Lord’s own people and that the Lord might become our God! I tell you I would sooner say, “This God is my God,” than anything else that I can imagine! To say, “This kingdom is my kingdom,” or, “This whole world is mine,” were a miserable business compared with saying, “My Beloved is mine and I am His!” You would not think I exaggerated if you tried it! I invite you to an honest, practical test.

See if there is not joy in the salvation of God. Religion is, with some people, a sort of dreamy thing on Sundays—you sit in your pews and bear with us long-winded talkers about things which you do not care for. Oh, if only you did value and enjoy them! If you could but taste and handle them you would say, “Go on, Preacher! Go on! You are a poor hand at it, for your themes are so great and wondrous that you cannot reach to them, but, still, go on! Ring that bell again! Open more doors and let us peep in upon the secret treasures. Bring us more clusters of the grapes of Eshcol and let us, at least, pluck a berry here and there if we cannot carry away a whole cluster—and so fill our mouths with the inexpressible delight of being God’s people and having Jehovah to be our God!”

This bliss comes to those of us who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh because Jesus said, “I will wait upon the Lord that hides His face from the house of Jacob.” The face of the Lord is no longer hidden from us! We have access with confidence into this Grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God. I seem to see in my spirit that old legend of Rome worked out in very deed. So says the story—in the Roman Forum there gaped a vast chasm which threatened the destruction of the Forum, if not of Rome. The wise men declared that the gulf would never close unless the most precious thing in Rome was cast into it. See how it yawns and cracks, every moment, more horribly! Hasten to bring this noblest thing! For love of Rome sacrifice your best!

But what, or *who* is this? Where is a treasure meet for sacrifice? Then Curtius, a belted knight, mounted his charger and, rightly judging that valor and love of country were the noblest treasures of Rome, he leaped into the gulf! The yawning earth closed upon a great-hearted Roman, for her hunger was appeased. Perhaps it is but an idle tale, but what *I* have declared is the Truth of God! There gaped between God and man a dread abyss, deep as Hell, wide as eternity and only the best thing that Heaven contained could fill it! That best thing was He, the peerless Son of God, the matchless, perfect Man and He came, laying aside His Glory, making Himself of no reputation. And He sprang into the gulf which then and there closed, once and for all!—

***“Down from the shining seats above  
With joyful haste He fled,  
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,  
And dwelt among the dead.  
Oh, for this love let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break,  
And all harmonious human tongues  
The Savior’s praises speak.”***

One great result of Christ’s having died is to leave us a way of access which is freely opened to every poor, penitent sinner. Come! Are you using that way of access? Do you use it every day? Having used it and thus having drawn near to God, do you *dwell* near to God? Do you abide in God? Is God the main thought of your life, the chief delight and object of your being? If it is not so, I earnestly invite you, by the Spirit’s help, to make it so. You must engage your heart to come to God in Christ. There is no coming to God without sincere resolve and eager desire. Are you engaged to such an end? Alas, it may be you are drawn elsewhere. Are you engaged? Alas, some are engaged to Madame Bubble! Some are en-

gaged to Belial! Some are engaged to self! Some are engaged to Mammon! Some seem engaged to the very devil of Hell!

Be wise and break these unlawful engagements! Let your covenant with death be broken and your league with Hell be annulled. Though you are weary of my words, yet would I stir you up to interest in this all-important matter. Break these deadly bands asunder! God help you, by a sudden energy which He shall give you, to snap your fetters once and for all and then, at once, firmly engage your hearts to Christ! Never such loveliness, never such love will you find elsewhere! Come, say now—Whatever else I do or do not do, I will do this—I will approach to God by the way that Christ has opened for me—I will arise and go to my Father! I will throw myself at my Father's feet—I must be reconciled! I cannot live an enemy to Him! I must be made a friend—

***“I will approach You—  
I will force  
My way through obstacles to You.”***

Jesus goes before me and I gladly follow. I will not leave the throne till You, O Lord, have said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” I shall be greatly happy, I shall be exceedingly glad if I may induce one spirit to come to God by Jesus Christ! But if the whole of you will come at once; if God's spirit shall now prompt all Believers to come and all unbelievers to become Believers, and so to come, what a splendid company of us will enter into the golden gates! And what joy there will be in Heaven over all of us as we approach unto the Most High! I think I note a seraph, as he takes down his harp, stand in the center of the heavenly choir and suggest to his fellow choristers that their theme should be, “Who is this that has engaged His heart to approach unto the living God?”

Hark how ten thousands of voices say—“Who is this?” Let us, in humble notes, lift up our praises. Here is a verse which may serve our turn—

***“Who is this that enters Glory,  
Clearing for His saints a way?  
Who shall tell the wondrous story  
Who His glorious work display?  
Jesus makes our access clear,  
To the Father brings us near.”***

Thus the question, “Who is this?” admits of a second answer, for now, in Christ Jesus, *all* Believers with engaged hearts are approaching unto God! Who is this? At first it is Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God. And next it is His Church with all her heart engaged, approaching unto God by Jesus Christ! My Hearers, can you join in the song of praise which is now rising from Heaven and earth? Angels are waiting till you approach their God! Come, hurry up! Hasten to be blest! At once approach your God by Christ Jesus and as angels see you coming, their song shall grow yet louder till it shall excel the noise of many waters and out-voice the last great thundering! They come! They come! Sinners are coming to God! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

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# SECRET DRAWINGS GRACIOUSLY EXPLAINED NO. 1914

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 15, 1886,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.”  
Jeremiah 31:3.***

THE dread of Divine Justice has often driven men to seek mercy. Many have been caught in the whirlwind of wrath and, in their dismay, they have fled for refuge to that Man who is a covert from the tempest. Hence the Lord does not decline to work upon the minds of the guilty by motives drawn from fear. Notice the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> verses of the previous chapter—“Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart.” This is by no means a solitary passage. Holy Scripture is strewn with solemn admonitions to flee from the wrath to come. Our dear Redeemer, whose lips are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, in great tenderness of heart warned men of the sure result of their sins and none used stronger or more alarming language than He did concerning the future of ungodly men.

He knew nothing of that pretended sympathy which will rather let men perish than warn them against perishing. Such tenderness is merely selfishness excusing itself from a distasteful duty. Our Savior spoke as the true and earnest lover of men and, therefore, uttered words which, having first wounded His own heart and brought the tears to His own eyes, went home with tremendous force to the minds of others. He spoke of weeping and gnashing of teeth, of a worm which dies not and of a fire which is not quenched. Weeping, He reminded them how often He would have gathered them together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but they would not—and, therefore, He warned them that nothing could come of it but desolation and destruction!

Brothers and Sisters, like our Lord, we do not hesitate to warn men of judgment to come. “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” We dare not quit this solemn duty lest it cost us our own souls! We dare not cease to sound the trumpet of alarm lest the enemy destroy our people and their blood be required at our hands!

Still, the master magnet of the Gospel is not fear, but love. Penitents are *drawn* to Christ rather than driven. The most frequent impulse which leads men to Jesus is hope that in Him they may find salvation. Truly,

even then, they are moved by fear of the evil which they would escape, but their feet are led to fly towards Him by hope in His gentleness, His goodness, His readiness to receive sinners. Hope in that mercy of God which endures forever is the great cord which draws men to repentance. Consequently, after the Lord had sounded the clarion note of warning which we have just heard, He touched the harp strings of Grace and brought forth from them notes both soft and sweet, cheering the sad and encouraging the despondent—these notes He knew would be heard where even the trumpet sounded not. Love wins the day!

One hair from the head of Love will draw more than the cable of fear! Let but Love speak a single word out of her heart—and let it reach the hearts of men—and it will accomplish greater marvels than all the prolonged discourses and threats of wrath. I am glad, therefore, that I have to speak to God's people, this morning, and set forth God's Love as the reason why they should love Him in return! "We love Him because He first loved us" is the great Law of the Christian life. In proportion as we recognize the love of God and know somewhat of its height, depth, length and breadth, our heart will be graciously affected by it. When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit which is given to us, *then* we love our Lord with all our might!

I want you, this morning, to pray that you may realize the things which I speak to you, so that when we discourse upon the love of God you may feel it glowing in your own souls. Oh, that His love, like coals of juniper, may burn in our hearts! With its vehement flame may it consume our hearts with a heavenly passion till all our nature ascends to Heaven like clouds of incense from the golden altar! May our God and Father speak within each one of us and say, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you!"

**I.** Our first observation will run on this wise—GOD'S DEALINGS WITH US ARE NEVER UNDERSTOOD TILL HE, HIMSELF, APPEARS TO US. He must speak, or we cannot interpret His acts. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." The Lord had been drawing these people, but they did not know it. God had been loving them with an everlasting love, but they did not recognize it. Nor could they know or recognize His loving kindness till the Lord, Himself, visited them in Person and removed the scales from their eyes! God is His own Interpreter. His Providence and Grace reveal Him, but still more does He, Himself, explain and reveal His Providence and Grace. Though all things in the field and the garden show what the sun does, yet none of these "fruits put forth by the sun" can be perceived till the sun, itself, reveals them.

For first, *man is not in a condition to perceive God till God reveals Himself to him.* By nature, Brothers and Sisters, we are blind Godward—yes, deaf and in all ways *insensible* towards the great Spirit. By nature we are dead to the Presence of the Lord. Naturally, man is an atheist. When the "Essays and Reviews" made a great deal of stir, an experienced preacher said, concerning them, "Essays and Reviews' do not trouble me, nor any of the nostrums of modern doubt, for my heart is a deviser of worse things than 'Essays and Reviews'—my evil heart is a fountain of atheism." Breth-

ren, worse difficulties have occurred to us than any that have ever been penned by the most notorious infidels! By nature we are as the fool who said in his heart, "There is no God." Our carnal mind is enmity against God and, consequently, it would be rid of Him if it could. We have need to pray and we do pray, "Save me from an atheistic heart, which hates the Trinity." Man, therefore, living in alienation from God, does not trace the inward drawings of Divine Love up to their source—he regards them as common things—and treads them out as sparks from an earthly fire. Though God may be sweetly influencing the man to something better, higher, nobler than sin, self and the world, yet he does not perceive the Divine working. The Lord said of Cyrus, "I girded you, though you have not known Me." And even so may He say of many an unconverted man, "I warned you and awakened you, and drew you when you were not aware of Me."

Besides this, my Brothers and Sisters, we are so *selfish* that when God is drawing us to Himself, we are too much absorbed in our own things to notice the hand which is at work upon us! We crave the world; we sigh for human approbation; we seek ease and comfort; we desire, above all things, to indulge our pride with the vain notion of self-righteousness and, therefore, we look not for God. Rather do we cry with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" God may draw a long time before we will budge an inch away from those gods which our own selfishness has set up. Young Samuel answered to the call of Jehovah at midnight—but with us there is neither hearing nor answering. How can we see God while our eyes are blinded with *self*?

While we are *carnal*, sold under sin, our heart is dead to the movements of God's Grace. Only a spiritual mind can discern spiritual things and, as we are not spiritual, we remain insensible to the Divine drawing. I know this was the case with me and I speak, therefore, with a humbling experience clear in my memory. For many a day the Lord drew me, but I did not know Him. The Lord worked upon my heart, but I did not perceive Him. Alas for the insensibility which even Gospel influences cannot remove! The Lord must appear to each one of us or we shall remain ignorant of His ways!

Moreover, dear Friends, God must explain His dealings to us by revealing Himself to us because *those ways are, in themselves, frequently mysterious*. Take Israel, for instance. The Lord moved Pharaoh to treat Israel with great severity and to make them serve with rigor. They made bricks without straw and the production of bricks was doubled till they cried by reason of their taskmasters! How was Israel to perceive that Jehovah was at the back of all this? Yet the Lord was thus accomplishing His design of bringing His chosen out of Egypt. The most difficult thing was not for Pharaoh to be compelled to let Israel go, but to bring the people into such a state that they would be willing to quit the fertile land! They lived in plenty in the land of Goshen and ate of the leeks, garlic and onions of Egypt—and had they been left alone, they would have had no wish to go forth to Canaan.

They would have been satisfied to become Egyptians had they always been treated as they were treated at the first. How were the Israelites to

understand, till God explained it, that this rough usage on the part of Pharaoh was to wean them from Egypt and make them willing to go out, even, into a desert that they might escape from the tyrant? When Pharaoh began to kill their first-born; when he refused to let them go, for a few days, to offer sacrifice and oppressed them more and more, how were they to know that this was a part of the plan of Jehovah who had loved them with an everlasting love? Even after He had smitten Pharaoh with plagues and Egypt was glad when they departed, how could they comprehend why God led them down to the brink of the Red Sea? Between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon, the host was made to encamp, even in a place from which there was no escape from their cruel foes whose chariots they heard rattling behind them!

How were they to know that the Lord had His way in the sea and His path in the mighty waters? How could they guess that He meant to bring Egypt down into the depth of the sea and there to crush the dragon with so heavy a blow that, through the 40 years of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness upon the Egyptian border, the nation should never be troubled by its old taskmaster? With a high hand and an outstretched arm, the Lord brought forth His people, but they understood not His wonders in Egypt till He appeared to them and said, "I am the Lord your God, which has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." God's dealings with His chosen are often so mysterious that they cannot know *them* till they know *Him*!

So it is when the Lord works eternal life in the soul. He does not usually begin by giving the man light, peace and comfort. No, but He sorely plagues him with "darkness that might be felt." He makes sweet sin to become bitter. He pours gall into the fountains of his carnal life till the man begins to be weary of the things which once contented him. Full often the Lord fits the arrows of conviction to the string and shoots again and again, and again till the soul is wounded in a thousand places—and is ready to bleed to death! The Lord kills before He makes alive! Is this the Lord's way of dealing with men? It is even so—it is the way of His loving kindness and tender mercy. But I say again, how could we expect unspiritual men to see the hand of the Lord in all this? The awakened man sees more of anger than of loving kindness in his griefs and the idea of everlasting love never enters his imagination! That God is drawing him with bands of love and cords of a man is a Truth of God of which he has no inkling. God must reveal Himself to the man or else he will not discover the hand of the Lord in the anguish of his spirit.

*This appearance of the Lord must be personal.* "The Lord has appeared of old unto *me*." I do not think any man knows the Lord by merely reading Scripture, nor by being convinced in his judgment of the truth of the Gospel. There is a special manifestation of the Lord unto the conscience, heart and soul of every man who is, indeed, taught of God. A personal revelation by the Holy Spirit is needed to bring home to us the Revelation of the Book. The result of it is conversion, or the new birth—and this is always effected by the Spirit of God. True knowledge of God is always a Divine operation—not worked second-hand by instrumentality—but worked by the right hand of the Lord, Himself. "No man can come to Me,"

says Christ, "except the Father which has sent Me draw him." And no man understands those drawings unless the same Father shall come to him and manifest Himself to him!

I do not ask the children of God whether they understand this, for I know they do. You can, many of you, say, "The Lord has appeared unto me." Not that you have heard a *voice*, nor seen a great light as Saul did on the way to Damascus. But as vividly to your inward eyes has God appeared as the great light appeared to Saul's outward eyes—and as potently to your secret ears has God spoken as that voice spoke to Saul's outward ears. God has drawn near to us and His visitations have new-created us! Till we know the Lord by *personal* revelation, we cannot read His handwriting upon our hearts, or discern His dealings with us.

*This appearance needs to be repeated.* The text may be read as a complaint on the part of Israel. Israel says, "The Lord has appeared of old unto me"—as much as to say, "He has not appeared to me *lately*." Of old he was seen by brook, bush, sea and rock—when Jacob met Him at Jabok and Moses in the wilderness at the burning bush—but now His visits are few and far between. "The Lord has appeared *of old* unto me." Oh, that He would appear now! I pray at this time that those of you who are mourning after that fashion may be able to rise out of it. It is not the Lord's desire that He should be as a stranger in the land, or as a wayfaring man that tarries but for a night. He is willing to abide with us! His delights are with the sons of men! Let us not forget the time when He did, of old, appear to us—I mean the first time.

It must be more than 36 years since the Lord first appeared to me and I beheld Him by the eyes of faith. How vile was I in my own sight and how glorious was He in my eyes! How my heart melted when I saw Him bleeding on the tree for me! How all my passions burned and glowed with heavenly ardor as I understood that He loved me and gave Himself for me! Then His name, His word, His day, His people were all precious in my sight! That was of old, but I do earnestly remember it! It is very sweet to look back upon the time of our espousals, but it will become a bitter retrospect if we do not again and again behold our Lord. It is woe to have seen the sun if one is now shut up in a dark dungeon! O Brothers and Sisters, do not let us be satisfied with old appearances—let us cry to our Beloved, "O Lord, manifest Yourself anew to me! O You that hides Yourself, appear to me! Look through the lattices and let Your face be seen again!"

He that condescended to show Himself to you of old will again reveal His love. What Jesus has done, He will still do. Once you walked by the way and your heart burned within you because Jesus spoke with you. He has said, "I will come again." Do you not remember how, in the very pew in which you are now sitting, you felt as if you could hardly keep your seat? You wanted to cry, "Hallelujah!" for joy of heart. Recall those happy periods, but only recall them with this resolve—"I will behold my Lord again. I will again delight myself in Him." Do not let the text be the epitaph of a long-ago appearance, but let it be the dawning of a new day whose sun shall no more go down!

*This appearance is always an act of mighty Grace.* The text might be read, “The Lord appeared *from afar* to me.” So He did at first. What a great way off we were from God, but behold, the Beloved came like a roe or a young hart, leaping over the mountains, skipping upon the hills! He came to us in boundless love when we lay at death’s dark door, the fast-bound slaves of Hell! Brethren, He can and will come again. If He came to us from far, He will surely come again, now that He has made us near. Expect Him to come to you all of a sudden. While I am yet speaking, pray that, before you are aware, your soul may be like the chariots of Amminadib! Pray for the immediate revelation of God, Himself, to your spirit in a way of joy and transport that shall set your soul in rapid motion towards the Lord! Should the Lord return to you in gracious manifestation, take care that you do not lose Him again. If the bridegroom deigns to visit you, hold Him fast. If you once see the splendor of His love, do not close your eyes to it, but gaze on till you behold Him face to face in Glory! Be this your prayer, “Abide with me.” Be not satisfied till, like Enoch, you *always* walk with God! But to this end God must appear to His people.

**II.** Secondly, when the Lord does so appear, WE THEN PERCEIVE THAT HE HAS BEEN DEALING WITH US. “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: *therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.*” What exceeding love the Lord showed to us before we knew Him! Let us now look back and remember the love of long-suffering which spared us when we delighted in sin. The Lord did not cut us off in our unbelief—there in is love. Some read this text, “therefore in loving kindness have I respited you,” or, “therefore have I drawn out My loving kindness unto you,” as if God stretched His loving kindness while we were stretching out our sinfulness and continued, year after year, to bear with us though we continued in wanton rebellion against Him!—

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

Think of sparing mercy now that you are able to see it because the Lord has appeared unto you.

The next admirable discovery is the Lord’s *restraining Grace*. We now see that the Lord held us back from plunging into the deepest abysses of sin. He would not let us commit crimes by which we might have ended our lives before conversion. He kept us back from sins which might have linked us in sad connections and led us into such circumstances that we never might have been brought to hear His Word or seek His face at all. Since the Lord has appeared to me, He has made me see His restraining hand where once I saw nothing but the cruel disappointment of my hopes. Blessed be God for those crooks in my lot which kept me from poisonous pleasures!

So, too, we now see the *preparations of Grace*, the plowing of our hearts by sorrow, the sowing of them by discipline, the harrowing of them by pain, the watering of them by the rain of favor, the breaking up of them by the frosts of adversity. These were not actually grace, but they opened the door for Grace. We now see how, in a thousand ways, the Lord was drawing us when we knew Him not!

The text chiefly dwells upon *drawings*. I beg you to refresh your memories by recollecting the drawings of the Lord towards you while you were yet ungodly. They began very early with some of us—even as little children we had great tenderness of conscience and many movements of the Spirit which would not let us sin as others did. Often when we had done wrong, we went to our little beds and cried ourselves to sleep under a sense of sin, a fear of punishment and a longing for mercy! Those drawings were continuous with some of us—we can hardly remember when we were without holy impulses, though we did not yield to them. When we left the parental roof, those drawings followed us to our first employment. Do you remember them? Before you knew the Lord Jesus, His Holy Spirit strove with you. You went into great sin, some of you, but the Lord continued to follow you. Even in your dreams He did not leave you. They were a way which the Lord had of getting at you—you hardened yourself against Him when you were awake—but when you fell asleep, He scared you with visions and made you think of judgment to come!

Often these were very gentle drawings—they were not such forces as would move an ox or an horse, but such as were meant for tender spirits. Yet sometimes they tugged at you very hard and almost overcame you. Drawing supposes a kind of resistance, or, at any rate, an inertness and, truly, we did not stir of ourselves, but needed to be persuaded and entreated. Some of you will remember how the Holy Spirit drew you many times before you came to Him. Remember those thundering sermons which sent you home to your knees? Those deep impressions which you could not shake off for a week or two? Those depressions of spirit and horrors of darkness out of which you could not readily rise? The Lord surrounded you as a fish is surrounded with a net and though you labored to escape, you could not, but were drawn more and more within the meshes of Mercy.

There are times with men, before conversion, when a sort of softness steals over them, when they feel as if they could not hold out much longer against appeals so reasonable and so gracious. A mother's prayers come up—perhaps her dying words are heard again—or the death of a little child touches the parent's heart as nothing else has done. The man is under holy influences, he knows not how! There are angels in the air around him, though there are devils in the heart within him. The man cannot be at peace in sin! He is restless till he finds rest in Jesus! It is the Lord drawing all the while and after the Lord has appeared to us we see it to be so.

Do you remember when, at last, the Holy Spirit drew you over the line? When, at last, without violating your free will, He conquered it by forces proper to the mind? Blessed day! You were made a willing captive to your Lord, led in silken fetters at His chariot wheels, a glad prisoner to Almighty Love, set free from sin and Satan, made to be unto your Lord a life long servant. He drew you! You did not know much about it, then, but you see it now.

After I had found Grace and salvation, a little time elapsed before I had surveyed the work of the Lord upon me. But when I did so, I learned much. Sitting down, one day, I meditated upon where I was and what I

was. I said to myself, "I have believed in Jesus Christ and I have passed from death unto life. To God be praise!" Then my train of thought ran thus—"How have I come to be in this condition? Did I make this change in myself? No. Must I praise my own free will? No. Was there originally in me some betterness which led me to Christ, while my companions have not come?" I dared not say so and, therefore, I perceived that the difference was made by the Sovereign Grace of God. I do not know whereabouts in theology I might have wandered, but those reflections made me a Calvinist—that is to say, one who traces salvation to the Lord, alone. I saw that my salvation was of the Lord from first to last and I have never had a doubt about the matter since!

It is no wish of mine to preach salvation by the will of man, or by the will of the flesh, but salvation all of Grace, from beginning to end according to the eternal purpose which the Lord purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was! It did not need any intricate reasoning to land me on the rock of Free Grace doctrine! If the Lord saved me, then He intended to save me—He did not do so by accident or inadvertence. Then if He once intended to save me, there could be no reason why that intention should begin at any one moment—He must have purposed to save me from all eternity! God has His plan and purpose, and what He actually does must have been known to Him and purposed by Him from of old. Then I saw, as in a glass, the ways of God towards me—but it was not till the Lord, Himself, had appeared unto me that I had this conception of His ways. He, Himself, by His Spirit, expounded to me the whole system after this fashion, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." We understand the drawings of the Lord after we have seen the Lord, Himself, but not till then.

**III.** We proceed a step further and WE PERCEIVE THAT LOVING KINDNESS WAS THE DRAWING FORCE—"therefore *with loving kindness* have I drawn you." At first we think God has dealt sternly with us, but in His Light we see light and we perceive that the drawing power which has brought us to receive mercy is the Divine Loving Kindness. Love is the attractive force!

What multitudes of persons have been drawn to the Lord, first, by His loving kindness in *the gift of His dear Son!* Perhaps there is no greater soul-saving text in the Bible than this, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I must have conversed with more than a hundred persons who have found the Lord through this blessed verse! I am speaking very moderately, for I think I might say that I have known *several* hundreds who have been guided into liberty by this polestar text. What a drawing there is in the fact that God gave His Son to redeem the guilty! Jesus died for the lost world and men, believing in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life. This is the master magnet—"I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The loving kindness of God as seen in the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus draws men from sin, from self, from Satan, from despair and from the world!

Next, *the hope of pardon*, free and full, attracts sinners to God. "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you," makes a man run after Christ!



Oh, what a draw there is in those Words, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon!" How one is drawn by the declaration, "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men!" The blotting out of sin is a glorious phase of the Divine Loving Kindness and many are allured by it to confess their sins. Is not the promise of remission the cord with which the Lord draws men to Himself? "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." Yes, there is such a thing as the entire blotting out of a life spent in iniquity! Jesus can wipe out the record of sin as a boy wipes the writing from his slate with a sponge. Sin is carried away by Jesus, even as the scapegoat bore away the sin of Israel. "They shall not be mentioned against you any more, forever." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." Thus does loving kindness draw us.

I have known others drawn to the Lord by another view of His loving kindness, namely, *His willingness to make new creatures of us*. The prayer of many has been, "Create in me a clean heart, O God," and they have been charmed by hearing that whoever believes in Jesus is born again, to start a new life, ruled by a new principle and endowed with a new nature, sustained by the Holy Spirit! Many who desire purity of life and nature—and wish to be right with God—are won by the blessed prospect of being created anew in Christ Jesus.

It may seem somewhat strange to you, but that form of loving kindness which mainly drew me to the Lord was this—I saw a good deal of the instability of character in young men who began life with bright prospects and fair promises—and I trembled for my own future. I read in the New Testament that he that believes in Jesus has everlasting life. I saw in the language of Christ, Himself, these Words—"I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands." Oh, how I longed to be one of those sheep in the hands of Jesus! I had known school fellows who were held up as patterns to me who acted very disappointingly after they left home—and I thought within myself—"Oh, for a spiritual life insurance! Oh, for a way of putting my soul into secure keeping so that I shall not become the prey of sin, but shall be kept by the Grace of God even to the end!"

The belief that I should find this *permanence of Grace* in Christ Jesus drew me more than anything else to Jesus! What a blessing to obtain "eternal salvation and good hope through Grace!" What a favor to receive within the heart a well of Living Water, springing up into everlasting life! Let me live till my hair is all white with age, He will not suffer me to turn, again, unto folly, for it is written, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." I clutched at that promise from the beginning and thus, with loving kindness, the Lord drew me to Himself. I see it now and bless His name for using such a magnet!

Brothers and Sisters, since we have known the Lord, has it not been His loving kindness that has always drawn us? Can you tell me how much loving kindness you have enjoyed? Begin the calculation! Yes, you may

take out a paper and pencil, if you like, and write away during the rest of my sermon! And when *I* have finished, I will ask *you* whether you have finished and you will answer, "Sir, I have not quite *begun* yet." Oh, the loving kindness of the Lord! You may measure Heaven! You may fathom the sea! You may plunge into the abyss and calculate its depth, but the loving kindness of the Lord is beyond you! Here is an infinite expanse. It is immeasurable, even as God, Himself, is beyond conception! It is everywhere about us—behind, before, beneath, above, within, without! Every day the Lord loads us with benefits. He binds us with so many loving kindnesses that He draws us, now, not with one cord, but with many—and each one draws Omnipotently!

His mercies are more than the hairs of our head—by day and by night He is drawing, drawing, drawing with those bands of love—and one of these days our whole body, soul and spirit will so yield to the sweet compulsion of Almighty Love that the whole man will remove to be with Him where He is! And we will *still* feel His loving kindness as we behold His Glory! All this was always true, but we could not see it till the Lord appeared to us and declared the gracious fact that with loving kindness He had drawn us! The fact is precious and the knowledge of it is exceedingly joyful!

**IV.** Lastly, I believe the appearing of the Lord to a man is the great means of teaching him Divine Truth. THEN WE LEARN THAT THE GREAT MOTIVE OF THE DIVINE DRAWINGS IS EVERLASTING LOVE. I do not want to preach any longer, but I want you to think. Description is not needed so much as meditation and realization. Imagine you hear the Voice which with a word made Heaven and earth! Imagine you hear it as a still small Voice, whispering in your ear, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Perhaps the less I talk about this, the better, for words cannot express the inexpressible! Let your spirit lie soaking in this Divine Assurance—"I have loved you with an everlasting love." Take it up into yourself as Gideon's fleece absorbed the dew!

Notice, the *Lord has done it*. It is an actual *fact*, the Lord is loving you. Put those two pronouns together, "*I*" and "*you*." "*I*," the Infinite, the inconceivably Glorious—"you," a poor, lost, undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinner! See the link between the two! See the diamond rivet which joins the two together for eternity—"I have *loved you*." It is not, "I have pitied you," nor, "I have thought about you," but, "I have *loved you*!" God is in love with you! I think Aristotle said that it was impossible for one to be assured of another's love without feeling some love in return. I am not sure about that, but I think it is quite impossible to enjoy a sense of God's Love without returning it in a measure. Soul, do you return it?

"I have loved you." Not, "I will do so," but, "I *have* loved you." Poor "*you*!" Do you not reply, "Lord, if I might say it, You know all things, You know that I love You. I cannot say that I love You as You love me, for I am such a feeble, finite creature. Still, I assuredly love You, and I dare say no other"? O Beloved, what more can I add? The bare fact that the Lord loves us is Heaven below if it is once thoroughly grasped by the soul!

See the antiquity of this love—"I have loved you with an everlasting love." I loved you when I died for you upon the Cross, yes, I loved you long before and, therefore did I die! I loved you when I made the heavens and the earth, with a view to your abode in it—yes, I loved you before I had made sea or shore. When this great world—the sun, the moon and the stars slept in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup—He loved His people. He saw them in the glass of the future with prescient eyes ages before ages had begun—and then He loved them with an everlasting love! There is a beginning for the *world*, but there is no beginning for the love of God to His people!

Nor does that exhaust the meaning of "everlasting love." There has never been a moment when the Lord has not loved His people. There has been no pause, nor ebb, nor break in the love of God to His own. That love knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning. When we were babes and could not know Him, He loved us. When we were foolish youths, running riot in iniquity, He loved us. When we became men, hard and callous, resisting Divine Grace, He drew us though we did not run after Him—for He loved us then. He loves us this day as much as ever, even though He may be chastening us. His love is a river, always flowing and overflowing—it will never diminish and it cannot increase, for it is already Infinite—

***"Mine is an unchanging love,  
Higher than the heights above!  
Deeper than the depths beneath,  
Free and faithful, strong as death."***

"I have loved you with an everlasting love." You may take a leap into the future and find that love still with you. Everlasting evidently lasts forever. Certain divines have tried to cut the heart out of that word, "everlasting," and to make it out that it means a terminable period—but it is idle to argue with men to whom words are mere shuttlecocks to play with. Most plainly that which is everlasting, lasts forever! You and I may live till we grow old and decrepit, but the Lord will not leave us, for it is written, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." We shall come to die and this shall be a downy pillow for our deathbed, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." When we wake up in that dread world to which we are surely hastening, we shall find infinite happiness in "everlasting love." When the judgment is proclaimed and the sight of the Great White Throne makes all hearts tremble and the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long—and our poor dust wakes up from its silent grave, we shall rejoice in this Divine Assurance—"I have loved you with an everlasting love." Roll on, you ages, but everlasting love abides! Die out, sun and moon and you, O time, be buried in eternity—we need no other Heaven than this, "I have loved you with an everlasting love!" Brothers and Sisters, the Lord's appearing to us has taught us great things in teaching us everlasting love!

I want the child of God to receive this assurance thoroughly into his soul, that God loves him with an everlasting love. Why, it makes my pulses beat more quickly! It makes me so full of delight that I can scarcely contain myself! A Divine delight thrills me. I, a poor sinner, even I, am the object of everlasting love! What then? Why, I must love my Lord—how can I help it? Do you not feel that you must wake up, from this time forth, to

serve your loving Lord at a sevenfold pace? Will you not consecrate yourselves to Him, to spend and to be spent for Him? What is there too precious to lay at His feet? Out with your alabaster boxes right now, if ever in your lives! What is there too heavy for you to bear? What is there too difficult for you to undertake for One who has loved you so faithfully, without beginning, without change, without measure, without end?

Alas for you, poor Heart, to whom this text does not belong! There stands the golden chalice. Oh, that you were thirsty, for then you might drink of it! You have not seen the Lord, for you have not sought Him. You know not that you are drawn, for you have never come to Christ, nor have you believed in His great Sacrifice. If there were no Hell hereafter, it would be Hell enough to me not to enjoy everlasting love! I count that man a wretch undone who has never heard the sweet, full music of this text. What? Do you live without God? Do you despise His love? If there were no hereafter, it is unhappiness, enough, to be lost to the infinite delight of knowing the love of God! Oh, that you would now believe in Jesus and find peace through His blood!

But O you that have this cup of blessing, drink of it to the fullest! Live upon this assurance! Go away singing because of it! Let not trouble disturb you—why should it? Let nothing vex you—why should it? Let no evil deed done to you by another provoke you—be ready to forgive because you see that the Lord has loved *you* and, therefore, you can love the most unlovable! None are too vile to share in our love since God has loved us! My heart sings, “He loved me and gave Himself for me,” and I am now prepared to love my enemies if I have any!

Ô Lord, appear to each one of us now! Appear to us and say, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Grant it, Lord! Grant it for Your sweet love’s sake! Amen.

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# EVERLASTING LOVE REVEALED

## NO. 2149

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 15, 1890,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.”  
Jeremiah 31:3.***

THUS speaks the Israel of God. She seems to wake up as if she had long been asleep and had forgotten a grand fact—a fact which she ought to have treasured up in her fondest memory. Suddenly startling into recollection, she cries, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me.” How strange that she should have forgotten it! Her spiritual lethargy had dimmed her memory and caused her to feel and act as if it were not true, as if her God had never revealed Himself to her. Then she saw with amazement that notwithstanding all the heavy chastisement which the Lord had sent her and notwithstanding all her backslidings, there was still a hope of mercy, no, there was the *certainty* of it, for the unchanging God had said, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

Are any of you forgetful or unaware of this sacred Truth of God? Has it never occurred to you that God has spoken to His people? Though you are a child of God, have you been taken up with so many inferior things that you have let go the blessed memory of former appearances of the Lord to your soul? May the Holy Spirit awake you at this time! May there come a blessed awakening hour to your drowsy spirits! This startling remembrance came to Israel at a time when her sorrows were very great and her sins were greater, still. She had been wounded so that she was sick and sore—and she found no healing medicine—and none to bind up her wounds. In her distress she remembered not only her faults, but also the former loving kindnesses of her Lord.

She gathered from that ancient assurance of Divine Grace that her God loved her, still, and would return to her in great mercy. She dwelt with hope upon that Divine assurance of irrevocable favor—“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” When earthly joys ebb out, it is a blessed thing if they make room for memories of heavenly visitations and gracious assurances! When you are at your lowest, it may happen that *then* the God of All Grace comes in and brings to your remembrance the love of your espousals and the joy of former days, when the candle of the Lord shone round about you.

At the same time, it was not merely a time of inward sorrow, but a period of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord, for Jehovah was speaking in tones of Sovereign Grace and pouring forth great rivers of promises and seas of mercy. See the first verse—“At the same time, says the Lord, will I

be the God of all the families of Israel and they shall be My people.” Sometimes you pour water down a dry pump and that sets it working so that it pours forth streams of its own and so, when our gracious God pours in His love into the soul, our own love begins to flow and with it memories awake and a thousand recollections cause us to bring to mind the ancient love in which we before delighted, and we cry, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me.”

It only needs a touch, this morning, of that pierced hand to make our hard hearts soft! If our Divine Lord will only come by His Spirit and visit us as we sit in these pews, the waters of love will flow within until the wilderness shall become a pool and the dry land springs of water! Long may we have suffered a great decay of spiritual life, but we shall, on a sudden, be restored and then our hearts will burn and glow with holy attachment to Him whose love has not changed, though we have so sadly fallen. God grant it may be so! May a renewed appearing of the Lord revive our joy in His appearing of old! While you are sitting there, listening to my words, may a still small voice be heard within your souls, melting your hearts and causing you to say, “Yes, I had almost forgotten it, but ‘The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.’”

May the grand discovery of everlasting love be made by many of you for the first time in your lives! Oh, for the surprises of Almighty Grace! As when one in plowing stumbles on treasure hid in a field and rejoices exceedingly, even so may you rejoice in newly discovered love! Or if you know it already, may you feel its drawings for the thousandth time and may it be to you still fresh and new, as though you had never felt it before. The visits of God’s Grace and the discoveries of His love to our hearts never grow stale! We can go over this heavenly ground again and again and always behold new glories in it! May an overpowering memory of the Lord’s love come over us all at this time, by the power of the Holy Spirit!

I shall handle the text, first, by calling your attention to *the marvelous appearing*—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me.” Secondly, to *the matchless declaration*—“Saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.” And thirdly, to *the manifest evidence of this love*—“Therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” May the Holy Spirit be poured forth, anointing every word I speak with Divine unction and may this discourse be precious to His people!

**I.** First, consider THE MARVELLOUS APPEARING—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me.” Here are two persons, but how different in degree! Here we have, “me,” a good-for-nothing creature, apt to forget my Lord and to live as if there were no God—yet He has not ignored or neglected me. There is *the High and Holy One*, whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain and He has appeared to me. Between me and the great Jehovah there have been communications—the solitary silences have been broken—“The Lord has appeared,” has appeared “unto me.”

He has looked through the window. He has shown Himself through the lattices—“The Lord has appeared.” Hundreds in this House of Prayer can

each one say, without doubt or hesitation, "The Lord has appeared unto me." Perhaps of late the Lord has manifested Himself to you as He does not unto the world, but even if it has not been so just now, yet there was a happy time, now in the old long ago, when you saw the Lord. This is a very wonderful thing, that Jehovah the Eternal should reveal Himself to the creature of an hour—that the thrice Holy should speak to the greatly guilty! See here we have "the Lord" and "me"—and between these two, this is the golden link, an appearance in infinite love—"The Lord has appeared unto me."

That the All-Glorious should put in an appearance among His angels and unveil Himself to Cherubim and Seraphim, I can more easily understand. But it is incomprehensible that the Creator of the ends of the earth, of whose understanding there is no searching, should visit *me*, a sinful child of man! Yet this which surpasses understanding is undoubtedly true. My Brothers and Sisters, we have enjoyed the Supernatural—we have risen out of the region of materialism into the spirit realm where God dwells and condescends to commune with mortal men! We can say, "The Lord has appeared unto me." It was necessary that He should do so, for nothing but His appearing could have scattered our darkness, removed our death and brought us salvation.

It needed that He should appear, for nothing but a vision of His love could have won our hearts for Himself and delivered them from the fascinations of this present evil world. Tell it among the skeptics and the earthworms—"The Lord has appeared unto me." I care not who questions it, for the results of His gracious visit are in my Nature and my life! The event is recorded in the diary of my memory in indelible ink! But it is also written in my *soul* and the experience of every day deepens the inscription! Is not this even as the Lord promised of old, "They shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them"?

Do I hear some asking, How is this? I understand that God appeared to Israel, but how to me? Let me picture the discovery of Grace as it comes to the awakening mind, when it learns to sit at the feet of Jesus, saved by faith in the great Sacrifice. Touched by the Spirit of God, we find that the Lord appeared to each one of us *in the promises of His work*. Every promise in God's Word is a promise to every Believer, or to every character such as that to which it was first given. When God said this or that to the saints of old, my Soul, He said it to you! I read the word as first spoken to Abraham, Moses, or David—but in very deed each utterance is for me! What a discovery! This Bible is God's letter of love *to me*! No promise of the Word of God is for one individual only. Though the promise was whispered in one ear at first, that one favored person was the representative of all who have like faith.

With what delight you will now read your Bibles, when you can see that in them the Lord has appeared of old unto you and spoken words of love to you *personally*! Does the Word of God speak to Believers? I am a Believer and therefore it speaks to me. Does the Word speak to praying men and women? I pray—it speaks to me. The richest word in all that Book is

as much the inheritance of the Believer today as it was the heritage of David and we may find the words of the Lord and eat them as the Bread of our souls, as Jeremiah did, for, in this sacred Book, “The Lord has appeared of old” to each one of His believing family.

Furthermore, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me,” *in the Person of His Son*. God came to each Believer in Christ Jesus. God came in boundless love to each one of us as “Immanuel, God with us.” Towards each one of us He “took upon Him the form of a servant, and humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” Listen, my Heart! In His Manhood and humiliation the Lord God appeared to you! On the Cross your Lord Jesus showed Himself to you in love. Now you have found it out, is it not a glorious discovery? It was not only for the innumerable multitude that Jesus died, but for you, my Soul, for YOU! I wish, Beloved, we could always look upon Jesus as God’s embodied love to us—to us in particular. Will you take a faith-view of Jesus at this time as dying for sinners and for *you* as a sinner in particular? Say, “Yes, 1,800 years ago and more, the Lord in the Person of His dear Son appeared unto me in Gethsemane and on Calvary as my Lord and my God, and yet my Substitute and Savior.”

Since then, the Lord has constantly appeared unto us in *the power of His Holy Spirit*. Do you remember when first your sin was set in order before your tearful eyes and you trembled for fear of the justice which you had provoked? Do you remember when you heard the story of the Crucified Redeemer? When you saw the atoning Sacrifice? When you looked to Jesus and were lightened? It was the Holy Spirit who was leading you out of yourself—and God by the Holy Spirit was appearing unto you. How long has it been? I hope I speak to some who have lately been renewed by the Holy Spirit and to you this appearing is fresh as morning dew! But I speak to many more whose call by Divine Grace was long ago.

It was “of old” that the Holy Spirit came into saving contact with your spirit and drew you with the cords of love and with the bands of a man. These past appearances have been eclipsed by others still more clear and full but, at the same time, as Israel remembered the first Passover as the beginning of things with the nation, so do you remember those first appearances of the Lord—for then you began to live! Some of us can remember where the Lord Jesus first met with us. Though it had been in the desert as with Moses, or by the brook as with Jacob, or by the city as with Joshua, or in the furnace as with Shadrach, we have forever reckoned the place to be holiness unto the Lord. Call it Jehovah-Shammah for the Lord was there!

Now, dear Friends, we hold this appearance *in precious memory*—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me.” Many things are preserved in the treasure house of memory, but this is the choicest of our jewels. How gracious, how glorious was the appearance of God in Christ Jesus to our soul! God full of mercy, God mighty to save, God the salvation of His people—what a sight is this! There was nothing like it at first! There is nothing like it now! Nothing that has ever been discovered by us since has



borne comparison in preciousness to that marvelous manifestation of the ever-loving God! Time may obliterate a thousand memories but it can never wear away the recollection of the Lord's appearances unto us!

This appearance came *in private assurance*. To me it was as personal as it was sure. I used to hear the preacher, but then I heard my God! I used to see the congregation but then I saw Him who is invisible. I used to feel the power of words but now I have felt the immeasurable energy of their *substance*. God Himself filled and thrilled my soul! Through and through, His almighty love pierced my heart. I know that some of you think that if God were to show Himself to you, as He did to Moses or Elijah, it would be a vast blessing to you. But the Lord's *present* appearances are not a whit less comforting and establishing. Manifestations by His Word and Spirit are by no means second in value to those of a miraculous sort. In no case can God, who is pure Spirit, be seen by the eye—He is only known by our *spirit*—and therefore His spiritual appearing is all we should desire.

Oh, the encompassing of Divine Love, when it wraps us about as a cloud enfolded the disciples upon Tabor! When the sacred hand of Love grasps our very heart, we feel the heavenly grip and every part and power of our being is moved! God has an indescribable way of putting Himself into communication with His people through Jesus Christ, by His Holy Spirit and when this occurs, they say, "The Lord has appeared *unto me*." There is, then, no hearing and seeing for other people—"The Lord has appeared *unto me*." Come, my Brothers and Sisters, shall we go back to that time of love when first the Lord said to us, "Live"? That was a word, indeed! Then every word in the Bible seemed for *us*. When we went up to the house of God every hymn and Scripture lesson was for us. And when we heard the sermon the Lord manifested Himself in it to us. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me" was our daily song, for He had, personally, and of a surety, drawn near unto our soul and shed abroad His love there by the Holy Spirit.

I cannot help calling your attention to the fact that the Lord came *in positive certainty*. The text does not say, "I hoped so," or, "I thought so," but, "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying." She who spoke thus saw the appearance and heard the speech. Brethren, be sure about your spiritual experience! It would be a horrible thing to leave spiritual things a matter of question, or to regard them as visionary and uncertain. To me it is bliss to say, "I know Whom I have believed." My soul cannot content herself with less than certainty. I desire never to take a step upon an, "if," or a, "perhaps." I have often waited as to spiritual movements till I could find beneath my foot one of God's shalls and wills upon which I could securely stand. I can never be content with the bare hope that I *may* be a child of God—I must have the Spirit bearing witness with my spirit that I am born of God.

Give me Infallible Truth. I want facts, not fancies. O Beloved, let your experience be made up of *facts* and not of notions and ideas! Seek to use the plain, straightforward utterance of my text—"The Lord appeared of old unto me, saying." If that is your case, you are happy. If it is not so, you

are in an evil plight, for you are evidently without God and therefore without hope.

**II.** My second head is THE MATCHLESS DECLARATION—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.” I do not want you, at this moment, so much to hear *me* and to consider *my* statement, as to *behold* the appearance of the Lord and enjoy for yourself personally and at once, the gracious assurance of heavenly Grace. Here is a word from God of *amazing love*—Jehovah says, “I have loved you.” Think it over. Believe it. Stagger not at it. If the husband should say to his wife, “I have loved you,” she would believe him—it would seem only natural that he should do so.

And when Jehovah says to you, a feeble woman, an unknown man, “I have loved you,” He means it. This is no fiction. God means by love what we mean by it—only His love is higher, deeper, fuller, holier than ours can ever be. Looking from His Throne, the insufferable light of which your eye could not endure, Jehovah speaks in accents of fervent affection and He says to you, “I have loved you.” Get hold of this Truth that God really loves you—that you are the object of the intense delight of the Host High—and what more would you have? God’s heart to you is Love! Be amazed. Be enraptured with this!

Note, next, it is a declaration of *unalloyed love*. The Lord had been bruising, wounding and crushing His people and yet He says, “I have loved you.” These cruel wounds were all in love. What? When He struck, did He love? “Yes, I have loved you.” What? When she was past human help and foul with sin? “Yes,” says He, “I have loved you.” “But, Lord, I have never been worthy of it.” “No,” He says, “but I have loved you all the same.” But, Lord, I have not been conscious of it. “I have loved you all the same.” But, Lord, I have run away from Your loving guidance. “I have loved you all the same.” God’s heart to His people is love, love, love, love, only love! Without beginning, without end, without measure, without change is the love of Jehovah to His elect. “I have loved you.”

Oh, when I sat at home and tried to eat this roll, as the Prophet did, it satiated my soul with fatness! I ardently wished that I might have voice and strength to tell out this blessed Truth to you. And then I thought—Well, what does it matter if I should be faint and feeble, if they will only think of the text believingly—and get it into their hearts by present enjoyment—it may even be better that the preacher should be nowhere and the Truth should be all in all. When we drink from the well we do not want the water to taste of the pitcher. If you have nothing from me I hope you will have the more from my Master. You will have no taste of me this morning, but only of this precious declaration of the Lord. “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

It is love, love only, love always, love perfect, love to the uttermost. This statement is a declaration of *love in contrast* with certain other things. Did you notice in the 14<sup>th</sup> verse of the 30<sup>th</sup> chapter, “All your lovers have forgotten you; they seek you not”? Let me sound those two notes in sharp contrast—“All your lovers have forgotten you,” but—“I have loved you with

an everlasting love.” What a difference between the false friendship of the world and sin—and the changeless love of God! You, being earth-bound in heart, have been going after your idols and they have all deceived you. You have been trusting here and there and your trusts have all betrayed you! But the Lord Jehovah says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

You have provoked Him to jealousy by gods which were no gods, but He has never ceased His love. O Friends, how sadly have we erred by spiritual idolatry! How often have we hewed out broken cisterns which hold no water and yet our God loves us the same as always! What a miracle of Grace is this! As for our love to Him, how fickle! We have been hot today and cold tomorrow. Our love has been an April day—warm sunshine and cold showers—but the Lord has loved us with infinite constancy, even with an everlasting love! He has never changed. He could not love us more—He would not love us less. “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

The contrast is very beautiful if we place over against it either the world’s love to us, or our own love to God. Jehovah, when He came to His people in Egypt, made Himself known as, “I Am that I Am”—the immutable God who abides forever the same. As such He has revealed Himself to us, for He is without variableness or shadow of turning. How sweetly does Immutability smile on us as we hear it say, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love”! Thus, dear Friends, our text is a word *of love in the past*—“I *have* loved you.” We were rebels and He loved us. We were dead in trespasses and in sins and He loved us. We rejected His Divine Grace and defied His warnings, but He loved us. We came to His feet all trembling and afraid—and He loved us and washed us and robed us. He loved us and therefore He saved us.

Since then we have been earthly, sinful, changeful, unbelieving, proud, foolish—but He has loved us without pause. We have been ill and racked with pain, but He has loved us. We have lost our dearest relatives by the Lord’s hand, but even in this He loved us. Everything has been in a whirl round about us, but He has loved us with fixed affection. Our life has been a strange labyrinth, but He has loved us and that love has been the clue of the maze. How sweet it is, Beloved, to roll up the years gone by and put them away with this label—“Days of the loving kindness of the Lord!” The matchless declaration of the text is a voice *of love in the present*. The Lord loves the Believer *now*. Whatever discomfort you are in, the Lord loves you. In this house, perhaps, your heart is failing you with fear, but the Lord still says to you, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

“Everlasting” includes *today*. Things present are provided for as well as things to come. External circumstances do not change the love of God nor will your internal condition do so. Has He not said, “I am God, I change not”? Everlasting love makes no leaps and jumps so as to leave out this day of trouble and that hour of temptation. Even at this dark hour your name is on the heart of your God. The text is a voice *of love in the future*. It means, “I will love you forever.” God has not loved us with a love which will die out after a certain length of time—His love is like Himself—“from

everlasting to everlasting.” If you will read the chapter through to the end, you will see how God was about to deal with His chosen. He says, “I will build you, and you shall be built.” “He that scattered Israel will gather him.” “I will turn their mourning into joy.” “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” These are outpourings of a love which goes on forever—

***“Father, ‘twas Your love that knew us  
Earth’s foundations long before:  
That same love to Jesus drew us  
By its sweet constraining power,  
And will keep us  
Safely now, and evermore.”***

It is a joy worth 10,000 worlds to have this assurance sealed in the heart by the Holy Spirit! “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” This is a declaration of *love secured to us*—secured in many ways. Did you observe in this chapter how the Lord secures His love to His people, first, by a Covenant? Read the first verse—“I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.” See further on from verse 31 to thirty-four. The Covenant is summed up in these words, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” And if it is so, the Lord’s love must, indeed, be everlasting. God has pledged Himself to His saints by a Covenant of salt, “an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” The tenor of the Covenant is, “I will, and they shall.”

How my heart delights in this! God loves me with an everlasting love and He embodies that love in an Everlasting Covenant. Further, this love is secured by relationship. Will you dart your eye on to the 9<sup>th</sup> verse and read the last part of it? “I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born.” A man cannot get rid of fatherhood by any possible means. Yes, though my boy should transgress and dishonor his father’s name, yet I am still his father. There is no getting out of this relationship by any conceivable method and so, if, indeed, the Lord is unto you a Father, He will always give you a father’s love. In your adoption and regeneration the Lord has avowed Himself to be your Father and has virtually said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

“The son abides always.” “If children, then heirs.” His love is pledged again by redemption. Read the 11<sup>th</sup> verse—“For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.” Would you see the indenture of God’s Covenant love? Behold it in the indented hands and feet of the Crucified Redeemer! How shall Christ leave off loving His people when He has their names engraved on the palms of His hands? Redemption has sealed everlasting love. That spear which found His heart and set flowing its blood and its water has killed all doubts as to the eternal endurance of our Lord’s love! From now on let no man question our Well-Beloved, for He bears in His body the marks of His everlasting love! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever—and His love to His chosen is at this time what it was before time began!

Once more, in this passage of the book of the Prophet Jeremiah, the Lord certifies His love to His people in a very solemn way by calling Heaven and earth to witness it. Let me read from the 35<sup>th</sup> verse. “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.”

Thus are the laws of Nature made to seal the Law of Love! God, that cannot lie, thus makes the whole creation to be a guarantee of His abiding love to His own. I pray you, believe Him and be joyful in His House of Prayer. This is a declaration *of love divinely confessed*. The Lord has not sent this assurance to us by a Prophet, but He has made it *Himself*—“The Lord has appeared.” This declaration does not come through another tongue or lips, but the Divine Lover Himself breathes His own love words to His chosen—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

Notice, that it is *love sealed with a “yes.”* God would have us go no further in our ordinary speech than to say, “yes, yes”—and surely we may be content with so much from Himself. His “yes” amounts to a sacred declaration—“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.” He lifts His hand to Heaven and He swears—swears by Himself, because He can swear by no greater—“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” Beloved, feast upon this! I am very conscious of the feebleness of my exposition, but I am equally conscious of the great strength of the precious doctrines which I have set before you.

**III.** We finish, thirdly, with THE MANIFEST EVIDENCE. “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Here are *drawings mentioned*. Have you not felt them? We have not seen God, Beloved, but we have *felt* Him drawing us. Oh, what tugs He gave to some of us when we were children! Do you remember, when you were boys and girls, when you could not sleep at nights for heavenly drawings towards Divine things? Do you remember, when you were alone in the country, how you would sit down under a hedge and cry—you scarcely knew why—longing for something better than you had as yet reached?

Do you remember when the Lord Jesus drew you out of the horrible pit? Out of the midnight of despair? Do you remember how He drew you till He set your feet upon a rock? He drew you from spiritual death, from the corruption of sin, from the dominion of the devil! He drew you into life, love and liberty. He drew you to the foot of the Cross, to the Throne of Grace, to the Church of Christ! How well do I recall the hour when I was drawn to the place where I saw One hanging on a tree in agonies and

blood—then and there I looked—and as I looked I lived! Since then the Lord has drawn me along the paths of duty and delight, of faith and peace, of love and joy, of hope and rapture.

These were *drawings resulting from love*. He drew us because He loved us with an everlasting love. Other drawings of Divine goodness are resisted—resisted, in some cases, to the bitter end—and men justly perish. But the drawings of everlasting love effect their purpose. If you have been drawn to Christ, it is because God loved you before the world began! Do not think the Lord began to love you when you began to love Him. Oh, no! If God loves you now, He loved you before He created the earth. If this day He loves you, He loved you when there were no days, but the Ancient of Days. He saw you through the glass of His prescience and He loved you and predestinated you to be conformed unto the image of His Son—and from this purpose of love He will never turn aside. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance [change].” He will not alter the thing which has gone out of His lips.

Here are drawings mentioned—these were *drawings from God*. How sweetly, how Omnipotently God can draw! When He begins to draw a man, that person may pull back and perhaps, even for years, may stand out against Divine Grace—but when the Lord puts forth His Omnipotence the man is bound to yield. Without violating the will of man or making him less a free agent than he used to be, the loving kindness of the Lord can act as a charm upon him and win him completely with his full consent. “Draw me; we will run after You.” He draws, and we run. When Jehovah would have Israel come to Zion, it soon comes to pass that Israel *longs* to go there.

See in the sixth verse: “For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise you, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God.” We yield to the drawings because they come from the Lord’s own hand and their power lies in His love. As the drawings come from God, so are they *drawings to God*. Blessed is he whose heart is being drawn nearer and nearer to the Most High. Naturally, we struggle back to carnal things—we get taken up with business, with family, and with a thousand groveling cares—but when the Holy Spirit draws, it is upward and heavenward! He draws us to repentance, to faith, to love, to holiness and to continuance in well-doing. Oh, that we may now feel Divine drawings towards Him who is our All in All!

The Lord assures us that these are *drawings of His loving kindness*. However He draws, it is in love and whenever He draws, it is in love. Observe that the Church does not here say, “The Lord drew me,” but the Lord Himself says, “With loving kindness have I drawn you.” God knows better about His drawings than we do. We think that He pulls and snatches in anger, but He knows that He has always drawn in loving kindness! Because the horse is willful, it thinks the driver stern—our waywardness makes us think our Lord austere. The forces which He puts forth to work upon us are tender, gentle, kind and loving. He has drawn

you and me “with loving kindness.” I am sure He has thus dealt with me. Will you think of your own case and bless His name?

Lord, You have drawn me when I did not know it. You have drawn me when I thought I was willingly moving of my own accord. I see it now and I bless Your name for it. Draw me, still, that I may still say, “Your gentleness has made me great.” What a wonderful word is that—“loving kindness”—“loving,” “kindness”—two of the choicest jewels set side by side! Kindness is “kin-nedness,” and the Lord Jesus treats us as His kin—and He does this in the most loving manner. “With loving kindness have I drawn you.” He might have whipped me to Himself. He might have dragged me to the City of Refuge. He might have threatened me into repentance. He might have thundered me into submission. But no, “with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

I spoke to a Brother in Christ, yesterday, who called himself—and I think he spoke the truth—“a specially favored one.” I take that title, also. Take it, my Sister! Take it, my Brother! Does it not fit you well? Has not the Lord been specially good to you? “With loving kindness have I drawn you.” “Alas,” cries one, “but I have been whipped.” “You have chastised me and I was chastised.” Very true, but how few have been the strokes compared with what you deserved! “Oh, but God has rebuked me sharply,” says another. I answer, again, how few have been His chidings compared with what we might have expected considering our evil ways! Prevaillingly His cords have been cords of love and His bands have been the bands of a man. Bless the Lord, O my Soul! He leads me beside the still waters.

Only one thing more. *These drawings are to be continuous.* “With loving kindness have I drawn you” and He means to do the same forevermore. If you will look the chapter through, you will see that God promises to keep on drawing. See verse eight—“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth.” Verse nine—“They shall come. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way.” Read verse 10—“He that scattered Israel will gather him.” See verse 12—“Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord.” He that has begun to draw will go on drawing us till He has safely landed us where His everlasting love shall be our endless theme of song—even in Heaven where we shall dwell in eternal fellowship with the Eternal God! The everlastingness of Divine Love is the crown of it all!

I would not care to preach to you a Gospel which has no final perseverance in it. Spiritual life which can die is not the *eternal life* promised in the Gospel—and heavenly love which can fail is not the everlasting love of our text! Whenever I find that doctrine left out, I feel as if they had taken away the wheat from the barn and the grapes from the winepress. If the salvation which you set forth to be that of Christ is a *temporary* one, you may have it that like it—I will have none of it! I believe in *everlasting* love and I can do with nothing less! My hope to get to Heaven lies in this—as far as I have come on the road, the Lord has drawn me and He will draw me the rest of the way. I have had no strength of my own until now—I

have had no might but what He has afforded me—and I look to the Lord, still, for all the Grace I shall need between this spot and the gate of pearl!

Such a magnificent text as ours ought to make us consider two things. The first is, Is it so? *Am I drawn?* If God loves you with an everlasting love, He has drawn you by His loving kindness—is it so or not? Has He drawn you by His Holy Spirit so that you have followed? Are you a Believer? Do you carry Christ's Cross? You have been drawn to this. Then take home these gracious words—"I have loved you with an everlasting love." If you have not been so drawn, do you not wish you were? Oh, it were worth dying a thousand deaths to be a Christian after that fashion of Christianity which is based on everlasting love! Here is a glorious foundation—love without beginning, love without end—free, sovereign, unchangeable love! Not love bought by merit in *us*, nor produced by our efforts or entreaties—but love which comes to us because God will love and has chosen in His Divine Sovereignty to love *us*. "Everlasting love!" Why, the syllables are music! If you can climb that height, you have climbed where it is worth while to abide forever!

O Friends, if you cannot claim this, at any rate desire it and go humbly on your knees to Christ Jesus and look to Him and live! But, child of God, if you know these drawings and if it is true that God loves you with an everlasting love, then *are you resting?* "I have a feeble hope," says one. What? How can you talk so? He who is loved with an everlasting love and knows it, should swim in an ocean of joy! Not a wave of trouble should disturb the glassy sea of his delight! What is to make a man happy if this will not?

Come, come! We must have no more hanging heads. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! If the Lord has loved me with an everlasting love, I will not be cast down though the earth is removed! His love is better than wealth! His love is better than health (great blessing as that is)! His love is better than honor, better than usefulness! Everlasting love—and you have it! Man alive, wipe the tears out of your eyes and lift up your head! "Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," for if He has loved you so, what have you to fear? What is to be done but to love Him in return who has loved us so much? One thing I know—

***"All that remains for me  
Is but to love and sing,  
And wait until the angels come  
To bear me to my King."***

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—**

***Jeremiah 30:12-17; 31:1-14.***

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—220, 229, 748.**

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# NEW TOKENS OF ANCIENT LOVE NO. 2880

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.**

*“The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes,  
I have loved you with an everlasting love:  
therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.”  
Jeremiah 31:3.*

IT is said that when the stars cannot be seen during the day from the ordinary level of the earth, if one should go down into a deep well, they would be visible at once and, certainly, it is a fact that many of the brightest of God's promises are usually seen by His children when they are passing through some of their darkest experiences. As surely as God puts them into the furnace of affliction and trial, He will *be with them* in the furnace. I do not read that Jacob ever saw the Angel of the Lord until that night when, by the brook Jabbok, “there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day,” but then, the wrestling Jacob met the wrestling Angel foot to foot. I do not know that Joshua ever saw the “Captain of the Lord's host” until, outside the walls of Jericho, his Divine Leader appeared to him. I do not know that Abraham ever saw the Lord until, as a stranger in the plains of Mamre, He manifested Himself to His servant in the form of a traveler and His friends needing hospitality and refreshment.

It is in our most desperate straits that we often have our most joyous Revelations. John must go to “the isle that is called Patmos” before he could have the wondrous Revelation that was there given to him. It was only on that barren, storm-girt rock, shut out from the world's light, that he could find the fitting darkness in which to view the Glory of Heaven undistracted by the shadows of earth! The message of our text was given to Jeremiah in a time of deep distress—it was meant to be helpful to the Lord's people in their greatest desolations. That being the case, we may use it in a threefold manner and view it, first, as *an answer to many complaints*. Secondly, *as teaching some exceedingly valuable doctrines* and, thirdly, *as a stimulant to self-examination as to our state before God*.

**I.** First, then, our text may be viewed as AN ANSWER TO MANY COMPLAINTS.

If you look at your Bibles, you will see that the word, “saying,” is in italics, showing that it is not in the original, but has been supplied by the translators. Sometimes they have inserted words which have really brought out the meaning more clearly—but, in this case, if I understand

the passage, they have rather obscured the sense. The fact is, the first sentence is a complaint on the part of Israel. In the previous verse, God had said, "The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest." "Ah," said Israel, "but that was centuries ago—the Lord has appeared *of old* unto me." There was a note of complaint even in the expression of gratitude, as much as to say, "Times are changed, for the Lord does not appear unto me now." The complaint was that His choice Revelations and wondrous deliverances were all in the ages long ago. But the Lord's answer was, in effect, "It is true that these Revelations and deliverances were in the past, but they are designed to yield you present comfort, for they prove that I have loved you with an ancient love and, since I am Immutable, you may omit the word, *ancient*, and insert, *everlasting*—Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love."

Then, to complete the answer, the Lord avers that even in Israel's present time of mourning He had manifested His loving kindness. He seems to say, "Is not that as much as I ever did? Talk of all the wonders that I worked in the days gone by, when I cut Rahab in pieces and wounded the dragon—*this* is a greater wonder, that I have drawn you with loving kindness! Say not that the former times were better than these. Say not that the wonder-working power of God is exhausted. I loved you of old, but I also love you today and I have proved it by drawing you with the bands of My love. This is as great a miracle, as high a privilege and as sure a sign of My love to you as anything I did in the olden days."

Now, Brothers and Sisters, is not this sometimes our complaint—that we read in the Bible of what God did of old, but we see nothing like that nowadays? Indeed, some people think that although there were wonders in those ancient times, the oracle has long ceased to speak. I daresay you have heard of the poor ignorant woman who, on being told by her minister about the crucifixion of Christ, said, "Well, well, Sir, if it was so, it happened a long while ago and a great way off—but let us hope the story is not true." I address some people, not quite so ignorant as that woman, who, nevertheless, when I preach about the wonders God has worked, say, "Well, Sir, those things happened long ago and a great way off—but it is not at all probable that God would do anything like that *now*." What? Do you think that His arm is waxed short, or that His hands have become powerless, so that He is not now able to help His people as He did in the ages gone by? This is the complaint of many! Perhaps they do not put it into words, but this is what they often say in their heart.

What is God's answer to this complaint? Let each Believer hear Him say, "I have done for you as great wonders as I ever did for Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. I have worked miracles for you as matchless as when I brought Israel up out of Egypt, or led the chosen nation through the wilderness into the land of Canaan. Did I bring them up out of Egypt? Have I not brought you up out of the dominion of sin? Did I break the power of Pharaoh? Have I not crushed the might of Satan? Did I divide the Red Sea for Israel to pass over? Have I not made a pathway for you, through

many a tumultuous sea, so that you have gone over dry shod? Did I feed the people with manna in the wilderness and have I not fed you—not with bread, alone, but also with the Words which have come forth out of My mouth? Did I cause Moses to lift up the bronze serpent, that they might be healed when they were bitten by the serpents? And have I not lifted up the Son of Man, that whoever looks unto Him may be cured of the serpent-bite of sin? Did I bring them into Canaan and give them rest? And have I not said to you, ‘There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God’? Did I drive out the Canaanite before them and give them possession of the land? And have I not driven out your sins and will I not, by My Spirit, purify and cleanse your whole life? Did I give them Prophets after my own heart—and have I not given you shepherds who have fed you with knowledge and with understanding? Did I give to them, at last, King David to sit upon his throne—and have I not given to you great David’s greater Son and Lord to be the King of your heart and to rule over your entire being? Did I give them Solomon, a temple and riches and glory? And have I not promised to you Heaven and greater riches, glories and splendors than anything I ever gave to him when he ruled over Israel?”

I feel sure that if you will carefully look into it, your own experience will prove to be far more wonderful than anything which God did of old, so that you will have no reason to say, “The Lord appeared of old unto our fathers, but He is not now with their children.” We are apt, sometimes, to think that natural miracles are greater than spiritual ones—for instance, that the dividing of the Red Sea, as recorded in the Book of Exodus, is a greater miracle than the forgiving of sins, as recorded in the Gospels. But if you will weigh these two things in the balances of the sanctuary, you will at once see that the spiritual miracle is infinitely greater than the natural one. It is an easy thing to shut the mouths of ordinary lions, but it is a great deal more difficult to shut the mouth of the roaring lion of Hell who goes about seeking whom he may devour. It is a very simple matter for the Omnipotent God to make a world—He speaks and it is done! But to remake an innumerable company of His creatures who have become debased and spiritually dead—this is, indeed, a work only comparable to that which He accomplished when He “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant.”

God made the world without any suffering, but He could not redeem even one soul without unknown agonies. At the close of the six days work of Creation, God could say of everything that He had made, that it was very good. But, on the Cross, the Savior could not say, “It is finished,” until His very heart had been broken with anguish and reproach. God could rejoice over the works of His hands—and His delights could be with the sons of men, but, after man had fallen, God could not lift him up again without sighs, groans and bloody sweat—yes, death itself, the death of deaths—“the death of the Cross.”

Therefore, let none of us, in these days, say that the former times were better than the present ones, or that God has ceased to perform His

mighty works. He has done as much for us as He ever did for our fathers—so let us praise and bless His holy name, and laud and magnify His deeds of Grace! We, as a church, perhaps, are apt to think that we must not expect great things from God in these times. Why not—I pray—why not? Did not God give tongues of fire and send His Apostles forth to preach the Word to the people of every clime under Heaven? And is it not a fact that, within a hundred years of Christ's death, His Gospel had been proclaimed through all the then known world? And is it not possible that from this time forth the Church of Christ may take great strides like a giant, instead of creeping like a snail? Why may not the army of the Cross march onward—

**“From victory unto victory”—**

instead of being so frequently repulsed? Is the Church of Christ always to be like a little stream in which you may see the pebbles lie? No! Let her be like Kishon, the mighty torrent that swept away the hosts of Sisera and Jabin, and let her carry off the legions of darkness into the depths of despair! Let God but arise in His might and wondrous works such as He did in the days of Huss, and Luther, and Calvin shall be done again! The thunder-claps of Whitefield and Wesley shall reverberate again! God can make all His ministers to be flames of fire if He so pleases. He can once more awaken His Church, scatter all her foes before her and enrich her with the spoils of the holy war!

We have not fallen upon evil days, Beloved. We may be feeble, but our God is not! The light may be dim just now, but the sun is not dim. What if the winds do not always blow with hurricane force? They are but slumbering for a while and will awake with all their known vigor and drive the chariots of the sky at resistless speed! What if the ocean should seem, just now, to be sleeping in its briny bed? Before long it will respond to the Psalmist's invitation, “Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof.” If the stars should be, for a little while, hidden from your gaze, they will soon pierce through the darkness and, once again, shall you behold those eyes of Heaven peering down in mercy upon you! God can speedily renew to you all the manifestations of His Presence! Ebbs shall be followed by floods, winters by summers, and our present indications of a state of death shall give place to signs and tokens of a glorious life! Say not, complainingly, O Church of God, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me,” but rather rejoice and revel in His comforting assurance, “Yes, I did appear of old unto you, for I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

I have thus explained how I believe our text was intended to be used.

**II. Now we will look at it as TEACHING SOME EXCEEDINGLY VALUABLE DOCTRINES.**

And, first, I believe that it teaches us *the Doctrine of Effectual Calling*—“With loving kindness have I drawn you.” No one ever comes to the Lord unless the Lord, Himself, draws him. He cannot come and he will not come. Christ said to the murmuring Jews, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.” And to those who sought to kill Him because of His miracles on the Sabbath, He said, “You will not come to Me, that you might have life.” That is the sternest blow against

free-will of which I know! What a free-willer can make out of that text, I cannot tell. He says that any man can come to Christ, yet Christ said to some, "You will not come to Me." And both observation and experience prove that this is still true. Never yet did a soul come to Christ till first Christ came to it. There are some who think that the Doctrine of Effectual Calling means that God forces men to repent and believe against their wills—a more absurd and unscriptural notion than that could hardly be mentioned! God does not drag men to Heaven by the hair of their heads! There is a wide difference between physical force and spiritual force. God does not save an unwilling man—He makes him willing in the day of His power.

We may not be able to explain all about this great mystery, yet we may firmly believe—in full accordance with the laws which regulate human minds and, without at all violating the free agency of His creatures—that God knows how to persuade men! Yes, and how sweetly to "compel them to come in," that His house may be filled! There is a sort of compulsion, you know, which one exercises by argument. The force of logic, or the spell of eloquence, we all acknowledge. In this way the understanding is overwhelmed. The mind, at first, resists, and says, "I will not do such-and-such," but you bring argument after argument to bear upon it until, at last, it yields and says, "I am compelled to do it." Yet it acts willingly, freely and not without pleasure. The understanding has been enlightened that acts upon the rest of the powers of the mind—and thus the man is influenced. We may even say compelled without any violation of the fact that he is free!

And so the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding by bringing the Truth of God to the mind and, through that Truth, leads the soul to see certain consequences that follow from it. Then the understanding, being enlightened, the soul, with full consent, comes to Christ. The Holy Spirit does what you and I cannot do, for He acts directly upon the will. We cannot do that except by physical force and, even then, the will is not really changed, for, if a man resolves that he will not do a certain thing but you afterwards compel him to do it, I question if his will is actually conquered. But the Holy Spirit knows how to apprehend "My Lord Will-Be-Will"—as Bunyan calls him—put him in irons and lead him away captive. There is still the will, but I can hardly say that it is put into fetters, for it was in fetters before! But it is as changed and assimilated to the will of God that it is really free in its love of holiness. It seemed to be free before, but it was a slave to evil passions. Free-will is a slave, by nature, but when Christ comes and, (as some would say), fetters it with the golden chains of love—then the will becomes free, indeed!

Thus I have shown you how the Holy Spirit acts upon the will. He can also act upon the heart which is, perhaps, an even more important part of the man. When a man truly loves any objective, he is always willing to do anything in furtherance of that objective. And so, when the Holy Spirit shows to the mind's eye the beauties of Christ, His sufficiency and adaptation to the needs of the soul, the heart begins to love Christ. Where the heart goes, the will must follow—especially if it is led by "My Lord Under-

standing, the Lord Mayor of Mansoul,” according to Bunyan’s *Holy War*. So, though no soul ever comes to Christ without being drawn to Him, yet let it always be understood that such drawing is in perfect accordance with the laws which govern human minds and that the Spirit of God thus acts without, in the least degree, violating the freedom which God has given to men!

The text says that God draws His people “with loving kindness.” Yet it is quite certain that the Holy Spirit makes use of the Law of the Lord in drawing men to Christ and salvation. The thunders of the Law, the terrors of judgment, the stings of conscience and the pangs of death are all employed for this purpose—but they are all tempered and softened by the loving kindness of the Lord! In every instance you will find that it is His loving kindness that gives the finishing stroke—even with those who are driven to Christ by that stern teacher, the Law. The prodigal set out for his father’s house from a sense of need, “but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.” So that the last steps he took towards his father’s house were taken with those kisses still warm upon his cheek and His father’s welcome still music in his ears! Rightly do we sing—

***“Law and terrors do but harden  
All the while they work alone.  
But a sense of blood bought-pardon  
Soon dissolves a heart of stone.”***

And when that sense of blood-bought pardon comes to the heart, the Law’s thunders are all hushed and the heart is won for God!

The Master came one night to the door of a man’s heart and knocked on it with the mailed gloves of the Law upon His hands. The door creaked and shook, but it did not open, and the man put up against it all the furniture he could find, to keep it from opening, crying, all the while, “I will never be forced to yield.” So the Master turned away for a time, but, by-and-by, He came back and, with His own soft hand, using mostly that part where the nail had penetrated, He knocked again, oh, so softly and tenderly! This time the door did not shake, but, strange to say, it opened and there, upon his knees, the once-unwilling host was found, waiting to welcome his Divine Guest! He said to Him, “Come in, come in! You have knocked in such a way that I can no longer resist You. I could not think of Your pierced hand leaving its bloody mark upon my door and then of Your going away homeless—Your head filled with dew and Your locks with the drops of the night. Come in, come in! You have won my heart and I yield to You, You blessed Lord and Savior!” It is so, I believe, in every case—loving kindness wins the day! What Moses could not do with his hammer, Christ does with His Cross. What Moses, with the two tablets of stone, could never do, Christ does with one touch of the finger of His mercy!

This is the Doctrine of Effectual Calling as I see it in the text. Do you all understand it experimentally? Can each one of you say with Dr. Doddridge—

***“He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice Divine”?***

If so, may He continue to draw you until, at last, He shall draw you from earth to Heaven and you shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, to go no more out forever!

I also see in the text *the Doctrine of Eternal Love*. Why has the Lord drawn His people to Himself? Because He loved them “with an everlasting love.” To some good people, the word, “election,” sounds almost like blasphemy. If “predestination” is mentioned, they think it is something dreadful! Yet that Doctrine is in the text and you cannot get the idea of “predestination” away from the word, “everlasting.” The reason—and the *only* reason why any man is ever drawn out from the world and brought to Christ, is to be found in the eternal love of God! There is nothing more, naturally, in that man than in any other man. Indeed, in many cases he is worse than others. If salvation had been the reward of merit, he would have been left out. There is, by nature, nothing in man to win the heart of Christ. What form, what comeliness is there in human nature in His sight? Shall blackness win the heart of Him who is without blemish and without spot? Shall loathsome leprosy be attractive to the Divine Being? Shall deformity so charm the eyes of Jehovah that He shall love it? It cannot be! The *only* reason for God’s love to us is that He *will* love us. From that fountain of His own dateless love springs our effectual calling and everything else that comes to us!

Let us pause awhile and meditate upon this everlasting love. Let every Believer in Jesus think upon it to his own comfort. There are many old things in the world—we like to see old castles, old abbeys and old ruins—but, long before those castles and abbeys were built, Christ Jesus had proved His love to us by redeeming us from our sins by shedding His precious blood for us on Calvary’s Cross! We delight to travel in foreign countries and to see the remains of old Rome, or the pyramids of Egypt, or other wonders of the world. But long before any of those stupendous structures were piled, God had declared that the Seed of the woman should bruise the old serpent’s head! It is delightful to go back, in thought, to the time when the hills were born—when the hoary Alps were yet infants and when the aged ocean was but a baby, sporting in its newborn existence and clapping its hands in its early glee. But if you go back as far as that, you have not begun to get anywhere near the time when God, in covenant with Christ, gave to Him a people and promised that they should be His forever and ever!

Scientists love to go back to the most remote geological periods—to those ages before man was created—when those various deposits of shells, bones and other materials were made which are gradually being discovered. But you must go further back than that! Yes, you must go back beyond the very first creative act of God—and even then you will not have reached that period of which the Psalmist says, “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.” Fly back in imagination, if you can, to the time when the un navigated ether had never been disturbed by the wing of cherub and when the song of the seraphim had never startled the silence of the infinite! Go back to the time when God dwelt alone and you have only *then* begun to approach

that mysterious eternity when God loved His people “with an everlasting love.” This wondrous love, too, was from eternity fixed upon such a worm as I am—and such worms as you are, Beloved. What a marvel it is that the Eternal should ever have deigned to think upon me, or upon you, my Brother, my Sister! Try to grasp it, if you can—though it is one of those things which only “expressive silence” can set forth. “HE loved me—from *everlasting!*” Feed on this glorious Truth of God, O Christian, and remember that your being drawn to Christ is the effect of this eternal love and is, at the same time, the proof of it—the proof that you were upon God’s heart long before He—

**“Spread the flowing seas abroad,  
And built the lofty skies!”**

Read the text another way and it will teach us a third Doctrine. *The word, “everlasting,” looks not only backward, but forward.* “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” That is to say, “I have drawn you because I intend to save you to everlasting. I would not have called you by My Grace if I had meant to ever leave you to perish. I would not have begun the good work in your soul, by drawing you with loving kindness, if I had not intended to bring you to My Glory at the last.” O beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, love without beginning is indeed sweet, but there is a still more luscious sweetness in love without end! It will do us good to dilate a little upon this wondrous Truth of God, nor shall we need to draw much upon our imagination in doing so. I can readily picture the time when this dark hair of mine shall be silvered over with gray and the sunlight of Heaven shall begin to whiten my brow. Yes, but God’s promise is, “Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.” It needs no great stretch of the imagination to look forward to the time when the old man will have to lean upon his staff and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened and the grasshopper shall be a burden. Perhaps it will be the lot of some of us young people to grow old together—if so, may we grow ripe as we grow old! But if we are the Lord’s people, we shall be able, each one, to say as infirmities increase upon us, “My flesh and my heart fails, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Then we look forward to that silent chamber where friends will stand by our bed and whisper, “He cannot last long now.” Whether we shall hear them say it, or not, we cannot tell, but, “we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Now the last moment comes. The death sweat is on our brow, the death rattle is in our throat, yet David’s words are fulfilled in our experience—“Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Now my soul has stretched her wings! She has left mortality behind, to—

**“Soar through tracks unknown”—**

but still she sings—

**“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.”**

In due time will come the great Day of Judgment, but—



***“Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who anything to my charge shall lay?  
While through Your blood absolved I am  
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”***

Now the drama of Time is finished. Eternity has come and we shall be “forever with the Lord!” The sun has spent its fire, the moon has paled its feeble light, the elements have been burned up with fervent heat, the stars have shut their eyes in eternal blindness and the universe dissolves as the billow’s foam sinks into the wave that bears it. But still, our Lord’s words describe the joy of His people—“the righteous into life eternal.” Oh, that precious everlasting love of God, always ours, because with loving kindness He has drawn us!

There is a thief over there who wants to steal away this Doctrine from me. He has been borrowing the old-fashioned burglarious instruments of dead men—the pick-locks of Arminius and the center-bits of Mr. Wesley—a good man, but one who was on a bad errand when he tried to take this choice and comfortable Doctrine from the children of God. Yet I do not care what any of them may say or do, “for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” If we are in Christ, there is one thing which should make us feel very safe—if anything could ever divide us from the love of Christ, we would have been divided long ago. Suppose that our troubles could do it—then it would have been done long since, for we have had a sea full of them already! Yet, in six troubles the Lord has been with us and, in seven, He has not forsaken us!

Suppose that sin could do it—then, Brothers and Sisters, it would have been done in the first hour after our conversion. I must certainly make my sorrowful confession—

***“If ever it could come to pass  
That God’s own child should fall away,  
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,  
Would fall a thousand times a day!”***

If the Lord had ever meant us to fall into Hell, we would have gone there years ago.

“But,” say some, “perhaps we may meet with strong temptations.” Yes, probably we shall, but we shall never meet with a temptation stronger than the arm of God can enable us to overcome! Others say, “But perhaps we may backslide.” Yes, I know we may. But if we do, the Lord will say to us, even then, “Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you.” Yet others say, “But perhaps we may make the Lord angry with us.” Yes, I know we may, but I also remember how He pleaded with those who did so in the olden day—“How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me. My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.”

This is a question about which we need not dispute here, for I do not suppose that there is one member of this church who ever entertains a doubt about the truth of this Doctrine. We sing over and over again—

***“Did Jesus once upon me shine?  
Then Jesus is forever mine!”***

And we delight to repeat that confident assurance of Toplady, whose own end was so joyous because of his enjoyment of this precious Truth of God—

***“Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the Earnest is given!  
More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in Heaven.”***

**III.** I was to have concluded my discourse by considering our text as A STIMULANT TO SELF-EXAMINATION AS TO OUR STATE BEFORE GOD, but our time has gone, so I can only ask this all-important question—Brothers and Sisters, have you any part and lot in these things of which I have been speaking? Are you the objects of eternal love?

“That is just what I would like to know,” says one, “can you tell me?” Well, I cannot climb to Heaven to read the roll of the redeemed, nor can I tell you of a way to go up Jacob’s ladder to read it for yourself. But there is a way of knowing whether God loved you before He made the world—and whether He will love you after the world has ceased to be. It is this—has He drawn you with His loving kindness? Examine your hearts and see. Have you felt your need of Jesus? Has that need constrained you to pray to Him? Has that prayer been answered by your being enabled to put your trust in Him? Have you been drawn away from the confidence in which you once boasted? Have you been drawn away from the love of your old sin? Have you—to sum up all—been made a new creature in Christ Jesus? Then, never doubt your election and never doubt your glorification! “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

What are you doing, Mr. Unbelief? You are trying to separate glorification from calling, but you can never do it, for God has joined them together so securely that neither death nor Hell can break the bond that unites them! Remember—“whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” May we all be there, among the heavenly birds of paradise—

***“And vie with Gabriel while He sings,  
In notes almost Divine”***

of love without beginning and of favor without end! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 60**

The subject of this chapter is “The glory of the Church in the abundant access of the Gentiles, and the great blessings after a short affliction.”

**Verse 1.** *Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.* The Church is like the moon which shines with borrowed light. When God shines upon the Church, then the Church shines by reflecting His light. The Glory of Jehovah is her glory. If that is withdrawn, she is dark, indeed, but when that shines into her and through her, then her brightness is great, indeed.

**2, 3.** *For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the LORD shall arise upon you and His glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.* There is nothing that breaks the darkness except the light from God's face. And when that falls upon the Church, then the Church straightway begins to shine in the midst of the darkness—and multitudes come to the light. Even the great ones of the earth, the kings, come to the brightness of her rising.

**4.** *Lift up your eyes round about, and see: they all gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side.* There is no sign here of the Church of God being deserted. On the contrary, she shall become, through the Grace of God, the center of attraction! Men shall come from distant lands to her—however far removed they were, they shall still come—“your sons shall come from far.” She shall also be increased by the accession of those near at hand—“and your daughters shall be nursed at your side.”

**5.** *Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto you.* Oh that we might live to see this happy day when we shall feel a holy awe because of God's Glory as revealed in His Church! This fear is not a servile dread but a holy awe of God. And then the heart shall be enlarged—we shall deal with great things, wish for great things, attempt great things, do great things and see great things. “Your heart shall fear and be enlarged,” for the sailor far away upon the sea and the whole strength of the Gentiles shall come to you.

**6, 7.** *The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto you: they shall come up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory.* These people had mostly been followers of false prophets, but they, too, shall forsake their fanaticism and their bigotry and come to unite with the Church of God. Those least likely and furthest off from hope shall be brought in by the Sovereign Grace of God.

**8.** *Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?* The Church is astonished! She asks, “Who can they be?”

**9, 10.** *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you. And the sons of strangers shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister unto them for in My wrath I smote you, but in My*

*favor have I had mercy on you.* The Church of God is one continuously. At first it was a Jewish Church and it has never ceased to comprise within its bounds some members of the chosen race. But now, in these latter days, she has broken the narrow bonds of race and from Tarshish and the distant isles of the sea, multitudes are already coming to the Church of God—and they shall come much more numerous in the years that have not yet arrived.

**11-14.** *Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto you the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish, yes, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted you shall come bending unto you. Or, if they do not themselves come, their children shall; each generation shall include a remnant according to the election of Grace and, in due time, shall come the great ingathering.*

**14-22.** *And as they that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet, and they shall call you, The City of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. You shall also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shall suck the breasts of kings: and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood, brass, and for stones iron: I will also make your officers peace, and your exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, wasting nor destruction within your borders, but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. The sun shall be no more your light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the LORD shall be unto you an Everlasting Light, and your God your Glory. Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be your Everlasting Light and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time. “Amen! Amen!” So say we with all our heart!*

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

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

# THE DRAWINGS OF LOVE

## NO. 3561

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 1917.

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

***“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.”  
Jeremiah 31:3.***

From the context it is clear that this passage primarily refers to God's ancient people, the natural descendants of Abraham. He chose them from of old and separated them from the nations of the world. Their election fills a large chapter in history and it shines with resplendent luster in prophecy. There is an interval during which they have experienced strange vicissitudes, been visited with heavy chastisements and acquired an evil reputation for the perverseness of their mind and the obstinacy of their heart. Yet a future glory awaits them when they shall turn unto the Lord their God, again, be restored to their land and acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the King of the Jews, their own anointed King. Without abating, however, a jot or tittle from the literal significance of these words as they were addressed by the Hebrew Prophet to the Hebrew race, we may accept them as an Oracle of God referring to the entire Church of His redeemed family and pertaining to every distinct member of that sacred community. Every Christian, therefore, whose faith can grasp the testimony, may appropriate it to himself. As many a Believer has heard, so every Believer may hear the voice of the Holy Spirit sounding in his ears these words, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

There are two things of which we propose to speak briefly tonight—the *unspeakable blessing*—“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” And the unmistakable evidence—“therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

How exceedingly great and precious this assurance! How priceless this blessing to be embraced with the love, the everlasting love of God! Our God is a God of Infinite Benevolence. Towards all His creatures He shows His goodwill. His tender mercies are over all His works. He wishes well to all mankind. With what force and with what feeling he asserts it! “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezekiel 33:11). And whoever of the whole human race, penitent for past sin, will turn to Jesus, the Savior of sinners, he shall find in Him pardon for the past and Grace for the future! This general Truth of God, which we have always steadfastly maintained, which we never saw any reason to doubt and

which we have proclaimed as widely as our ministry could reach, is not at all inconsistent with the fact that God has a chosen people among the children of men who were beloved of Him, foreknown to Him and ordained by Him to inherit all spiritual blessings before the foundation of the world! As an elect people, they are the special objects of His love. On their behalf the Covenant of Grace was made. For them the blood of Christ was shed on Calvary. In them the Spirit of God works effectually to their salvation. Of them and to them it is that such words as these are spoken, "I have loved you with an everlasting love"—a love far superior to mere benevolence—towering above it as the mountain above the sea! A kinder love, deeper, far sweeter than that bounty of Providence which gilds the earth with sunshine, or scatters the drops of morning dew—a love that reveals its preciousness in the drops of blood distilled from the Savior's heart and manifests its personal, immutable favor to souls beloved in the gift of the Holy Spirit which is the seal of their redemption and the sign of their adoption. So the Spirit, Himself, bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God! Now think for a little while of—

#### I. THIS INESTIMABLE BLESSING.

Let us consider the text word by word. "I have loved you," *Who is the speaker?* "I," the great "I am," Jehovah the Lord! There is but one God, and that God fills all things. "By Him all things were made, and through Him all things consist." He is not far away, to be spoken of as though He were at an infinite distance from us, though Heaven is His Throne—for He is here with us. We live in Him, move in Him and have our being in Him. Imagination's utmost stretch fails to grasp any true conception of what God is. The strong wing of reason, though it were stronger than that of the far-famed albatross, would utterly fail if it should attempt to find out God. Incomprehensible are you, O Jehovah, Your Being is too great for mortal mind to compass! Yet this we understand—Your voice has reached us—from the excellent Glory it has broken in tones distinctly on our ears—"Yes, I have loved you." Believer in Christ, have you heard it? The love of any creature is precious. We prize the love of the beggar in the street. We are flattered by it. We cannot estimate it by silver or gold. Most men court the acquaintance or esteem the friendship of those among their fellow creatures who are in anyway distinguished for rank, for learning, or for wealth. There is a charm in living in the esteem of those who, themselves, are estimable, but no passion of our nature will supply me with an adequate comparison when I ask what must it be to be loved with the love of God! To be loved by Him whose dignity is beyond degree, whose power to bless is infinite, whose faithfulness never varies, whose Immutability stands fast like great mountains—to be loved by Him who dies not, and who will be with us when we die, to be caressed by Him who changes not in all our cares, to be shielded by His love when we stand at the Judgment Seat and pass the last dread ordeal that responsible creatures have to undergo! Oh, to be loved of God! Had you the hatred of all mankind, this honey would turn their gall into sweetness! It were enough to make you start up from the dungeon of

wretchedness, from the chamber of poverty—yes, or from the bed of death! How like an angel you might feel—and know that such you are—a prince of the blood Imperial! If this is true of you, my Friend, in unspeakable joy you may emulate the bliss of blest spirits who see Jehovah and adore Him before His Throne!

*Who is loved?* “*I have loved you.*” Drink that in if you can, Christian! Come to that wellhead—here is joy for you, indeed! Repeat the words to yourself with fitting emphasis, “Yes, I have loved you.” Is it not amazing that the Mighty God should love any of the race of Adam—so insignificant, so ephemeral, so soon to pass away? Did an angel love an ant creeping on an anthill, it were strange, though the disparity is comparatively trivial between these two—but for the eternal God to love a finite man is a marvel of marvels! And yet had He loved all men everywhere, save and except myself, it had not so amazed me as when I grasp the Truth in relation to myself that He has loved me! Let me hear His voice saying, “Yes, I have loved you,” and forthwith I sit down abashed with humility and overwhelmed with gratitude, to exclaim with David, “What am I, and what is my father’s house, that You have brought me here? Why have You loved *me*?” Surely there was nothing in my natural constitution, nothing in my circumstances, nothing in my transient career that could merit Your esteem or regard, O my God! Why, then, have You spoken thus unto Your servant, saying, “I have loved you”?

Oh, how well I could imagine His having rather said to one and another of us, “I have despised you!” You were, perhaps, once a drunk, yet He loved you! A swearer, yet He loved you! You had a furious temper, yet He loved you! And you have, even now, infirmities and imperfections that make you sometimes loathe yourself and lie down in shame, weary of life, chafed with the conflict in which you have to fight with such besetting sins day by day—evil thoughts and evil desires so degrading to your nature, so disgusting to yourself, so dishonoring to your God. Still, He says, “Yes, I have loved you.” Come, Brothers and Sisters, hear the Word of God and heed it! Do not fritter away the sweetness of the text with annoying questions! Here it is. In large and legible letters it is written. Come to this wellhead and drink! Take your fill and slake your thirst with this Divine Love. If you believe in Jesus, what though you are poor, obscure, illiterate and compassed with infirmities which make you despise yourself, yet He who cannot lie says, “I have loved you.” These words have been said to a Magdalene—they have been spoken to one possessed with seven devils—they were whispered in the heart of the dying thief! Within the tenfold darkness of despair, itself, they have sounded their note of cheer. Blessed be the name of the Lord, you and I can hear the voice of His Spirit, as He bears witness with our spirit, “Yes, I have loved you.” What a disparity by Nature, what a conjunction by Grace between these two, the, “I,” and the, “you”—the Infinite “I” and the insignificant “you”—the first Person so grand, the second person so paltry!

Whenever I attempt to speak about God's love, I feel that I would rather hold my tongue, sit down to ponder and ask Believers to be kind enough to join me in meditation rather than wait upon my feeble expressions. If the love of God utterly surpasses human knowledge, how much more a mortal's speech? *What is it He bestows?* That God should be merciful to us is a theme for praise. That He should pity us is a cause for gratitude. But that He should *love us* is a subject for constant wonder, as well as praise and gratitude! Love *us*? Why, the beggars in the street may excite our pity, and towards the criminals in our jails we may be moved with compassion—but we feel we could not *love* many whom we would cheerfully help. Yet God loves those whom He has saved from their sins and delivered from the wrath to come! Between that great heart in Heaven and this poor throbbing, aching heart on earth there is love established—love of the dearest, truest, sweetest and most faithful kind! In fact, the love of woman, the mother's love, the love of the spouse—these are but the water—but the love of God is the wine! These are but the things of the earth, but the love of God is the celestial! The mother's love mirrors the love of God, as the dewdrop mirrors the sun, but as the dewdrop compasses not that mighty orb, so no love that beats in a human bosom can ever compass, as no words can express the height, length and breadth of the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

“Yes, I have loved you.” Oh, come near then, Christian! Your Father, He that chastened you yesterday, loves you! He whom you forget so often and whom you have offended so constantly, yet loves you! You know what it is to love. Translate the love you bear to your dearest friend and look at it and say, “God loves me better than this.” Do you think there are some you could die for cheerfully, whose pain you would freely take if you could ease them of it for a while, upon whose weary bed you would cheerfully lie down if a night of suffering could be spared him? Your Father loves you better than that and Jesus proves it to you! He took your sins, your sorrows, your death, your grave, that you might be pardoned, accepted and received into Divine favor—and so might live and be blessed forevermore!

Passing on with our meditation, let us observe that *there is incomparable strength*, as well as inexhaustible sweetness in this assurance, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” That word, “everlasting,” is the very marrow of the Gospel. Take it away, and you have robbed the sacred Oracle of its most Divine part! The love of God is “everlasting.” The word bears three ideas within it. *It has never had a beginning.* God never began to love His people. Before Adam fell. Before man was made, or the mountains were brought forth. Before the blue heavens were stretched abroad, there were thoughts of love in His heart towards us! He began to create, He began actually to redeem—but He never began to love. It is eternal or “everlasting” love which glows in the bosom of God towards every one of His chosen people! Some of our hearers, strange to say, take no delight in this Doctrine. But if you know that everlasting love is yours, you will rejoice to hear it proclaimed again and again! You will welcome



the joyful sound. Ah, God's love is no mushroom growth. It sprung not up yesterday, nor will it perish tomorrow but, like the eternal hills, it stands fast. You were loved of your God before He had fashioned Adam's clay, or ever this round world was rolled from between His palm to spin in its mighty orb! Long before the stars began to shine, before time was, when God dwelt in eternity all alone, He loved you, then, with an everlasting love!

The second idea is that *He loves His people without cessation*. It would not be everlasting if it came now and then to a halt—if it were like the Australian rivers which flow on, become dry and flow on again. The love of God is not so. It swells and flows on like some mighty river of Europe or America, ever expanding, mighty, joyous river returning again into the eternal ocean from where it came. It never pauses. Christian, your God's love to you is always the same. He cannot love you more! He will not love you less! Never, when afflictions multiply, when terrors frighten you or when your distresses abound, does God's love falter or flag. Let the rod fall ever so heavily upon you, the hand that moves, like the heart that prompts the stroke, is full of love! Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His Grace. Whether He brings you down into the depths of misery, or lifts you up into the seventh Heaven of delight, His faithful love never varies or fluctuates—it is everlasting in its continuity.

And, being everlasting, the third thought is, *it never ends*. You will grow gray soon, but the love of God shall still have its locks bushy and black as a raven with the verdure of youth! You will die soon, but the love of God will not expire. Your spirit will mount and traverse unknown tracts but that love shall encompass you there! And at the bar of judgment, amidst the splendors of the Resurrection Morning in the Millennial Glory, and in the eternity that shall follow, the love of God shall be your unailing portion! Never shall that love desert you. A destiny how splendid! For your soul an heritage, how boundless! Stand tonight on your Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the north, and the south, to the east and the west, for the infinite prospective that lies before you is all your own inheritance! God began not to love you, nor will He ever cease to love you! You are His and you shall be His when worlds shall pass away and time shall cease to be! There is infinitely more solace and satisfaction here than I can bring out. I must leave it with you and commend it to your meditation. I am sure there is no more delightful manna for the pilgrims in the wilderness to feed upon than this Doctrine applied to the heart! The love of God towards us personally in Jesus Christ is an everlasting love. Now we come to the second point, which is—

**II. THE UNMISTAKABLE MANIFESTATION**, the manifestation by which this love is made known. Good people often get puzzled with the Doctrine of Election. In their simplicity they sometimes ask, "How can we know whether we are the Lord's chosen, or ascertain if our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life?" You cannot scan that mystic roll, or pry between those folded leaves. Had you an angel's wing and a seraph's

eye, you could not read what God has written in His book! The Lord knows them that are His. No man shall know by any Revelation save that which the Holy Spirit gives according to my text. There is a way of knowing and it is this—"Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you." Were you ever drawn? *Have you been drawn with loving kindness?* If so, then there is evidence that the Lord loved you with an everlasting love! Be ready, therefore, to judge yourselves. You are challenged with this pointed question—Were you ever Divinely drawn? Say now, Beloved, have you experienced this sacred attraction that made you willing in the day of His power? Were you ever *drawn from sin to holiness*? You loved sin once—in it you found much pleasure. There were some forms and fashions of vice and folly which were very dear to your heart. Have your tastes been changed and your track been turned by the Sovereign charm of this Divine loving kindness? Can you say, "The things I once loved, I now hate. And what gave me pleasure, now causes me a pang"? Is it so? I do not ask you whether you are perfect and upright. Alas, who of us could answer this question otherwise than with blushes of shame? But I do ask if you hate sin in every shape and desire holiness in every form? Would you be perfect if you could be? If you could live as you like, how would you like to live? Is your answer, "I would live as though it were possible for me to serve God day and night in His Temple, without a wandering thought or a rebellious wish"? Ah, then, if you have been thus drawn from sin to holiness by the way of the Cross, no doubt He loved you with an everlasting love and you need not discredit it! You may be as sure of it as if an angel should come and drop a letter into your hands on which those words would be inscribed! Yes, still surer, for the angel might have missed his way, but God's Word cannot err! If you are thus drawn, He has loved you with an everlasting love!

Listen again. Have you ever been drawn from self to Jesus? There was a time when you thought yourself as good as other men. Had the bottom of your heart been searched, there would have been found written there, "I do not see that I am so great an offender as the most of my neighbors. I am respectable, upright, moral. I should hope it would speed well with me at the last, for if I am not, now, all that I should be, I shall try to be good and by earnest endeavors, joined with fervent prayers and repentance, I hope to fit myself for Heaven." Oh, that you may be drawn away from all such empty conceit and led to rest your hope solely on that blessed Man who sits at the right hand of God, crowned with Glory, though He was once fastened to the Cross, despised and rejected of men and made to suffer as a scapegoat for our sins! This, Beloved, would be a sure sign that you had renounced yourself and closed in with Christ. You must have been loved with an everlasting love. It is as impossible for any of the elect of God to come to Christ and lay hold on Him without Divine drawing, as it would be for devils to feel tenderness of heart and repentance towards God! If you can say from your heart—

***"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to Your Cross I cling,"***

then His drawing may suffice as the proving that He loved you with an everlasting love!

Have you ever been *drawn from sight to faith*, from consulting your creature faculties to confidence in God? You used to depend only on what you called your common sense. You walked by the judgment of your own mind. Do you now trust in Him who truly is, though He is invisible—who speaks to you, though His voice is inaudible? Have you a sense, day by day, of the Presence of One Supreme whom you cannot hear nor see? Does the unseen Presence of God affect you in your actions? Do motives drawn from the next world influence you? Do you, in the day of trouble, lean upon an arm of flesh, or cry and pray, and make supplication to the Almighty? Have you learned to walk in dependence upon the living God, even if His Providence seems to fail you and gives a lie to His promises? Know, then, that a life of faith is a special gift of God—it is the fruit of Divine Protection so you are enabled to walk with God—and He deigns to befriend you so you may humbly but safely conclude that your name stands inscribed in the records of the chosen! To be drawn into a life of faith is a blessed evidence of Christ's love.

Are you, moreover, day by day being drawn from earth to Heaven? Do you feel as if there were a magnet up there drawing your heart so that when you are at work in your business, in your family with all its cares, you cannot help darting a prayer up to the Most High? Do you ever feel this onward impulse of something you do not understand, which impels you to have fellowship with God beyond the skies? Oh, if this is so, rest assured that it is Christ that draws you! There is a link between you and Heaven—and Christ is drawing that link, and lifting your soul forward towards Himself. I love that sweet hymn and I hope you love the sentiment of it—

***“My heart is with Him on the Throne.  
And ill can brook delay!  
Each moment listening for the voice,  
‘Make haste and come away!’”***

If your heart is here, below, then your treasure is here. But if your heart is up there—if your brightest hopes, your fondest wishes are in the heavenly places—your treasure is manifestly there and the title-deeds of that treasure will be found in the eternal purpose of God whereby He ordained you unto Himself that you might show forth His praise! Thus have I tried to show you that those who are thus drawn may be assured that they were loved with an everlasting love. And now will you further observe that it is with loving kindness they are drawn?

Some people are frightened into religion. Beware of any religion that depends upon exciting your terror! Some people's religion consists entirely of doing what they think they must do, though they do not like it. They are afraid of punishment, or they are anxious for a reward. Such is not the religion of Jesus Christ! It is said that the soldiers of Persia were driven into battle and that the sound of the whips of the generals could be heard even while the battle was raging— lashing on the unwilling ranks

to fulfill their part in the fray! Not so went the Greeks to battle. They rushed like lions amidst a flock of sheep to tear their prey. They fought for their country, for their temples, for their lives, for all that they held dear—and right cheerily from such an impulse within did they engage in the war. The difference between the Greeks and the Persians is just the difference I want to describe among the professed followers of our Lord. The genuine Christian serves God because he loves Him, not that he fears Hell, for he knows that he has been delivered from condemnation, being washed in Jesus' blood! He serves God not that he expects to earn Heaven—he scorns the idea. Heaven is not to be merited by our poor paltry works. And besides, Heaven is *his inheritance* since Christ has given it to him, having made his title sure! *He serves God because he loves Him.* He is drawn by a sense of the love of God towards him to love God in return. Who is the best servant? Not, surely, the man who only does what he is paid to do—who serves you for his wage and who would betray your interest to benefit himself! Rather is he the true servant who would cling to you in all your fortunes or misfortunes, through good or through evil report.

Some of the old-fashioned servants were so attached to their masters that they were reckoned on and regarded as members of the family. Those are the true servants of Christ who love Him and render Him their services, not menially for the pay they count upon, but loyally because their hearts are faithful and true to Him! They love Him so that they could not turn aside from Him, or seek another Lord. Say now, are you thus drawn with loving kindness? What a lovely word this, “loving kindness,” is! “Kindness,” seems to be like some huge opal or some sparkling diamond, a Koh-I-Noor, and love seems to be like fine gold to encircle it! I think I could stand and look at that word, “loving kindness,” till with sacred enchantment I burst into a song! There is such a charming sweetness and yet such an immutable stability in the Grace of God which it reveals that our rapture is kindled as often as we review it! Of that loving kindness I have tasted here below and of that loving kindness I hope to sing in yonder skies in worthier notes than this weak voice can now compass! The loving kindness of the Lord, as it beams from His eyes, as it is communicated by His helping hands, as it is expressed by His gentle, tender voice, quickens the soul in the path of duty and restrains it from falling into sin! How can I do this great wickedness, how can I sin against so almighty a Friend whose kindness to me is so gratuitous, so constant, and so exceedingly generous?—

***“Now for the love I bear His name,  
What was my gain, I count my loss!  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to His Cross.  
Yes, and I must and will esteem  
All things but loss for Jesus' sake!  
Oh, may my soul be found in Him  
And of His righteousness partake!”***

Thus clearly and thus surely may you judge for yourselves whether you are God's chosen or not. Are you drawn and how are you drawn? Is it with loving kindness? These are the two points that melt and fuse in experience. As before that God whose eyes of fire search you through and through, I do conjure you to judge and righteously judge right now as to your own condition! Be not satisfied to rest peacefully until you can say, "Thanks and praise to God's eternal love, I am drawn by Grace! By Divine Grace I am constrained. From now on I freely yield myself up to Christ to be His servant, His disciple, His friend, His brother, forever and forever. The Lord has appeared unto me, saying, 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.'"

Do I hear a sigh come up from some in this assembly? A sigh which, being interpreted, would say, "Alas, for me this sacred solace was never mine! I was never drawn. I feel no love, no such melting favors as your description of loving kindness ever dawned on me. But, ah, I wish I were drawn, that I had a part among that blessed throng who shall forever see His face! Oh, that I could believe that I, though the meanest of them all, should find my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life!" Why Friend, with you it would seem the drawing has begun! Surely God's loving kindness has made your mouth water! I rejoice exceedingly over those who hunger after the Bread of Life, for they shall speedily be filled! Right well I know my Master will give it to them. If you desire Christ, depend upon it, Christ desires you! No sinner was ever beforehand with Christ. When you are willing to have Him, He is evidently willing to have you! You had not put out one hand towards Him if He had not already put two hands on you! Oh, if you will but trust the bleeding Lamb—believe that He can save you—and trust in Him to save you with unfeigned confidence, then you are already drawn! This is proof positive that God has loved you from before the world's beginning!

Oh, how I would that some might be drawn tonight! Some who have been great and grievous sinners. There are many such among the chosen vessels of mercy. God grant some of you young people may be drawn. And you who, though no longer young, are still without the blessing, I cannot bear the thought that you should tarry longer uncalled by Sovereign Grace. May the Holy Spirit attract you! May you feel in your heart the wish to belong to Christ—the desire to be counted among them when He makes up His jewels. Turn that wish into a prayer! Bow your head, now, and pray with this petition. God will hear your secret sighs. He does not reject sincere prayers, however badly they may be worded. If you can get no further than a sigh, it has its value in His kind esteem. The tear that fell just now upon the floor of the pew was not lost, for an angel tracked and treasured it and carried it on high. God will accept you if you will accept Christ. If you trust Jesus now, 'tis done! You are saved! The moment a sinner believes and trusts in Christ, he is saved—saved forever! In that moment his iniquity is blotted out and he is accepted in the Beloved. From that moment he might sing—

***“Tis done, the great transaction’s done!  
I am my Lord’s and He is mine!  
He drew me and I followed on,  
Glad to obey the voice Divine!”***

The Lord appear to you, speak to you and bless you, saying to you, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
MATTHEW 7:13-23.**

**13, 14.** *Enter you in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in there because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.* Be up and on your journey. Enter in at the gate at the head of the way and do not stand hesitating. If it is the right road, you will find the entrance somewhat difficult and exceedingly narrow, for it demands self-denial and calls for strictness of obedience and watchfulness of spirit. Nevertheless, “enter you in at the strait gate.” Whatever its drawbacks of fewness of pilgrims, or straitness of entrance, yet choose it and use it! True, there is another road, broad and much frequented—but it leads to destruction. Men go to ruin along the turn-pike road but the Way to Heaven is a bridle path. There may come other days when the many will crowd the narrow way, but at this time, to be a popular road, it must be broad—broad in doctrine, so-called, in morals and in spirituals. But those on the strait road shall go straight to Glory—and those on the broad road are all abroad. All is well that ends well! We can afford to be straitened in the right way rather than enlarged in the wrong way because the first ends in endless life and the second hastens down to everlasting death! Lord, deliver me from the temptation to be “broad,” and keep me in the narrow way, though few find it!

**15.** *Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.* We have need of our judgments and we must try the spirits of those who profess to be sent of God. There are men of great gifts who are “false prophets.” These affect the look, language and spirit of God’s people, while really they long to devour souls, even as wolves thirst for the blood of sheep. “Sheep’s clothing” is all very fine, but we must look beneath it and spy out the wolves! A man is what he is inwardly. We had need beware. This precept is timely at this hour. We must be careful, not only about our way, but about our leaders! They come to us—they come as prophets—they come with every outward commendation but they are very Balaams and will surely curse those they pretend to bless!

**16.** *You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?* Their teaching, their living and their effect upon our minds will be a sure test to us. Every doctrine and doctrinaire may thus be tried. If we gather grapes from them, they are not thorns. If

they produce nothing but thistledown, they are not fig trees. Some object to this practical method of test, but wise Christians will carry it with them as the ultimate touchstone. What is the effect of modern theology upon the spirituality, the prayerfulness, the holiness of the people? Has it any good, effect?

**17, 18.** *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 man produces according to his nature, he cannot do otherwise. Good tree, good fruit. Corrupt tree, evil fruit. There is no possibility of the effect being higher and better than the cause. The truly good does not bring forth evil—it would be contrary to its nature. The radically bad never rises to produce good, though it may seem to do so. Therefore, the one and the other may be known by the special fruit of each. Our King is a great Teacher of prudence. We are not to judge, but we are to know—and the rule for this knowledge is as simple as it is safe. Such knowledge of men may save us from great mischief which would come to us through associating with bad and deceitful persons.

**19.** *Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.* Here is the end to which evil things are tending. The ax and the fire await the ungodly, however fine they may look with the foliage of profession. Only let time enough be given and every man on earth who bears no good fruit will meet his doom! It is not merely the wicked, the bearer of poison berries, that will be cut down, but the neutral, also—the man who bears no fruit of positive virtue must also be cast into the fire!

**20.** *Therefore by their fruits you shall know them.* It is not ours to hew or to burn, but it is ours to know. This knowledge is to save us from coming under the shadow or influence of false teachers. Who wants to build his nest upon a tree which is soon to be cut down? Who would choose a barren tree for the center of his orchard? Lord, let me remember that I am to judge myself by this rule. Make me a true fruit-bearing tree.

**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 who is in Heaven.* No verbal homage will suffice! “Not everyone that says.” We may believe in our Lord’s Deity and we may take great pains to affirm it over and over again with our, “Lord, Lord”—but unless we carry out the commands of the Father, we pay no true homage to the Son! We may acknowledge our obligations to Jesus and so call Him, “Lord, Lord”—but if we never practically carry out those obligations, what is the value of our admissions? Our King receives not into His Kingdom those whose religion lies in words and ceremonies, but only those whose lives display the obedience of true discipleship!

**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 who work iniquity!* An ortho-

dox creed will not save if it stands alone, neither will it be sure to do so if accompanied by official position and service. These people said, “Lord, Lord,” and, in addition, pleaded their prophesying or preaching in His name. All the preaching in the world will not save the preacher if he does not practice what he preaches! Yes, and he may have been successful—successful to a very high degree—“and in Your name have cast out devils”—and yet, without personal holiness, he who casts out devils will be cast out himself! The success boasted of many have had about it surprising circumstances of varied interest—“and in Your name done many wonderful works”—and yet the man may be unknown to Christ! Three times over the person is described as doing all “in Your name,” and yet the Lord, whose name he used so freely, so boldly, knew nothing of him and would not allow him to remain in His company! The Lord cannot endure the presence of those who call Him, “Lord, Lord,” and then work iniquity! They professed to Him that they knew Him, but He will “profess unto them, I never knew you.” How solemn is this reminder to me and to others! Nothing will prove us to be true Christians but a sincere doing of the Father’s will! We may be known by all to have great spiritual power over devils and men—yet our Lord may not acknowledge us in that Great Day, but may drive us out as impostors whom He cannot tolerate in His Presence!

—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.**



# A PROMISE FOR THE BLIND

## NO. 3139

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1909.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE BAPTIST CHAPEL, CHURCH STREET, BLACKFRIARS ROAD,  
ON TUESDAY EVENING, APRIL 3, 1855.

[ON BEHALF OF THE CHRISTIAN BLIND RELIEF SOCIETY.]

*“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and she that travails with child together: a great company shall return there.”*  
*Jeremiah 31:8.*

POOR Israel, as a nation, had its ups and downs. It was sometimes in captivity and soon it experienced a deliverance. At one time it was diminished and brought low through affliction, persecution, or sorrow. At another, it was multiplied and increased exceedingly. It was the deliverance from one of these evil seasons that Jeremiah was commissioned to announce by the promise that the Lord’s people would come again to their own land.

Let us consider, for a few minutes, the circumstances of these Israelites. It must have been a sorrowful thing for them to dwell in a land that was not their own, to hear a language they didn’t understand, to see the fierce inhabitants, their enemies, and the idolatrous worship of the heathen gods. We can well conceive of their mournful spirit and the feeling with which they gave utterance to their plaintive song, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” But God sent among them Prophets who told them that they would be restored and herein lay the glory of the promise—that it included *all* the captive people of God—whatever might be their rank or position! The blind, the halt and the lame would all come back. The hoary-headed man with his staff, equally with the young and vigorous—the lame as well as he who could run like the rabbit—all would come to the Mountain of the Lord! Nor should even women be left behind—“The blind and the lame, the woman with child and she that travails with child together: a great company shall return there.” Had the Prophet not said that the blind and the lame would come, that their faces should be turned towards the holy city—had he not said that they would enter into the Temple of the Lord—they might have thought that being poor and blind, they would never be allowed to come unto the holy mountain, even Zion.

But, my Friends, this text has a further prophetic signification in its reference to the gathering in of the Jews in the latter times. And with this we have more particularly to do. I believe in the restoration of the Jews to their own land in the last days. I am a firm believer in the gathering in of the Jews at a future time. Before Jesus Christ shall again come upon this earth, the Jews shall be permitted to go to their beloved Palestine. At present they are only at the entrance gates. I am told that the Jews have a practice of bringing some of the soil of their own country to England under the seal of the chief rabbi. And that at their death it affords them the highest joy to know that they will have a portion of this soil buried with them, even were it no more than sufficient to cover a sixpence. They have another idea—of course, it is a very foolish one—that every Jew dying in a foreign land travels underground direct to Palestine. It is because they love their country that they believe such a lie!

But whatever may be our opinion respecting the Jews and their position, this I know—though they ought not to be fettered and oppressed, though they ought to have a vote in Parliament, though they ought to be freed from civil disabilities, yet they never can amalgamate with other nations. The time will come when they shall leave their sordid ideas in the pursuit of gain to secure the treasures of Paradise. They are now a scattered people and must be till the last times. Then suddenly they shall rise, touched by the influence of the Spirit of God, again to be His people. Their temple shall again resound with the worship of God and old Zion will be again built! Then may we truly expect the latter-day Glory shall come. Certainly, if I read my Bible aright, I must believe that the down-trodden, despised Jew shall again be glad and poor old Judea, that has been the scoff and scorn of mankind, shall again be lifted up and restored—and shall shine forth “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!”

If it is so, mark you, the blind Jew and the lame Jew will as surely go to Jerusalem as any of the rest of the Jews! They will all go—the blind, the lame, the woman travailing with child will all meet in God’s holy Temple.

However, I leave this case of the Jews, their coming up from Babylon and the last gathering in of Israel. I know very little of them, but would rather speak of my text under another aspect. You know that God has a peculiar people, as much a chosen nation as the Jews ever were—a called and elected people whom the Father has chosen from before the foundation of the world—a redeemed people whom Jesus has purchased with His precious blood. They are a sanctified people because God has separated them from the rest of mankind. Well, all these people are to be brought in, to be gathered to Christ—everyone whom God has chosen, redeemed and sanctified shall come to Mount Zion! Blessed be God, they shall all come to this city above! God’s wheat shall all be gathered into God’s garner. The ransomed of the Lord shall all join the throng around the Throne of God forever—

**“To bless the conduct of His Grace,  
And make His glories known.”**

My text says the blind and the lame shall meet there. Now I am about to speak, first of all, of *the characters named in the text. And then I am going*

*to try to show you the duties of Christians to the persons so designated, or spoken of, as the lame and the blind.*

**I.** First, I am to speak of THE CHARACTERS NAMED IN THE TEXT—“the blind and the lame.”

We will speak of the blind first. There are three classes of blind people—the physically blind, the mentally blind and the spiritually blind. In illustration, I would take you to the London Road and there you will find these three orders of blind people. There is the school for the blind, where you will find the physically blind. Just before you is the Roman Catholic Cathedral—there you will find the spiritually blind. And further on is the Bethlehem Hospital, commonly called Bedlam, where you will find the mentally blind. These are, then, the three divisions—the naturally, or physically blind, the mentally blind and the spiritually blind.

Well, first, we refer to *the physically blind*. If chosen of God, they will love Him and they shall all come to Heaven. Ah, poor Adam, how many are the infirmities which your one sin has entailed upon your offspring! Oh, mother Eve, how did your act of transgression bring on us a train of woes! Lameness, blindness, deafness along with all the sad ailments of the paralytic, the dumb, the deformed! But all honor to the Second Adam! He overcomes these infirmities! He saves “the blind and the lame.” Through His Sovereign Grace, He loves many of the poor, darkened sons of men. Blind men are not chosen for soldiers except in the army of God, but in that army He enlists many blind warriors and makes them the best of His soldiers! Yes, blind saints, God loves you and will not exclude you from Heaven! The man who has to go leaning on his crutch all through the journey of life is not refused at Heaven’s door because of his crutches. You blind men, groping along in the world, when you arrive at Heaven’s gate, are you to be excluded because of the lack of your eyes? Rather, the moment they come to its threshold, God speaks the word and the withered limb regains its strength, the dim eye its luster and thus, “the blind and the lame” become fitted to join the shining multitude around the Throne of God!

We know that if we die aged, we shall not be aged in Heaven—there are no furrows on the brow of the glorified ones! Their eyes know no dimness—they know not what it is to have infirmities of body, for mortality is exchanged for immortality! It may be that we are weakly here. It may be that we have a feeble, diseased, emaciated body here. But there we shall have a spiritual body, like unto Christ’s glorious body, clothed in light and majesty! We shall then be partakers of the bliss of Heaven, shining as the stars in the firmament forever and forever! Now, you physically blind, you who do not see the glorious rays of the sun, do not be downcast, but remember that there have been many illustrious saints who have endured the same calamity. Chief and foremost, remember the Blind Bard of Paradise, who, when his eyes were darkened, saw things that others had never imagined! I mean Milton. Though you are deprived of your temporal sight, you may see far into the deep things of God! Others have been blind as well as you. Many blind men have been great men. You physically blind, rejoice that blind though you are, if you look

to Christ, by faith, you will join “the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.”

But, then, secondly, *the mentally blind* shall be restored. I have referred to Bedlam for an illustration. I do not mean, by that, to refer to those who have suffered the entire loss of their reason. It would be a very doubtful question to discuss whether a person born without the use of his natural reason can be an object of Divine Grace. It would lead to a great deal of discussion, without any practical result, so I leave it alone. But there is such a thing as practical mental blindness. There may be the master-mind, gigantic conceptions, a fruitful imagination with the power of leading and governing other minds—and yet there may be a degree of mental blindness. We are all somewhat blind. We have all, we must confess, an imperfect vision—except the “Pope” who claims to be infallible and, therefore, proves that he is *more blind* than the rest of us! There are some of us who feel our fallibility in point of judgment and who are obliged to acknowledge our ignorance and lack of clear mental perception.

But, my Friends, some of the mentally blind shall enter Heaven. I now refer to those whose mental powers are very weak. I sometimes meet with these mentally blind people. They do not know much of their own language and, perhaps, have never put as many as a half a dozen words together in their lives in public. I once heard of one of these, an old woman, who had heard a most uninteresting discourse upon metaphysics, but she called it “a blessed sermon, for,” she said, “the minister told us all about the Savior being both meat and physic, too.” I think that was a good mistake! She, like many of the mentally blind, could not understand one-half of the words that are used by some of our preachers. She belonged to the somewhat mentally blind folk who have not had the benefit of teaching or training. Well, blessed be God, they do not need it to find the way to Heaven! “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.”

Well, all these mentally blind shall come. There will be people in Heaven who never read a word in their lives. I know not how low the Grace of God can go. Some poor creatures who know nothing of the things of earth, even these may understand the Gospel, it is so plain! We do not need a giant intellect in order to grasp its Doctrines. Its element and substance is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Believer, ignorant though you may be, you can comprehend this grand scheme of man’s redemption, so do not say that because you are poor and ignorant, you will not enter Heaven!

But, then, thirdly, there are *the spiritually blind*. Whenever you find a person spiritually blind, you ought to be very careful how you speak to him, or of him. I do think this is a matter in which we often fail. The discussion between Catholics and Protestants has been far from what it ought to have been. We seem bent upon forcing them to submit at once to our views, but this is wrong of us. We may condemn wrong principles, but let us always speak gently of the men who hold them. They are spiritually blind, so we should deal kindly with them, avoiding that bitterness of spirit which is so often manifested. Sick men will not take your medicine if you give them vinegar with it—give them something sweet with it

and they will take it. So be kind and loving to the spiritually blind and they will be likely to give heed to you.

To say nothing of the Church of Rome, the Puseyites, or Arminians—to go no further than the present congregation—there are many spiritually blind here! Oh, men or woman, do you see your lost and ruined state by nature? No. Did you ever, by faith, see Christ crucified on the Cross for man's redemption? No, you did not! Did you ever understand the sufficiency of the mediatorial Sacrifice of Christ? No, you did not! Did you ever realize what vital union with the Person of Christ means? No! Has the Holy Spirit ever spoken in your heart? You are obliged to confess that you know nothing about His purifying influence! Ah, then, you are blind—spiritually blind! Chapelgoer, churchgoer—having the form of religion without the power, you are blind as a bat which can only fly in the night! Or like the owl—when daylight comes, you will not be able to find your way. Unless the scales are removed from your eyes, you will be exposed to the Judgment of God! But if the Holy Spirit illuminates you, though *now blind*, you shall come to Zion with the rest of the chosen race!

But my text also mentions the lame. These are not so much the subject of our consideration tonight and may, therefore, be passed over briefly. But many of the lame are to get to Heaven. Who are they? Well, Brothers and Sisters, *there are some of God's people who are lame because they are weak in faith*. We sometimes hear a great deal said about possessing a full assurance of being a child of God and then, every now and then, we hear of others who have a doubt, or only a hope, concerning their salvation. As good Joseph Irons used to say, "They keep hope, hope, hoping—hop, hop, hopping all their lives because they can't walk." Little-Faith is always lame. Yet, although some of you never could say with certainty that you are the people of God, yet one or another of you can say with sincerity—

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Your kind arms I fall;  
Be You my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my All."***

You lame ones, fear not—you will not be cast out! Two snails entered the ark—how they got there, I cannot tell. It must have taken them a long time. They must have started rather early, unless Noah took them part of the way. So, some of you are snails—you are on the right road, but it will take you a long while to get into the ark unless some blessed Noah helps you!

Again, *backsliders are lame*. There are Christians to be found who believe that it is possible to fall from a state of Grace. Here I would speak cautiously. God's people cannot fall finally—but they can fall a long way. When a Christian falls, it is no light matter. I hear some talking of falling and getting up again, as if it were nothing. But let them turn to Hebrews 6:4-6. [See Sermon #75, Volume 2—FINAL PERSEVERANCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] But we will rejoice that—

***"Grace will complete what Grace begins,  
To save from sorrows or from sins."***

I do not say that a Christian may not fall and break a limb—but I do say that a child of God cannot fall, spiritually, and break his neck! He cannot fall without grievous injury. The result, in his experience, will be unhappiness and misery. Look at poor David—after falling into that great sin, his history was nothing but troubles from rebellious sons and enemies! You loving, living children of the blessed God, I know that you will not talk lightly of falling into sin. Backsliders, fallen ones, God will have mercy upon you if you are truly penitent. It is a glorious fact that the sorrowing backsliders shall not be left behind. Backsliders shall sing above, as God's restored children, whom He always has loved. Blind and lame ones, believe in the Lord and you shall be found amongst the followers of the Lamb at the last!

**II.** Now secondly and very briefly, WHAT ARE OUR DUTIES TO THESE BLIND PEOPLE?

I answer, first, *to the spiritually blind, our duty is to pray for them.* Yes, I believe we should never do anything without prayer. However much you may profess to love them, yet if you do not pray for them, I cannot believe what you say! An infidel once met a Christian and said to him, "You don't believe in the Bible. You don't believe in the Gospel!" "I do," the Christian replied. "Well, then, how is it that as I pass you in going to my business every day, you have never spoken to me concerning my soul? You don't believe the Bible!" "I do." "I cannot believe you," he said, "for if you do, you are very unfeeling."

Now, Christians, if you believe that you have spiritually blind people around you, what is your duty towards them? Sirs, unless you feel a deep concern about their state, I fear that the heavenly Physician has not removed the spiritual cataract from your eyes! If we believe their position to be one of extreme peril—that they, for lack of the Light of God to guide them—are perishing, how we ought to exert ourselves on their behalf! The ministers do not feel enough for souls in this degenerate age, but keep on preaching, preaching, preaching, or read, read, reading their good-for-nothing manuscripts—and yet there is no increase to their churches! The minister is here in the pulpit and the people are down below in the pews. There is no golden link of sympathy between them. We need more of this sympathy! We need more intense love to souls, the souls of the ungodly! We need to go more to God's Throne to plead *for* you and then to plead *with* you! As God's ambassadors, we say with Paul, "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." It is no trifling matter to be spiritually blind! It is no light matter to have no eyes! No, the blind are sure not to enter Heaven if they die spiritually blind! They must have their eyes enlightened by God if they are to be found above! May the ever-blessed and glorious God awaken all the spiritually blind! May we who are ministers and all others who have the opportunity use it, under God's blessing, to throw the Light of God upon their dark minds! Try to get your neighbors to the House of God, but take care that it is a Gospel ministry to which you invite them! Take care that you prove the value of the Gospel you possess by your own consistent practice. Pray for them and it may be that God will give them repentance unto life.

And then, next, *our duty to the mentally blind is to be very charitable and try to instruct them.* We must manifest, in all our dealings with them,

a kindness of disposition, never attempting to thrash them into what we believe to be right. I do not believe in the utility of bigoted denunciations. I sometimes differ from my Christian Brothers, but I do not quarrel with them on that account. All I can say is, "Well, Brother, if you can't see it, I cannot help it. It is in the Bible and I can see it plainly enough." We, as Calvinists, believe that men cannot see the Truth of God unless it is revealed to them by God. We should, therefore, be the last to condemn the ignorant, but should do our utmost to instruct them and to open their eyes. It is of no use to attempt to force a man to believe. It has been said—

***"Convince a man against his will,  
He's of the same opinion still."***

So, whenever you get into an argument with a mentally blind man, suppose it to be a Roman Catholic, don't get cross with him. If you do, you will never make a friend of your opponent. Suppose others do not see as you do on some matters, on infant baptism or anything else—and I think we Baptists very often err in our temper in some of our discussions—well, don't try to compel them to see as you see! Brothers and Sisters, that is not the way to convince them of the Truth of our beliefs. Instead of acting like that, we should try to show them the Truth as it is in the Bible—and then they must shut their eyes or else see it. "It is there," you say—"if you can't see it, I shall not be cross or out of temper with you." Never let us be cross with the mentally blind. You know that the policeman, when he meets a man at night, turns his lantern straight upon the man's eyes—so must we turn the Light of Truth upon these blind eyes and not take out the truncheon to thrash them! We should also reflect that there was a time when we, too, knew nothing. It therefore behoves us to act kindly to the younger scholars in the school, seeing that we have not always been in the highest class.

But now to conclude, we have to speak of our duty to the *physically blind*. There are some good people who would be glad to work for their living, but they are disabled through affliction. Among these are the blind. When I go among the sick and poor, I find so many to relieve that when I have given all I can afford, there is still more to do. Well, there they are, and to do them any permanent good you must give them something week by week. I was thinking, suppose another globe were created and rolled up alongside this world, so that when any in this world became sick, or blind, or helpless, we could put them over into the other world to get rid of them? Well, suppose that were done, Brothers and Sisters? You would soon want them back again! "There is dear Sister So-and-So. She is entirely dependent upon the charity of her friends, but she has such rich deep experience—we have derived so much comfort from her society that we must have her back." Then, if these poor sufferers were in another world, you would have no way of doing good by relieving them—and then you would wish you could do something for them for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. You would then have to complain, "Here is this shilling—I don't know what to do with it. Here I have money that I cannot use because there are no objects of charity to whom I can give it—I wish Jesus Christ would come down to earth again.

Would I not minister to His necessities if He were here? Yes, that I would! I would give Him the best of things that were to be found anywhere. Then I would sit at His feet, washing them with my tears and wiping them with the hair of my head.”

You say that, but if all these poor blind people were in another world, there would be no one to whom you could minister for His sake, so Jesus Christ has sent some of them to us that we may have the opportunity of doing good to them and that, by-and-by, He may be able to say to us, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto Me.” He has cast some blind people upon the Church on purpose—to give us the treat of doing something for them. He has said, “The poor you have always with you.” He allows you the opportunity of showing your love to Him by relieving those who need your help. When I hear of a church where they are all gentlemen, I always say farewell to that, for where there are no poor, the ship will soon sink! If there are no poor there, Christ will soon give them some if they are a real Gospel Church.

Now, the reason we have a Blind Society is simply this—there are some good people who cannot help themselves because they are blind and helpless. There is one from my Church and some from other Churches. It is not a very large Society—it is all the better for that, for I find that in the great Societies, there is so much influence needed and so many votes required, that those who need help most cannot obtain it! And those who do not need it so much, but have the influence, get it all! Well, in this Christian Blind Relief Society, some of these poor blind people receive a trifle every week and I assure you they are all needy and deserving objects of your charity.

This is what we ask you tonight to support. Jesus Christ stands at the door and says to you as you leave, “Give Me something, this night, if you love Me.”

I have to appeal so often, and am followed so much by my own people, that I have not the face to ask you for anything tonight, so Christ shall ask, instead, and I will ask next time. Remember the poor! Take care of the blind!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
MATTHEW 9:27-35; 20:29-34.**

[The first page of the preceding Sermon shows that it was delivered in the year 1855, before the beloved preacher had come of age. The Expositions given by Mr. Spurgeon at that early period were not reported, as they were in the later years of his ministry. Consequently, two passages relating to Christ’s healing of the blind have been selected from *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, the popular Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew which was being prepared by Mr. Spurgeon almost up to the time of his Home-going in January, 1892. Readers will therefore have the opportunity of comparing the messages left on record by him near the beginning and near the close of his long and prosperous London pastorate.]

**Matthew 9:27.** *And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, You Son of David, have mercy on us! No sooner does Jesus move, than fresh candidates for His bounty appear! The blind seek sight from Him. Two sightless men had become companions in affliction—they may have been father and son. They were in*



downright earnest, for they *“followed Him, crying, and saying, Have mercy on us.”* Persevering, vehement, yet intelligent was their appeal. They were of one mind in reference to Jesus and, therefore, they went one way and used one prayer, to one and the same Person. Our Lord is here called by His royal name—*“You Son of David.”* Even the blind could see that He was a king’s son! As Son of David, He is entreated to show mercy and act according to His royal nature. It is mercy which gives us our faculties and mercy alone can restore them. This prayer suits us when we perceive our own darkness of mind. When we cannot see our way into Truth, let us appeal to the Lord for gracious instruction, always remembering that we have no claim except that which originates in His mercy.

**28.** *And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus said unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yes, Lord.* They were most eager for the gift. They gave Him no leisure—they pressed *into the house* where He had sought privacy and rest—they *came to Him*, even to Jesus Himself! The Lord would have them express their faith and so He makes inquiry of them as to what they believe about Himself. Jesus makes no inquiry about their eyes, but only about their faith—this is always the vital point! They could not see, but they could believe and they did so. They had a specific faith as to the matter about which they prayed, for our Lord put it plainly, *“Believe you that I am able to do THIS?”* They had also a clear view of the Character of Him to whom they applied, for they had already styled Him, *“Son of David,”* and now they called Him, *“Lord.”*

**29.** *Then touched He their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you.* Again He questions their faith and this time He throws the whole responsibility upon their confidence in Him. *“According to your faith be it unto you.”* He touched *them* with His hand, but they must also touch Him with their faith! The word of power in the last sentence is one upon which He acts so continually that we may call it, as to many blessings, a rule of the Kingdom of God. We have the measuring of our own mercies—our faith obtains less or more according to its own capacity to receive! Had these men been mere pretenders to faith they would have remained blind. If we will not in very truth trust our Lord, we shall die in our sins.

**30.** *And their eyes were opened and Jesus immediately charged them, saying, See that no man knows it.* They both saw the double miracle was worked at the same moment. Comrades in the dark, they are now companions in the light! Singular that for two souls there should thus be one destiny! It was a singular double fact and deserved to be made widely known, but our Lord had wise reasons for requiring silence. He *“immediately charged them.”* He left them no option—He demanded complete silence. He that opened their eyes closed their mouths. Jesus did not desire fame—He wanted less crowding, He wished to avoid excitement and, therefore, He was express and peremptory in His order—*“See that no man knows it.”*

**31.** *But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country.* They most industriously published what they were told to conceal till *“all that country”* rang with the news! In this they erred greatly and probably caused the Savior so much inconvenience by the pres-

sure of the crowd, that He had to leave the town. We may not hope that we are doing right if we disobey our Lord! However natural disobedience may appear to be, it is disobedience and must not be excused. Even if the results turned out to be advantageous, it would not make it right to break the command of our Lord. Silence is more than golden when our King commands it. He does not seek applause, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets that He may be known to be doing a great work. His followers do well to copy His example.

We do not wonder that our Lord's name became famous when there were such persons to advertise it. How earnestly and eloquently would the two formerly blind men tell the story of how He opened their eyes! We are not forbidden, but *exhorted to make known the wonders of His Grace*. Let us not fail in this natural, this necessary, this useful duty. More and more let us "*spread abroad His fame*."

**32.** *As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil.* As a pair of patients leave the surgery, another poor creature comes in. Note the, "*behold*." The case is striking. He comes not freely, or of his own accord—"they brought" him—thus should we bring men to Jesus. He does not cry for help, for he is "*a dumb man*." Let us open our mouths for the dumb. He is not himself, but he is "*possessed with a devil*." Poor creature! Will anything be done for him?

**33.** *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.* Our Lord does not deal with the symptoms, but with the source of the disorder, even with the evil spirit! "*The devil was cast out*" and it is mentioned as if that were a matter of course when Jesus came on the scene. The devil had silenced the man and so, when the Evil One was gone, "*the dumb spoke*." How we should like to know what he said! Whatever he said, it matters not—the wonder was that he could say anything. The people confessed that this was a wonder quite unprecedented—and in this they only said the truth—"It was never so seen in Israel." Jesus is great at surprises! He has novelties of gracious power. The people were quick to express their admiration, yet we see very little trace of their believing in our Lord's mission. It is a small thing to marvel, but a great thing to believe! O Lord, give the people around us to see such revivals and conversions as they have never known before!

**34.** *But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils.* Of course they had some bitter sentence ready! Nothing was too bad for them to say of Jesus. They were hard pressed when they took to this statement which our Lord, in another place so easily answered! They hinted that such power over demons must have come to Him through an unholy compact with "*the prince of the devils*." Surely this was going very near to the unpardonable sin!

**35.** *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

**Matthew 20:29, 30.** *And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, You Son of David! On Jericho a curse had rested, but the*

Presence of Jesus brought it a blessing! We suppose He must go through Jericho as once before He must go through Samaria. Our Lord *departed from Jericho* and a vast crowd attended Him, for His fame had spread far and wide. Nothing striking is noted concerning His doings till two beggars come upon the scene. Mercy needs misery to give it an occasion to work. *Behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside.* They could not behold Jesus, but we are asked to behold them. They had taken up a hopeful position, by the wayside, for there they would be likely to hear any good news and there they would be seen by the compassionate. They had ears if they had not eyes and they used their hearing well! On enquiry, they learned *that Jesus passed by* and believing that He could restore their sight, they grew earnest in prayer to Him—*they cried out.* Their plea was pity—“*Have mercy on us.*” Their appeal was to the royal heart of Jesus—“*O Lord, You Son of David.*” Our Lord’s sermon was interrupted by the repeated outcries of these two blind beggars of Jericho. But this never displeased Him—neither would true preachers of the Gospel be disconcerted if some of their hearers were to cry out with similar eagerness for salvation.

**31.** *And the multitude rebuked them, told them they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, You Son of David!* The crowd desired to hear Jesus, but could not do so because of the shouts of the blind men—therefore *the multitude rebuked them.* Did they upbraid them for ill manners, or for noise, or for harshness of tone, or for selfishly wishing to monopolize Jesus? It is always easy to find a stick when you wish to beat a dog. The people wanted them to be quiet and *hold their peace*—and found plenty of arguments why they should do so. This was all very well for those who were in possession of their faculties, but men who have lost their sight cannot be quieted if there is an opportunity of obtaining sight—and as that opportunity was rapidly passing away from these poor men, they became vehement in their earnestness! Unhindered by the threats of the crowd, *they cried the more.* Some men are urged onward by all attempts to pull them back. When we are seeking the Lord, we shall be wise to make every hindrance into a stimulus. We may well bear rebukes and rebuffs when our great aim is to obtain mercy from Jesus Christ!

Unvarying was the blind beggars’ cry—“*Have mercy on us, O Lord, You Son of David!*” Variety of words they had no time to study. Having asked for what they needed—in words which leaped from their hearts—they repeated their prayer and their plea. And it was no vain repetition!

**32.** *And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will you that I shall do unto you? Jesus stood still.* At the voice of prayer, the Sun of Righteousness paused in His progress! Believing cries can hold the Son of God by the feet! *He called them*—and this because they had called Him. What comfort that call yielded them! We are not told that they came to Him. There is no need to tell us that. They were at His feet as soon as the words were uttered! How sadly blind are those who, being called a thousand times by the voice of Mercy, yet refuse to come! Our Lord enlightened minds as well as eyes and so He would have the blind men intelligently feel and express their needs. He puts to them the personal en-

quiry—“*What will you that I shall do unto you?*” It was not a hard question, yet it is one which many an attendant at our places of worship would find it difficult to answer. You say you “wish to be saved”—what do you mean by those words?

**33.** *They said unto Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.* Just so. They needed no time for second thoughts. Oh, that our people were as quick to pray, “*Lord, that our eyes may be opened!*” They went straight to the point. There is not a word to spare in their explanatory prayer. No book was needed, no form of words—the desire clothed itself in simple, natural, earnest speech.

**34.** *So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.* So—that is, since they thus stated their desire and had so great a need, *Jesus had compassion on them*, pitying their loneliness in the dark, their deprivation of enjoyment, their loss of power to follow a handicraft and their consequent poverty. *He touched their eyes.* What hands were those which undertook such lowly fellowship with human flesh and worked such deeds of power! *Immediately their eyes received sight.* Only a touch and light entered! Time is not necessary to the cures of Jesus. Proof of their sight was at once forthcoming, for *they followed Him.* We best use our spiritual sight when we look to Jesus and keep close to His heels.

Oh, that the reader, if he is spiritually blind, may ask for the touch of Jesus and receive it at once, for immediately he will receive sight! An inward light will, in an instant, shine forth upon the soul and the spiritual world will become apparent to the enlightened mind! The Son of David still lives and still opens the eyes of the blind! He still hears the humble prayer of those who know their blindness and their poverty. If the reader fears that he, too, is spiritually blind, let him cry unto the Lord at this very instant and he will see what he shall see—and he will forever bless the hand which gave sight to the eyes of his soul!

—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.**

# GATHERING IN THE CHOSEN NO. 3308

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 1912.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, APRIL 29, 1866.

*“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together; a great company shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born.”  
Jeremiah 31:8, 9.*

THERE IS a wonderful variety in the acts of God and yet there is a most singular uniformity. So complete is this uniformity that any one deliverance which God works for His people will be found to be, in its main features, just like any other of His deliverances.

Starting—for it is a convenient starting-point—with the deliverance of God’s people out of Egypt, there are many points of similarity between that marvel of mercy and the bringing back of the banished tribes from Babylon to their own land. There was a manifestation of the same gracious consideration, of the same Omnipotent power, of the same efficient purpose worked out in all points according to God’s Eternal Covenant. Then, taking another great leap, that return from Babylon is, no doubt, a very fair picture and a very excellent type of the gathering together in their own land of the Jews in the days that are yet to come when they shall say to one another, “Let us go up to the house of our God.” Everybody will admit that it will be as great a wonder to see the Jews, who are now a nation scattered abroad throughout the whole world, once more dwelling together in Palestine, as it was for them to have been brought out of Egypt or delivered out of Babylon in days long past! But taking a still greater leap, this again is a type of the greatest of all deliverances—the deliverance neither of the Jews alone nor of the Gentiles alone, but of the whole chosen company who shall be brought out from all the lands of sin and error into which they have been driven by their first parents’ fall and their own actual transgressions! They shall be brought out by the same almighty power, only on a far greater scale, and they shall meet, as in a common focus, in that Jerusalem above which is the home of all the chosen! I want to turn your thoughts toward that glorious future when the vast assembly of the redeemed will “sing the Song of Moses, the servant of God, and the Song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are

Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, You King of saints.”

**I.** And, first, I am going to show you that we have, in the text, DEITY MANIFESTED.

There is a Divine ring about the text as there was in that ancient fiat which startled the darkness and caused it to flee away. “Let there be light, and there was light.” So here the Lord says, “I will bring them and gather them...and they shall come...I will lead them. I will cause them to walk; they shall not stumble.” It is, “I will,” and, “they shall” all the way through! There is no admission of doubt or of the possibility of failure. Jehovah speaks in the Sovereignty of His power and says, “I will do this, and I will do that,” and there is not an, “if,” or a, “perhaps,” or a “maybe” to mar the certainty of the Divine Declarations—“I will” and “they shall.”

Remember, Beloved, that it was so in Egypt. “Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” Yet, when the Lord smote his first-born with all the first-born throughout the land of Egypt, “he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up and get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord as you have said.” And when the time came for captive Israel to return from Babylon, God had but to speak and the iron bars snapped in sunder and the gates of brass flew open! So also shall it be in the latter days when the Jews are restored to their own land. By some mysterious influence which probably many of them will not be able to understand, they will be irresistibly drawn from all parts of the earth to Emmanuel’s land and, meanwhile, that same Divine Energy is gathering together the chosen unto the great Shiloh, for “unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” Invisible bands of love are continually drawing to Christ those for whom He died. The mighty magnet of His atoning Sacrifice is constantly attracting to Him the members of His redeemed family—more in one age than in another, yet always according to the eternal purpose and decree of God—for although He acts mysteriously and silently, yet He always “works all things after the counsel of His own will.”

I do not know any theme upon which one might dilate with greater joy than that of the Omnipotent energy of God as displayed in the salvation of sinners, yet it must always be understood that we proclaim this Truth in complete harmony with the responsibility of man and his absolute free agency. I have always taught you that the *Omnipotence* of God over the human heart is never exercised in such a way as to violate the free will of man. It would be a clumsy kind of *Omnipotence* that would do as it pleased with men whether they were willing or not! But it is Divine *Omnipotence* that molds the will, enlightens the judgment and fashions the heart and mind and character of man according to the Lord’s eternal purpose. Yet, on the other hand, let me beseech you never to let your ideas of the free agency of man prevent you from adoring the Omnipotent

Sovereignty of God. We are not to have man's free will sitting on the throne! Its place is that of a humble servant waiting at Jehovah's feet. Let the glorious Truth of God that "the Lord reigns" be proclaimed in its fullest sense and let the man who dares to limit the Sovereignty of God answer for it before Him who, with a rod of iron, would dash in pieces the potter's vessel that presumed to say, "Why have you made me thus?" We believe that when the great drama of human history is complete, it will conform in every jot and tittle to the eternal plan that was in the mind of God long before He spoke the great creative word which called the Heaven and the earth into existence!

In the bringing up of Israel out of Babylon there were a great many questions to be considered. Would the king be willing to let them go? Would they themselves be willing to go? By what process could they be ranged under one leader? How could they be provided for and provisioned for such a long journey? By what means could they be safely conducted through the perils of the wilderness? How could they again be settled in a land which had become barren through the curse of God resting upon it? Yet, when the set time came, all these difficulties vanished! As God was in that plan of bringing His people back from Babylon, the king's heart was turned as the husbandman turns the channel of irrigation in the midst of the garden! As God was in it, the Jews sighed and longed to return to Jerusalem! As God was in it, they went back, not like trembling doves flying from a pursuing hawk but like a bannered host returning from the conquest loaded with spoil!

Just so is it with the sinner and the salvation of his soul—there are many questions that he may want to ask. How can prejudice be subdued? How can ignorance be overcome? How can the stubborn will be controlled? How is it possible for the Ethiopian to change his skin and the leopard his spots? But, when God comes forth to save, it is as though a man walked through cobwebs and brushed them away from him on either side, or as though a giant stalked through a host of pigmies and made them fly to right or left—

***"When He makes bare His arm,  
What shall His work withstand?"***

When He puts forth the fullness of His strength to effect His Divine Purpose, who shall say to Him, "What are You doing?" Therefore, you ministers of God, be bold, for you serve the Lord God Omnipotent! You servants of Christ in every sphere, be brave, for you have not espoused a losing cause! Everyone of you, though you may be but little in the army of the Lord, yet are—

***"Strong in the Lord of Hosts,  
And in His mighty power"—***

for His Kingdom cannot be overthrown, it must spread until it fills the whole earth! And God, even our own God, must be exalted and the praises of His holy name and of His glorious work must go on ringing down the ages forever and ever!

## II. Now turning to the second point, we see in the text DIFFICULTIES REMOVED.

Difficulties would naturally be suggested by unbelieving minds. It would be said, in the first place, that *the people had gone too far away ever to be gathered*. Yet the Lord says, “I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth.” There may be at the present time, some of the Lord’s chosen far away in Greenland, Labrador, and other lands of snow and ice. There were some, in the olden times, when the Moravian Brethren went forth at God’s command to bring to Christ those who belonged to Him in “the north country.” There were also others in the far-away islands of the south—cannibals given up to the wildest passions—but Christ had bought them with His precious blood and a sacred instinct compelled John Williams and many other martyrs and missionaries to go forth to the Apostolic task of turning savages into saints! It may be that God has many of His chosen ones at the present moment in the center of Africa—and if it is so, they shall not die before the Gospel has been made known to them and they have been brought to trust in Him who loved them and gave Himself for them! Distance is no distance in the sight of God! He sees all the inhabitants of the globe at a single glance and His gaze is fixed upon the blood-bought sons and daughters of men wherever these may be dwelling! And He will gather them from all the coasts of the earth where their lot has been cast.

And as distance of space is no obstacle to the bestowed of God’s mercy, so neither is the distance that is caused by the greatness of sin. “Now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.” There may be one among those whom I am now addressing who has gone to the cold “north country” of infidelity, where he stands shivering in the biting winds of doubt and skepticism. Ah, but my Friend, God is able to bring you to Himself even from that dreary region! There may be some who have gone to the uttermost coasts of sin until they have become masters in iniquity, trafficking upon the broad sea of transgression and doing business in the deep waters of infamy and perhaps of blasphemy. Ah, but if you are among these who were given to Christ, God will gather you sooner or later—even if you have sold yourself to the devil, “your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand.” If you are, indeed, “bought with a price,” Christ will surely gather you with the rest of His redeemed! By might and main He will make a conquest of you, for, when the Lord determines to bring His people to Himself, neither material distance nor moral distance can prevent Him from doing so!

There was also another difficulty—not only were these people in Babylon far away from Jerusalem, but *some of them were blind*. What did it matter to them where they lived? No landscape, even though it was as grand as that which Moses saw from the top of Pisgah, could have any attraction for them. Even if others go back, shall not the blind be left behind? Of what service are the blind? How shall they behold the beauty of the Lord? But the Lord said that He would bring back the blind with the



others from the north country, and from the outcasts of the earth, and we may apply this promise to those who are *spiritually* blind. How can you get at a man who will not see his own sin and who will not or cannot see the beauty of God's plan of salvation? How are you to get at those whose eyes are covered with the scales of prejudice? How can you reach the Romanist whose eyes are plastered up with ceremonies and superstitions? How can you convince the work-monger that his own good deeds, of which he thinks so much, are blinding him to the beauties of Christ? How can these blind ones be saved? Ah, Beloved, no eye is too blind for God to pour light into it! And some of us can bear our personal testimony upon this matter. We would never have known the Grace of God in truth if that Grace had not come to us in our blind ignorance and enlightened us! May it be so with some who are here tonight! Is there a very ignorant person here? Well, my dear Friend, do you know that you are a sinner, that you are guilty in the sight of God? Then do you know that Christ Jesus came into the world to save such guilty sinners as you are? If so, and you put your trust in Him, you are already wise unto salvation however little you may know about other matters! Learn the great Truth that Christ died in the place of all who believe in Him and you will no longer be numbered among the spiritually blind!

With those blind people in Babylon there seem to have been *some lame folk* and an objector might have said, "Surely, if the caravan is to pass through the desert, it would be better to leave these poor limping ones at home! How can they ever be brought to Jerusalem?" But the Lord said, "The blind shall be led, and the lame shall be carried, but they must not be left behind." Now, there are some who are *morally* lame. If ever they enter into life, it will be among the crippled and the maimed. They seem as if they could not walk uprightly, there is a limp in their gait. Their knees are weak, they cannot pray as they would. Lame Sinners—are you here tonight? Do you feel as if you cannot get to Christ, and cannot pray, and cannot do anything right? Well, do but cry to Him, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Turn your eyes to Christ, think of Him as He hung upon the Cross and trust Him to save you, and you shall find that, lame as you are, you shall be brought safely Home! Mr. Ready-to-Halt shall get to Heaven as surely as Mr. Great-Heart himself!

Then there were some others of whom it was said that they could not possibly join the caravan—"the woman with child and her that travails with child." These were certainly unfit to go—they were in such a weak state that they could not take that long journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, yet the Lord said, "I will gather them and bring them," and so He did! Well, there are some like them in our midst tonight, burdened ones who have a load of sin pressing upon them, fainting ones whose souls are in a sacred travail. They would gladly run, but they cannot even stand! And they are all too apt to fall. But, O you who are thus soul-distressed, the blessing is that Jesus Christ will not leave you behind!

You shall be brought with the rest of the chosen seed to the heavenly Jerusalem to praise and magnify your great Deliverer forever and ever!

**III.** Now in the third place, we have in the text not only Deity manifested, and difficulties removed, but we also have DESCRIPTIONS GIVEN.

How shall this great company be brought to the Jerusalem which is above? Listen! There is a mighty host on the march, but I hear no sound of trumpet, no voice of mirth, no song of joy! What do I hear? Weeping, mourning, lamentation—“*They shall come with weeping.*” That is the music to which sinners usually set out for the heavenly Canaan—seldom if ever is that start made without tears! It is not the shriek of despair. It is not the groan of disappointment. It is not the yell of rage, and hate. It is the plaintive wail of a soul that says to God, “I have sinned against Heaven and before You, and are no more worthy to be called Your son.” From those who compose that throng you may, every now and then, catch such sorrowful sentences as these, “I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.” “My sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity. I will be sorry for my sins.” This is the kind of music that we hear from those who are setting out for Heaven! Have you, my Friend, ever practiced it? You will never sing in Glory if you have never wept over your sin! I do not merely mean such tears as men and women shed, though these will probably not be absent, but I mean that you will experience that spiritual sorrow which is often too deep for tears. May God the Holy Spirit teach us to weep at the remembrance of our sin, to weep at the foot of the Cross as we look upon Him whom our sins have pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born!

Listen again! Now I hear another note rising from the great caravan, the note of supplication. It is the hour of prayer. They have got beyond weeping into anxiety, desire, petition, request—and I hear many voices crying, “Save Your people who trust in You. Be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause Your face to shine upon us.” In our day, the supplication takes some such form as this, “Reveal Yourself unto us, O Christ, for in You do we put our trust! In Your name have we set up our banners. Come forth, O Lord, as our Helper and Deliverer!” The march is with weeping and supplication—and I believe these two things will attend that caravan right up to the brink of Jordan! The last tear will be dropped in Jordan’s flowing stream, for we shall sorrow no more and repent no more when we stand before the Eternal Throne of God! And the last prayer—at any rate, the last prayer that has any sense of sin in it—shall be breathed on the bank of the river which we cross to enter into Glory!

I must next direct your attention to something in our text about the road the caravan has to traverse—“I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters.” They had to pass through a wilderness in going from Egypt to Canaan, and also in returning from Babylon. And we, also, have to traverse the wilderness of this world in journeying to the better Promised

Land above. But as they had water in abundance on their long marches, we, also, have “the rivers of waters” of Divine Grace and Almighty Love. When we first began to seek the Lord, we found that one of the channels in which the precious rivers were flowing was this precious Bible at which we still quench our spiritual thirst. Then, when we trusted in Jesus, and confessed our faith in Him, we found the two ordinances that He instituted—Believers’ Baptism and the Lord’s Supper—to be as refreshing to our spirit as cold water is to the thirsty. I trust that you, Beloved, while sitting under the sound of the Word of God, have often been able to drink of the brook by the way. And certainly private prayer and intimate fellowship with God, and, above all, the secret and mysterious indwelling of the Holy Spirit have caused you “to walk by the rivers of waters,” so that although the earth is in itself arid, “a dry and thirsty land where no water is,” you have found that from the foot of the Cross there flows a living stream from which all the chosen may continue to drink until they come to that “pure river of Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb.”

In the description of the caravan route we are next told that it is “a *straight way*.” The path to Heaven is not at all difficult to find. It would be very difficult to find the way to Heaven by the rites and ceremonies about which some are so particular, but to those who trust in Jesus, the way of salvation is a very simple one, so simple that the wayfaring man, though a fool in other things, need not err therein! If any of you are trying to find your way to Heaven by the road of your own good works, you may well be puzzled, for you are off the right track altogether! But the Believer’s path is straight and plain. He trusts and he is saved! He looks and he lives! He believes God’s Word and he proves that it is true! You know that the way of policy, such as ungodly men often follow in this world, is a very crooked way, and Christians are sometimes tempted to tread that treacherous path. But that is the slimy way into which the devil led our first parents, and nothing but evil can come to those who walk in it! The giving up of the whole heart and soul to Christ is the simple way of being saved—and then yielding complete obedience to Christ is the simple way of living. The Lord’s promise is, “I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way”—not in a crooked, twisting, winding, in-and-out way, but in a straight way—the way of faith in Christ and of unquestioning obedience to His commands.

The description of this straight way concludes thus, “Wherein they shall not stumble.” It is a good thing to have a straight road, but it is a better thing to have also a sure foot! And God, who teaches His people to do right, also gives them Grace to do it. These blind ones and lame ones and weak ones of whom I have been speaking, are upheld by Sovereign Grace in the narrow way in which the Lord is leading them. My eye seems to catch the glorious vision! I see the blind finding their way to the great center of eternal blessedness. I see the lame come running as though they had wings on their feet to speed them onward to the pearly

gates above! I see the vast blood-bought throng, from the North, and the South, and the East, and the West, casting away, by Divine Grace, all their burden and their cares! And with the fetters of their sins snapped forever, streaming in crowds to the one blessed center—

***“Jerusalem the golden,  
With milk and honey blest”—***

where we ourselves expect, by-and-by, to be! Angels and the redeemed from among men must be continually witnessing the arrival of those who, first chosen by the Father, then redeemed by the Son, then regenerated by the Holy Spirit, have repented of sin and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ and by Grace have been preserved in their march through the wilderness and brought Home to that blessed city from which they shall go no more out forever! Well may we sing—

***“O Paradise eternal!  
What bliss to enter you,  
And once within your portals,  
Secure forever be!  
In you no sin nor sorrow,  
No pain nor death is known—  
But pure glad life, enduring  
As Heaven’s benignant throne!  
There all around shall love us,  
And we return their love  
One band of happy spirits,  
One family above.”***

**IV.** Now I must close when I have spoken but for a minute upon the last point, which is DIGNITY BESTOWED. “For I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born.”

Those who are brought out of the bondage of sin, as Israel was brought out of Egypt and Babylon, by the almighty power and Grace of God, are acknowledged by Him as His children. John writes concerning Jesus, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave Him power (the right, or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” This relationship cannot be disputed and cannot be disturbed—and this is the relationship which exists between God and every pardoned sinner! Happy soul! Though once in the family of Satan and an heir of wrath, you are now a child and an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ!

I think there are some here whose mouths are set a-watering for this same blessing and who are longing to be found among the innumerable multitude who shall be gathered in the heavenly Jerusalem at the last! Well, if you truly desire to be the Lord’s, that is a sign and token that the Lord also desires to have you as His child! That is a true declaration in one of our hymns—

***“No sinner can be beforehand with You.”***

If you really desire to have God as your God, and Christ as your Savior, God desires it, too, and Christ desires it. If you are willing to be saved, do not imagine that Christ is unwilling to save you! If you are coming to Christ, Christ is coming to you. No, He HAS come to you, or you would

never want to come to Him! “Only believe.” These are Christ’s words to you now—believe that He is able to save you through the merit of His atoning Sacrifice and through the prevalence of His intercession before His Father’s Throne above. Trust Him! Trust Him to save you now, and then you also shall be among the redeemed of the Lord who shall return and come with singing unto Zion! Everlasting joy shall be upon your head! You shall obtain gladness and joy—and sorrow and mourning shall flee away from you forever!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 31:1-28.**

**Verse 1.** *At the same time, says the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.* How divinely He talks—as only God can talk! These people had rejected Him, yet He says, “They shall be My people,” not only some of them, but all of them! “I will be the God of all the families of Israel.” Behold the wonderful power of Divine Grace upon the hearts of rebellious sinners. There are no “ifs,” and no, “buts,” here! It is, “I will” and, “they shall.” God knows how to work out His own purposes of love and mercy!

**2.** *Thus says the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found Grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.* If we ever do get true rest of soul, God must cause us to rest. As David said, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” The rest of the heart is a miracle of Divine Power!

**3.** *The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.* [See Sermons #1914, Volume 32—SECRET DRAWINGS GRACIOUSLY EXPLAINED; #2149, Volume 36—EVERLASTING LOVE REVEALED and #2880, Volume 50—NEW TOKENS OF ANCIENT LOVE—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] There is the source of everything that is good and gracious—“everlasting love.” When God has once set that love upon His people, anything and everything that is for their good may come out of it! All temporal good and all eternal blessings will come out of everlasting love. Oh, that we might, each one of us, have Grace to appropriate these blessed words to himself—“I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” They were given to Israel of old, but the spiritual Israel possess all the privileges of the natural Israel, and much more.

**4.** *Again I will build you, and you shall be built.* Whatever God does is done effectually—there is never any failure in His work.

**4.** *O virgin of Israel: you shall again be adorned with your tabrets, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry.* They had wept and mourned, but they were to dance! They had been very sad and disconsolate, but they were to take down their harps from the willows, and even to have their tabrets or timbrels again.

**5.** *You shall yet plant vines upon the mountain of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.* God makes the luxuries of Grace to be common things to His people. Fare that once seemed so rare as to be enjoyed only on high days and holidays shall become everyday meat to His people when their Lord reveals Himself to them!

**6.** *For there shall be a day that the watchmen upon the Mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise you, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.* For many a year Israel had gone to Bethel to worship the calves, or stayed at home to adore the shrine of Ashtaroth. Now they were to go to Zion to serve Jehovah! See what the Grace of God can do even for idolaters? If any of us have been bowing down to our idols, may we this day turn to the living God! May the power of His Grace lead us to go heartily and un-animously to worship the Lord our God.

**7, 8.** *For thus says the LORD; Sing with gladness, for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish you, praise you, and say, O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return there.* Whatever God does, He does thoroughly. When He shall restore His ancient people, He will not leave the weak ones behind and if, today, we are enjoying His Presence, the most afflicted and the most infirm among us shall know what the joy of the Lord means! The Lord grant it, and we will praise His holy name.

**9.** *They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them.* Weeping and prayer go well together. There is no prayer like a wet prayer saturated with the tears of repentance.

**9.** *I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way—* Hear this, you mourners! God will supply your need with rivers of waters, and He will make you walk in a straight way. Sometimes we are perplexed because the road seems to wind in and out like a labyrinth, but God can lead us in a straight way! “I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way”—

**9.** *Wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a Father to Israel and Ephraim is My first-born.* They had forgotten their relationship to Jehovah, but He still remembered that they were His children.

**10, 11.** *Hear the word of the LORD, O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off and say He that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd does his flock. For the LORD has redeemed Jacob and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.* They were the Lord’s chosen people even when they were in captivity in Babylon! He had scattered them because of their sin, but He would gather them in His mercy.

**12-14.** *Therefore they shall come and bring in the height of Zion and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat and for wine and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance both young men and old together:*

for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness says the LORD. What a blessed change this was for those who had sorrowfully cried, “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” And we rejoice in a still greater change when the Lord brings us into spiritual liberty!

**15-17.** *Thus says the LORD, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping, for her children refused to be comforted, for her children, because they were not. Thus says the LORD; Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded says the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in your end, says the LORD, that your children shall come again to their own border.* A mother’s sorrow over her lost babies is very great and long-enduring, but if she is a Christian, she shall meet them again in the land of the blessed, and shall be parted from them no more forever.

**18.** *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.* [See Sermons #743, Volume 13—EPHRAIM BEMOANING HIMSELF and #2104, Volume 35—THE INNER SIDE OF CONVERSION—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What a wonderfully expressive word that word, “bemoaning,” is!

**18, 19.** *You have chastised me and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn You me, and I shall be turned; for You are the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* Hear what the Lord says about these bemoaning ones, these sin-loathing ones—

**20.** *Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child?* Or we may render it, “Is this Ephraim, My dear son? Is this My pleasant child?” He is all that now that he begins to hate his sin!

**20.** *For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still.* Think of this, you who forget your God, you backsliders, wanderers from your Father’s house!

**20, 21.** *Therefore My heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the LORD. Set you up way marks, make you high heaps.* Raise signs along the road at various points to let other travelers know the way in which they should go.

**21, 22.** *Set your heart toward the highway, even the way which you went: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these your cities. How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter? for the LORD has created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.* Whereas the enemy had compassed Jerusalem round about, now Jerusalem was to be the besieger, and to compass her enemies and defeat them. Some interpreters think this is an allusion to the birth of the Savior, that “new thing in the earth”—the Incarnation of the Son of God.

**23-25.** *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.* This prophecy is to be fulfilled in the restoration of Israel to Palestine. Until that happens, the promise bears a spiritual meaning to all the children of God. O weary Soul, you shall be satiated—that is more than being satisfied! You shall have as much of holiness and joy as you can hold! Plead His promise now, O sorrowful Soul, and may God fulfill it to you!

**26.** *Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.* Well might it be. Poor Jeremiah, who so often wept over the woes of Israel, was the very man to be refreshed when he heard from God that He would visit His people in mercy, and bring them back to their own land! Happy dreamer, who dreams such a blessed dream as this, a dream that came true in due time!

**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.* What a black list of words we first have here! God's way of dealing with His people when they wander away from Him is very stern. They must be brought back, but it will be over a very rough road. The Lord says that He "watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict." And in the same measure He now declares that He will watch over them to do them good. As our tribulations abound, so also shall our consolations abound by Christ Jesus! If you have been bitterly convicted of sin, you shall be sweetly convicted of pardon. The deeper God digs the foundation, the higher He means to build the house. Those who are brought to Him in great affliction very often afterwards know more of Christ and more of the love of God than any others!

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# FOURFOLD SATISFACTION

## NO. 2726

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 12, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 4, 1880.**

*“And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness. And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord... For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.”  
Jeremiah 31:14, 25.*

THE subject of this morning [Sermon #1549, Volume 26—GOOD NEWS FOR THIRSTY SOULS—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> ] WAS *spiritual* thirst, and the promises made thereto. I tried to encourage those who are not at rest concerning the state of their souls—those who have strong and ardent desires to escape from the wrath to come—I tried to encourage them to partake of Christ, by faith, that they might find peace of heart and so might be perfectly satisfied. I believe that some did find peace this morning. We shall be on the look-out for them and hope that they will speedily come and tell us what God has done for their souls.

But, on this occasion our subject is the very opposite of that of this morning. It is neither thirst nor hunger, but perfect satisfaction, not strength of agonizing desire, but rest of holy satiety of which I am about to speak, in the earnest hope that all of you who are believers in our Lord Jesus Christ may enjoy this perfect satisfaction even at this very hour. There are four forms of satisfaction described in the four sentences of the two verses which form our text.

**I.** The first is GOD'S SERVANTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE APPOINTED SACRIFICE. Read the first sentence of verse 14—“I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness.”

God's people are His children, but they are also His servants. And their service, viewed from one special point, is that of priests. Christ has made all of us who believe in Him to be kings and priests unto our God. It is the business of every Christian to be a priest. There is now no special order of priests apart from the general body of believers in Christ. We regard the use of the term, “priests,” as relating to any other persons as utterly misleading and untrue. Every man who is a Christian is a priest unto God and he daily offers unto God the acceptable sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. In fact, his whole life should be a sacrifice—his ordinary garments should be his priestly vestments—and wherever he is, the place should be a temple for God's worship. His own house and every room in it should be consecrated to the Lord's service. And every action

of his life should be the act of one who is holy unto the Lord and who does everything with a view to the Glory of God.

Priests, of course, must have a sacrifice, and it is the special privilege of the priests of God that they shall be satisfied by eating the fat of that sacrifice. If you read, when you are at home, in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of Leviticus, you will find that the Aaronic priests were forbidden to eat the fat of the sacrifice and, in fact, to eat any portion of the fat of a beast that had been sacrificed to God was a crime that was punishable with death! There were certain portions of the sacrificial animals that were allotted to the priests, but all that was described as, “the fat thereof,” was for God, and for God alone, so that, under the Jewish dispensation, the priest could never be satisfied with fatness. But Christ has made us priests after another order than that of Aaron—and the richest part of the Sacrifice, the very fat of it—is now ours to feed upon!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, what is the Sacrifice of which we speak today, but the Lord Jesus Christ? We know of no other atoning Sacrifice but the blessed Person, body, soul, spirit, and blood of Jesus Christ, our Incarnate God and Savior! It is with this Sacrifice that Believers are perfectly satisfied.

First, *we are satisfied with Christ as our Sin-Offering*. Brethren, He did really take upon Himself our sin and He did make an end of it upon the Cross. Believing in Christ Jesus, we have no more consciousness of sin so far as its *guilt* is concerned. A thing cannot be in two places at one time. When Christ took our sins, we had not one of them left. We were clear of them, in God’s sight, the moment that Christ became our Substitute. And when, by faith, we laid our hand on that dear head of His and made confession of our transgression, we received the personal assurance that our sin was made to meet upon Him more than 1,800 years ago. When He was nailed to the accursed tree, outside the gate, He presented a sin-offering for our sake and that one offering was effectual, for by it He has fulfilled the great prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince, “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” Brothers and Sisters, you believe this great Truth of God, I know you do, but are you satisfied with it? If you are not, you ought to be, for what better fountain of cleansing can you desire than the precious blood of Christ? What better way of Atonement do you need than that Christ should bear the wrath of God for you—that He should take your sin and hurl it into the depths of the sea where it can never be found again? When He had done this, he cried, “It is finished!” And it was finished forever—so are you not perfectly satisfied with Christ as your Sin-Offering?

Next, *we are satisfied with Christ as our Burnt-Offering*. Under that aspect, also, He was well pleasing to God. Man was bound to bring to God a perfect obedience which would please his Maker. By himself, man could never do this. But Christ has done it, and you and I who believe in Him are perfectly satisfied that God is well pleased with Him, and also well pleased with us who are representatively in Him. By faith, wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, with His finished work imputed to us and

His perfect robe covering us as with raiment of worked gold, we believe that we are beautiful in the sight of God, “accepted in the Beloved,” so that He can use His words to the spouse in the Canticles and say to us, “You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you.” If you believe this and have really a firm grip of it, you are perfectly satisfied with Christ as your justifying righteousness, the Burnt-Offering with which God is well pleased so that He smells in it a savor of rest.

There was another offering, called the peace-offering, in which the worshipper partook with God of the sacrifice in token of complete reconciliation between God and the sinner. Are you not *perfectly satisfied with Christ as your Peace-Offering*? You feed upon Him and God feeds upon Him and, therefore, you feel yourself to be at perfect peace with God, do you not? “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Have you that peace, Beloved? If you are looking to Christ alone as your Savior, I know that you do feel within you that deep “peace of God, which passes all understanding,” which does “keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Do you need any better peace with God than Christ has made? Do you need any better reconciliation than Christ has accomplished? I know you do not and you can, at this moment, from your inmost soul say, “God has satisfied my soul with the Sacrifice of His dear Son. The fatness of that Sacrifice has filled me and I am delighted with it. Christ has put away all my sin. He has made me acceptable unto God. He has given me the enjoyment of peace with God and communion with Him. Now am I fully contented.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, when a man truly lays hold of Christ, he gets fully satisfied. People come to us and say, “Why don’t you take up the modern-thought doctrines? Why don’t you study the new theories that so many have accepted?” Well, the reason is that when we have the best Object for our faith that we can ever get, we feel as if that is quite good enough for us. We cannot imagine anything that could give such rest to our entire nature as a belief in Christ has done. If you can really prove to us that there is something better, we are not fools, and we shall be quite willing to accept it—but we greatly question whether you will ever bring us to your way of thinking, for this Christ of ours, in whom we have believed, is so good, great, gracious and glorious, that He fills and overfills us, and we do not see what more we could ever want or have!

Oh, how long was my mind in bitter anguish till I came to eat the fat of Christ’s Sacrifice! And when I trusted in Him as my Substitute, He at once satisfied the demands of my intellect. I seemed to think that it was the most glorious invention possible, even to God, that Christ should die, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Then I understood how God could be justified and yet be the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus—how He could pardon me and yet punish my sin—how there should be no violation of His justice and yet no limitation of His mercy because Christ stepped in and paid all my debt, so that it was justly as well as mercifully struck out from the record of God! There are some very great intellects in the world—no doubt there are much greater

ones than mine—but, as far as mine is concerned, that doctrine of Christ's Substitution perfectly satisfies me.

Words fail me when I try to tell you how fully this Truth of God also satisfies my *conscience*. My conscience, burdened, troubled and perplexed when it was once awakened, used to plague me day and night. I said to myself, "If God does not punish me for my sins, He ought to do so." I could not believe in any love of God that did not punish my sin. But when I saw that He bade His sword awake against His own dear Son who stood in my place—when I saw that He was too just to wink at sin and pass by transgression, but visited it upon a willing Substitute—blessed be His name, then my conscience found a place of perfect rest! I felt that I could love God and trust God because He had not winked at sin, but had punished it, in the Person of His dear Son, on my behalf! Oh, this fat of the Sacrifice satisfies God's servants as to their conscience!

And now it also satisfies my affections. And it will satisfy yours, dear Friend, if you trust to it. You need somebody to love—everybody does. You cannot go through the world simply living inside your own ribs. You must live in somebody's heart and if you give your heart altogether to any human being, you will be disappointed. But, oh, when you love Christ with all your heart—when you live wholly for Him, then you have something that fills your heart right up! Here your love can rest! It can roost and build its nest in the wounds of Jesus! There is nothing that can fill the affections of any one of us like the dear Person of our suffering Lord.

And I am sure that He also satisfies all our hopes. Large as they may be, there is enough in Christ to fully gratify them. And as for our fears, He fills them up so that we seem to have nothing to fear! "If God is for us," in Christ, "who can be against us?" If Christ has died for us, who is he that condemns us? And what is there that can now separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Oh, if you would all but try this blessed plan of believing in Jesus as the Lamb of God slain for your sin—if you would but eat the fat of this great Sacrifice—you, also, would prove the truth of the first sentence of our text, "I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness." In that way you would have all you could take in and a great deal more than all you need!

**II.** Now let us turn to the second sentence of our text. "My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord." This teaches us that AS GOD'S PEOPLE, WE ARE SATISFIED WITH GOD'S GOODNESS. All through my discourse, I shall be appealing to you, dear Friends, and asking you whether it is not as I say. Come now, Beloved, you who are the Lord's people, I want to ask you a few questions concerning His goodness to you.

First, *are you satisfied with God's eternal purposes?* Your names are written in His Book of Life. He chose you from eternity to be His. Before the torch of light had kindled the first shining orb, He had looked upon you with Prescient eyes and loved you! You are satisfied about that great Truth of God, I hope—"I have loved you with an everlasting love." "Satisfied," did I say? That word seems scarcely good enough! Sit down and

turn over in your mind this eternal love of God and you will feel such delight within your soul, if you feel as I do, that you will soon have tears streaming down your cheeks for very joy as you sing—

***“Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I burn!  
Chosen of You ere time began,  
I choose You in return.”***

Well, now, out of that eternal love comes *adoption into God’s family*. Taking us out of the family of the Prince of Darkness, He has made us His own sons and daughters! Are you satisfied with that adoption? Do you need any higher honor than to be a child of God? For, “if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Earthly sovereigns are accustomed to confer titles of nobility upon certain of their subjects. I suppose there is something in the honor, though not much. But when God makes a man His child, He puts him among the princes of the blood royal of Heaven, the imperial family of the skies! The peerages of Heaven are so glorious that all the nobilities of earth sink into utter insignificance in comparison with them! You, poor man, and you, humble woman, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, are allied to the God that made Heaven and earth! You have been admitted distinctly into the one Divinely royal family of the universe! Are you not satisfied with this honor? You should be, indeed, more than satisfied with this goodness of the Lord!

Well, now, since you have become the subject of this adoption, *all God’s dealings with you have been the dealings of a Father*. He treats you now as His sons. Perhaps, at the present moment, you do not feel quite satisfied with God’s dealings with you. But if you are in a right spirit, you will be. It may be that God has stripped you of your wealth and pulled you down from the high places you once occupied—you now stand in a very lowly position compared with that which you once filled. Yet, Beloved, if faith is in active exercise, you will say concerning the Lord’s dealings with you, “What pleases Him, pleases me. Whether He lifts me up, or casts me down, since He does it out of fatherly love and makes all things work for my good, I will be satisfied with whatever He does, for it is all goodness and it is written, ‘My people shall be satisfied with My goodness.’”

O dear Friends, this is a happy state of mind to be in, to be content with all that happens to us—to have done with wishing for any alteration in God’s dealings with us—to be satisfied with whatever He gives and just as satisfied when He withholds—to be even as a weaned child, crying no more after this poor world, but giving yourself up entirely to your loving Father’s care! May God grant to each one of you this privilege of being perfectly satisfied with His Providential dealings with you! You will be a very naughty child if you are not—and you will bring upon yourself a heap of trouble if you kick against what God has done. It will cost you more pain to rebel against God’s will than that will ever can cause you if you yield to it.

Are you not also *satisfied with the goodness of God in His promises*? Take your Bible—is it not a galaxy of stars—everyone of them infinitely more precious than the whole of the wealth of this world? All that you need for time and for eternity is included in the promises of God’s Word—

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

I am quite sure that you are also *satisfied with your prospects*. Why, I think, that you will each one say, “I am infinitely more than satisfied with the prospect before me. It is too bright, too good, too glorious.” I am sure that God’s people, when they are in a right state of heart, are so satisfied with His goodness that they do not wish for anything more. They can hardly conceive of more than God has prepared for them that love Him. Let me but have God’s goodness and all may be as God wills! Only grant me Your favor, O my God, and I will make no choice of continent or climate, of poverty or wealth, of sickness or health, of time to live or time to die. If I have Your goodness, all else is but a trifle. God’s people show that they are satisfied with God’s goodness for they have no wish to change it for anything else. They would not give up their God if all the kingdoms of the world could be delivered over to them—they do not desire anything better for their children than God’s goodness. When you, who are parents, think of your dear ones growing up around you, you are naturally anxious about their prospects. If you did but know that they were all the Lord’s children, you would say, “We really care for nothing more than that. Their fortune is made when once their father’s God has become their God.”

This spirit of resignation makes you content to wait here below, whether it is threescore years and ten, or fourscore years, or less, or more! That question will not trouble you so long as God’s goodness follows you. And this satisfaction also makes you happy in the thought of departure out of this world—not impatient, but still expectant, hoping for the day to come soon when, borne on wings sublime, you shall leave behind you all the fret and care of this poor undeveloped life, and shall enter into the Glory where your spirit shall expand itself in the full Light of God and you shall know what God has prepared for them that love Him.

**III.** I can only speak very briefly upon the third sentence of our text, which is found in the 25<sup>th</sup> verse. “I have satiated the weary soul.” THIS SATISFACTION IS MEANT FOR WEARY PILGRIMS.

First, *they are to be satisfied with Divine refreshments*. Was it not so with you, Beloved, when you started on the heavenly pilgrimage? I should like to recall to you, my Brothers and Sisters, that memorable day when first you knew the Lord. In my own case, I can testify that I was very heavy of heart and very weary in spirit. Often did Satan tempt me to give up seeking rest, for I had sought so long in vain. I had attended the ordinances of God’s House, and used the means of Grace with great diligence, yet I think I was none the better, but rather grew worse. But the moment that I looked to Christ upon the Cross—the very instant I understood that all I had to do was to look unto Him and be saved—truly

He had satiated my weary soul! I could have danced for joy, or shouted “Hallelujah!” at that moment! And by the hour together my spirit was singing, “Praise the Lord!” I did not know how to sufficiently express my delight.

You remember that time yourselves, do you not, when the Lord satiated your weary soul? He had given you all that your soul could feed upon and a great deal more. You were like a mouse that gets into a dairy full of cheese—you knew that you could not eat it all so you seemed to bury yourself in the fatness and fullness of the Lord’s mercy! There was no hope that you would be able to take it all in. It was so with me, I know. I felt like a little fish in the Atlantic, swimming where I pleased—above, beneath, around on all sides there was an infinity of delight that much more than filled my soul. That is what the Lord does for us when we begin to trust in Jesus. How has it been with us since then?

Well, Brothers and Sisters, I for one testify that *He has continued to revive us*. We have often been weary since those early days. Sometimes, weary *in* the Lord’s service, though never weary *of* it. We have been wearied with pain. We have been wearied with trials. We have been wearied with doubts and fears. We have been wearied with the assaults of Satan. We have been wearied with the unkindness of men and weary in a great many ways, but, oh, whenever we have come to Christ, how speedily He has satiated our weary soul! We could laugh at opposition then! We could cheerfully take up our heaviest cross and find it light as a feather! And we marched onward singing—

***“In darkest shades if He appears,  
My dawning is begun!  
He is my soul’s sweet morning star,  
And He my rising sun.”***

Perhaps our greatest weariness is weariness of ourselves. The one person that troubles me most is the one from whom I cannot get away as long as I am here. There is, I expect, a troublesome fellow who worries and bothers you a great deal—that is, yourself. Well, dear Friend, when you are weary of self, you will find it a blessed thing just to look away to Christ and say, “Lord, I am empty, but You are my fullness. I am weakness itself, but You are my strength. I am a mass of sin and misery, but You are my righteousness and my salvation. I am less than nothing, but You are all in all to me.” It is when we are most sick of self that we are most fond of our Savior—and it is when we get most weary of sinning that we find the sweetest repose in our sin-conquering Redeemer!

So, you see there is perfect satisfaction for weary souls, and well there may be, for look, you weary ones, and see what you have to give you this satisfaction! God the Father is yours, to be your Father! God the Son is yours, to be your Husband, your Head! God the Holy Spirit is yours, to be your Comforter, your perpetual Indweller. “All things are yours. . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” The Covenant, in which the “all things” are wrapped up, is yours, for He has made with you “an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” Heaven is yours,

with its golden streets, its green inviting fields, its endless glories, its boundless bliss—all is yours. Are you not satisfied, O poor weary one? Throw yourself down upon the couch of God's goodness and take your fill of rest, for this is the rest, and this is the refreshing and, "so He gives His Beloved sleep."

**IV.** The last sentence of our text can only just be touched upon. It speaks of SATISFACTION FOR MOURNERS. "I have replenished every sorrowful soul."

There are plenty of sorrowful souls about and, no doubt, there are many in this congregation. As we look into their faces, they appear tolerably cheerful, but, "the heart knows his own bitterness." There are some of us who are, at times, very heavy of heart—but when we do wear sackcloth, we always wear it next to our skin. I can speak for myself upon that matter. I do not like to wear sackcloth outside for everybody to see because if we do that, we make other people wear it, too, for we set a fashion of mourning. But this is our Lord's command—"When you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face; that you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly."

But, now, where are you, sorrowful ones? Here is satisfaction for you, whatever may be the cause of your weeping and grieving. *Are you sorrowing about past sin?* Well, the Lord has given you perfect satisfaction concerning that matter, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He tells you that He has put away all your iniquity—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You need not be downcast concerning the sins that God tells you have ceased to be! Remember that wonderful declaration in Jeremiah 50:20? "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Perhaps you are *sorrowful about inbred sin*. You grieve because you cannot live as you would like to live. That is a blessed kind of sorrow. All God's servants have to fight with inward corruption, more or less, and it often makes us cry with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But do not stop at that question—go on to say with Paul, on another occasion, "Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Your inward sins will all be conquered! There is not one Canaanite in the land who will not be destroyed by the power of your glorious Joshua, Jesus, who is leading you on to the battle! You shall be perfect, one day, before the Presence of God. With exceeding joy you shall be presented, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."



Perhaps, however, some of you may be *sorrowing because of your present troubles*. Then the Lord comforts you by telling you that your troubles are working for your lasting good. I should like to bear my own witness to the Lord's goodness to me and I desire to bless Him as much for the cups full of bitterness as for the chalices of sweet delight. And I really and honestly believe that, of the two, I have gained more by affliction than by joy. And I have more reason to praise God, at this moment, for deep depression and heart sorrow than for all the joys I have ever known, with but one exception, that is, the joy of believing in Christ and having fellowship with Him. Put all earthly enjoyments together and I do not think that they are worthy to be compared with the benefit of sanctified sorrow

There may be some of you who are *sorrowing because of dear children whom you have lost*. The text says, "I have replenished every sorrowful soul" so that you must not sorrow over these dear ones who have died, especially after you have read in this chapter about God comforting Rachel concerning her slain children. You know how the innocents were murdered at Bethlehem by the cruel Herod and Rachel mourned for them in this Prophetic lamentation. But the Lord said to her, "They shall come again from the land of the enemy." It is a high honor to be the mother of a child in Heaven! It is something still higher to be mother to many sweet little ones who have gone on before you and who are singing up there an everlasting song of praise unto the King! It is a wondrous joy to be the father of those who, day and night, wait upon God in Heaven and see His face, and serve Him evermore! So be not sad or downcast if that is your case. As for all who die in the Lord, we sorrow not as those who are without hope. There will be blessed meetings, by-and-by. You look back, with great sorrow, to the loss of a dear husband, wife, brother, sister, father, mother—yes, but you know where they are and you have the blessed assurance that you shall meet them again in the day when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised—and you, with them, shall form an unbroken family around the Throne of God in Heaven!

What is your sorrow, dear Friend? I will not stop to go into any further particulars, but whatever it may be, there is sufficient Grace stored up in Christ to take all your sorrow away. Come, aching head, lay yourself down upon the bosom of the loving Jesus! Come, weary heart, lean your whole weight upon His wounded side! Come, child of God with the sad countenance, and the red eyes of sorrow, look to the Man of Sorrows, grief's close acquaintance, and learn from Him where the River of Salvation perpetually flows! If the Lord will but reveal Himself to you, you will need no other consolation, for He is, Himself, the Consolation of Israel.

Some of you may not come to this place many more times. Perhaps you are getting old and very feeble. Well, suppose you never come again—we shall be sorry to miss you if we ourselves remain, but you will not be sorry to be "forever with the Lord." You are going from good to better and from better to best! And what will the best be? If, at the Lord's Table, down here, you have sometimes had such raptures that you

hardly knew how to bear the joy—and I know that you have had such bliss—what will it be to see your Savior face to face and to be forever with Him where you can never grieve Him again and where He will pour out all the love that is in His heart into your glorified spirit? All that may happen to you within a week, within an hour, within a moment! Nobody knows how near we are to the King's pearly gate, so let us not sorrow too much, nor be too much cast down. Listen to the music of the golden harps—they are ringing out so sweetly that if we could but open these ears of ours a little more, we might catch at least some stray notes from the everlasting harmonies! Some of you are nearer to Heaven than you think you are. If these eyes could but be opened, or be taken away altogether, so that the spirit might see without the hindrance of these poor dim glasses, what a sight it would be! The jeweled city, with its 12 foundations all formed of precious stones—and the eternal Light shining out of it from the face of God and the Lamb, for no other light is needed there—

***“What must it be to be there?”***

Just think that we may be there within the next ten minutes and this thought should make us bear without a sigh the sorrows of the present moment, whatever they may be—

***“The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,”***

so let us—

***“Smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song”***

—and God be with us evermore, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 31:1-26.**

**Verses 1-3.** *At the same time, says the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people. Thus says the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found Grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.* Was there ever a sweeter word from Heaven than this—everlasting love proved by the drawings of Divine Grace? I know that your hearts will be full of music if ever the Spirit of God has spoken home to your soul such a message as this! Let us read it again. “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

**4, 5.** *Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin of Israel: you shall again be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry. You shall yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.* God has kind purposes of love towards His ancient people and He will yet bring Israel again to her own land. And, spiritually, He has like purposes of love to all His elect. And they shall joy and re-

joyce with unspeakable delight. What if you are barren for a while? God shall yet come to you and you shall be fruitful.

**6-9.** *For there shall be a day that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise you, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. For thus says the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish you, praise you, and say, O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born.* Do not forget the first meaning of this passage in its reference to Israel, but suck in also the consolation which comes from it to all who are believers in Christ. The Lord will certainly bring all His chosen ones to Himself. Blind as they are—wandering as they have been—they shall come back to Him! They shall come back with tears of repentance, and with refreshments of mercy: “by the rivers of water.” They shall come back to their God, who says, “I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born.”

**10, 11.** *Hear the word of the LORD, O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock. For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.* Redemption lies at the bottom of every favor that we receive from God. He blesses us because He has redeemed us. He has bought us with so great a price that we are too dear for Him to ever lose us. Because He has bought His flock, He will, therefore, fetch it away from the enemy.

**12-14.** *Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness. And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the LORD.* Why, these very words are full of marrow and fatness! The promise is inexpressibly sweet! What must the fulfillment of it be? Oh, for faith to lay hold upon it! Yet there is a note of sorrow mingled with the pealing of the joy-bells—

**15, 16.** *Thus says the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus says the LORD; Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. “Your lost babes shall live; their very bodies, moldering in the earth, shall rise again. Be not grieved or vexed overmuch, for, ‘they shall come again from the land of the enemy.’”*

**17.** *And there is hope in your end, says the LORD, that your children shall come again to their own border.* There is another sorrow—a deeper sorrow than grief over children, that is, sorrow for sin—

**18.** *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus. You have chastised me, and I was chastised.* And that was the end of it.

**18.** *As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.* Since Your chastisements have been of little service to me, lay Your hand upon me—

**18, 19.** *Restore me, and I shall be turned; for You are the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented.* Repentance is a turning from sin unto the Lord.

**19.** *And after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh.* In very grief of heart, as if I could not smite myself enough for having sinned.

**19.** *I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* Now when a man talks like that, how does God speak?

**20.** *Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still.* “Not only do I remember him, but ‘I do earnestly remember him still.’”

**20.** *Therefore My heart yearns for him.* “I cannot bear to see his misery.”

**20.** *I will surely have mercy upon him, says the LORD.* Oh, what blessedness there is in this gracious promise!

**21-26.** *Set you up landmarks, make you high heaps: set your heart toward the highway, even the way which you went: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these your cities. How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. 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. Upon this I awaked and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.* I should think it was. If a man could dream like that, he might well wish to go to sleep again! To dream of everlasting love, of gracious drawings, of heavenly restorations, of sin forgiven, sorrow removed and desire satisfied, well may the Prophet, say, “My sleep was sweet unto me.” May we, when we are awake, learn what the Prophet heard in his sleep!

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—774, 801, 746.**

—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.**

# EPHRAIM BEMOANING HIMSELF

## NO. 743

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 31, 1867,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, NEWINGTON.**

***“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: You have chastised me, and I was chastised as a bull unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn You me, and I shall be turned, for You are the Lord my God.”  
Jeremiah 31:18.***

THE heathen described their fabled deity, Jove, as sitting far aloft regardless of the common affairs of this lower world. Upon a few kings and princes he might turn an observant eye, but the most of men were creatures far too insignificant to affect the mind of Jove. Whether they lived or died was nothing to him—they fulfilled their destinies and passed away, while Jove remained serenely still, or nodded as his august will might be.

Not such is Jehovah, the God of Heaven and of earth! He compasses our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. “The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his going.” He regards the cries of the afflicted. “He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.” “Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly.” Though He is so great a God that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet He deigns to  *dwell* with the man who is of a contrite and humble spirit.

God has not left us as the ostrich leaves her young. Say not that we are left without a Friend to care for us—our Maker has not gone away! He has not shut up the gates of Heaven! He has not closed His ear from hearing, neither has He restrained His hand from helping us! Still does He hear His Ephraims when they bemoan themselves, and He sends them the mercy for which they pine. Let us conceive, as far as may be, of the nearness of God to every mourning soul, for it is marvelous and worthy of admiration.

When her Majesty, some months ago, heard of the desolation which had been caused by an accident in the pits, her tender heart hastened to the relief of the widows and the fatherless, but at the moment of the calamity she was not on the spot in person. She could not be in the pit to hear the groans and sustain the faith of the dying. No, she could not be in the cottage to mark the tears of the widow and to cheer her with heavenly promises. But our God is on the spot where calamity occurs, for in Him we live and move and have our being! He is the greatest of comforters, and He is also the most approachable.

He is “a very present help in time of trouble.” He needs no messengers to bear to Him the news of our grief or penitence, for He is not far from any of us. Mourner, your sigh is known to God as soon as you have

heaved it! No, *before* your grief thus found a vent He saw it struggling within you! Yes, and the grief which you cannot express in words God can see and interpret! He knows the language of our grief, the meaning of our tears. Blessed be the ever-present God that He is upon the spot where the bemoaning of penitents are heard and bends a gracious ear to the cry of His children!

This morning my first desire is that each of us may feel that God is here and may be reached by us—that whatever our condition of mind may be, the Lord is well aware of it—and that if there should be caused by this service even so much as the faintest ripple of a desire towards Him, He will note it in His book—and if that desire should increase into a wave of prayer, it will not be lost upon Him. “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.”

I shall now, as I am strengthened by God, first ask your kind attention to a sinner bemoaning himself. Secondly, I shall wish you to remember God as hearing Him. And thirdly, our largest subject probably will be God fulfilling the desire of that bemoaning penitent, and turning him effectually from his sins.

**I.** First, observe carefully, A SINNER BEMOANING HIMSELF. Last Sunday we preached upon two sinners, but we had little or no bemoaning [#742—“*A Sermon to Open Neglecters and Nominal Followers of Religion.*”] One of them said, “I will not go,” and the other said, “I go, Sir,” but went not. We are a stage farther this morning. We introduce to you one whose heart has been affected by Divine Grace—whose conscience has been awakened, whose soul has been quickened—and we find him, according to the expressive word of the text, “bemoaning himself.”

The very word is doleful to the ear—it reminds us of the mourning of doves—we cannot pronounce it without feeling that it reveals a depth of sorrow. It is a word which tells of pain, anguish, fear, restlessness, sad remembrances, terrible forebodings and raging desires. Ephraim was “bemoaning himself.” Viewing the sorrow before us, we note that he who bemoaned himself was bowed down with a peculiar grief. He did not lament for his children with the bitter weeping of Rachel. He did not mourn over friends and kinsfolk withered under the blast of death. He was not as one crying out through pangs of bodily pain because a limb was crushed, or a bone was broken.

He bemoaned himself, but not because he had lost his goods. Not because the ship had foundered at sea, or the house was wrapped in flames, or his riches had taken to themselves wings and flown away. No, his sorrow was of another kind. He bemoaned himself with a more mysterious and more bitter grief. The cause of the sorrow lay *within*—he was “bemoaning himself! This is, I say, a peculiar sorrow—one which the most of men look down upon with scorn. I pray God, my Hearers, that you may not be strangers to it for, unless you bemoan yourselves you shall never make the angels merry, for their rejoicing is over “one sinner that repents.”

There is no weight of glory for those who have never mourned the weight of sin! If you have never bemoaned yourself you have never enjoyed peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The sorrow of the text is that of a soul visited by God the Holy Spirit—the inward grief of a man who has been convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is bitter sorrow, but so blessed are its results that I will call it a bitter sweet! It brings darkness with it, but it is the darkness of the last hour of the night which heralds the dawn of the day! Godly sorrow is well-founded sorrow. I will try to describe its sources.

When a sinner bemoans himself in this way, “Alas! Alas!” he says, “I have found out that all is true which I have oftentimes been told by God’s ministers. I have, indeed, offended my Maker! I have grieved the God who gave me my being! I have made my best Friend to be my *enemy* because of my *sin*. I have set myself in opposition to the King of kings! I cannot fight it out with Him, for He is too great for me. What shall I do? To where shall I fly? It is surely true and just that He should punish me, and woe is me, for I cannot bear His anger! If my ribs were iron and my flesh were granite, I should dissolve in the heat of His wrath. I can no more resist Him than flax can stand against fire, or stubble against the flame.

“Woe is me! I have roused Omnipotence to be my enemy! I have set all Heaven in array against me! I cannot resist, and I cannot escape—what, then, shall I do? Shall I promise that I will be better? Alas, my reformations cannot blot out my *past* sins, for my old offenses will still demand a punishment even if I commit no more! But worse and worse, I now discover that my *nature* is full of sin and will rebel continually! Thorns and thistles will grow in the accursed soil of my heart, no matter what I do to pluck them up by the roots! I am not only thus an enemy to God by my actions, but by my very *nature*. Woe is me! Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then might I, who have been accustomed to evil, learn to do well. Alas, I am a traitor to my God, a stranger to peace and happiness, a slave to sin, in bondage to evil.”

To the mind in this state it is no wonder if the thought occurs, “Oh, that I had never been born! Would to God I had been created a dog or a toad sooner than have become a sinful *man*, for I see my end, my dreadful end! I shall march on from bad to worse, and when I shall die the wrath of God will come upon me to the uttermost! Forever shall I be banished from all hope of happiness. I cannot endure the wrath to come! To where shall I fly, or what shall I do? If I try to pray, my lips refuse to express my heart’s desires—no, I cannot tell what to desire nor how to pray. Alas! Alas! I am undone, indeed! I am lost! Lost! Lost! Would God that there were mercy for me.”

There is good ground in the sinner’s state for all his bemoaning. The fears to which I have given utterance are all reasonable and well-grounded—fears so truly the offspring of a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience that if, dear Hearer, you have never felt them—I pray that you may do so before you sun has set! This sorrow is humble sorrow. Notice, it is not written, “I hear Ephraim *excusing* himself,” or

“*flattering* himself,” or “making new resolutions,” but, “I have heard him *bemoaning* himself.”

When God the Holy Spirit gives genuine conviction of sin to a man, how he changes in his own esteem! He finds that all his righteousnesses are just a bundle of filthy rags. He thought them to be clean, white vestments, fair as the robes of the redeemed in Heaven. And he was proud to think of arraying himself in them. But when he unpacked them in the daylight he saw them to be full of holes, reduced to rags and tatters and, what was worse, polluted with horrible filth! So he threw them all away and fell to bemoaning himself.

An awakened conscience does not say, “I could not help it, it was my nature, I was led into it by my passions. I was tempted by my circumstances.” No, it gives up all excuses because it sees their hollowness. “I sinned,” says the man, “I knew it was sin. I chose it willfully. I might have avoided it, but I would not. I set darkness for light and light for darkness. I am a willful offender.” Instead of laying a flattering unction to his soul, he sees sin to be exceedingly sinful and laments it.

My Hearers, am I describing some of you? I trust, before the Lord, some of you can see your own photographs here, and if so, I have joyful news from the Lord for you, for broken hearts shall be bound up by the Lord Jesus Himself—and eternal life shall be given you if you rest in Him! Please notice that this sorrow was *thoughtful* sorrow, for Ephraim reviews his past life—“You have chastised me.” What came of it? Why, “I was chastised,” and that was all. Are there not some of you in this Hall who might say, “Great God, You Yourself must deal with me, for none but Yourself can ever save me. I have been laid upon a bed of sickness, and I have recovered from it. And there was an end of the sickness, but I was none the better for it.

“I lost my wife, I buried my children, I have suffered hard blows, but that is all—all my afflictions have produced no good result. Lord, I have had sickness after sickness but I am rather worse than better! Like a bull unaccustomed to the yoke, beaten but not subdued, struck but still obstinate.” The more the untrained bull is goaded, the more it kicks, and it will not wear the yoke with patience. Have you not been like it? When you have heard a sermon, you have laughed at it! When your mother’s tears have fallen for you, you have despised them. When your wife’s prayers have gone up to Heaven, you have turned them into ridicule. You have been chastised and chastised, but no good has followed it.

Some of you have wearied the Lord with your iniquities, till He asks, “What shall I do with you?” Take heed, for patience endures not forever! The Lord will not always plow upon a rock. He will not always sow upon the thankless sand. “For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes often upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God. But that which bears thorns and briars is rejected, and is near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.” I trust that many of you are sensible that no outward Providences, persuasions, or



preaching will suffice to save you—you need *effectual* Grace to convert your soul or you will perish forever.

I beg you to notice the bemoaning of the text in one more respect, namely, that it was hopeless and yet hopeful. Ephraim says, “Lord, it is of no use to chastise me, for I only get worse. But do *You* turn me, and I shall be turned.” I was staying one day at an inn in one of the valleys of Northern Italy, where the floor was dreadfully dirty. I had it in my mind to advise the landlady to scrub it, but when I perceived that it was made of mud, I reflected that the more she scrubbed the worse it would be.

The man who knows his own heart soon perceives that his corrupt nature admits of no improvement. There must be a new *nature* implanted, or the man will be only “washed to deeper stains.” “You must be born again.” Ours is not a case for mending, but for making new. The meaning of the prayer in my text is, “Lord, do not chastise me, but *turn* me. Do it Yourself, and then it will be done. Turn me, and I shall be turned, but if You do not do it I am past hope.” O troubled Soul, if the Lord shall put His hand to the work this morning, what a wonderful change will He work in you! But only His own right hand can do it. Pray, then, this prayer—

**“Turn me, and I shall be turned.”**

**“No outward forms can make you clean,  
Your leprosy lies deep within.”**

No resolving of yours can cleanse you any more than the Ethiopian can make himself white by resolving to be so! Only the Holy Spirit can purify you with the blood of Jesus. He who gives life to the dead can give spiritual life to you. He can take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh! I invite you, therefore, to pray, “Turn me, O God, and I shall be turned.” And I bid you exercise the appropriating Grace of faith and say, “for You are the Lord my God.” Are you made willing to take Jehovah to be your God today, my Hearer? Are you willing to give up the world, its pleasures, and its gains?

Are you willing to give up self, fashion, pomp, self-indulgence, and sin in every shape? If you are, then I beseech you wait not till you get home, but, standing or sitting where you now are, let Ephraim’s bemoaning prayer be yours, “Turn me, Lord! Convert me! Make a new man of me! Turn me, and I shall be turned—for You can do it so that it will be well done, thoroughly done, effectually done, permanently done, unhesitatingly done. Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned, even I. Though I have been set on mischief. Though none beside could ever move my flinty soul. Though I was so dogged and resolved that one might as well have tried to rule the winds or command the tempest as to curb my will, yet, Lord You can do it.”

I see at this moment some of you dashing at full speed down the hill like wild horses, and none can restrain you. In vain we may call to you! In vain we throw fences across the road—you leap over every barrier, determined to be lost! But let Almighty Grace interpose! Let the Lord Himself appear! He can twist His hand in the neck which seemed clothed with thunder! He can throw back the maddened steed! He can thrust the bit of

Divine Grace into its foaming mouth and constrain the once untamable being to bear the yoke of love. May such a feat of Grace be performed in some sinner's heart this day!

**II.** I do not know where Ephraim was when he bemoaned himself, but I SEE THE LORD OBSERVING HIM. I know not where some of you hide yourselves now that you are pricked in your conscience. Some retire to their bedrooms. Some shut themselves in their closets. Many a countryman has wept behind the hedge, or climbed into a hayloft, or leaped into a saw pit to pray. It little matters where you seek the Lord. He will be sure to see you—and even if it is in the crowded street of Cheapside or Cornhill—if your *soul* is in prayer, all the din of noisy London cannot stop the prayer from reaching the ear of God!

You know, Mothers, how quick you are at night to hear your children if they are ill. If you had a nurse, she might slumber on—but as for you, with little Jane upstairs sick—if you fall asleep, the faintest noise wakes you. Yet you are not one-half so wakeful as God is! For He neither slumbers nor sleeps. When your heart begins to say, “My God, my God, I would be reconciled! My Lord, I would be cleansed,” the Lord is waiting to be gracious. Before you call, God hears you, for He is a God ready to pardon.

Observe that God heard all that Ephraim had to say. I do not know that anybody else cared to do so, and so, if you have not a Christian friend, although I am sorry for you, I would say never mind—God is enough for you without a friend! No one else might have understood Ephraim if they had heard him, but God knew all about him and He understood him well. If you cannot utter your prayer in good English, never mind. Breathe it out anyway—God can understand it. Broken prayers are the best prayers. Do not suppose that you require fine words and elegant phrases in order to affect the Lord. Your tearful eyes shall be more mighty than trope or metaphor, and your heavy sighs shall be more eloquent than the polished period and lofty climax of the orator.

Only prostrate your soul before God with humble heart and downcast eyes and your Father will accept you. What man among you can stand against his children's tears? When King Henry II in the ages gone by was provoked to take up arms against his ungrateful and rebellious son, he besieged him in one of the French towns, and the son, being near unto death, desired to see his father and confess his wrongdoing. But the stern old sire refused to look the rebel in the face. The young man, being sorely troubled in his conscience, said to those about him, “I am dying. Take me from my bed and let me lie in sackcloth and ashes, in token of my sorrow for my ingratitude to my father.”

Thus he died, and when the tidings came to the old man outside the walls that his boy had died in ashes, repentant for his rebellion, he threw himself upon the earth like another David, and said, “Would God I had died for him!” The thought of his boy's broken heart touched the heart of the father. If you, being evil, are overcome by your children's tears, how much more shall your Father who is in Heaven find in your bemoaning

and confession an argument for the display of His pardoning love through Christ Jesus our Lord?

This is the eloquence which God delights in—the broken heart, and the contrite spirit! He heard and He understood all that Ephraim said, and He was moved by it. Did you note that word, “I have surely heard Ephraim”? As if nothing were more sure! If God should not hear the music of Heaven, He would hear the prayers of penitents! If the booming of the storm and the roar of the tempest, when the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies—if the clapping of the thousand hands of the roaring sea when it rejoices in its strength should not be heard by the Eternal ear—yet, surely, the bemoaning of a single sinner should be regarded!

The crash of thunder is to the Lord no more than the sound of the falling of a sere leaf on a still summer’s eve, but the cry of *one* of His children peals through Heaven, and moves the Infinite heart, so that swift on wings of love the God of mercy flies. Nor is it mere pity. God gives to us practical aid—He gave to Ephraim what Ephraim asked for. Our God is full of compassion. He is a terrible God when He has to deal with sin—thunderbolts are in his hands, and lightning flashes from His eyes of fire, “for our God is a consuming fire.” But when He has to deal with *penitents* His name is Love. He rides in a chariot of mercy and holds out a silver scepter of Divine Grace!

O seeking souls, Jehovah will hear you through the merits of His Son! Seek His face and you shall not seek in vain!

**III.** Let us now turn to the third point and view THE LORD WORKING IN HIS EFFECTUAL GRACE. Beloved Friends, recollect that the only turning in the world that is saving and Divine is the turning of the *heart*. As for a mere change of notions—the turning of the *head*—many mistake it for conversion, but it is quite another matter. “Oh, yes!” says a man, “I used to be an Arminian, now I have become a Calvinist.” Or, “I used to be a Churchman, and now I have joined the Baptists.” Or, “I used to be a Papist, and I have become a Protestant.” Well, and what difference will that make if you have not a new *nature*?

A thief is a thief, whatever name he may bear—no change of name will make him honest. You may be quite as bad in one denomination as in another, for hypocrisy and formalism are found among all sorts of professors. If you take a raven and put it in a brass cage, or a silver cage, or a golden cage—it is still a raven—and so, if you, join this Church or that Church, unless your *nature* is changed, you are an unsaved sinner! Let me add that thought is a useful thing to have the outward conversation changed, yet that is not enough. It is a great blessing when a drunkard becomes a teetotaler. It is a great blessing when the thief becomes honest. It is a great blessing when any vice is given up, and the opposite virtue is carried out—but that is not the matter. “You must be born again.”

All the changes that you can ever work in yourselves will not avail for your entering Heaven. Go to St. Paul’s Cathedral and see the statues in white marble—they are not living men, and you cannot make them so. Wash them, clothe them, paint them! Do what you will with them, still

they cannot join in the songs or prayers of living men, because they are marble and not alive. Even so is it with you, unregenerate ones. You have no spiritual life in you—we would have you washed, we would have you moralized, for that is a good thing—even a corpse should be clean! But all the washing and the cleaning will not make you live! You must have the Divine influence from on high. No turning is good for anything everlastingly except the renewing of the inward nature by a work of Divine Grace in the soul.

How is this done? This is the work, this is the difficulty! I will show you God's mode of working as briefly as I can. The Lord's way of turning a man in the main is much as follows, but the exact method varies in each case. If a man is going on in any one road and you want to turn him, the first thing is to stop him. What would one of you think if tomorrow, as you were walking to your labor, you should suddenly see the earth open before you as though a volcano had split open the earth from its lowest depths? I warrant you would go no further in that way! You would stand with hair on end and gaze down into the dread abyss, or fly back in alarm.

This is exactly what happened to me when God turned me. I went on easy enough in my sins. I thought them pleasant, and that I should continue in them—till, by God's Grace I came to feel that Hell was a real thing, and that I was on the brink of it! I saw clearly that if the brittle thread of my life were snapped, infinite misery would be my portion in the place where fiends forever bite their bonds of iron, unable to escape or to endure! Oh, how a distinct sight of wrath to come stops a man! How he pauses when he perceives in his own soul that the wages of sin are death! A sight of the everlasting burnings makes him cry "STOP!" and though, before, he went on gaily dancing to destruction, he now waits awhile, puts his finger to his brow, takes counsel with his cooler judgment, and says to himself, "Now what shall I do?"

When a man is awakened by the Holy Spirit to feel that Hell is his just desert, it is no wonder that his mind is turned from the love of sin to a perfect horror of it. "Oh," he says, "if Hell is kindled by my sin, how can I love the sin which prepared such wrath for me?" The old naturalist, Ulysses Androvaldus, tells us that a dove is so afraid of a hawk that she will be frightened at the sight of one of its *feathers*. Whether it is so or not, I cannot tell. But this I do know, that when a man has had a thorough shaking over the jaws of Hell he will be so afraid of sin that even one of the feathers of it, any one sin, will alarm and send fear through his soul! This is a part of the way by which the Lord turns us when we are, indeed, turned.

Furthermore, the awakened conscience is led to see the real nature of sin. We have all seen bears in a pit, and lions in stone, and have seen them without alarm. But I can readily imagine that if a lion were suddenly to leap from my platform into the midst of this throng you would regard it with a very different eye! A wild beast let loose among you would be a very different thing from what it is in a picture or a statue. Now sin, as the preacher talks of it, is to most of you like a painted lion. But when a man

feels it in his own soul as an evil full of mischief, it is a very different thing. We are like the man in the fable who warmed a frozen viper in his bosom—when it came to life he knew its poisonous nature, for he felt the venom in his veins.

Men, before God quickens them, nurse the viper of sin in their bosom, and say, “Look at its azure scales. How fair it is to look upon! Do you suppose so harmless a creature could ever do me injury?” They put it in their bosom with much fondness. But when it bites them, and the hot poison runs through their veins and conscience is thoroughly awake, then they loathe it and cast it from them, or rather would do so if they could! But as Laocoon, in the old story tried in vain to tear the serpent’s coils from his limbs, so is it with them until Divine Grace comes to their aid. At any rate, a true sight of sin soon turns a man most thoroughly from his former love of it.

There once lived a great religious impostor, of whom it is said—

**“O’er his features hung  
The veil, the silver veil which he had flung  
In mercy there, to hide from mortal sight  
His dazzling brow, till man could bear its light.”**

When that veil was at last uplifted, the foulest leprosy was seen! So Sin comes to men covered with its silver veil, and it whispers with softest accents sweet as music, “Trust me, I cannot deceive you. I bring you richest joy. See how the cup sparkles, how the wine moves itself aright! How merry is the dance! How joyous is the chambering and the wantonness!” But ah, when once that silver veil comes off, and sin’s leprous brow is seen, then man, enlightened by his God, turns from it, crying, “Get you behind me, Satan.”

As John said of Jezebel, “Throw her down,” so do men abhor the accursed thing that by her witchcrafts could lead their souls to destruction. A sight of Hell and a sense of sin are great means in the hands of God to turn the sinner from his ways. The grand turning point I have not come to yet—it is a *sight* of Christ on the Cross. If you ever, by the eyes of faith, see Jesus Christ dying for you, sin will never be sweet to you again. What was it slew our blessed Lord? It was our sin—

**“ ‘Twere you, my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were!  
Each of my crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear.”**

When we discover that our iniquities put our dearest and best Friend to death, we vow revenge against our iniquities, and from that day forth hate them with a perfect hatred. Let me illustrate this very simply. Here is a knife with a richly-carved ivory handle, a knife of excellent workmanship. Yonder woman, we will suppose, has had a dear child murdered by a cruel enemy. This knife is hers. She is pleased with it, and prizes it much. How can I make her throw that knife away? I can do it easily, for that is the knife with which her child was killed. Look at it. There is blood still

upon the handle. She drops it as though it were a scorpion—she cannot bear it.

“Put it away,” she says, “it killed my child! Oh, hateful thing!” Now, sin is such a thing—we play with it till we are told it was sin that killed the Lord Jesus, who died out of love to us—pure, disinterested love. Then we say, “Hateful thing, get you gone! How can I endure you?” Remember how Mark Anthony stirred up the Romans to a fury against Caesar’s murderers? Holding up the mantle of dead Caesar, he pointed to the tears and gashes in the garment—“In this place ran Cassius’ dagger through. Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed.” And thus he inflamed the multitude to such a pitch of fury that they snatched up the seats around them, and away they went to the houses of the conspirators to set them on a blaze.

Ah, if my lips could speak as my heart bids them, I would cry, “See there the wounds of the Son of God! Behold the crimson stains which mark His blessed body! Mark the crown of thorns! Gaze upon the pierced hands! Weep over the nailed feet! See the deep gash which the lance made in His side! Sin did this cruel work, this bloody deed! Down with our sins! Drag them to the Cross! Slay them at Calvary! Let not one of them escape, for they are the murderers of Christ!” This is the way in which the Lord turns the sinner, and he is turned, indeed.

Further, one of the most blessed ways by which God makes the sinner turn is this—He manifests His everlasting love to him. You remember the fable of the traveler going along wrapped up in his cloak, and the contest between the wind and the sun as to which should get his cloak from him? The wind blustered and blew with a cold driving rain but the traveler wrapped his cloak about him the more tightly, and went shivering on his journey. The wind could not tear away the garment. Then the genial sun burst forth, and shone full upon the traveler’s face. It dried his garments and cheered him with its warmth. By-and-by the traveler loosed his cloak and at last threw it off—the sun’s kindness had won the day.

Now, when God’s Law blusters about a sinner, it sometimes happens that he says, “I will go on in my sins.” But when God’s love comes, who can stand against it? “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” says God to the sinner. “Is it so?” cries the renewed heart. “Then, Lord, I cannot be Your enemy any longer.” Oh, if some of you did but know that God has chosen you from before the foundation of the world! If you did but know that you are His darlings, His favorites—that He gave His own Son to die for you! Oh, if you did but know that your name, your worthless name, is written upon the hands of Christ—would you not love Him then?

I pray that He may reveal that love to you today, and, if He does, you will sing—

***“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,  
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart.  
Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground,  
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”***

When this sense of love has done its work, new loves and new desires fill the soul and the man is a new man. Some worldlings cannot make out why Christians abstain from certain pleasures. "Why," they say, "I am not going to deny myself of every pleasure!" Do not you know, my dear Friends, that it is no denial to us to go without sin? It is no denial to the sheep to live without licking blood, because the sheep would dread the sight of blood! It desires the sweet green grass, but does not care for carnage. So when God gives us new hearts and right spirits, we do not find it a *denial* to renounce sin—our tastes are *changed*—our new loves and our new desires are not those of our former estate!

There may be a gentleman here who has risen in the world. He was once a farmer's boy, but now he rides in his carriage. When he was a farmer's boy, he used to think what a grand thing it would be to be a king and swing on a gate and eat bacon all day long. But now I will be bound to say he does not want to swing on a gate, and has little relish for the rustic dainty of which he was once so fond. He has reached a different rank of society, and his tastes and habits are all different.

So is it with the Christian. God makes a king of him, and how can he go back to play with beggars? God has put a heavenly nature into him, and he abhors to grovel in the dust of sin. Dear Friends, I would to God that you might know your standing in Christ—sons of God, heirs with Christ, joint heirs with Him—and when you do it will turn you away from the base things of sin and you will be turned, indeed!

Once more, and I shall not detain you. There is something which binds the Christian very fast to holiness and restrains him from sin, and that is the prospect of yon bright world to which he is wending his way. This week I had my faith much strengthened in visiting a sick woman. I would gladly change places with her. Glad enough should I be to lie upon that sick bed and die in her room, for though she has been long on the borders of the grave, and knows it—knows that each hour may probably be the last—her joy is so great, her bliss is so abundant, that you have only to speak with her and her joy overflows!

She told me, "I prayed that if God would spare me, He would give me one soul, and He has given me *five* converts while I have been on this bed!" And I did not wonder at it, as I saw the five dear friends sitting in the room. I did not wonder at it—it was enough to make one a Christian to see her joy and her peace, and hear her talk so confidently about the time when she should see her Lord and be in His embrace forever! "Ah," says the devil to the Christian, "I will give you so much if you sin." Our reply is, "What could you give me compared with our inheritance? O Fiend, you bring me *counterfeit* riches, but I can count down ten thousand times as much in real solid gold!

"You proffer me your paste gems, but here are diamonds and pearls of the first water and of the rarest value! Away with you, you tempter! You know not how to tempt a Christian! For his gains are greater than anything you can give him." Surely this would turn your hearts, my Hearers, if you could but know and feel the glory of our inheritance! If you had a

vision of the land of the hereafter, where the birds of Paradise forever sing, and the sun forever shines, and the day is never ended, surely sin would no longer enchant you. "We are on our journey home," say the host of the elect. The city which has foundations has turned their stops from sin, and they are turned, indeed, so that they never can be turned back again.

Now I have done, but I do not like to send you away without making again the personal enquiry. Are you bemoaning yourself? Do you desire to be turned? Would you have these gracious motives operating upon you? Then do not put it off, but this moment breathe the silent prayer, "Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned." I have a great desire in my heart. I should like to tell you of it—it is that there should be more converted in this place than ever were converted at one time in any place since the world was—for never before was such an audience gathered to hear one man! Whether that desire shall be granted I do not know, but if we have faith enough for it, it may come, and it *will* come! Why should it not?

Oh, that some great sinners might be saved, for they always make the best saints! Oh, that the Lord might take some of the ringleaders in the devil's army and make them lieutenants in His service! None so brave for Christ as those who were brave for sin! You great sinners—may great mercy meet with you! Remember the way of salvation is this—Trust Jesus and you shall be saved! Look to Him I have pictured just now bleeding, groaning, dying on the tree! Look, look, and live! Only depend upon Him! Only give your heart to Him, and rest in Him, and it is not possible that one should perish who comes to Jesus and puts his trust in Him!

Brethren, pray for us! If you, the members of this Church, do not pray for me, I feel I shall have much to lay to your charge. Never was anyone called to so great a work as this. I have, this morning, 20,000 claims upon your prayers! I beseech you by the living God pray for me! It were better for me that I never were born than to have this responsibility upon me if I have not your prayers! Who can tell?—the service of this morning may, when it is thought over and remembered by the hearers—bring forth fruit a hundred-fold, and God shall have the glory! Do pray for me! And, Sinner, unconverted Sinner, do pray for *yourself*, and may God hear you for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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# THE INNER SIDE OF CONVERSION

## NO. 2104

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1889,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: You have chastised me and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn You me and I shall be turned. For You are the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore My heart is troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.”***  
***Jeremiah 31:18-20.***

THERE are turning points in most lives. We go on in a straight line for a certain distance but suddenly we come to a place where we must make a choice of roads. All the rest of our journey may depend upon what we do at those particular points. Character often hinges on a day's resolve. Every now and then we meet with a man who has seemed hopeful enough till he has taken a wrong turn. And ever since then we have heard it said of him that “he has gone bad.” That is a common and expressive phrase for going in the wrong direction openly and boldly. The man was not right before, but now he is wrong in conduct—heart and life rush together down a steep place into the sea of ruin.

On the other hand, the world may not often notice it, but the lovers of the souls of men observe, with great gladness, that men and women are suddenly pulled up and caused to turn in the *right* direction. I meet with many who were once gay and frivolous, who are now, “much tumbled up and down in their thoughts,” as Master Bunyan would have said. And I mark their regret, their hope, their trust, their brave resolve, their deliverance by the help of God, and their firm choice of that right road which they, from now on, follow earnestly. Their way is now upward, ever upward—a toilsome and rugged way it may be—but a safe and a right way, which leads them to, “glory and honor and immortality.”

There are many turning points and places of deliberation in the pilgrimage of life. To some, those turning points come very early in youth—while they are yet boys and girls they are visited in conscience and impressed in spirit. And blessed are they if they then and there seek the Lord. For they shall find Him, to the joy of their whole lives. To young men and maidens there are stations on the line of life where they are called upon to decide as to their future road. Again and again the warning voice is heard, “Change here for holiness and eternal life.”

The lad is to be bound apprentice, or he is to take his first situation, or for some other reason he is, for the first time, to leave his father's roof—let him look upon this occasion as one of the most important seasons of his life. The night before he goes away will be, to that youth, if he is wisely led, a time for especially committing himself to God. When, for the first

time, facing public life, the youth may well hear a voice saying to him, "Choose this day whom you will serve." The whole of his future may depend upon how he begins in the house of business—the first step may influence every other.

When men and women are about to be married, how much of life then trembles in the balances! Upon the choice of a partner in life the fashion of that life may depend. Whether self or Christ—the world or God—shall be the master motive of the household, may be decided by the finger which wears the plain gold ring. Too often is marriage entered on frivolously. And yet, if one could see all the bearings of it, for good or for evil, one would judge the fullest consideration and the most prayerful thought to be nothing more than the demand of common sense on such a subject.

Changes in business, removals of residence, promotion to higher positions, or serious losses—all make new starting points. Birthdays, new years, graves wet with tears, or strange events in personal history have all become turning points in life's ways. Fierce temptations have also brought the lives of men to pauses and then to onrushes, which have continued to give force to all the rest of their existence. To yield at a certain moment has meant slavery for life. To overcome has meant eternal triumph.

Joseph's career was determined by that grave moment in which he fled from the allurements of sin and left his garment in the tempter's hands. By that flight he prepared his way to become the savior of Egypt and the benefactor of his father's house. Take heed, my Brother, when you are tempted. For the next minute may be the pivot of your life. An interesting book has been written upon "Turning Points in Life," and it is capable of indefinite extension. According to a man's station and disposition, those turning points take place at different periods. But whenever they are before us, they call for special prayer and trust in God.

There is, however, one turning point, and one only, which will secure salvation and eternal life. And that is what we call conversion, which is the first apparent result of regeneration, or the new birth. The man being renewed, the current of his life is turned—he is converted. Of this turning point I desire to speak this morning, so far as pain and weakness will permit.

The text tells us a great deal about this turning—it is wonderful how clearly it describes it. The Bible must have been written by our Creator, for nobody but the Lord who created men could know so much about them. This volume reveals the secrets of all hearts. It unveils our private thoughts. "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." And that conversion which it works, it describes as none else can. Every touch is true to nature and marks the hand of One who is within us as well as round about us. As you listen, may the Holy Spirit teach many of you what salvation means—may He turn you—and you will be turned.

In our text we have man at the turning points as *God* observes him. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." Then we have *man* just after the turning point, when *he* says, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh." And then, thirdly, we have God viewing man at that turning point, crying with

holy joy, "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord."

I pray that I may be enabled, in plain and simple language, to describe that inner and vital experience with which many of you are well acquainted but which may, to others, still seem a strange thing.

**I.** First, here is MAN AT THE TURNING POINT AS GOD OBSERVES HIM. Is not that a wonderful Word of the Lord—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself"? Of a certainty the Lord hears all the sorrowful voices of men. It may be that nobody else has heard you—you would be very sorry that they should. But the Lord says, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." You did not speak, you could not put your feelings into words—your utterance was a moan, a piteous noise, such as an animal might give forth—a moaning like that of a cow in pain.

The word here used, if you pronounce it deliberately, conveys its own meaning by its sound. The Lord hears "surely"—that is to say, He hears the sense and meaning of our wordless moans—He puts into language that which no words of ours could express. The Lord understands us better than we understand ourselves. Concerning the man here described, we note that he is in a state of great sorrow about himself. He is not bemoaning the dead but he is bemoaning *himself*. His moans are not about his lost money or estate—he may be poor, but this is not his present grief.

His moans are not about his bodily pains—he may be sickly but his distress is in his spirit rather than in his flesh. His moans are not now about the bitterness of his lot, the weariness of his daily toil, or the oppression of the proud. No, he bemoans *himself*, himself only. This is sorrow, indeed. The grief is *within*. All the water outside the ship is of small account. It is when the leak admits the water to the hold that there is danger. "Let not your heart be troubled"—it matters something if your country or your house is troubled. But to you, the trying matter is if your *heart* is troubled.

We read that David's heart smote him—that is an ugly blow, against which there is no shield. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity. But a wounded spirit, who can bear?" This is what the Lord tenderly notes about the sinner at the turning point, that he bemoans himself. His first and deepest grief is that he himself is in an evil case. He moans his own sad plight. Ah me, nothing is such a bitter fountain to myself as myself! My Soul, you are in some respects my sole misery! You are my very self. And if you are wrong, all is wrong. My Soul, how is it with you? What am I? Where am I? And where am I going? Lost! Lost! What have you lost? Alas, I have lost myself! Thus the Lord, "heard Ephraim bemoaning himself."

This bemoaning was addressed to his God. This is a very hopeful point about it—he cried to Jehovah, "You have chastised me and I was chastised." His deep trouble is poured out unto his God. It is a blessed thing when a man in his distress turns *to* his God and not *from* him. It is well when the troubled heart cries, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him and fill my mouth with arguments."

Is it so with any of you here present? Have you given up running to your neighbor? Is yours a grief with which no neighbor could understand? Does it afford you some relief to look God-ward? Does even your despair turn its almost stone-blind eyes in the direction of the sun? When you cry and moan, are those cries and moans unto God? Do you sit alone and keep silent to all else? And do you speak to God in secret? Then let me assure you that there is hope. I am glad, dear Friend, because I perceive that whatever bitterness may be in your heart, there will come a sweet ending to it.

If the vessel's head is toward the Lord, no storm will ever sink it. You have come to a blessed turning point in your life when you are driven to address your sore complaints unto the Lord God. It is no work of mere nature when the heart talks with God. Look at the multitudes of prayers which unconverted men daily repeat. What dead formalities they are! They do not speak to *God!* They repeat a certain set of fine words to the air, or to the skies. But God is not there. A mouthful of words every morning and night, uttered without thought of the living God—to what end are these?

True prayer sees God present and speaks to Him as to a living, listening Person. Hear how Ephraim spreads his case before God! Come, Heart, be of good cheer, some great good is coming to you, now that you are coming to God! If you are speaking to the Lord, though it is only in sighs and moans, He hears you, and He will answer you, and speak comfortably unto you.

Notice how Ephraim in the text has spied out his God as having long ago dealt with him. He tells the Lord that He has chastised him—"You have chastised me and I was chastised." The man had not before observed the hand of God in his suffering—but he does now. He lost his wife—he did not see God in this stroke chastening him. His children were taken from him—he did not see the hand of God even in that affliction. I see the suffering man before me—he has been brought low by sickness. But he has not considered who it is that has weakened his strength in the way and shortened his days.

His spirits sink, his mind is wretched. He has not yet felt that it is the hand of the Lord which is heavy upon him. It is a mark that the careless heart has come to a change, when the man who had not God in all his thoughts now sees Him in his life and cries, "You have chastised me." I have hope of that man who sees God's hand, even though he sees only a rod in it.

In this case, "You have chastised me and I was chastised," would seem to mean that it was a very sore punishment—he was indeed, chastised—there was no mistaking the smart. Our heavenly Father does not play with the rod. When He deals the blow, He means that it shall be felt. "You have chastised me and I was chastised—I felt it and I bemoan myself because of it." I may be speaking to some here who are smarting, even now, under the afflicting hand of God. Let them acknowledge that hand—turn to Him that smites them and kiss the hand which inflicts the blow—so shall the rod of the Lord be turned away from them, and they shall know that in very faithfulness He has afflicted them.

But the mourner in our text means more than this by his moans—he owns that the chastening had not set him right. “You have chastised me, and I was chastised.” And that was all. He had smarted but he had not submitted. He had not obeyed but had still further rebelled. He was “as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.” He was like the unbroken calf, which cannot bear the yoke and will not work in the furrow—which, being goaded—kicks back at the driver and thus hurts itself all the more with the goad.

Human nature is restive under the yoke of the Law. Its shoulder will not endure the pressure of the command. When sin brings sorrow as its wage, the proud spirit of man is angered and he resents that which God justly lays on him. In the time of his affliction many a man sins more and more. Now it may happen that I am speaking to a person here whose portrait is photographed in this verse. God has chastised you, but all that has come of it is that you have been chastised—you have not yielded, you have not repented, you have not made confession of sin. You have not asked for mercy through the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a very sad and dangerous state of things. Every chastisement which ends in chastisement—and produces no salutary fruit—not only involves solemn responsibility but it casts a sevenfold blackness over future guilt. He that goes astray over the thorn-hedge of affliction is not likely to return. May God save us from unsanctified chastisements, for they are full often the outriders of destruction! “He, that being often reprov’d hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

Ephraim feels this and fears the result of having been thus obstinate towards God. Was there not grave reason for fear? If the fire will not separate the dross from the lump of ore, what is to be done with it, but to cast it away as reprobate? What is the Lord to say to those whom He has chastised in vain but this—“Ephraim is joined unto his idols: let him alone”? If the rampant young bullock will not bear the yoke, bring forth the axe. That which will not bend shall break—that which cannot be mended must be thrown away.

Yet there is something better than this. The mourner in our text despairs of all but God. He cannot turn himself and chastisement will not turn him. He has no hope left but for God Himself to interpose. “Turn You me and I shall be turned.” Lord, You did send a fever—it has burnt me but it has not melted me! Let Your love do what Your furnace could not! Lord Jesus, come Yourself and melt this iron heart! Lord, You have sent death and he has frightened me, but he has not changed me!

Come Yourself and do by Your life what the fear of death could not! Lord, I have been subjected to pains and plagues that might have broken the pride of a Pharaoh, but I have been exceedingly obstinate and have wickedly stood out against You. Come Yourself, with Your own almighty Grace and conquer even me! Turn You me and I shall be turned. But I despair of any other power ever working conversion in me.

Surely, it does not need that I speak with any powerful language to my dear hearers this morning when I beseech you to make your personal appeal to the Lord Himself. If you have not yet yielded to the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and if outward means have up to now failed—if

even the sadness of your life has not been the means of bringing thought into your heart and repentance into your soul, then cry to the Lord God and entreat Him by His Holy Spirit to deal with you. You are driven into a corner—nothing can save you now but the Lord God Himself. Cry to Him, for you have no other hope.

Pray, “Turn You me, O Lord, for You only can turn me. O Lord, place Your hand upon the helm of my ship and turn it as You will! Come into my vessel, O Lord Jesus, for my ship is driven with winds and tossed with waves! Come You and take supreme command, and be both Captain and Pilot to me! Turn You me and I shall be turned.”

Holy Scripture plainly teaches us that although man is a free agent, yet the Lord can control his will without destroying it. He can turn the will and heart by forces which act in perfect harmony with the laws of the human mind. He can make us as freely turn as if there were no constraint. And yet the glory of every holy movement and turn shall be due unto the Lord, alone. My Hearer, you may rightly and wisely pray at this hour—“Lord, if Your judgments fail, let Your Grace prevail. If afflictions are too feeble, set Your Omnipotent Grace to work. Turn me and I shall be turned.”

To all this confession, poor bemoaning Ephraim adds another word, whereby he submits to the supreme sway of Jehovah his God—“For You are the Lord, my God.” Happy is that heart which, in its despair, throws itself at the feet of its covenant God, crying, “You are the Lord, my God”! He does as good as say—Man cannot help me. I cannot help myself. Even Your chastenings have not availed to turn me. Lord, I appeal to You, Yourself! You are Jehovah—You can do all things. You are my God, for You have made me. And therefore you can make me new. I pray You, therefore, exercise Your own power and renew Your poor broken and deified creature. Fashion me according to Your mind, that I may answer to Your purposes.”

Beloved Friends, I do not feel that I can preach, but I wish my heart could get at your hearts. I cannot do this—but may the mystic finger of the Holy Spirit now touch the hearts of any who are awakened and aroused but not decided. And may they be led to take the blessed step of casting themselves upon God as He is revealed in Christ Jesus, humbly saying, “You are the Lord, my God”!

Thus I have dimly described the man at the turning point. And it only remains to note that all this was done and felt, not in pretense, but indeed, and of a truth. The Lord says, “I have surely heard Ephraim.” What was said was truly said, so that God surely heard it. That experience which is not real and not really worked in the soul will prove to be nothing better than the painted pageantry of a dead soul—a disguise to go to Hell in. Pretend to no feeling which is not real. Profess no emotion which is not deeply and truly felt. In all things be sincere, and most of all be accurate when describing your inner condition before the heart-searching Jehovah.

**II.** Secondly, let us hear MAN AFTER THE TURNING POINT. Here you have the description in the nineteenth verse. It begins with “Surely.” Is it not very remarkable that each of these verses should be stamped with the hallmark, and each one bear the word, “surely”? The Lord said He had

“surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.” And here Ephraim says, “Surely after that I was turned, I repented.”

See, before us, prayer mixed with faith soon answered. Not many moments after Ephraim had said, “You are the Lord, my God,” he felt that he was turned. He treats it as a matter of fact and speaks of “after that I was turned.” There is a sacred moment in the life of the chosen of God in which he is turned. I do not think that every man can tell when that turning took place. But it did take place in the case of every saved one.

Looking back, he has to look for the fruit of the turning. And that may be very perceptible, though the secret mystic work may in itself be hidden. In quickening the soul from its death in sin, there must be a moment in which the sinner is dead and another in which he lives. The actual transition from death to life must be instantaneous, though the signs of it may be gradual. “A point of time, a moment’s space,” works the inner transformation. Quick as a lightning flash is the implantation of the Divine life. The dead man lives at once—the condemned is in an instant pardoned.

A man must be either condemned or forgiven, and this is a great change. The Divine life itself must either be there or not be there. And so there must be a true line over which the man passes, once and for all, when he proceeds from darkness into light, from death into life. “I was turned,” says he. Many others of us can say, “I was turned.” My Friend, do you remember when you were turned? Do you know your spiritual birthday and the spot of ground where Jesus unveiled His face to you? Some of us do, although others do not.

The main point is to be turned. To know the place and time is a secondary matter. Yet I say some of us know when we were turned. And here is one reason why we remember it, for repentance came with turning. “After that I was turned, I repented.” The man, when awakened, cried, “Break! Break! Break, O heart!” But it would not break. He said to himself, “I long to *feel*,” but he could not feel—his heart seemed to be as an adamant stone. If he did, for a moment, experience a melting emotion, it passed away and his goodness was as the morning cloud, or as the early dew.

But now, after he was turned, repentance came easily. No effort was required. The heart of stone had turned to flesh and the rock smitten by the Divine rod gushed with floods of penitential grief. “I repented,” says he, meaning, I changed my mind about a thousand things—I loved what I had hated, I hated what I had loved. I loathed what had been called my pleasure. I longed for what I had despised as being dull and dreary. “I repented”—I felt deep sorrow for sin and I quit it to follow after obedience and holiness.

Repentance is a sweet and sure evidence of a Divine conversion. He that is truly turned, turns his face to the wall to weep and pray. You can not make yourself repent. But when God has changed your heart, you will repent as naturally as the brook flows down the valley when once its bands of ice are thawed. “After that I was turned, I repented.”

Deep sorrow followed upon farther instruction. The Holy Spirit does not leave the convert but gives him further instruction. And out of that comes a sorer regret, a more complete self-abasement. “I smote upon my thigh,” says Ephraim, even as the publican smote upon his breast. Do you not

hear him cry, "Ah me, what have I done? What have I done?" His conviction was deeper, after he was instructed, than it had been before. God takes us into His school and He begins to show us the evil of sin—the great iniquity of rebelling against a God so good, so kind—against a Law so just, so righteous.

And then we begin to abhor ourselves. Especially does the Holy Spirit instruct us as to the Person, and work, and love, and Divine Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this makes us loathe ourselves still more. We begin to see that there is salvation in none other, but only in the Lord—and that His salvation by Christ Jesus is to be had for nothing—a free gift of Sovereign Grace. And that it is given at once to all who seek the Lord, believing in Christ Jesus, however great their guilt may be. Nothing makes a man smite upon his breast with a deep sorrow for sin like knowing the Grace of God as it is revealed in the suffering and death of the incarnate God.

As a man knows more of himself, more of Christ, more of God, and more of the hereafter, he becomes indignant with himself and deals heavy blows at himself. "After that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh." Want of knowledge tends to make men hardened, unfeeling, self-complacent, and proud. But when they are instructed by the Divine Spirit, then they are ready to inflict wounds upon themselves as worthy of buffetings and blows. "God be merciful to me a sinner" is a fit prayer for the instructed—and the lowliest posture well becomes such a one.

To this deep sorrow there followed shame. Ephraim says, "I was ashamed, yes, even confounded." This man knew everything before. Now he knows nothing, but is confounded. Once he could dispute and dispute and dispute. But now he stands silent before his Judge. He formerly felt himself quite able to defend his own cause, but now he stands ashamed. Before he was turned, he might have raised objections to the Gospel—yes, raised them by the mile. And if you had answered a legion of them, he would have summoned another legion to his help.

But now he proposes no defense, the blush mantles his cheek and he pleads guilty. It is very difficult to bring the sinner where he has nothing to say. But in this case the man is muddled, confused, ashamed, silenced—and has neither excuse nor extenuation to offer. He stands like a convicted felon, who, when he is asked by the judge if he has anything to say in stay of sentence, lays his hand on his mouth, and, blushing scarlet, confesses by his silence that he deserves to die. This is the man with whom Mercy can work her will.

"Well," says one, "you are not painting a very pretty picture." No, I am not. But I am painting a truthful one. When God the Holy Spirit brings a man to the great turning point, He empties him, strips him and lays him low. One of the very first feelings of the new-born life is amazement, dismay, self-abhorrence, self-despair. Truth requires that such as we are by nature should be ashamed. It is no mock modesty. We ought to be ashamed, for we have acted shamefully. The Holy Spirit makes a man see this.

What the man could once boast of, he could not now mention without disgust. He could formerly come forth, wearing a brazen forehead, but



now he seeks holes and corners where he may hide his guilty face. He hangs his head and judges himself worse than the worst. He even wishes that he had never been born, or that he had been made a dog or a toad, rather than have been a man. God often brings men down to this condition in order that they may be on ground whereon He can meet them in the way of Divine Grace.

Lastly on this point, memory now comes in and revives the reproach of youth. Memory is a very terrible torture to a guilty heart. "Son, remember!" is one of the voices heard in Hell. "I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." The formerly forgetful man now recollects what he used to be in years gone by. How convenient it is to forget. But how damnable! Forgotten sin steels the heart and blinds the conscience—and so destroys the soul.

Ephraim had forgotten his green and foolish years when he was in the first fury of his sinful madness. Do you say to me, "I was sowing my wild oats then"? I answer, "You were sowing and soon will come the time for reaping." Go down, now, to the field and see what has come of your random life! Wild oats are seldom barren. I have known them grow up into a harvest of unquenchable flames! God has not forgotten your youthful provocation.

Ah, when memory is awake, it piles huge piles of firewood upon the fires of remorse and the flame rises to the heavens. It is a great reproach to a man to have been a rebel in his youth—it shows how ingrained a traitor he is. I can only compare the sinner with a quickened memory to one who is traveling across the plains of Russia dreaming in his carriage and all of a sudden he is aroused by the sharp bark of a wolf behind him. And this is followed up by a thousand cruel voices of brutes, hungry and gaunt and grim, all eager for his blood.

Listen to the patter of those eager feet! The howls of those hungry demons! From where did they come? You thought that your sins were dead long ago and quite forgotten. See, they have left their tombs! They are on your track. Like wolves, your old sins are pursuing you. They rest not day nor night. They prepare their teeth to tear you apart. Where will you flee? How can you escape the consequences of the past? They are upon you, these monsters—their hot breath is in your face—who can now save you?

Only a miracle can rescue you from the reproach of your youth—will that miracle be worked? May we dare to look for it? We have something better than a mere hope to set before you. Jesus meets these packs of wolfish sins. He interposes between us and them. He drives them back! He scatters them! There is not one of them left! For our sakes He has borne reproach. He gave His back to the smiters and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair—He hid not His face from shame and spitting. And by this substitution of Himself, He has set His people free. But till this is seen and known by faith, the man is in a hopeless state—neither is any in a more horrible condition. He is ashamed, confounded and crushed with reproach. All this is working a true and deep work in his soul. Better things are coming.

**III.** Now we will turn and HEAR GOD AT THIS TURNING POINT. Picture the poor guilty creature, confounded, covered with reproach, unable to de-

fend himself in the least degree. And then the God whom he has so greatly offended comes in and cries, "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child?" Does this look like a question? The answer has been already given in the ninth verse of this same chapter—"I am a Father to Israel and Ephraim is My first-born."

The gracious Lord sees Ephraim sore with chastisement, spent with weeping, pale with shame, and moaning with agony. And then his sonship is acknowledged. He bends over the crushed one and cries, "This is My son. This is My dear child." How gracious on God's part to acknowledge the guilty rebel as a son! What did the father do in the parable, when he saw his son a great way off? He knew him to be his son and he had compassion and ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him.

God is eager to receive returning prodigals. The Lord as good as says, "He is My dear son. He is a pleasant child"! The sinner that despairs of self-salvation is "my dear son"! The sinner who bemoans himself for his transgressions is "a pleasant child"! How can it be? The heart of the Father in Heaven has great depths in it, unfathomable by our poor limited natures. We are told, sometimes, that there is joy in the hearts of angels over sinners that repent. I do not doubt the fact. But that is not the truth which the Bible tries to tell us. Holy Scripture says—"There is joy in the *presence* of the angels of God over one sinner that repents."

In whose *Presence* do the angels dwell? Why, in the Presence of God! The joy described in the parable of the finding of the lost sheep is the joy of God *Himself* over a repenting sinner! When a sinner is smiting upon his thigh, the Lord God is smiling on him. When he is ashamed and confounded, God is ready to own him as His dear Son. Oh, the heights and depths of sin-forgiving, sin-forgetting Grace! See, Beloved, here is love acknowledging the object of its choice—love confessing its near relationship to one most unworthy and most sorrowful.

Then behold the same love well-pleased. The Lord does not merely say, "Ephraim is My son; yes, he is My child." But He calls him, "My *dear* son, a pleasant child." A pleasant child! Why, he has been full of rebellion from his birth! Yes. But he confesses it and mourns it. And he is a pleasant child when so much holy sorrow is seen in him. He is polluted with sin—his sins have ruined his beauty and diseased his soul! Yes, but he cried, "Turn me," and he has been turned—and now, by God's Grace, he is a pleasant child.

What a marvel that the thrice holy Lord should ever take pleasure in a sinner! Yet a sinner on his knees is a delight to the heart of the All-Merciful. A sinner with his eye on the Cross, believing in the Lord Jesus, is very dear to the Father. I do believe that the great Lord would rather turn His eyes away from angels than fail to look upon a weeping pleader, crying, "God be merciful to me." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word." O you kings and princes, with all your pomp and glory—you may knock at the door of Heaven and wait for notice!

O you peers of the realm, you may go your ways and seek great things of God, but He will no more regard you than the servants at your doors! But if there is a poor, foul castaway—weeping and bemoaning himself—let

him know that the Lord waits to be gracious unto him. When a son, a pleasant child, is before the Father, in sorrow and reproach, the Father's heart and eyes are both with him to bless him. He is a dear son, he is a pleasant child. He takes him to His bosom, not because of his goodness, but because of his relationship.

Let me imagine a scene, such as our London homes have often seen. One of you has a little girl and she has behaved very badly during the day. Mother has threatened her with punishment for her continued ill-conduct. The child, in her bad temper, has run away. The evening comes on and where is Jane? Her brothers and sisters do not know. It is getting late. Where can she be? Has anybody seen her? No, she is not hidden away at home—every room has been searched.

In alarm, someone is sent to the police station. Have you seen a little girl? No, they have not seen a little girl. It gets to be ten o'clock at night and the matter is very serious. Eleven strikes, like a knell. "Why don't you go to bed, dear Mother?" "Go to bed! Why, I am her mother!" and she breaks out with, "My child! My dear child!" Surely a little while ago she might have been called a good-for-nothing little chit—one might have been glad to miss the worrying little troubler. But now Mother cries, "My child! My dear child!"

The clock strikes twelve. The small hours grow into great ages of grief. Father is troubled—he has been up and down the streets and searched everywhere. You meet him and you say, "Well, she was, after all, a very commonplace child and most obnoxious in disposition." "Ah, you do not know her. Oh, she was such a pretty girl! She had her peculiarities. But it makes me angry to hear a word against the dear child." Mother felt that she never knew before how much she loved that child!

What is that? What? Is the wanderer found? What joy beams from every face! Could you have imagined that one naughty child could have made such a stir and caused such delight? Sinner, this is just what happens about you! Thus does the great God think of His wanderers and rejoice when He sees them returning home. When you cry, "Father!" He answers with, "Is he not My dear son? Is he not a pleasant child?" Love takes delight in repenting sinners.

Notice, in this case, love in earnest. The Lord says, "Since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still." Think of that, "*I do earnestly remember him still!*" God in earnest—that is a great conception! God in earnest over one moaning sinner! God earnest in thoughts of love, even when He bids the preacher tell the offender of the wrath to come. He says, Go and thunder at him and let loose the lightning of the Law upon him—and yet I earnestly remember him with thoughts of love! Tell him he will be driven into everlasting fire if he repents not. And yet, in thus threatening him, I do earnestly remember him still.

Go, Providence, and frustrate his designs! Go, Death, and take away his child! Yet in all this, there are earnest thoughts of love towards him. "Since I spoke against him," says God, "I do earnestly remember him still." These are charming words to me. They thrill my soul. I fear to handle them lest I brush off their bloom. God is never more in earnest to save a soul than when He is dealing roughly with it.

How I wish I could put my thoughts into your hearts at once—instead of having to dilute them by my own words—and then see their strength watered down as they pass through your ears and your understanding and at last filter in drops into your hearts! May the Lord put His own thoughts into your souls by His holy Spirit, that you may know, in some measure, what His earnest remembrance means!

Notice, next, love in sympathy. Ephraim is bemoaning himself and what is the Lord doing? He says, “My heart is troubled for him.” God’s heart is wounded when our hearts are broken! The tenderness of God is at work—His very life is stirred when a soul is crying to Him, “Turn me and I shall be turned”—Jehovah is in sympathy with Ephraim! When the rebel is moved with repentance, the forgiving Lord is moved with pity! God Himself repents of the evil with which He chastised the sinner when the sinner repents of the evil with which he grieved his God. Those are words which will bear much thinking on—“My heart is troubled for him.”

Then comes love in action—“I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.” I am so glad to think that the “surely” is found again in this place. “Surely” God heard Ephraim bemoaning. “Surely” he said that he was turned, and now God says, “Surely I will have mercy upon him.” The Lord God puts His hand and seal to it. Sinner, He assuredly forgives you. As surely as you have been ashamed, so surely does He put away your reproach. Come to Him by Christ and He forgives you now. The bill of your debts is receipted—the handwriting which was against you is blotted out. The weight of your iniquity was laid on Christ Jesus of old and He Himself carried it away and hurled it into the abyss, so that it shall never be mentioned against you any more.

“I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.” What great mercy, what full mercy, what eternal mercy, is this! Yield, then, your stubborn hearts to this immeasurable love. Be captives in the embrace of compassion. Can you resist the charms of goodness? When God comes forth with nothing in His heart but love and kindness, mercy and pardon, flee no longer from Him! Turn at His reproof.

And may this day, even this very moment, be the day of salvation, the beginning of days to you! Then will we bid them ring the bells of Heaven, for there is joy today. May the Lord Himself have joy of you! May He, concerning you, rest in His love and rejoice over you with singing! O Lord, grant me the joy of leading many to Yourself by this sermon, through your Son, Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit! Amen. Amen. Amen.

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# GOD, THE HUSBAND OF HIS PEOPLE

## NO. 3419

A SERMON  
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*“Although I was a Husband unto them, says the Lord.”*  
*Jeremiah 31:32.*

SIN is greatly aggravated by the mercy of God, of which the sinner has been a partaker. Sin in a child of God is peculiarly sinful. Instead of its being a trifle, as some men seem to think, it is a very solemn matter, indeed. To have had deep draughts of Divine Love and then to deeply offend against that love is no light thing. This seems to have been the crying part of Israel's sin. “Although I was a Husband unto them.”

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, God's ancient people, Israel, seem to have lived and passed across the page of history on purpose that they might remain forever the picture of ourselves. Whenever you read of their backsliding, of their idolatries, of their provoking of God's Spirit, you may shut the book and say, “Within my heart there is all this and my life is as like to this as in a glass, face answers to face.” We must not be slow to condemn their sin, but we must always remember that there are two culprits at the bar—and that when we condemn them we also condemn ourselves!

Now, at this time, we shall first of all, spend a few minutes in *considering the indictment which God brought against His people Israel*—they had sinned—“although,” He said, “I was a Husband unto them.” Secondly, *we shall have to plead guilty to the indictment for ourselves*. And then, thirdly, we shall *offer some suggestions of amendment that should arise out of the painful and penitent reflections* of this evening. First, then, let us consider very earnestly and humbly—

### I. THE INDICTMENT WHICH GOD BROUGHT AGAINST ISRAEL.

Their sin was aggravated because God was a Husband unto them. How was this? He was a Husband to them in that *He set His special love upon them* as a husband does upon his bride. He found them, as He says, in a desert land, in a howling wilderness. He found them, as we know, literally, in the land of Egypt, in the house of bondage where their lives were made bitter in the cruel slavery of making bricks for their tyrant masters. But He so loved them that with a high hand and an outstretched arm, He redeemed them. All His plagues He brought on Pharaoh and upon the fields of Zoan. He magnified His power, even on the tribes of Pharaoh, and at the Red Sea He glorified Himself by the destruction of all the hosts of Egypt. But as for His people, He led them forth like

sheep, by the hands of Moses and Aaron. A husband, having loved his bride, and finding her in slavery, would never cease until the utmost that could be done had been done for her liberty and happiness! And God was thus a Husband unto His people. He says, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you."

He was a Husband unto them, further, *in that He made them and them, only, to be His special people*. As the husband turns not his eyes to others, but sets his heart upon the one peculiar one, so did the Lord towards His people, Israel. And what people were like unto them—what people to whom God manifested Himself so clearly? There were other nations greater than they, but God did not send His Truth unto them, but they lived and perished in darkness. But God, in His Sovereign Grace, set His heart on Israel—Israel He loved—and Israel, alone!

He was a Husband unto them, in the next place, *in that He remained faithful to them*. He had taken them, as it were, for better or for worse—and worse, it was, with terrible preponderance! They grieved His Spirit and provoked Him to anger, yet He cast not away His people. Even to this day He is still a Husband unto Israel, and the day shall come when the scattered and the dispersed of Judah shall be gathered with all their brethren into their own land. And where they sat down and wept, and mourned over the desolation of their cities, they shall once again wake the harp with joy and gladness! God has been a Husband to that people in the faithfulness which He exhibited towards them.

He was their Husband, too, in this sense, *that He communed with them most lovingly*. There were divers appearances which the Lord made to His people by His Prophets and He did great wonders and worked many signs and miracles. Besides that, He revealed Himself in the Tabernacle and in the Temple—in the sacrifice and in the offerings. True, in not so clear a light as He has revealed Himself to us, but still, with marvelous brightness as compared with the darkness in which the whole world was lying. As a husband reveals himself in love with his spouse, so did the Lord as a Husband unto His ancient Church.

In addition to this, *He took care to provide for His people, Israel*, as a husband does, when with all his worldly goods he does endow her whom he has chosen. What people were like they—who ate angels' food? Yes, they ate manna to the fullest. If they needed water, the Rock furnished it to them! He brought oil out of the flinty rock when they needed it. All that they needed in the wilderness was supplied bounteously to them. Their garments grew not old, neither were their feet sore by the space of 40 years, though they passed through that howling wilderness where no supplies could be drawn! No people were ever better provided for than they, for even their luxury was sometimes at least gratified—when they asked for flesh, the quails descended and they were fattened thereon.

In addition to that, the God who had become their Husband *protected them* as the husband does his wife. He chased the Amalekites before them! He allowed no people to withstand them when they went forth to battle—and the Lord led the van. Though He chastened them before their

enemies for their sins, yet when they returned, He made one of them to smite a thousand and to put ten thousand to flight. Marvelous were the deliverances which the Lord worked for His people. Time would fail us to tell of Gideon and of Barak, of Sampson and of Jephtha and of all that the Lord, the Husband of Israel, did in the deliverance of His spouse!

Nor did He rest *until He had brought His people, Israel, into that quiet and settled state which is the expectation of those who enter into the marriage relationship*. Under their own vines and their own fig trees He made them to sit down and rest. He brought them to land that flowed with milk and honey, out of whose hills they could dig brass. He drove out the heathen before them, and gave them their land for an heritage, even an heritage forever for His people, Israel, and there the spouse of God might long have enjoyed her rest and her peace, had it not been that she broke her Covenant although He had been a Husband unto her.

Now, Beloved, just think, before we turn away from this, what a wonderful picture this is of how the Lord has dealt with such of us as are His believing people. Think of His love to us *when He brought us out of Egypt*. We remember well, some of us, the days of our bondage, for the iron entered into our soul. We can never forget those deep convictions, those terrible lashes of the Law and our own endeavors to make bricks without straw, that we might save ourselves by our works. How gloriously He brought us forth! How He made us to eat of the paschal lamb, and how the blood-mark was put upon the lintel and the two side posts! And we learned what it was for God to look upon the blood and to pass over us. And what a triumphant day that was when all our sins were drowned in the shoreless flood of the Savior's Atonement! What a shout went up from our hearts that day—louder and sweeter than even that of the daughters of Israel when they followed Miriam with their tabrets and timbrels to the dance! We did say then and in recollection of it, we will say it again, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!" As for our sins, the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left! Those Egyptians, whom we saw through our tears, we shall see no more forever!

From that day, how God has been pleased to prove that He is a Husband to us, *by His special love to us!* We never can doubt that Doctrine of His special love. I hate to see a contracted mind that will not tolerate the thought that God has a benevolence towards *all* His creatures. His tender mercies are over all His works, but do let us never in the thought of that forget that there is also a peculiar and special affection which He has towards His own chosen whom He brings to Christ! He loves not the world as He loves His spouse! God has no affection towards the ungodly such as He has towards those whom He has united unto Himself and made to be His, as the spouse is to her husband, in a vital, affectionate, intense, eternal union!

God has been a Husband to us certainly in that not only has He chosen us specially in His love, but also in *that He has been marvelously faithful in that love*. I can scarcely speak to you without feeling the tears

well up in my eyes when I think of my own unfaithfulness to Him who loved me before the earth was. Oh, which is the stranger of the two—that He should love us or that we should treat Him so unfaithfully?—

***“Yet, though I have Him oft forgot,  
His loving kindness changes not.”***

Precious Truth of God! He has been a Husband unto us. He has never thought of divorce. Is it not written that “He hates putting away”? And so He does and He has not put us away, but we are as dear to Him, now, as we were of old, and as we shall be when we stand before His face without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!

Remember, my Brothers and Sisters, also, in thinking over how God has been a Husband to us, as He was to Israel, that *He has been pleased to provide for us as He did for Israel*. Providentially, in temporal matters, we have been provided for. Perhaps some of you could not tell how you have been led in a very intricate pathway. There have been times when you have been on the verge of need, and periods, certainly, when you had nothing to spare. And yet, up to this moment, He that feeds the sparrows and clothes the lilies has not let you starve, and you can sing to the praise of His faithfulness that bread has been given you and your waters have been sure. But it has been specially so in spiritual things. Do you ever know what it is to be drained right out in spirituals—to come right to the very bottom—lower than the poor widow when she had but a handful of meal to make one cake and then die? Alas, some of us know what it is to be brought to extreme spiritual poverty and a sense of nothingness in ourselves that well-nigh breaks us to pieces and lowers us into the abyss of despair! But though the tide has ebbed out fearfully, there has always been enough water for every galley of Grace to float—and though the night has been very dark, there has always been light enough for the soul to find its way somehow! And though at times the tempest has howled terribly through the gloom, yet there has always been a harbor, so that we have been enabled to outride the hurricane—and so we shall yet outride all the storms we encounter until we reach the port of bliss! He has well provided for us and, therein, has He been a Husband unto us.

And equally well has He *protected us*. We little know how much we owe to the protection of Providence. We sometimes forget our dangers. I was amused to hear of a sailor when he was out in the Channel. You would think he was in great danger, saying, “What a dreadful thing it must be, to be on land in such an hour, with chimney-pots flying about and tiles falling off the houses. Who knows who may be killed if they are not safe at sea in such a storm!” We do not always reckon upon these immunities from danger which God gives us, or know how much they cost. Indeed, if Providence goes very smoothly with us, we do not seem to notice it at all! A father and a son, living at some distance from each other, agreed to meet half-way on a certain day. The son, after he had saluted his father, said, “I have met with a most remarkable Providence on the road! My horse fell three times, and yet I was not at all hurt.” “Ah,”



said the father, "I have had an equally remarkable Providence! I rode my horse all the way and he did not even stumble." We do not often notice the hand of Providence in that kind of thing as we ought to do. The preservations of our life—oh we do not know how many there are! Now and then we have a surprising one which we can observe—and we jot that down in our diary—but we have many more which are not noticed by us. And as for spiritual preservations, my Brothers and Sisters, incessantly in danger as we are from temptations from within and corruptions from within, from our circumstances, from the world, from the flesh, from the devil—God has, indeed, been a Husband to us and a wall of fire round about us, protecting us, else we had not been here among His people tonight—but we would have been numbered among the castaways who have gone back into perdition!

So I might continue, for I think we may add that last point. God has given to many of us just *that settled rest* which He gave to His people Israel when they came to Canaan. He has been a Husband to us and as Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, you shall find rest in the house of your husband," so have we found rest in Jesus Christ—a peace of God which passes all understanding! And we have come to a land that flows with milk and honey. We have crossed the Jordan of doubts and fears, and though we have not driven out the Canaanites of daily temptation, yet we still possess the land, for we that have believed do enter into rest.

This, then is the indictment against us, that although He has been a Husband unto us, we have not acted towards Him as such a Husband's love deserves. So we turn now to the next great thought, which is this—

## II. WE HAVE TO PLEAD GUILTY TO THE INDICTMENT AGAINST OURSELVES.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I desire not to speak so much to you as to myself. And I pray of you that my voice may be accepted as your own voice to yourselves and if anything comes home to the conscience, open the door to it—let it wound you and let it grieve you—and let it awaken you to something nobler. God grant that it may.

What have been the peculiar sins that we, as Christian people, have committed against the love of God who has been as a Husband to us? Well, first, it is a very grievous offense against the marriage state *when the heart of the bride wanders*—when she is not sure, after all, that her husband is the man of her choice, and the man whom, above all others, she esteems. Now— I am afraid we have commonly committed such an offense against our union with God. Our thoughts have often wandered—wandered from our God. Our dearest earthly friends have sometimes tempted our hearts away. Verily I perceive that we often idolize children—but even worse—for in a certain sense it is worse that more sordid idolatry, the love of gold, the desire to be rich, has led many a soul astray from its chaste, simple, ardent affection to the God of Love. Our very books and our studies may decoy us from our God. Yes, our own ministers, whom we love, and even what we hear from them, may stand between us and God! The man that will be an idolater will make a god of

anything, as the poor Hottentots do with a bit of rag which they will call a god, and worship it! We may make a god of anything, and how quick we are to do it! Oh, our God, our God, our God! Do You condescend to make Yourself a Husband to us? Oh, can there be anything compared to You? What shall we even think of as second to You? You are fullness of joy! You are infinity of good! What fools, what madmen, what sinners of a scarlet dye are we when we let our heart even wink its eye, as it were, to anything else, much less go astray and miss the love which we ought to give to God alone! That is the first sin of which we may stand convicted—wandering in heart from God, although He has been a Husband unto us.

Our second sin, probably, is *that we have been negligent in His service*. It is the wife's joy to please her husband and unkindness or negligence from her becomes a grievous mischief in the household circle. Now, if God becomes a Husband unto us, what ought we to do for Him? I think He might come tonight and say, "I have something against you," and He might look us in the face and say, "I have not wearied you with sacrifice, but you have wearied Me with your sins. You have brought Me no sweet canes, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices." Much that we might have done for our Lord's Glory we have negligently left undone. Many and many a fair opportunity of speaking well of His great name has slipped by, unused. Brothers and Sisters, is it not so? I read once in a letter from a Brother that he had attained unto perfect sanctification for 20 years! Oh, if it were true, what would I give if I could say the same! I do not believe it, or that any one of us has for 20 *minutes* done all that he could for his Master, much less for 20 years! There must have been sins of omission, at least! I dare not look back upon a single sermon without feeling that I ought to have preached it better, nor ever rise from my knees in prayer without feeling that I ought to have prayed more earnestly and to have come nearer to God. Everything seems marred and spoiled. We will strive after perfection, but who among us has attained it? Have we not been negligent in the loving kindness which we ought to have manifested toward Him who has been a Husband to us?

Further than that, Brothers and Sisters, have we not been very much to blame in *the slackness of our communion*? The wife desires to see her husband. She says—

***"There is nae luck about the house,  
When the gude man's awe!"***

She cannot be satisfied without his presence! She says there is music in the sound of his footstep when she hears it on the stairs. She loves to meet him when he comes home from his daily labor. It is her joy to be in his company. Has it been so with us? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you have come up, sometimes, to this Tabernacle and you have listened to me, but you have not had any desire to get near to God, or if you have, it has been a very faint desire—and you have gone away without seeing Him! And day after day will pass with some professors without a word with the Master—without a single glimpse of the Savior! They seem to be content

when the great good Lord, who is a Husband to them is far away. It must not be so anymore! Let us confess the sin. I fear it is so with most of us.

A further sin against God, our Husband, is this, that I fear *we have often been loose in our trust in Him*. It would be a sad thing if the wife did not believe her husband's word and if she could not trust her husband's heart. Now, it has been so between us and God sometimes. He cannot lie! Moreover, He has given us two immutable things wherein it is impossible for Him to lie, that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope that is set before us in the Gospel. He has never broken a promise yet—if we never doubted God till God gave us cause to doubt Him—doubting would be unknown! And yet have we not been base enough, when some new trial has come, to sit down and say, “Shall I get through this? Will the promise be fulfilled now? Will not the Lord, after all, leave His servant to perish?” Shame on us! Shame on us! Shame on us! The Lord forgive us our unbelief, and strengthen our faith!

Once more, is there not this sin very common among professors—that even *the idea of this relationship of God has not crossed some professors' minds*? This is a sweeping charge to bring, but the Doctrine of the Union of the Believer with Christ, and of the marriage of the Believer to Christ, is not even thought of by many professing Christians. They are Believers in Christ and they look to the precious blood, but they have not entered into that which is within the veil. They have not sought to know those choicer and deeper things. Well, but is this right, that God should be a Husband unto us, and yet that we should not recognize the relation? Married, and not know it? God, your Husband, and you never think of Him? Does this blessed fact never tone your life, nor give a color to your actions, never check your hand, nor nerve it for a holy deed? Is this all put away, as if there were nothing in it, but perhaps a pretty fancy, or a word or two that might be listened to, but might as well be forgotten? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, this is sin, indeed, and I am sure that there are few of us that are not guilty, probably none of us, for oftentimes we have forgotten this union, though we have known and understood it! We have walked towards God as if we were strangers to Him and there were no relationship by blood between us and our God through Jesus Christ!

Thus have I read the indictment, and thus would I plead guilty. Thus would I weigh, and thus would I ask each professing Christian here to weigh the charges as they come against himself, and say how far they concern him. And now to close. A few words by way of—

### III. SUGGESTIONS FOR AMENDMENT.

It is idle to be always regretting, but never reforming—to be forever confessing, but never making an advance in the right direction. Now, first, dear Brothers and Sisters—sitting here tonight while Gods' gracious rain is falling on the earth, may His rain fall on our hearts—let us *admire the condescension of God* that He should say, “I have been a Husband unto you.” It is a depth of Grace that He who made the Heaven and the earth and who is infinitely great and glorious, should condescend to come into anything like such a relation as this with His poor creatures

whom He has made and whose breath is in their nostrils. Oh, what a stoop—from the highest loftiness of Glory—to call Himself a Husband to a worm!

Adore next, I pray you, *the faithfulness with which hitherto God has carried out this relationship*. I have asked you to remember it. Now, adoringly bow your hearts at the thought of it. Oh, God, we bless You, You have not left us. We praise Your name that You have continued so truly a Husband to our souls and that notwithstanding all our sin, and care, and woe!

Let us, Brothers and Sisters, from henceforth *seek to love the Lord foremost*. A great man, taking his wife with him to a noble entertainment that was given by Cyrus, was asked by her husband on his return what she thought of Darius, and she replied, “I never thought of Darius. I never thought of anybody but my Husband.” And oh, were it not a grand thing if our hearts chiefly thought of God? Other things must, of course, come across the mind and, for a while, engross it, but the first free thought of the Believer should be of the Glorious One who loved him from before the world—and will love him when the world has passed away!

And as we set God first in our love, so, next, let us try tonight that we *set Him first in all our actions*. “Seek you first—*first*—the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Let the supreme aim of life be not business, not the family, not personal pleasure, but our God! Let all be secondary and subordinate to Him. Set Him on high in your spirit and let everything contribute to His service and Kingdom.

And that being done, let us *seek to dwell with our God*. This is the true and effective way of reforming. Instead of having breaks of communion, little periods of it now and then, like oases in the desert, we should seek to have constant communion with Him. What a delightful hymn that is—

**“Son of my soul, You Savior dear!”**

We often sing it. I wish we could practice it and that it were ours always, to abide with Him, because without Him we could not live and without Him we dare not die. May we learn the art of fellowship with God in the turmoil of business. To have fellowship with God in the closet, in the study, or in the chamber is not always easy, but to have fellowship with Him in the noise of busy life is difficult—but to this we ought to attain. May we be able to attain to it, so that we may never leave the society of Christ, go where we may.

And, Brothers and Sisters, *if there is anything that we have not done for Christ*, anything that we could do now, tonight, anything that we feel we ought to do tomorrow, let us do it! Let us not be saying that we have left undone these things, but let us set to work to do them. The wife gives to her husband her whole self—let us give to our loving God our whole spirit, soul and body! Be it our prayer that there may not be an unconsecrated hair upon our heads, not a single heaving of the lungs, nor a circulation of the blood, but what in the whole shall be acknowledged. We would not desire to keep even a little spot for the flesh, or make provision

for the lusts thereof. Pray that God would sanctify us wholly. Oh, God, do this! And it will be best for us to turn the whole subject into an earnest, loving, longing prayer. Oh, You who are a Husband to my soul, come to me, visit me! I know I have offended You, but Your mercy is great. Reveal Yourself to me! I am cold and dead, and like a clod of earth, but Lord, You can make the clod a star, to burn as fire and shine as gloriously as the sun! Only Your Presence I want, and my sins will flee, and my weakness be swallowed up in strength. If I am unholy, Your Presence though Jesus Christ shall put my sins away. If I am dead, Your Presence would be my life! Oh come, Lord, come to me for Jesus' sake!

Now, I know that to some here all this seems like an idle tale. Well, well dear Friends, I wish it were not so! But you must be born-again and until you are born-again you will not understand this. But if you do not understand this simple talk which Believers have with one another, depend upon it, you will never be able to enter where they sing in nobler notes before the Throne of God! May God convince you of your need of a Savior and bring you to put your trust in Jesus, for there is life in Him, and in Him, alone! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
ISAIAH 55; JEREMIAH 30:1-11.**

It is the language of Infinite Mercy, speaking to the abject condition of mankind. We have become naked, poor and miserable through sin and, God, instead of driving us from His Presence, comes loaded with mercy—and thus He speaks to us.

**Verse 1.** *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* See the freeness of Divine love? See how God, who knows the needs of souls, provides all things necessary for them—water—the Water of Life and, as if that were not enough, the wine of joy, the milk of satisfaction—and He offers these freely! Yes, He stands like the salesman crying in the market, and cries, “Ho! Ho! Everyone that thirsts!” But, mark, there is no gain for Him—the gain is for ourselves—for He says, “He that has no money, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” All that you need, dear Friend, God is ready to give you! Yes, He invites you to come and receive it! He presses upon you the good things of the Covenant of Grace. Why do you stand back? Do you want these good things? Then come and welcome! It is God who bids you come.

**2.** *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Why do you seek to get comfort for your souls where you will never get it? Why do you try to content your immortal nature upon things that will die? There is nothing here below that can satisfy you! Why spend your money, then, for these things, and your labor for nothing?*

**2.** *Hearken diligently unto Me and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* God has real food for your soul—something that will make you truly happy. He will satisfy you, not with the name of goodness, but with the reality of it if you will but come and have it! You shall have fullness—you shall have delight—if you are but willing to come and receive it!

**3.** *Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live—*Then who would not hear—who would not give attention—if by that attention immortal life may be received?

**3.** *And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Will God enter into Covenant with sinful men—with thirsty men—with hungry men—with needy men—with guilty men? Ah, that He will! “I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

**4.** *Behold, I have given Him—*That is, the Son of David, Jesus the Christ, “I have given Him.”

**4.** *For a Witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* If you need anyone to tell you what God is, Jesus Christ is the Witness to the Character of God! Do you need a leader to lead you back to peace and happiness—a commander by whose power you may be able to fight Satan and all the powers of darkness that hold you in bondage? God has given His Son to be such a Leader to you! Oh, who would not enlist beneath His banner?

**5.** *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the LORD, Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* Here God speaks to Jesus, whom He has made a Commander, and He tells Him that He shall not be without a people, for those who never knew Him shall come to Him. There are some in this house tonight who have not yet yielded themselves to Christ—some of whom He will say, “Tonight I must abide in your house”—and when that Voice of power is heard, their hearts will yield and they will become the disciples of Jesus!

**6.** *Seek you the LORD while He may be found.* And that is tonight, for the promise of finding is still given to everyone who seeks.

**6.** *Call you upon Him while He is near.* And He is near, for in all places where His name is recorded, there He has promised to be. Wherever the Gospel is preached, we have Christ’s word for it—“Lo, I am with you always.” So, then, call upon Him while He is near.

**7-9.** *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. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.* Oh, that we could rise to God’s thoughts—that we could speak His thoughts of love—that we could really believe that He is ready, now, to receive and forgive us, and could,

therefore, fly into His arms without hesitancy or delay! God help us to do it!

**10-11.** *For as the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me, void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* Trust, then, in the Gospel, which is the Word of God, for it cannot fail you! Rest yourselves in the Divine promise of pardon, for it cannot drop to the ground. It must accomplish the Divine Will!

**12.** *For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* “For,” if you do this—if you forsake your sins—if you turn unto God—God can make such joy in the heart that all the world shall be full of joy! When a man feels that his sins are forgiven, then Nature seems replete with ditty and the hills, rocks and trees all proclaim the Presence of a gracious God! Until then, when the heart is heavy, Nature seems dull and dreary—but oh, may the Grace of God so light up our hearts that all the world may be lit up for us.

**13.** *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

### **JEREMIAH 30:1-11.**

**Verses 1, 2.** *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write you all the words that I have spoken unto you in a book.* Too good to be lost! The Prophets said much when they did not write, but this particular Chapter and the next were to be carefully written down. God here begins to deal with His guilty people in a way of love and mercy. It is a very strange Chapter, one of the richest, one of the most cheering in the whole of God’s Word! Therefore, write it in a book.

**3.** *For, lo, the days come, says the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, says the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.* Souls get into captivity. God has ways of restoring them. Tonight I expect, and believe, that many captives will be restored by the Grace of God to rest and comfort! Will you be one of them? Poor Mourner, pray now that you may be! Ask God that tonight He may give you freedom from your captivity.

**4, 5.** *And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.* “Why” you say, “I thought you began to read words of comfort. Now there is a drop!” Yes, there always is. Whenever God is going to comfort a man, He first makes him see his

need of comfort. There is always stripping before there is clothing! On God's part there is always emptying before there is filling.

**6.** *Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?* Everywhere, when the time of mercy came, it was a bad time, a dark time—a time of inward throbs, throes and travail.

**7.** *Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble: but he shall be saved out of it.* But he shall be saved out of it! What a flash of lightning across the black face of the cloud. "He shall be saved out of it."

**8, 9.** *For it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.* See how the Chapter has gotten back to the comforting strain again? After the bass notes, we run up the scale. We have come to comfort again! I should not wonder if we have to go back, however, for so it is—God's mercy is a checkered work, black and white, sorrow and salvation.

**10, 11.** *Therefore fear you not, O My servant, Jacob, says the LORD, neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.* What a beautiful collection of words for a troubled heart! And they are not beautiful words only, but there is a deep, true meaning in them—"Shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid." I pray God that many here who are much afraid, and cannot be quiet, but are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, may get into this blissful state tonight!

**11.** *For I am with you, says the LORD, to save you.* God may destroy the wicked, and He will—but not His people, His own beloved—His heart goes after them. "I will not make a full end of you."

**11.** *Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you: but I will correct you in measure and will not leave you altogether unpunished.* You will have to smart for it. If you are God's child, you will have to be brought home with many a tear and many a sigh. Your sorrow, tonight, is a part of a heavenly discipline by which you shall be saved!

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

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



# THE LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART

## NO. 1687

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 29, 1882,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

*After those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law  
in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.”  
Jeremiah 31:33.*

LAST Lord's-Day morning [GOD'S NON-REMEMBRANCE OF SIN—NO. 1685] we spoke of the first great blessing of the Covenant of Grace, namely, the full forgiveness of sins. Then we dilated with delight upon that wonderful promise, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," I hope our consciences were pacified and our hearts filled with wonder as we thought of God's casting behind His back all the sins of His people, so that we could sing with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities."

This great blessing of pardoned sin is always connected with the renewal of the heart. It is not given *because* of the change of heart, but it is always given *with* the change of heart. If God takes away the guilt of sin, He is sure, at the same time, to remove the power of sin. If He puts away our offenses against His Law, He also makes us desire, in the future, to *obey* the Law of God. In our text we observe the excellence and dignity of the Law of God. The Gospel has not come into the world to set aside the Law. Salvation by Grace does not erase a single precept of the Law, nor lower the standard of justice in the smallest degree—on the contrary, as Paul says—we do not make void the Law through faith, but we establish the Law.

The Law is never honored by fallen man till he comes from under its condemning rule, walks by faith and lives under the Covenant of Grace. When we were under the Covenant of Works, we dishonored the Law, but now we venerate it as a perfect display of moral rectitude. Our Lord Jesus has shown to an assembled universe that the Law is not to be trifled with and that every transgression and disobedience must receive a just recompense of reward, since the sin which He bore on our account brought upon Him, as our innocent Substitute, the doom of suffering and death. Our Lord Jesus has testified, by His death, that even if sin is pardoned, yet it is not put away without an expiatory Sacrifice. The death of Christ rendered more honor to the Law than all the obedience of all who were ever under it could have rendered! And it was a more forcible vindication of eternal justice than if all the redeemed had been cast into Hell.

When the Holy One smites His own Son, His wrath against sin is evident to all. But this is not enough. The Law is, in the Gospel, not only vindicated by the Sacrifice of Christ, but it is honored by the work of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men. Whereas under the Old Covenant, the commands of the Law excited our evil natures to rebellion—under the

Covenant of Grace we consent unto the Law, that it is good, and our prayer is, "Teach me to do Your will, O Lord." What the Law could not do because of the weakness of the flesh, the Gospel has done through the Spirit of God! Thus the Law is held in honor among Believers and though they are no more under it as a Covenant of Works, they are, in a measure, conformed to it as they see it in the life of Christ Jesus, and they delight in it after the inward man.

Things required by the Law are bestowed by the Gospel. God *demands* obedience under the Law—God *works* obedience under the Gospel. Holiness is *asked* of us by the Law—holiness is *worked* in us by the Gospel so that the difference between the economics of Law and Gospel is not to be found in any diminution of the demands of the Law, but in the actual *giving* unto the redeemed that which the Law exacted of them—and in the working in them that which the Law required. Notice, beloved Friends, that under the Old Covenant, the Law of God was given in a most awe-inspiring manner and yet it did not secure loyal obedience. God came to Sinai and the mountain was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire—and the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace—the whole mountain quaked greatly!

So terrible was the sight of God manifesting Himself on Sinai that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." Out of the thick darkness which covered the sublime summit, there came forth the sound of a trumpet, waxing exceedingly loud and long, and a Voice proclaimed, one by one, the 10 great statutes and ordinances of the moral Law. I think I see the people at a distance, with bounds set about the mountain, crouching with abject fear and, at last, entreating that these words might not be spoken to them any more! So terrible was the sound of Jehovah's voice, even when He was not declaring vengeance, but simply expounding righteousness, that the people could not endure it any longer—and yet no permanent impression was left upon their minds—no obedience was shown in their lives!

Men may be cowed by power, but they can only be converted by *love*. The sword of justice has less power over human hearts than the scepter of mercy. Further to preserve that Law, God Himself inscribed it upon two tables of stone and He gave these tablets into the hands of Moses. What a treasure! Surely no particles of matter had ever been so honored as these slabs which had been touched by the finger of God and bore on them the legible impression of His mind! But these Laws on stone were not kept—neither the stones nor the Laws were revered. Moses had not long gone up into the mountain before the once awe-struck people were bowing before the golden calf, forgetful of Sinai and its solemn Voice—and making for themselves the likeness of an ox that eats grass—and bowing before it as the symbol of the Godhead!

When Moses came down from the hill with those priceless tablets in His hands, He saw the people wholly given up to base idolatry and, in his indignation, he dashed the tablets to the ground and broke them in pieces, as well he might when he saw how the people had spiritually broken them and violated every Word of the Most High! From all this I gather that the Law is never really obeyed as the result of servile fear. You may preach up

the anger of God and the terrors of the world to come, but these do not melt the heart to loyal obedience. It is necessary, for other ends, that man should know of God's resolve to punish sin, but the heart is not, by that fact, won to virtue. Man revolts yet more and more—so stubborn is he that the more he is commanded, the more he rebels!

The Decalogue upon your Church walls and in your daily service has its ends, but it can never be operative upon men's lives until it is also written on their *hearts*. Tables of stone are hard and men count obedience to God's Law to be a hard thing—the Commands are judged to be stony while the heart is stony—and men harden themselves because the way of the precept is hard to their cold minds. Stones are proverbially cold and the Law seems a cold, chill thing, for which we have no love as long as the appeal is to our fears. Tablets of stone, though apparently durable, can readily enough be broken and so can God's Commandments—and so they are, indeed, broken every day by us. Those who have the clearest knowledge of the will of God, nevertheless offend against Him. As long as they have nothing to keep them in check but a servile dread of punishment, or a selfish hope of reward, they yield no loyal homage to the statutes of the Lord!

At this time I have to show you the way in which God secures to Himself obedience to His Law in quite another fashion—not by thundering it out from Sinai, nor by engraving it upon tablets of stone—but by coming in gentleness and infinite compassion into the hearts of men and there, upon fleshy tables, inscribing the Commands of His Law in such a manner that they are joyfully obeyed and men become the willing servants of God! This is the second great privilege of the Covenant—not second in value, but in *order*—“who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases.” It is thus described by Ezekiel—“And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.”

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have it in another form and we read it thus—“Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when 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 when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My Covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord. For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.”

This is so inestimably precious that you who know the Lord are longing for it and it is your great delight that it is to be worked in you by the Sovereign Grace of God! We shall, first of all, look at the tablets—“I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” Secondly, at the writing. Thirdly, at the Writer and, fourthly, at the results which come of this wondrous writing. O that the Spirit who has promised to lead us into all the Truths of God may now illuminate us!

**I.** First, I invite your attention to THE TABLETS upon which God writes His Law—“I will put My Law in their inward parts.” Just as once He put

the two tables into the ark of gopher wood, so He will put His holy Law into our inward nature and enclose it in our thoughts and minds and memories and affections, as a jewel in a case. Then He adds, "And I will write it in their hearts." Just as the Holy Words were engraved upon stone, so shall they now be written in the heart, in the handwriting of the Lord, Himself. Mark that the Law is written not *on* the heart, but *in* the heart, in the very texture and constitution of it, so that into the center and core of the soul, obedience shall be infused as a vital principle!

Thus, you see, the Lord has selected for His tablets that which is the seat of life. It is in the *heart* that life is to be found, a wound, there, is fatal. Where the seat of life is, there the seat of obedience shall be. In the heart, life has its permanent palace and perpetual abode—and God says that, instead of writing His Holy Law on stones which may be left at a distance—He will write it on the heart, which must always be within us. Instead of placing the Law upon phylacteries which can be bound between the eyes but may easily be taken off, He will write it in the *heart*, where it must always remain. He has bid His people write His Laws upon the posts of their doors and upon their gates, but in those conspicuous places they might become so familiar as to be unnoticed. The Lord, Himself, now writes them where they must always be noted and always produce effect.

If men have the precepts written in the abode of their life, they live with the Law and cannot live without it. It is a wonderful thing that God should do this. It displays infinitely greater wisdom than if the Law had been inscribed on slabs of granite or engraved on plates of gold. What wisdom is this, which operates upon the original spring of life, so that all that flows forth from man shall come from a sanctified fountainhead! Observe next, that not only is the heart the seat of life, but it is the governing power. It is from the heart, as from a royal metropolis, that the imperial commands of the man are issued by which hand and foot, eye and tongue and all the members are ordered. If the heart is right, then the other powers must yield submission to its sway and become right, too.

If God writes His Law upon the heart, then the eyes will purify their glances, the tongue will speak according to rule, the hands will move and the feet will travel as God ordains. When the heart is fully influenced by God's Spirit, then the will and the intellect, the memory and the imagination and everything else which makes up the inward man, comes under cheerful allegiance to the King of Kings! God Himself says, "Give me your heart," for the heart is the key of the entire position. Hence the supreme wisdom of the Lord in setting up His Law where it becomes operative upon the entire man. But before God can write upon a man's heart, it must be prepared. It is most unfit to be a writing tablet for the Lord until it is renewed. The heart must, first of all, undergo erasures.

What is written on the heart, already, some of us know to our deep regret. Original sin has cut deep lines, Satan has scored his horrible handwriting in black letters and our evil habits have left their impressions. How can the Lord write there? No one would expect the Holy God to inscribe His Holy Law upon an unholy mind! The former things must be taken away, that there may be clear space upon which new and better things may be engraved. But who can erase these lines? "Can the Ethio-

pian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you, also, do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The God who can take away the spots from the leopard and the blackness from the Ethiopian, can also remove the evil lines which now deface the heart!

As the heart must undergo erasure, it must also experience a thorough cleansing, not of the surface only, but of its entire fabric. Truly, Brothers and Sisters, it was far easier for Hercules to purge the Augean stables than for our hearts to be purged, for the sin that lies within us is not an accumulation of external defilement, but an *inward*, all-pervading corruption! The taint of secret and spiritual evil is in man's natural life. Every pulse of his soul is disordered by it. The eggs of all crimes are within our being—the accursed virus, from whose deadly venom every foul design will come—is present in the soul. Not only *tendency* to sin, but sin, *itself*, has taken possession of the soul and blackened and polluted it through and through till there is not a fiber of the heart unstained with iniquity! God cannot write His Law in our inward parts till, with water and with blood, He has purged us.

Tablets on which the Lord shall write must be clean, therefore the heart on which God is to engrave His Law must be a cleansed heart. It is a great joy to perceive that from the Person of our Lord, heart-cleansing blood and water flowed so that the provision is equal to the necessity! Blessed be the name of our gracious God! He knows how to erase the evil and to cleanse the soul through His Holy Spirit's applying the work of Jesus to us! In addition to this, the heart needs to be softened, for the heart is naturally hard and, in some men, it has become harder than an adamant stone! They have resisted God's love till they are impervious to it—they have stood out obstinately against God's will till they have become desperately set on mischief and nothing can affect them.

God must melt the heart, must transform it from granite into flesh—and He has the power to do it! Blessed be His name, according to the Covenant of Grace, He has promised to work this wonder and He will! Nor would the softening be enough, for there are some who have a tenderness of the most deceiving kind. They receive the Word of God with joy. They feel every expression of it, but they speedily go their way and forget what manner of men they are. They are as impressible as the water, but the impression is as soon removed, so that another change is needed, namely, to make them *retentive* of that which is good—otherwise you might engrave and re-engrave—but, like an inscription upon wax, it would be gone in a moment if exposed to heat.

The devil, the world and the temptations of life would soon erase out of the heart all that God had written there if He did not create it anew with the faculty of holding fast that which is good. In a word, the heart of man needs to be totally changed, even as Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again." Dear Hearers, we preach to you that whoever believes in Christ has everlasting life and we speak neither more, nor less, than the Truth of God when we say so! But yet, believe us, there must be as great a change in the heart as if a man were slain and made alive again! There must be a new creation, a resurrection from the dead—old things must pass away—and all things must become new. God's Law can never be

written upon the old natural heart—there must be a new and spiritual nature given—and then, upon the center of that new life, upon the throne of that new power within our life, God will set up the proclamation of His blessed will and what He commands shall be done.

So, then, you see these tablets are not so easily written upon, as perhaps we first thought. If God is to write the Law upon the heart, the heart must be *prepared*, and in order to being prepared, it must be entirely renewed by a miracle of mercy, such as can only be worked by that Omnipotent hand which made both Heaven and earth.

**II.** Secondly, let us pass on to notice THE WRITING. “I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” What is this writing? First, the matter of it is the Law of God. God writes upon the hearts of His people that which is already revealed. He inscribes there nothing novel and unrevealed, but His own will which He has already given us in the Book of the Law. He writes upon the heart, by gracious operation, that which He has already written in the Bible by gracious Revelation. He writes not philosophy, nor imagination, nor superstition nor fanaticism, nor idle fancies. If any man says to me, “God has written such-and-such a thing on my heart,” I reply, “Show it to me in the Bible,” for if it is not according to the other Scriptures, it is not a Scripture of God!

A fancy as to a man’s being a Prophet, or a prince, or an angel may be on a man’s heart, but God did not write it there, for His own declaration is, “I will write My Law in their hearts,” and He speaks not of anything beyond. The nonsense of modern pretenders to prophecy is no writing of God—it would be a dishonor to a sane man to ascribe it to Him! How can it be of the Lord? He here promises to write His own Law on the heart, but nothing else. Be content to have the Law written on your soul and wander not into vain imaginings lest you receive a strong delusion to believe a lie. Observe, however, that God says He will write His whole Law on the heart—this is included in the words, “My Law.”

God’s work is complete in all its parts and beautifully harmonious. He will not write one command and leave out the rest as so many do in their reforms. They become indignant in their virtue against a particular sin, but they riot in other evils. Drunkenness is to them the most damnable of all transgressions, but covetousness and uncleanness they wink at! They denounce theft and yet defraud! They cry out against pride and yet indulge envy! Thus they are partial and do the work of the Lord deceitfully. It must not be so! God does not set before us a *partial* holiness, but the *whole* moral Law! “I will write My Law in their hearts.” Human reforms are generally lopsided, but the Lord’s work of Grace is balanced and proportionate. The Lord writes the perfect Law in the hearts of men because He intends to produce perfect men.

Mark, again, that on the heart there is written not the Law toned down and altered, but, “My Law”—that very same Law which was, at first, written on the heart of unfallen man. Paul says of natural men, that “they show the work of the Law written in their hearts.” There is enough of the Light of God left on the conscience to condemn men for most of their iniquities. The original record of the Law upon man’s heart at his creation has been injured and almost obliterated by man’s fall and his subsequent

transgressions, but the Lord, in renewing the heart, makes the writing fresh and vivid, even the writing of the first principles of righteousness and truth.

But to come a little closer to the matter—what does the Scripture mean by writing the Law of God in the heart? The writing, itself, includes a great many things. A man who has the Law of God written in his heart, first of all, knows it. He is instructed in the ordinances and statutes of the Lord. He is an illuminated person and no longer one of those who knows not the Law and is cursed. God's Spirit has taught him what is right and what is wrong. He knows this by heart and, therefore, can no longer put darkness for light, and light for darkness. This Law, next, abides upon his memory. When he had it only upon a tablet, he must necessarily go into his house to look at it, but now he carries it about with him in his heart, and knows, at once, what will be right and what will be wrong. God has given him a touchstone by which he tries things.

He finds that "all is not gold that glitters," and all is not holy which pretends to that character. He separates the precious from the vile and does this habitually, for his knowledge of God's Law and his memory of it are attended by a discernment of spirit which God has worked in him, so that he quickly discerns what is according to the mind of God and what is not. Now this is a great point, for some things are commonly done by men which they will even defend and say that there is no wrong in them. But, according to the Divine rule, they are utterly unjust. God's people judge these things and take no pleasure in them. A sacred instinct warns the Believer of the approach of sin. Long before public sentiment has proclaimed a hue and cry against questionable practices, the Christian man, even if deluded, for a while, by current custom, yet feels a trembling and an uneasiness. Even if he consents outwardly—being overborne by general opinion—a *something within* protests and leads him to consider whether the matter can be defended. As soon as he detects the evil, he shrinks from it. It is a grand thing to possess a universal detector, so that, go where you may, you are not dependent upon the judgment of others and, therefore, are not deceived as multitudes are. This, however, is only a part of the matter, and a very small part comparatively.

The Law is written on a man's heart, further than this, when he consents unto the Law that it is good. It is when his conscience, being restored, cries, "Yes, that is so, and ought to be so! That command by which God has forbidden a certain course is a proper and prudent command—it ought to be enjoined." It is a hopeful sign when a man no longer wishes that the Divine commands were other than they are, but confirms them by the verdict of his judgment. Are there not men who in their anger wish that killing were not murder? Are there not others who do not steal, but yet wish they might take their neighbors' goods? Are there not many who wish that fornication and adultery were not vices? This proves that their hearts are depraved!

But it is not so with the regenerate, they would not have the Law altered for any reason! Their vote is with the Law. They regard it as the guardian of society, the basis on which the peace of the universe can, alone, be built, for only by righteousness can any order of things be estab-

lished. If we could possess the wisdom of God, we would make just that Law which God has made, for the Law is holy, just, good and promotes man's highest advantage! It is a great thing when a man gets as far as that. But, furthermore, there is worked in the heart, by God, a *love* to the Law as well as a consent to it—such a love that the man thanks God that He has given him such a fair and lovely representation of what perfect holiness should be—that He has given such measuring lines by which he knows how a house is to be built in which God can dwell. Thus thanking the Lord, his prayer, desire, longing, hungering and thirsting are after righteousness, that he may, in all things, be according to the mind of God.

It is a glorious thing when the heart delights itself in the Law of the Lord and finds, therein, its solace and pleasure. The Law is fully written on the heart when a man takes pleasure in holiness and feels a deep pain whenever sin approaches him. Oh, my dear Friend, the Lord has done great things for you when every evil thing is obnoxious to you! Even though you fall into sin through the infirmity of your flesh, yet if it causes you intense agony and sorrow, it is because God has written His Law in your heart! Even though you cannot be as holy as you want to be, yet if the ways of holiness are your pleasure—if they are the very element in which you live as much as the fish lives in the sea—then you are the subject of a very wonderful change of heart!

It is not so much what you *do*, as what you *delight* to do, which becomes the clearest test of your character. Many strictly religious people who go to and fro to Church and Chapel would be uncommonly glad if they did not feel bound to do so. Is not their public worship a dead formality? A great many people have family prayers and private prayers who wish they could be rid of the nuisance. Is there any religion in bodily exercises which are burdensome to the heart? Nothing is acceptable to God until it is acceptable to yourself—God will not receive your sacrifice unless you offer it willingly! How contrary this is to the notion of many, for they say, "You see I deny myself by going so many times to a place of worship and by private prayer, therefore I must be truly religious." The very reverse is far nearer the truth! When it becomes a *misery* to serve God, then, indeed, the heart is far away from spiritual health, for when the heart is renewed, it delights to worship and serve the Lord!

Instead of saying, "I would omit prayer if I could," the regenerate mind cries, "I wish I could be always praying." Instead of saying, "I would keep away from the assembly of God's people if I could," the newborn nature wishes, like David, to *dwell* in the House of the Lord forever! This is a great evidence of the writing of the Law upon the heart, when holiness becomes a pleasure and sin becomes a sorrow. When this is done, what great things God has done for us! The main point of the whole, is this, that whereas our nature was once contrary to the Law of God so that whatever God forbade we at once desired, and whatever God commanded we, therefore, began to dislike, the Holy Spirit comes and changes our nature and makes it congruous to the Law—so that, now, whatever God forbids we forbid and whatever God commands, our will commands!

How much better to have the Law written upon the heart than upon tablets of stone! If anybody should enquire how the Lord keeps the writing



upon the heart, legible, I should like to spend a minute or two in showing the process. How the Holy Spirit first writes the Law on the heart, I cannot tell. The outward means are the preaching of the Word and the reading of it. But *how* the Holy Spirit directly operates on the soul, we do not know—it is one of the great mysteries of Grace. This much we know within ourselves, that whereas we were blind, now we see and, whereas we abhorred the Law of God, we now feel an intense delight in it! We also know that the Holy Spirit worked this change, but how He did it remains unknown. That part of His holy office which we can discern is done according to the usual laws of mental operation. He enlightens by knowledge, convinces by argument, leads by persuasion, strengthens by instruction and so forth.

So far, also, we know that one way by which the Law is kept written upon a Christian's heart is this—a sense of God's Presence. The Believer feels that he could not sin with God looking on. It would need a brazen face for a man to play the traitor in the presence of a king—such things are done “under the rose,” as men word it—but not before the monarch's face! So the Christian feels that he dwells in God's sight and this forbids him to disobey. The eye of the Heavenly Father is the best monitor of the child of God. Next, the Christian has a lively sense within him of the degradation which sin once brought upon him. If there is one thing I never can forget, personally, it is the horror of my heart while I was yet under sin. God revealed my state to me. Ah, Friends, the old proverb that a burnt child dreads the fire has an intensity of truth about it in the case of one who has ever been burnt by sin so as to be driven to despair by it! He hates it with a perfect hatred and, by that means, God writes the Law upon his heart.

But a sense of love is a yet more powerful factor. Let a man know that God loves him, let him feel sure that God always did love him from before the foundations of the world, and he must try to please God. Let him be assured that the Father loved him so much as to give His only-begotten Son to die that he might live through Him and he must love God and hate evil. A sense of pardon, of adoption and of God's sweet favor, both in Providence and in Grace must sanctify a man. He cannot willfully offend against such love! On the contrary, he feels himself bound to obey God in return for such unsearchable Grace and thus, by a sense of love, does God write His Law upon the hearts of His people!

Another very powerful pen with which the Lord writes is to be found in the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we see Jesus spit upon, scourged and crucified, we feel that we must hate sin with all the intensity of our nature. Can you count the purple drops of His redeeming blood and then go back to live in the iniquity which cost the Lord so dear? Impossible! The death of Christ writes the Law of God very deeply upon the central heart of man. The Cross is the crucifier of sin. Besides that, God actually establishes His holy Law in the throne of the heart by giving us a new and heavenly life. There is, within a Christian, an immortal principle which cannot sin because it is born of God and cannot die! It is the living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever! In regeneration there is imparted to us a something altogether foreign to our corrupt nature—a Divine principle is dropped into the soul which can neither be cor-

rupted nor made to die—and by this means the Law is written on the heart. I do not pretend to explain the process of regeneration, but for certain, it involves a Divine life implanted by the Holy Spirit.

Once more, the Holy Spirit, Himself, dwells in Believers. I pray you, never forget this marvelous doctrine, that as truly as ever God dwelt in human flesh in the Person of the God-Man Mediator, so truly does the Holy Spirit dwell in the bodies of all redeemed men and women who have been born again! And by the force of that indwelling, He keeps the mind forever permeated with holiness, forever subservient to the will of the Most High!

**III.** Now we turn, for just a minute, to think of THE WRITER. Who is it that writes the Law in the heart? It is God, Himself! “I will do it,” He says. Note, first, that He has a right to write His Law in the heart. He made the heart—it is His tablet—let Him write there whatever He wills. As clay in the hands of the potter, so are we in His hands. Note, next, that He, alone, can write the Law in the heart. It will never be written there by any other hand. The Law of God is not to be written in the heart by human power. Alas, how often have I expounded the Law of God and the Gospel of God, but I have got no further than the ears—only the living God can write in the living heart! This is noble work, angels, themselves, cannot attain to it! “This is the finger of God.”

As God, alone, can write there, and *must* write there, so He, alone, shall have the Glory of that writing when once it is perfected. When God writes, He writes perfectly. You and I make blots and errors—there needs to be a list of itemized errors at the end of every human piece of writing! But when God writes, blots or mistakes are out of the question! No holiness can excel the holiness produced by the Holy Spirit when His inward work is fully completed! Moreover, He writes indelibly. I defy the devil to get a single letter of the Law of God out of a man’s heart when God has written it there! When the Holy Spirit has come with all the power of His Divinity and rested on our nature—and stamped into it the life of holiness—then the devil may come with his black wings and all his unhallowed craftiness, but he can never erase the eternal lines!

We bear in our hearts the marks of the Lord God Eternal and we shall bear them eternally! Written rocks bear their inscriptions long, but written hearts bear them forever and ever! Does not the Lord say, “I will put My fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from Me”? Blessed be God for those immortal principles which forbid the child of God to sin!

**IV.** I wish to finish by noticing THE RESULTS of the Law being thus written in the heart. I hope while I have been preaching about it, many of you have been saying, “I hope that the Law will be written in my heart.” Remember that this is a *gift* and privilege of the Covenant of Grace and not a work of man. Dear Friends, if any of you have said, “I do not find anything good in me, therefore I cannot come to Christ,” you talk foolishly! The absence of good is the reason why you *should* come to Christ to have your needs supplied. “Oh, but if I could write God’s Law in my heart I would come to Christ.” Would you? What would you need Christ for? But if the Law is *not* written on your heart, then come to Jesus to have it so written!

The New Covenant says, "I will put My Law in their inward parts and will write My Law in their hearts." Come, then, to have the Law thus inscribed within! Come just as you are, before a single line has been inscribed. The Lord Jesus loves to prepare His own tablets and write every letter of His own Epistles—come to Him just as you are, that He may do all things for you! What are the results of the Law being written in the hearts of men? Frequently the first result is great sorrow. If I have God's Law written in my heart, then I say to myself, "Ah me, that I should have lived a lawbreaker so long! This blessed Law, this lovely Law, why I have not even thought of it, or if I have thought of it, it has provoked me to disobedience! Sin revived and I died when the Commandment came." We wring our hands and cry, "How could we be so wicked as to break so just a Law? How could we be so willful as to go against our own interests? Knew we not that a breach of the Commandment is an injury to ourselves?" Thus we are in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for the death of his first-born. I do not believe God has ever written His Law on your hearts if you have not mourned over sin. One of the earliest signs of Grace is a dew upon the eyes because of sin.

The next effect of it is there comes upon the man a strong and stern resolve that he will not break that Law again, but will keep it with all his might. He cries out with David, "I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments." His whole heart says, when reading the precepts of the Lord—"Yes, that is what I *ought* to be, that is what I *wish* to be and that is what I *will* be, according to the will of God." That strong resolve soon leads to a fierce conflict, for another law lifts up its head, a law in our members—and that other law cries, "Not so quick, there! Your new Law which has come into your soul to rule you shall not be obeyed! *I will be master!*"

He who is born within us to be our king finds the old Herod ready to slay the young child. The lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh—the pride of life—each one of these swears warfare against the new Monarch and the fresh power that is come into the heart. Some of you know what this struggle means. It is a very hard fight, with some, to keep from actual sin. Have you not, when troubled with a quick temper, had to put your hand to your mouth to stop yourself from saying what you used to say, but what you never wish to say again? Have you not often gone upstairs to get alone, feeling that you would soon slip if the Lord did not hold you up? How wise to get alone with God and cry to Him for help! How prudent to watch day and night against evil!

Certain braggers talk about having got beyond all that. I should be glad to think that there are such Brethren—but I should need to keep them in a glass case to show them round, or in an iron safe where thieves could not get at them! I conceive it to be a snare of the devil to imagine that you are beyond the need of daily watchfulness! For my own part, I have not passed beyond conflict and struggle. I bear testimony that the battle grows more stern every day! Those of God's people with whom I associate, I still find fighting and wrestling. Sometimes I know the devil does not roar, but I am more afraid of him when he is quiet than when he rages. Of the two, I would sooner he would roar, for a roaring devil is better than a

sleeping devil. Whenever he gives way, he only gives an inch to take a mile—and whenever you begin to say to yourself, “My corruptions are all dead. I now have no tendencies to sin,” you are in awful peril!

Poor Soul, you do not know what you are talking about! God send you to school and give you a little of His Light and you will sing another tune, I am sure, before long! These are the incidental results—when the Lord writes the Law in the heart, strifes and struggles are common within the man—for holiness strives for the mastery. But does not something better than this come of the Divine heart-writing? Oh, yes! There comes actual *obedience*. The man not only consents to the Law, that it is good, but he obeys it! And if there is anything which Christ commands, no matter what it is, the man seeks to do it—not only *wishes* to do it, but actually does it! And if there is anything that is wrong, he not only wishes to abstain from it, but he *does* abstain from it. God helping him, he becomes upright, righteous, sober, godly, loving and Christ-like—for this it is which the Spirit of God works in him! He *would* be perfect were it not for the old lusts of the flesh which linger, even in the hearts of the regenerate.

Now the Believer feels intense pleasure in everything that is good. If there is anything right and true in the world, he is on the side of it. If there are defeats to the Truth of God, he is defeated. But if the Truth of God marches on, conquering and to conquer, he conquers and takes and divides the spoil with joy! Now he is on God’s side; now he is on Christ’s side; now he is on truth’s side; now he is on holiness’ side and a man cannot be that without being a happy man! With all his struggles, all his weeping and all his confessions, he is a happy man because he is on the happy side. God is with him and he, by God’s Grace, is with God—and so he must be blessed!

As this proceeds, the man becomes more and more prepared to dwell in Heaven. He is changed into God’s image from Glory to Glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Our fitness for Heaven is not a thing that will be clapped upon us in the last few minutes of our life, just as we are going to die, but the children of God have a meetness for Heaven as soon as ever they are saved—and that meetness grows and increases till they are ripe and then, like ripe fruit, they drop from the tree and find themselves in the bosom of their Father God! God will never keep a soul out of Heaven half a minute after it is fully prepared to go there and so, when God has fitted us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in His Light, we shall enter *at once* into the joy of our Lord.

My Brothers and Sisters, I feel I have talked feebly about one of the most blessed subjects that ever occupied the thoughts of man—how God’s Law shall be kept, how it shall be honored, how holiness shall come into the world—and we shall no longer be rebellious. Herein let us trust in our Lord Jesus, who is to us the Surety of that Covenant of which this is one great promise—“I will put My Law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it.” God do so to us, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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# GOD'S WRITING UPON MAN'S HEART

## NO. 2992

A SERMON  
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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IN THE YEAR 1864.**

***"I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts."  
Jeremiah 31:33.***

THIS is not the language of the Old Covenant, but of the New Covenant. The prospects of life held out in the Law have all dissolved into a ministration of death as the penalty of disobedience. Its voice might have once captivated hearts that knew not their own weakness. How did it speak? "Do this, and live; keep My commandments, and you shall receive in return for your obedience singular blessings upon earth and rest in Heaven." But that Old Covenant, since the Fall, no man has kept, or can keep. Surely if any persons could have kept it, those to whom it was originally given were the most likely to do so. They were a separated people. They were removed into the wilderness, far from evil associations. They were miraculously fed out of the granaries of Heaven. They received their drink in an equally marvelous manner out of the smitten Rock. They had God, Himself, in the midst of them. They had His pillar of cloud to cover them by day and His pillar of fire to lead them by night. In all their difficulties they could appeal to Moses. If there had been an inadvertence or mistake, they could turn to Aaron and he, by the offering of the appointed sacrifice, could set them right again. They were placed where they had not the trials and the temptations of the rest of mankind. They were so cut off and separated that I may well compare them to—

***"A garden walled around,  
Chosen and made peculiar ground."***

And yet, even in that favored soil, which was so well tilled and so well kept by God, it was utterly impossible that perfect holiness could grow and, therefore, the Law of God was broken. Even the seed of Israel, circumcised and blessed with covenants and promises—and having the immediate Presence of God in their sanctuary could not keep the Law—a clear lesson to us that "by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified." You cannot perfectly obey God! You cannot work out a righteousness of your own! You cannot do that which God commands you to do. Look to the flames which Moses saw—and sink, and tremble, and despair if you wish to be saved by your own works!

Now that Old Covenant has passed away with regard to the Lord's people. As many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus are now under a New Covenant which is of quite a different kind. It does not say, "Do this,

and live.” It says, on God’s part, “I will give you a new heart; I will forgive your sins; I will bless you with My Presence. I will make you holy. I will keep you holy. I will preserve you in My ways; I will bring you to Myself at the last.” And all this is vouchsafed without any conditions that render the fulfillment precarious, for whatever conditions there were, devolved not upon the sinner, but upon the sinner’s Substitute—as though God had said, “I will do this if My only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, will give His blood for the remission of your sins and work out a perfect righteousness for your acceptance.” That has been done and now, as far as you and I are concerned, the Covenant of Grace is one of promise, pure promise, nothing but promise! And all that we have to do, as poor, guilty, helpless, needy souls, is to sit down at the feet of our gracious God and receive from Him these wondrous blessings which the Covenant has secured to all the faithful—

***“Firm as the lasting hills,  
This Covenant shall endure,  
Whose potent shalls and wills  
Make every blessing sure!  
When ruin shakes all nature’s frame,  
Its jots and tittles stand the same.  
Here when your feet shall fall,  
Believer, you shall see  
Grace to restore your soul,  
And pardon full and free!  
You with delight shall God behold  
Sheep restored to Zion’s fold.  
And when through Jordan’s flood  
Your God shall bid you go,  
His arm shall you defend,  
And vanquish every foe!  
And in this Covenant you shall view  
Sufficient strength to bear you through.”***

One of the blessings of this New Covenant is heart-writing—“I will put My Law in their minds, and write it on their hearts.” It is of that I am going to talk tonight. And instead of having different heads to the sermon, I will just offer a few observations, which have, I think, a very intimate connection with this point of writing upon the fleshy tablets of the heart.

My first observation is that WITH THE TABLETS OF STONE, CHRISTIANS HAVE NOTHING WHATEVER TO DO.

Do not be staggered or astonished at this remark. I know that there are certain places of worship where these two tablets of the Law stand right over the Communion Table, but they have no business there, for we can never have any communion with God upon the footing of the Law. If there must be anything there. If there must be any symbol at all there, then the Roman Catholic is right when he puts there the Cross, or a picture of the crucifixion. We put away all symbols lest they should become a source of idolatry. But, if there must be anything over the Communion Table, the Cross is the proper thing—not the two tablets of the Law, for, on the footing of the Law, God never had communion with

man—and He never can have, since man has fallen. With the two tablets of the Law as they are written upon the stone, the Christian has nothing whatever to do.

You know me too well to suspect me of being an Antinomian, yet I will not try to detract from the force of the expression which the Holy Spirit has taught us, “You are not under the Law, but under Grace.” All the Ten Commandments the Christian loves. They are his rule of life and he decides to keep every single word that God has ever commanded to the sons of men. But, as they stand on those tablets of hard, cold rock, I have nothing whatever to do with them! Moses dashed them from his hands in holy rage and, surely, as I see their cracked fragments there, I can only say that I have done precisely what Moses did—and have broken those tablets to pieces, too! Even Moses could not carry these tablets in his hands without breaking them, nor can I do any better than he did. God rules His people, not by Law, but by love. They do not walk in holiness because they must, but because they wish to do so. The rule which governs them is not, “Do this, and live; do that, and perish,” but this—“I have loved you with an everlasting love; what will you do for Me?” To quote two good lines of old Master Quarles, which just give me the sense I want to convey to you—

***“Leave you the stony tablets for your Savior’s part.  
Keep you the law that’s written in your heart.”***

As for the Laws written on the stone tablets, Christ has kept them and fulfilled them! Therefore they have lost their force to crush you. The tablet on your heart is your rule, your guidance and your law. See to it that you be not disobedient to the Revelation of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

There are many of my hearers, tonight, who are always dealing with the tablets of the Law. You are trying to get to Heaven by what you can *do*. O my dear Friend, you cannot keep the Law—why do you try to do it? It is too high, too heavenly, too broad, too spiritual for you. It affects you in your imaginations, your thoughts, your words, your actions. Why, you break it every moment! You have broken it since you have been in this House of God. Think not, then, to do an impossibility! And even if you could keep it in the future, it would do you no good, for you have already broken it and to try to preserve what you have already broken is most absurd! If you had an alabaster box in your hand, and you had broken it to slivers, however careful you might be of the broken fragments, you could not put them together again. You have most effectually cut the throat of all your hopes of ever being saved by the Law of God! O Man, why do you try to do this when Christ has kept the Law for all who trust Him? Do you think that Christ would have come all the way from Heaven to keep the Law for you if you could keep it for yourself? If you could be your own Savior, what need was there for Him to be stretched upon the Cross and to bleed, and agonize, and die? Does Christ do that which is not necessary? O proud soul, proud soul to think to do what only a Savior can accomplish! Come now and leave your *doings*—for all your

righteousnesses are but as filthy rags! Come now and leave your virtues and all your boasted deeds, and look away to where He hangs who has woven a garment without seam from the top throughout and has dyed it in the crimson of His own blood! Put this on and you wear Heaven's court-dress, and you shall one day stand among the peers of Paradise! But without this, you are naked, poor and miserable! I counsel you, therefore, to buy of Him fair raiment—the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints!

With the Law as engraved on stone, then, the Believer has nothing to do—his business is with the Law as written with the Spirit of the living God upon his heart!

My next observation is that **THE OLD HEART IS NOT FIT FOR GOD TO WRITE HIS LAW UPON.**

Somebody said once that the human heart, in infancy at least, was like a piece of white paper, and that there might be anything written on it which we pleased. Little did that person know—little had he even guessed the truth concerning a human heart—for the heart is blotted, blurred, blacked, smeared, smudged, fouled, stained through and through even at the very beginning! Everyone can say with David, "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." There is no such thing as a white surface upon the natural heart—and God never tried to write a sentence on the natural heart yet—and He never will because He knows right well that that heart is not a fit place for His holy Law to be written. If it should be possible for Him to put it upon that black heart, I think He would not do it, for it is an impure thing and God will never write His perfect Law upon an imperfect parchment like a depraved heart. It is too vile, too abominable for God to touch. All that can be done with the old, natural, human heart, is for God to mortify it, to pierce it through and through with the spear which pierced the side of Christ! "Death to the old Adam! Death to the old Adam!" is the cry of the Gospel. But as for modifying him, it never tries to do it, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor can the leopard change its spots. The old nature is looked upon as hopeless and is given up to die—and the sooner it dies, the better for you and for me! God will not write His Law upon it, for it is foul, and blotted, and too abominable for Him to touch.

Equally impossible is it for God to write upon the old heart because it is stony. He did write once on stone and the tablets were broken—He will not write on stone a second time. The first tablets of stone were broken and, as to the second tablets of stone, I know not where they are, they are lost—as if the very thought of goodness had been lost to man by nature. And if God should write upon a stony heart, this would be the result—that the heart with the Law written upon it must soon be broken and destroyed. What? Shall He write on such an unstable, treacherous, deceitful thing as an unrenewed heart? As well might you write upon the sand! Or, still worse, go write your name upon the treacherous billow and expect to find it handed down to fame! But God writes not on water.



He will not take His great pen into His hand to write on such a medium as the heart which "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." "You must be born-again." God's promise is, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Let that prayer be breathed by you as you realize the unfitness of the old heart for God to write upon!

The old heart, then, being put out of the question, there is a new heart produced by the Holy Spirit. Transcending the greatest wonders in Nature is this bestowment of a new heart! You know, dear Friends, that a tree, if it has had some of its branches cut off, may grow new branches and there are some crustaceous animals which, when they lose a claw or a foot, grow fresh ones—but you never heard of an animal losing its heart and then having a new one! The thing is impossible in Nature, but this wonder of wonders God works in us! He gives a new core to our very being, a fresh life-fountain to the whole of our existence!

Well, when this new heart comes unto us, it must have something written on it. A heart with nothing on it would be too preposterous for imagination. Look at all God's works—they all have something written on them. Even the black brow of tempest has God's name of terror written upon it in letters of lightning. Do not the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of Armies? Is not the Eternal, Himself, mirrored in tempest upon the bosom of the stormy sea? Even the fields, whether they are white with winter's snows or golden with autumn's crown of glory, still bear the impression, either of Divine Power or of Divine Love. God has written the whole world over—there is not a slab in the great palace of creation which is left unsculptured. Everywhere there are great hieroglyphs which skillful men and initiated spirits love to read. And shall there be nothing on the heart, when God has taken the trouble to make it twice over, when He has made that heart new? If there were nothing on the heart, it would be no heart! A heart without something in it is just a dull, dead vacuum and not a fit heart for such a creature as man. What was the new heart made for—to what end and to what purpose—if it were not to bear some Divine inscription? The devil would soon attempt to write on it if God did not write. Is it not the very best way to keep a man from filling a bushel with chaff, to first fill it full of wheat? So, for God to write on the new heart—is not this the safest method to keep that heart pure for Himself, so that no word of the language of Hell shall be written there? If that heart were left empty, what would happen? Is it not written concerning the man's house that was swept and garnished, that the evil spirit came back to it? Why? Because it was empty! If there had been a tenant in it—if the armed strong man had kept the house—the old tenant could not have gone back. And so, when God has thoroughly written out this whole of His Law upon the tablet of a sanctified heart, there will be no possibility that sin shall ever be written there! I know it is an incorruptible seed that cannot sin, because it is born of God, but that very thing which makes it an incorruptible seed—the very life that is in it—makes it swell, and grow, and germinate.

As the heart is God's heart, and a renewed heart, there must be God's writing upon it. God does not send books into the world which are but blank paper. He does not produce as His Epistles that are to be known and read of all men, mere empty sheets! No, there must be upon the new heart some of the handwriting of God!

Pray the Lord to give you new heart, poor Soul. Or if you have it already, ask Him to write upon it now. Say, in the words of that verse—

***“There shall His sacred Spirit dwell,  
And deep engrave His Law—  
And every motion of our souls  
To swift obedience draw.”***

NEXT, IS NOT THE NEW HEART THE VERY BEST PLACE IN WHICH TO WRITE THE LAW OF THE LORD?

I cannot conceive of a better place to put it than in the new heart. A certain minister, preaching from the text, “Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You,” had three heads to his sermon. First the best thing, “Your Word.” Secondly, “in the best place—“have I hid in my heart.” Thirdly, for the best of purposes—“that I might not sin against You.” That is as a well-divided sermon! The heart is the best place, because, you know it is in his heart that a man carries his jewels. When Little-Faith was met down Dead Man's Lane by those three villains, they robbed him of most of his spending money, but they did not steal his jewels. The reason was because he carried them in the casket of his heart. Some men wear their religion as men wear their hats—where it can be snatched by a thief, or be blown away by the winds of temptation, or be laid aside to suit their own convenience when they get into the devil's drawing room. But the true Christian carries his religion in his heart. And as his heart is always safe in the very center of his being, so is his religion. Fair weather or foul weather, good company or bad company—it is all the same. In closing markets or the winning market—whether men cry, “Hallelujah” and, “Hosanna”—or whether they cry, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” the man is still the same because he has his principles in his heart, which is the best place for God's Law.

Putting the Law of the Lord into the heart signifies that it is put where it will be loved and where it will control the whole man. If you can put a thing into a man's heart, you have put it at the very center of his being. We have heard of a certain shepherd who had a flock of sheep in a meadow. A stream of water that ran through the meadow was very foul and muddy, so the shepherd dug some new channels. But after he had dug them, the water was still not very clear. He cleared out the channels again and again, but still, after a little while, the water was again impure. It was better than it had been before, when flowing through the muddy channel, but still it was not such as he wished it to be. At last, someone said to him, “Why do you not clear the water up upon the hill? There is a mass of mud and filth there and the water comes down the hillside laden with all this impurity. Purify it there, purify it near the fountainhead.” So, when man gets purified at the fountain—when he gets the Law of the Lord in his heart—then it is that he is sure to be all right as to the

streams of his actions. You cannot put the Law of God, then, in a better place than in the heart, because there it will be preserved—and there it will influence the entire man. Lord, grant to me and to mine, that we may have Your Law thus safely locked up in the golden casket of a renewed heart.

Still, it must be admitted that IT IS VERY HARD TO WRITE ON HEARTS.

That same old poet whom I quoted just now, Quarles—pictures God as saying—

***“What I indite  
‘Tis I alone can write  
And write in books that I Myself have made.  
‘Tis not an easy trade  
To read or write in hearts.  
They that are skillful in all other arts  
When they take this in hand  
Are at a stand.”***

It is not easy to read hearts and it is still harder work to write on hearts. We can sometimes write on people's heads—that is comparatively easy. You may get a thing into the intellect. you may get it into the brains by sheer dunning and argument—but to get things into the heart is not so very easy—

***“He that's convinced against his will  
Is of the same opinion still”—***

and, though convinced, he still goes on in the same path, pursuing the thing which he knows to be his own worst enemy. There are no slaves like those who serve their enemies and those are the greatest slaves who are slaves to their own soul-destroying lusts. It is not an easy thing to write on hearts. When there are many conversions, certain simpletons are apt to think that there is something in the preacher to account for them. Suppose someone had gone to that ancient battlefield and had picked up the stone with which David smote Goliath's head, and said, “Well, it must be a very wonderful stone that could have killed a giant”? And then, after turning it round, and looking at it a little while, he would say that it was very much like any other smooth stone that might be put in a sling. And very likely he would throw it down in contempt and think nothing of it.

Well, that is how some people do with God's ministers. They first say, “Well, there are so many conversions. The preacher must be a very wonderful man.” And then they find him wonderfully like any other common-place talker and so they think nothing of him. Ah, simpleton! Do you not know that it is not the stone, but the sling, and not even the sling, but the God who directs the stone to the giant's brow? And so it is not the man, but the man's Master—and it is the Spirit of God that makes the Word effectual. But what would you think if that stone should talk thus, “Oh, what a fine stone am I! I killed you, Goliath! What a fine stone am I! The daughters of Jerusalem ought to rejoice over me in the dance, and they ought to ‘sound the loud timbrel’ and say, ‘Glory be unto

you', O Stone, for you have smitten the giant's brow"? What would the Angel of Wisdom say but, "O foolish pebble of the brook! Son of the dirt and of the dark and miry sea! There is nothing in you any more than in your fellow stones that slept with you in the flowing crystal! Had David picked any other stone, the work would have been done just as well and, inasmuch as he chose you, boast not of yourself as though there were anything in you."

Beloved, when you and I are privileged to do anything for Christ, let us remember that we are only like the poor stone out of the brook—that there is nothing in it—and that unto God must be all the glory. This writing upon hearts is hard work. I confess that I never could—and I never expect to be able to write God's holy Law on a human heart. No, Beloved, the heart is locked up too tightly for us to get at it. But God has the key and He opens it as a man would do his own writing desk. And He knows how to open the sheets, one after another, and begin to write with His own pen the blessed Commandments of His new and perfect Law. Jesus is the great Writer, for Jesus knows hearts! He is Divine and Omniscient and, therefore, He knows hearts. And He is a Man—every pang that rends the heart has rent His heart. He had a pierced heart and there was a terrible writing upon His heart when the spear wrote there this great word—"WRATH"—"the wrath of God on account of sin." He knows what heart-writing means. Deep on His heart are inscribed His people's names. He understands heart-writing and He can do for His disciples what has been done in Him. He has such a gentle hand, such loving fingers, such a great heart to move that hand, that He is the great Heart-Writer and there is none that can match Him in writing upon human hearts!

Further, WHEN GOD WRITES UPON THE HEART, HE WRITES BY HIS HOLY SPIRIT AND USES HIS WORD AS THE PEN.

There are several pens that God uses and one is His Written Word. This is a gold pen with a diamond point. It is marvelous how God can sometimes write on the heart with a text of Scripture, a promise, a threat, a word of doctrine, of exhortation, or of rebuke. When He writes with that diamond pen, there is never any mistake, never any scratching or catching in the paper—all is well written!

Then He sometimes writes on human hearts by His ministers. Mr. John Berridge once preached a sermon upon a different text from mine, but I may quote from his sermon. He says that ministers are like pens. There are some University ministers, he says, and they try to make them the same as people make steel pens nowadays—they make them by the gross! And though they have their excellences and many of them are highly educated men, yet they also have their deficiencies. John Berridge compared himself to an old goose quill. He said that he could not make such fine lady-like up-strokes as the University steel pens could, but he thought that God often made heavier down-strokes on the heart by him than He ever did by the University gentlemen. And that is the case with some of us. We have to be nibbled several times before we are fit to write

with at all—and when we do write, we sometimes make a sorry blotch of it—yet the Lord does help us, rough and ready as we are, to make some heavy down-strokes on the sinner's conscience. And if this is done, it is a reason for thankfulness and we will bless the Lord for it! Pens, however, must sometimes be sharpened—and so ministers must sometimes feel the sharp knife of affliction so as to make them more fit to preach God's Word.

Need I remind you, Beloved, that a pen cannot write of itself? Just take that pen and lay it down on the paper. Can that pen write, "Paradise Lost?" Why, it cannot even stir! It cannot write a single letter of the alphabet, much less can it write a poem! And so is it with the minister—he can write no Truths of God in the sinner's heart and conscience unless his Master holds him in His hands—but when the Master begins to write, oh, then, how well it is done, and how the white paper of the new heart receives the Divine handwriting and it remains indelibly there!

Neither would it be any use for writing even if it were the best pen in the world—without ink. And the analogy in this case is with the Holy Spirit. The minister must be dipped in this ink. He must have the Holy Spirit with him, or else it is no matter what he may be—he may be a goose-quill, or he may be the polished steel. He may have been well-sharpened, he may have written much in his time, but he can write nothing without the ink. Mr. Joseph Irons used to pray, as he went to his pulpit, "Oh, for an unction from on high! Oh, for an unction from on high!" And I think this may be the preacher's prayer whenever he goes to preach, "Oh, for an unction from on high! Oh, for much of this Divine ink—much of the Holy Spirit!"

Surely we may praise and bless the Lord whenever we see His Law written upon a human heart because it is God's Law, because it is God who wrote it and because it is the Spirit of God who is the Agent, through the Word, by whom that writing is put there! Let us join in hearty thanksgiving to Father, Son and Spirit, the Covenant-keeping God who writes His Law in our hearts!

And it may be well to make a special note of this fact—IT IS GOD'S LAW WHICH IS WRITTEN UPON THE NEW HEART.

I do not think it is the Law as it stands in the letter, either in Exodus or in Deuteronomy, but it is the *spirit* of the Law that is written upon the Christian's heart. With regard to the Law as a letter, we may say, "The letter kills." It is the spirit, the essence of the Law, which the Christian is to mind and which is written on his heart. Under the old Law, the Jew was often put to much inconvenience. For instance, the Law of the Sabbath, as it then stood, was, "In it you shall do no manner of work." Now, some Christians read it in that way even to this day—but when the Savior was on earth, His disciples rubbed the ears of corn together in the fields and ate thereof, on the Sabbath. The Pharisees complained of this, but the Savior replied to them that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The Sabbath was never meant to be a fixed and tight bond to crush us and make us feel like slaves during the time

it lasted. It was made for our use, to be devoted to the best and highest of purposes. The Pharisees would never have healed anybody on the Sabbath—that, they thought, was dreadfully wicked! But Jesus Christ hallowed the Sabbath by acts of mercy. And now He gives to the Christian a day of rest, not, indeed, such a day of rest as it was to the Jew, but He gives us this that we may perform works of mercy, works of piety and works for necessary uses. These we do perform and when we do, there are some who cry out that such-and-such a Christian is not a Sabbatarian! No, and the Christian has no need to be! His Law of the Sabbath is not the old Law, as he finds it in Deuteronomy or Exodus, but the Law of the Sabbath as he finds it according to Christ—which is this—that the day is a day of rest and holy pleasure. A day in which we are to serve God with all our might and any kind of work which is wholly God's work—and in which we can serve God—is a work which we are permitted—no, which we are enjoined to perform!

So it is with all the Law. The Christian does not go back to the Law of Moses and say, "I feel very angry. I should like to know whether I may kill my brother." No, he has the Law of God in his heart and he does not want to kill anybody. He knows that he that is angry with his brother is a murderer, so he turns around and says, "I forgive you. I forgive you freely." Sometimes persons come and ask us questions which involve some degree of lust, but a Christian has the Law of God in his heart and he does not want to know whether this and that may be permitted as a sin of the flesh, but he remembers that, "whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart" and so he spurns the sin. The Law written on his heart is enough for him and he delights in the Law of God after the inward plan, without needing to go to the letter, the killing letter—and reading in that the condemnation of offenses rather than the promptings of holy motives! The Law of God is perfect! Let us say nothing against it. But it is not so glorious as the Law which Christ has brought in and which He exhibited in His own Person. The glory of the Law was great, but the glory of Christ's Gospel is far greater! Remember, Christian, that there is to be written on your heart the whole of God's Law, but it is the *spirit* of that Law—not the letter of it—which is to be written there. And what that spirit is, you know, for our great Teacher epitomized it in one word, and that one word is "LOVE." Love that furnishes the impulse while it prescribes the duty.

The man who has God's Law written in his heart will go right without a book—he will go right without having somebody at his elbow to nudge him. And why will he go right? Why does the steam engine go? Because it has steam within it and the proper machinery—so it must go. You do not see 20 horses dragging a steam engine along, do you? There are some folks who want to make laws to make other people good. That is not the way in which Scripture goes to work. Scripture just alters the man's heart, puts new machinery in him and the heavenly steam—and then he cannot help going right! You are not to have a Law with 20 policemen behind it to drag a man to do right—that is not the thing to do. The man

must be renewed by Divine Grace and made a new creature in Christ Jesus—and then, by the force and strength of that new nature, the Law being written in his heart—he hates that which is evil and cleaves to that which is good. Some people cannot understand this. They know that they will not, themselves, do what is right unless they are flogged to it—while they do what is wrong at every opportunity from an evil bias. But the Christian is different! He has been born-again and now he would need flogging to do evil! And even then he would not do it. But he needs no driving to that which is good, for the ways of God are his pleasure and the pleasures of sin he hates. May we all in this sense have the Law written on our hearts! And what will that Law be? Why, this word, “LOVE.” Love is the Law of the Gospel! “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength; and your neighbor as yourself.” This is the Law of the Christian, and this is the Law which is written on his heart! This is the sum and substance, the distilled essence of all the Ten Commandments. You may forget those Ten Commandments, O Believer, if you will but remember this new Law which is written on your heart, “Love, love, love!”

Last of all, THE WRITING PRESERVES THE HEART AND THE HEART PRESERVES THE WRITING.

Some of us who have a large correspondence sometimes have a grand burning. There are a lot of letters on my table, very possibly written by some of you, which will never get answered. But if people will write ten times as many as anybody can answer, they must not expect to get replies. Still, there they are, and sometimes there comes to be a general blaze—and while we are burning the letters up, every now and then we say, “Ah, I’ll keep that!” Why? Well, it is in the handwriting of somebody we loved, but who is now dead. And we say, “Yes, I’ll keep that. Just put that away in one of the pigeon-holes and there let it lie among the interesting letters.” So, when God comes at last to look at all the writing of the universe, there will be a general burning—but He will come to one heart, and He will say, “Yes, keep that, that has my Law written on it—and wherever I see my Law, I see my dear Son’s handwriting. He Himself died upon the Cross that this heart should not be burned. I will keep that.” If you have God’s Law written on your hearts, it will preserve you.

So, too, the heart preserves the writing. The Pharaohs have written wonderful inscriptions in Egypt upon their stone tombs, yet some of these have become defaced through the lapse of years—

***“Time has a mighty tooth,  
And bites the granite through.”***

But when a thing is written upon an immortal heart, no time can change it! The heart that had God’s Law written on it years ago, still has it written there in the last expiring moments, as the Believer talks with his God upon his dying bed. The flesh has been committed to the grave, but the handwriting is not gone, for the heart on which it was written has soared aloft, and now it is before the eternal Throne of God! And

when the sun has grown dim with age and the moon has waned never to wax again, and the stars have quenched their tiny lamps, when—

***“The great globe itself,  
Yes, all which it inherits, shall dissolve  
And like this insubstantial pageant faded  
Leave not a rack behind”—***

just as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost forever—when all the universe that God has made, except the Heaven which is to exist forever, shall have passed away, then the handwriting of God upon that heart will be as clear and as legible as it is now! Yes, and if you can fly on seraph's wings far, far away, till time seems a spot too small to be discerned by the keenest eye. If you have sped on till God has made and destroyed as many worlds as there are grains of sand by the seashore. Till He has piled up and dashed to pieces, again, as many mighty universes as there are drops in the ocean—changeless even then—the imperishable writing of the Divine hand shall still glitter on the immortal, eternal hearts that God has made and quickened—that they might be the pillars on which He might write the memorial of His love and holiness! Oh, that my heart might have His writing on it! Brothers and Sisters, I pray that it may be the case with you and with all of us!

But, remember, the old heart must be broken—and the place to get a new heart is at the foot of the Cross. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “Whoever believes in Him shall not be ashamed.” He that trusts in Jesus builds upon a rock! He builds for eternity and his happiness shall be secure.

The Lord send you away with His own blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

—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.**



# GOD IN THE COVENANT

## NO. 93

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1856,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“I will be their God.”  
Jeremiah 31:33.***

WHAT a glorious Covenant the Second Covenant is! Well might it be called a “better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6). It is so glorious that the very thought of it is enough to overwhelm the soul when it discerns the amazing condescension and Infinite Love of God in having framed a covenant for such unworthy creatures, for such glorious purposes, with such disinterested motives! It is better than the other covenant, the Covenant of Works, which was made with Adam. Or that covenant which is said to have been made with Israel, on the day when they came out of Egypt. It is better, for it is founded upon a *better principle*. The old covenant was founded on the principle of merit. It was, “Serve God and you shall be rewarded for it. If you walk perfectly in the fear of the Lord, God will walk well towards you and all the blessings of Mount Gerizim shall come upon you and you shall be exceedingly blessed in this world, and the world which is to come.” But that covenant fell to the ground, because, although it was just that man should be rewarded for his good works, or punished for his evil ones, yet man, being sure to sin, and since the Fall infallibly tending towards iniquity, the covenant was not suitable for his happiness, nor could it promote his eternal welfare. But the new covenant is not founded on works at all. It is a covenant of pure unmingled Grace. You may read it from its first word to its last and there is not a solitary syllable as to anything to be done by us! The whole Covenant is a covenant, not so much between man and his Maker, as between Jehovah and man’s Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ. The human side of the covenant has been already fulfilled by Jesus, and there remains nothing, now, but the covenant of giving, not the covenant of requirements. The whole covenant with regard to us, the people of God, now stands thus—“I will give this, I will bestow that. I will fulfill this promise. I will grant that favor.” And there is *nothing* for us to do! He will work all our works in us. And the very Graces that are sometimes represented as being stipulations of the Covenant, are *promised to us*—He gives us faith. He promises to give us the Law in our inward parts, and to write it on our hearts. It is a glorious Covenant, I say, be-

cause it is founded on simple mercy and unmixed Grace—quite irrespective of creature-doings, or anything that is to be performed by man—and hence this Covenant surpasses the other in *stability*. Where there is anything of man, there is always a degree of mutability. Where you have anything to do with creatures, there you have something to do with change. For creatures and change, and uncertainty always go together. But since this New Covenant has now nothing whatever to do with the creature, so far as the creature has to do anything, but only so far as he is to *receive*—the idea of change is utterly and entirely gone. It is God's Covenant and, therefore, it is an unchanging Covenant. If there is something which I am to do in the Covenant, then is the covenant insecure. And although happy as Adam, I may yet become miserable as Satan! But if the Covenant is all on God's part, then if my name is in that Covenant, my soul is as secure as if I were now walking the golden streets! And if any blessing is in the Covenant, I am as certain to receive that blessing as if I already grasped it in my hands—for the promise of God is sure to be followed by fulfillment! The promise never fails. It always brings with it the whole of that which it is intended to convey and the moment I receive it by faith, I am sure of the blessing, itself! Oh, how infinitely superior is this Covenant to the other in its manifest security! It is beyond the risk or hazard of the least uncertainty!

But I have been thinking for the last two or three days, that the Covenant of Grace excels the other Covenant most marvelously in the *mighty blessings* which it confers. What does the Covenant of Grace convey? I had thought, this morning, of preaching a sermon upon, "The Covenant of Grace. What are the blessings it gives to God's children?" But when I began to think of it, there was so much in the Covenant, that if I had only read a catalog of the great and glorious blessings wrapped up within its folds, I would have needed to occupy nearly the whole of the day in making a few simple observations upon each of them! Consider the great things God has given in the Covenant of Grace. He sums them up by saying He has given "all things." He has given you eternal life in Christ Jesus. He has given Christ Jesus to be yours. He has made Christ heir of all things and He has made you joint-heir with Him. And hence He has given you everything! Were I to sum up that mighty mass of unutterable treasure which God has conveyed to every elect soul by that glorious Covenant, time would fail me! I therefore commence with one great blessing conveyed to us by the Covenant of Grace and then, on other Sabbaths, I will, by Divine permission, consider separately, one by one, sundry other things which the Covenant conveys.

We commence, then, by the first thing, which is enough to startle us by its immense value! In fact, unless it had been written in God's Word,

we could never have *dreamed* that such a blessing could have been ours! God, Himself, by the Covenant of Grace, becomes the Believer's own portion and inheritance—"I will be their God."

And now we shall begin with this subject in this way. We shall show you, first, that this is a *special blessing*. God is the special possession of the elect, whose names are in the Covenant of Grace. Secondly, for a moment or two we shall speak of this as being an *exceedingly precious blessing*—"I will be their God." Thirdly, we shall dwell upon the *security of this blessing*—"I will be their God." And fourthly we shall endeavor to stir you up to *make good use of this blessing*, so freely and liberally conveyed to you by the Everlasting Covenant of Grace—"I will be their God."

Stop just one moment and think it over before we start. In the Covenant of Grace, God, Himself, conveys Himself to you and becomes yours. Understand it—God—all that is meant by that word—eternity, infinity, Omnipotence, Omniscience, perfect justice, Infallible rectitude, Immutabile Love—all that is meant by God—Creator, Guardian, Preserver, Governor, Judge—all that, that great word, "GOD," can mean—all of goodness and of love, all of bounty and of Grace—all that, this Covenant of Grace gives you, to be your absolute property as much as anything you can call your own—"I will be their God." We say, pause over that thought. If I should not preach at all, there is enough in that, if opened up and applied by the all-glorious Spirit, to excite your joy during the whole of the Sabbath—"I will be their God."

***"My God! How cheerful is the sound!  
How pleasant to repeat!  
Well may that heart with pleasure bound,  
Where God has fixed His seat."***

**I. HOW IS GOD ESPECIALLY THE GOD OF HIS OWN CHILDREN?** For God is the God of all men, of all creatures. He is the God of the worm, of the flying eagle, of the star and of the cloud. He is God everywhere. How, then, is He more my God and your God than He is God of all created things? We answer, that in some things God is the God of all His creatures. But even there, there is a special relationship existing between Himself and His chosen creatures, whom He has loved with an everlasting love. And in the next place, there are certain relationships in which God does *not* exist towards the rest of His creatures, but only towards His own children.

**1.** First then, God is the God of all His creatures, *seeing that He has the right to decree* to do with them as He pleases. He is the Creator of us all—He is the Potter, and has power over the clay, to make of the same lump, one vessel to honor and another to dishonor. However men may sin against God, He is still their God in that sense—that their destiny is immovably in His hands—that He can do with them *exactly* as He choos-

es. However they may resent His will, or spurn His good pleasure, yet He can make the wrath of man to praise Him and the remainder of that wrath He can restrain! He is the God of all creatures, absolutely so in the matter of Predestination, seeing that He is their Creator and has an absolute right to do with them as He wills. But here again He has a special regard to His children and He is *their* God even in that sense. For to them, while He exercises the same Sovereignty, He exercises it in the way of Grace and Grace, only. He makes them the vessels of mercy, who shall be to His honor forever. He chooses them out of the ruins of the Fall and makes them heirs of everlasting life, while He allows the rest of the world to continue in sin and to consummate their guilt by well-deserved punishment. And thus, while His relationship is the same, as far as His Sovereignty is concerned and His right of decree, there is something special in its loving aspect towards His people. And in that sense He is *their* God.

Again—He is the God of all His creatures *in the sense that He has a right to command obedience of all*. He is the God of every man that was ever born into this earth, in the sense that they are bound to obey Him. God can command the homage of all His creatures because He is their Creator, Governor and Preserver. And all men are, by the fact of their creation, so placed in subjection to Him, that they cannot escape the obligation of submission to His laws. But even here, there is something special in regard to the child of God. Though God is the ruler of all men, yet His rule is special towards His children, for He lays aside the sword of His rulership and in His hand He grasps the rod for His child, not the sword of punitive vengeance! While He gives the world a Law upon stone, He gives to His child a law in his heart. God is my Governor and yours, but if you are unregenerate, He is your governor in a different sense from what He is mine. He has ten times as much claim to my obedience as He has to yours. Seeing that He has done more for me, I am bound to do more for Him! Seeing that He has loved me more, I am bound to love Him more! But should I disobey, the vengeance on my head shall not fall so heavily as on yours, if you are out of Christ, for that vengeance incurred by me has already fallen upon Christ, my Substitute. Only the *chastisement* shall remain for me—so that there, again, you see where the relationship to all men is universal, there is something special in it in reference to God's children.

Again—God has a universal power over all His creatures *in the character of a Judge*. He will “judge the world in righteousness *and His people with equity*.” He will judge all men with equity, it is true, but as if His people were not of the world, it is added afterwards, “His people with equity.” God is the God of all creatures, we repeat, in the sense that He is their Judge. He will summon them all before His bar and condemn or ac-

quit them all, but even there, there is something peculiar with regard to His children. For to them, the condemnation sentence shall never come, but only the acquittal. While He is Judge of all, He especially is *their* Judge—because He is the Judge whom they love to reverence, the Judge whom they long to approach because they know His lips will confirm that which their hearts have already felt—the sentence of their full acquittal through the merits of their glorious Savior! Our loving God is the Judge who shall acquit our souls, and in that respect we can say He is *our* God! So, then, whether as Sovereign, or as Governor enforcing law, or as Judge punishing sin—although God is, in some sense, the God of all men, yet in this matter there is something special towards His people, so that they can say, “He is our God, even in those relationships.”

**2.** But now, Beloved, there are points to which the rest of God’s creatures cannot come—and here the great center of the matter lies—here the very soul of this glorious promise dwells! God is our God in a sense with which the unregenerate, the unconverted, the unholy, can have no acquaintance—in which they have no share whatever! We have just considered other points with regard to what God is to man, generally. Let us now consider what He is to us, as He is to none other.

First then, God is my God, seeing that he is *the God of my election*. If I am His child, then has He loved me from before all worlds and His Infinite Mind has been exercised with plans for my salvation! If He is my God, He has seen me when I have wandered far from Him and when I have rebelled. His mind has determined when I shall be arrested—when I shall be turned from the error of my ways. He has been providing the means of Grace for me. He has applied those means of Grace in due time, but His everlasting purpose has been the basis and the foundation of it all! And thus He is my God as He is the God of none else beside His own children! He is My glorious, gracious God in eternal Election, for He thought of me and chose me from before the foundation of the world, that I should be without blame before Him in love! Looking back, then, I see Election’s God, and Election’s God is my God if I am in Election. But if I fear not God, neither regard Him, then He is another man’s God and not mine. If I have no claim and participation in Election, then I am compelled to look upon Him as being, in that sense, the God of a great body of men whom He has chosen, but not *my* God. But if I can look back and see my name in life’s fair book set down, then, indeed, He is my God in Election!

Furthermore, the Christian can call God His God from the fact of his *Justification*. A sinner can call God, God, but he must always put in an adjective and speak of God as an *angry* God, an *incensed* God, or an *offended* God. But the Christian can say, “*my* God,” without putting in any

adjective except it is a sweet one wherewith to extol Him, for now we, who were sometime afar off, are made near by the blood of Christ. We who were enemies to God by wicked works are His friends and, looking up to Him, we can say, “*my* God,” for He is my Friend, and I am His friend. Enoch could say, “my God,” for he walked with Him. Adam could not say, “my God,” when he hid himself beneath the trees of the garden. So that while I, a sinner, run from God, I cannot call Him mine. But when I have peace with God and am brought near to Him, by His Grace, then, indeed, is He my God and my Friend!

Again—He is the Believer’s God by *Adoption*, and in that the sinner has no part. I have heard people represent God as the Father of the whole universe. It surprises me that any reader of the Bible should so talk. Paul once quoted a heathen poet who said that we are His offspring. And it is true, in some sense, that we are, as having been created by Him. But in the high sense in which the term, “childhood,” is used in the Scripture to express the holy relationship of a regenerate child towards his Father—in that sense none can say, “Our father,” but those who have the, “Abba, Father,” printed on their hearts by the Spirit of Adoption. Well, by this Spirit of Adoption, God becomes my God, as He is not the God of others. The Christian has a special claim to God, because God is his Father, as He is not the Father of anyone else save his Brethren. Yes, Beloved, these three things are quite enough to show you that God is, in a special sense, the God of His own people. But I must leave that to your own thoughts, which will suggest 20 different ways in which God is especially the God of His own children, more than He is of the rest of His creatures. “God,” say the wicked, but, “*my* God,” say God’s children! If, then, God is so especially your God, let your clothing be according to your feeding. Be clothed with the Sun—put on the Lord Jesus! The king’s daughter is (and so let all the king’s sons, be) all glorious within. Let their clothing be of worked gold. Be clothed with humility, put on love, a hear of compassion, gentleness, meekness. Put on the garments of salvation! Let your company and conversation be according to your clothing. Live among the excellent, amongst the generation of the just. Get up to the general assembly and Church of the First-Born, to that innumerable company of angels and the spirits of the just men made perfect. Live in the courts of the great King, behold His face, wait at His Throne, bear His name, show forth His virtues! Set forth His praises, advance His honor, uphold His interest. Let vile persons and vile ways be condemned in your eyes—be of more noble spirits than to be companions with them! Regard not their societies, nor their scorns, their flatteries or their frowns. Rejoice not with their joys, fear not their fears, care not their care, feed not on their dainties—get up from among them to your country, your city,

where no unclean thing can enter or annoy! Live by faith, in the power of the Spirit, in the beauty of holiness, in the hope of the Gospel, in the joy of your God, in the magnificence and yet the humility of the children of the great King!

**II.** Now, for a moment, let us consider THE EXCEEDING PRECIOUSNESS OF HIS GREAT MERCY, “I will be their God.” I conceive that God Himself could say no more than that. I do not think if the Infinite were to stretch His powers and magnify His Grace by some stupendous promise which could outdo every other—I do not believe that it could exceed in glory this promise, “I will be their God.” Oh, Christian, do but consider what it is to have God to be your own! Consider what it is, compared with anything else—

**“Jacob’s portion is the Lord!  
What can Jacob more require?  
What can Heaven more afford —  
Or a creature more desire?”**

*Compare this portion with the lot of your fellow men!* Some of them have their portion in the field. They are rich and increased in goods and their yellow harvests are, even now, ripening in the sun. But what are harvests compared with your God, the God of Harvests? Or, what are granaries compared with Him who is your Husbandman and feeds you with the Bread of Heaven? Some have their portion in the city—their wealth is superabundant and in constant streams it flows to them until they become a very reservoir of gold! But what is gold compared with your God? You could not live on it—your spiritual life could not be sustained by it. Apply it to your aching head and would it afford you any ease? Put it on a troubled conscience—could your gold relive its pangs? Put it on your desponding heart and see if it could stop a solitary groan, or give you one less grief? But you have GOD—and in Him you have more than gold or riches ever could buy, more than heaps of brilliant ore could ever purchase for you! Some have their portion in this world, in that which most men love—applause and fame—but ask yourself, is not your God more to you than that? What if a thousand trumpets should blow your praises and if a myriad clarions should be loud with your applause? What would it all be to you if you had lost your God? Would this relieve the turmoil of a soul ill at ease with itself? Would this prepare you to pass the Jordan and to breast those stormy waves which, before long, must be forded by every man, when he is called from this world to lands unknown? Would a puff of wind serve you, then, or the clapping of the hands of your fellow creatures bless you on your dying bed? No, there are griefs, here, with which men cannot intermeddle—and there are griefs to come with which men cannot interfere to alleviate the pangs, pains, agonies and dying strife! But when you have this—“I will be your

God”—you have as much as all other men can have put together! How little we ought to estimate the treasures of this world, compared with God, when we consider that God frequently gives the most riches to the worst of His creatures! As Luther said, “God gives food to His children, and husks to His swine”—and who are the swine that get the husks? It is not often that God’s people get the riches of this world—and that does but prove that riches are little worth, otherwise God would give them to us! Abraham gave the sons of Keturah a portion and sent them away. Let me be Isaac and have my Father—and the world may take all the rest! Oh, Christian, ask for nothing in this world but that you may live on this and that you may die on this—“I will be their God. This exceeds all the world has to offer!

*But compare this with what you require, Christian.* What do you require? Is there not here all that you require? To make you happy, you wanted something that would satisfy you. And come, I ask you, is not this enough? Will not this fill your pitcher to its very brim, yes, till it runs over? If you can put this promise inside your cup, will you not be forced to say, with David, “My cup runs over. I have more than heart can wish”? When this is fulfilled, “I am your God,” let your cup be ever so empty of earthly things—suppose you have not one solitary drop of creature joy—yet is not this enough to fill it until your unsteady hand cannot hold the cup by reason of its fullness? I ask you if you are not complete when God is yours? Do you need anything but God? If you think you do, it were well for you to still need, for all you need, without God, is but to gratify your lust. Oh, Christian, is not this enough to satisfy you if all else should fail?

But you want more than quiet satisfaction, you sometimes desire rapturous delight. Come, Soul, is there not enough here to delight you? Put this promise to your lips—did you ever drink wine one-half as sweet as this, “I will be their God”? Did ever harp or violin sound half as sweetly as this, “I will be their God”? Not all the music blown from sweet instruments, or drawn from living strings could ever give such melody as this sweet promise, “I will be their God.” Oh, here is a very sea of bliss, a very ocean of delight! Come, bathe your spirit in it—you may swim, yes, to eternity—and never find a shore! You may dive to the very Infinite and never find the bottom. “*I will be their God.*” Oh, if this does not make your eyes sparkle, if this does not makes your feet dance for joy and your heart beat high with bliss, then, assuredly, your soul is not in a healthy state!

But then you want something more than present delights, something concerning which you may exercise hope. And what more do you ever hope to get than the fulfillment of this great promise, “I will be their



God"? Oh, Hope, you are a great-handed thing! You lay hold of mighty things which even Faith has not power to grasp. But though your hand may be large, this fills it, so that you can carry nothing else! I proclaim, before God, I have not a hope beyond this promise! "O," you say, "you have a hope of Heaven." Yes, I have a hope of Heaven, but this *is* Heaven—"I will be their God." What is Heaven, but to be with God, to dwell with Him, to realize that God is mine, and I am His? I say I have not a hope beyond that, there is not a promise beyond that—for all promises are couched in this, all hopes are included in this, "I will be their God." This is the masterpiece of all promises! It is the top stone of all the great and precious things which God has provided for His children, "I will be their God." If we could really grasp it. If it could be applied to our soul and we could understand it, we might clap our hands and say, "Oh, the glory! Oh, the glory! Oh, the glory of that promise!" It makes a Heaven below and it must make a Heaven above, for nothing else will be needed but that, "I will be their God."

**III.** Now, for a moment, dwell on the CERTAINTY OF THIS PROMISE. It does not say, "I *may* be their God," but "I *will* be their God." Nor does the text say, "Perhaps I shall be their God." No, it says, "I *will* be their God." There is a sinner who says he won't have God for His God. He will have God to be his Preserver, to take care of him and keep him from accidents. He does not object to having God to feed him, to give him his bread and water and raiment. Nor does he mind making God somewhat of a show thing, that he may take out on Sunday and bow before it—but he will not have God for his *God*—he will not take Him to be his All! He makes his belly his god, gold his god, the world his god. How, then, is this promise to be fulfilled? There is one of God's chosen people there. He does not know that he is chosen yet and he says he will not have God. How, then, is the promise to be carried out? "Oh," say some, "if the man won't have God, then, of course, God cannot get him." And we have heard it preached, and we read it, frequently, that salvation entirely depends upon man's will—that if man stands out and resists God's Holy Spirit, the creature can be the conqueror of the Creator, and finite power can overcome the Infinite! Frequently I take up a book and I read, "Oh, Sinner, be willing, for unless you are, God cannot save you!" And sometimes we are asked, "How is it that such an one is not saved?" And the answer is, "he is not willing to be. God strived with him, but he would not be saved." Yes, but suppose He had strived with him, as He did with those who *are* saved, would he have been saved, then? "No, he would have resisted." No, we answer—it is not in man's will, it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood—but of the power of God! And we never can entertain such an absurd idea as man can conquer Omnipotence, that the

might of man is greater than the Might of God! We believe, indeed, that certain usual influences of the Holy Spirit may be overcome. We believe that there are general operations of the Spirit in many men's hearts which are resisted and rejected, but the *effectual* working of the Holy Spirit with the determination to save cannot be resisted—unless you suppose God overcome by His creatures and the purpose of Deity frustrated by the will of man—which were to suppose something akin to blasphemy! Beloved, God has power to fulfill the promise, "I will be their God." "Oh," cries the sinner, "I will not have You for a God!" "Will you not?" He says and He gives him over to the hand of Moses! Moses takes him a little and applies the club of the Law, drags him to Sinai, where the mountain totters over his head, the lightning flashes and thunders bellow—and then the sinner cries—"O God, save me!" "Ah! I thought you would not have Me for a God?" "O Lord, You shall be my God," says the poor trembling sinner, "I have put away my ornaments from me. O Lord, what will You do to me? Save me! I will give myself to You. Oh, take me!" "Yes," says the Lord, "I knew it. I said that I will be their God and I have made you willing in the day of My Power." "I will be their God and they shall be My people."

**IV.** Now, lastly, I said we would conclude by **URGING YOU TO MAKE USE OF GOD**, if He is yours. It is strange that spiritual blessings are our only possessions that we do not employ! We get a great spiritual blessing and we let the rust get on it for many a day. There is the Mercy Seat, for instance. Ah, my Friends, if you had the cash box as full of riches as that Mercy Seat is, you would go often to it! As often as your necessities require! But you do not go to the Mercy Seat half as often as you need to go. Most precious things God has given to us, but we never overuse them. The truth is, they cannot be overused! We cannot wear a promise thread-bare. We can never burn out the Incense of Grace. We can never use up the Infinite treasures of God's loving kindness. But if the blessings God gives us are not used, perhaps God is the least used of all. Though He is our God, we apply ourselves less to Him than to any of His creatures, or any of His mercies, which He bestows upon us! Look at the poor heathen. They use their gods, though they are no gods. They put up a piece of wood or stone and call it, god—and how they use it! They need rain—the people assemble and ask for rain in the firm but foolish hope that their god can give it! There is a battle and their god is lifted up. He is brought out from the house, where he usually dwells, that he may go before them and lead them on to victory! But how seldom do *we* ask counsel at the hands of the Lord? How often do we go about our business without asking His guidance? In our troubles, how constantly do we strive to bear our burdens, instead of casting them upon the Lord, that

He may sustain us? And this is not because we may not, for the Lord seems to say, "I am yours, Soul, come and make use of Me as you will. You may freely come to My store, and the oftener, the better. Welcome!"

Have you not a God lying by you to no Purpose? Let not your God be as other gods, serving only for a show. Have not God in name, only. Since He allows you—having such a Friend—use Him daily. My God shall supply all your needs—never need while you have a God. Never fear or faint while you have a God—go to your treasure and take whatever you need. There is bread and clothes, and health and life, and all that you need. O Christian, learn the Divine skill to make God all things—to make bread of your God, and water, and health, and friends, and ease. He can supply you with all these! Or what is better, He can *be* all these—your food, your clothing, your Friend, your Life. All this He has said to you in this one word, "I am your God." And here you may say, as a Heaven-born saint once did, "I have no husband and yet I am no widow. My Maker is my Husband. I have no father or friend and yet I am neither fatherless nor friendless, my God is both my Father and my Friend. I have no child but is not He better to me than ten children? I have no house, but yet I have a home, I have made the Most High my habitation. I am left alone, but yet I am not alone, my God is good company for me. With Him I can walk. With Him I can take sweet counsel, find sweet repose. At my lying down, at my rising up, while I am in the house, or as I walk by the way, my God is always with me. With him I travel, I dwell, I lodge, I live and shall live forever."

Oh, child of God, let me urge you to make use of your God! Make use of Him in prayer. I beseech you, go to Him often, because He is *your* God! If He were another man's God, you might weary Him. But He is *your* God. If He were my God and not yours, you would have no right to approach Him, but He is *your* God! He has made Himself One to you, if we may use such an expression, (and we think we may). He has become the positive property of all His children, so that all He has and all He is, is theirs! O child, will you let your treasury lie idle, when you need it? Go! Go and draw from it by prayer—

***"To Him in every trouble flee,  
Your best, your only Friend."***

Fly to Him, tell Him all your needs! Use Him constantly by faith, at all times. Oh, I beseech you, if some dark Providence has come over you, use your God as a sun, for He is a Sun! If some strong enemy has come out against you, use your God for a shield, for He is a Shield to protect you! If you have lost your way in the mazes of life, use Him as a Guide, for the great Jehovah will direct you! If you are in storms, use Him for the God who stills the raging of the sea and says unto the waves, "Be

still.” If you are a poor thing, knowing not which way to turn, use Him for a Shepherd, for the Lord is your Shepherd, and you shall not want! Whatever you are, wherever you are, remember God is just what you need and He is just where you need. I beseech you, then, make use of your God! Do not forget Him in your trouble, but flee to Him in the midst of your distresses, and cry—

***“When all created streams are dried  
Your fullness is the same!  
May I with this be satisfied,  
And glory in Your name!  
No good in creatures can be found  
But may be found in Thee!  
I will have all things, and abound,  
While God is God to me!”***

Lastly, Christian, let me urge you again to use God to be your delight this day. If you have trial, or if you are free from it, I beseech you, make God your delight. Go from this House of Prayer and be happy this day in the Lord. Remember it is a commandment, “Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say, rejoice.” Do not be content to be moderately happy—seek to soar to the heights of bliss and to enjoy a Heaven below! Get near to God and you will get near to Heaven! It is not as it is with the sun, here—the higher you go, the colder you find it—because on the mountain there is nothing to reflect the rays of the sun. But with God, the nearer you go to Him, the brighter He will shine upon you and when there are no other creatures to reflect His goodness, His light will be all the brighter! Go to God continually, importunately, confidently! “Delight yourself, also, in the Lord and He shall bring it to pass.” Commit your way unto the Lord, and He shall “guide you by His counsel and afterwards receive you to Glory.”

Here is the first thing of the Covenant of Grace. The second is like unto it. We will consider that another Sabbath. And now may God dismiss you with His blessing. Amen.

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

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

# **KNOWING THE LORD THROUGH PARDONED SIN NO. 2006**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 29, 1888,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

***“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.”  
Jeremiah 31:34.***

TRUE knowledge of God is a Covenant blessing. To know Jehovah as the only living and true God, to know Him personally and intimately, so as to say with David, “You are my God”—this is one of the choice blessings of the Covenant of Grace which grace bestows upon all the chosen. In this prophecy Jehovah declares that He will yet give this knowledge to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. And this is our hope for the long-wandering seed of Abraham, whom He will yet restore and save.

If we regard the passage before us as instructive in its order, the knowledge of God follows closely upon the application of the Law to the heart. Read, “After those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts. And will be their God and they shall be My people . . . and they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord.” The work of grace usually begins, so far as we can perceive it, by the Holy Spirit’s bringing the Law into contact with the inner man. The Law outside of a man is forgotten. He may profess a reverence for it but it does not affect his desires and thoughts.

But when the Holy Spirit begins to put the Law into the inward parts, the immediate result is the discovery of our shortcomings and transgressions. The more the man’s heart sees the perfect holiness of the Law of God the more he perceives his own unholiness and impurity. He sets his own conduct in contrast with the Divine righteousness and he is overwhelmed with shame, sorrow and dismay. He feels that if God should mark iniquities he could not stand in His presence—more—that if the Lord at once condemned him, He would be just. Law-work is grace-work in its darker dress. It is the axe which rough-hews the timber which grace goes on to fashion and smooth.

By the operation of the Law upon the conscience, convincing the man of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, the Holy Spirit works towards the transforming of the heart. He takes away the stone out of it and makes it to be a fleshy, tender, sensitive thing. Then with His own finger

He writes the Divine Law upon the mind and the affections so that the Divine commands become the center of the man's life and the governing force of his action. The man now loves that Law which before he, at his very best, only feared—it becomes his will to do the will of God. By a miracle of Divine Grace his nature is changed so that its tendencies, which were all towards evil are corrected by new tendencies which are all towards good.

Now is the Law of God indeed glorious, for it rules by love. It was terrible when written on those tablets of stone which Moses dashed to pieces. But its radiance is like that of a pearl most precious when it gently influences our manhood from the central throne of the heart. It is now written on a tablet which will endure throughout eternity, for it is engraved upon an immortal spirit. As the Law is written on the heart, a manifestation is made of God Himself. The man is made to know himself, to know God's Law and thus he is led to know the Lord. Now he acquaints himself with God and is at peace.

Of this gracious knowledge of the Lord I am going to speak this morning. This is to be our first head—the one essential knowledge—"They all shall know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord." The second head equally arises out of the text—it is the one grand means of obtaining this essential knowledge. The text tells us how this knowledge is imparted by the Lord—"For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." When we receive pardon from the hands of God, then we know Him, indeed. For, as Zacharias said in his song, our Lord Jesus has come "to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins."

**I.** To begin with, then, we have here, first of all, THE ONE ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE. It is a great Truth of God that, "This is life eternal, to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." To know God is to live in the light. This knowledge brings with it trust, peace, love, holiness and acceptance. Do not read this passage as some do and tear it up by its roots and then use it as if it were a prophecy of the universal spread of religion. Do not dream of a day when we shall not need to teach our brother and our neighbor the great Truths of our holy faith—at any rate, the text before us says nothing of the kind.

This prophecy is to be read as it stands and in its own connection. In the first place, as we have already said, it relates to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. At the present time these have forgotten the Lord as to a true spiritual worship of Him. For they have rejected the Messiah, in whose face God's glory is seen—this nation is to be brought back to its best estate. Both portions of it shall be converted and shall come under a new Covenant of a very different tenor from that which their fathers so wantonly broke. The Lord will gather the remnant of Israel under a Covenant of Grace by which He will work in them those things which under the old Covenant He justly required of them.

Under this Covenant of Grace they are to have their hearts inscribed with His Law. Jehovah is to be their God and they are to be His people. Then shall they in very deed know the Lord as their fathers knew Him in the days of Elijah when the fire fell from Heaven and they cried, "Jehovah, He is the God. Jehovah, He is the God." Whatever else these converts shall *not* know, they *shall know* Jehovah, "from the least of them unto the greatest of them."

Refer the passage to the spiritual Israel, as you justly may and you learn that when God deals with men in a way of Divine Grace and impresses obedience upon their nature, then they all know Him—from the least of them unto the greatest of them. The universality of the text extends to all those who come under the New Covenant and are renewed in heart. These, without exception, know the Lord and there is no need that they be instructed upon that important point. These people know the Lord and never can forget Him—henceforth they are no more strangers to Him but sojourners with Him.

Let us consider this knowledge, that we may see what it is. And to begin with, it is emphatically the knowledge of God—"They shall all know Me." They may not know everything about God. Who could? Who knows the Lord in that sense but the Lord Himself? Only the infinite can comprehend the infinite. The intellectual comprehension of the attributes of God is beyond us. How, then, could we grasp His essence? The regenerate, however, know the Lord, though they do not and cannot understand His incomprehensible glories. They may not know a great many things which they would like to know—critical, scientific, historical, theological, spiritual and eternal—but these matters are not spoken of in this place. One form of knowledge is mentioned, and only one—"They shall all *know Me*, says Jehovah."

Observe that the Prophet speaks not of knowing *facts* about God, nor *truths* as to what God is, or has done, or will do—it is knowing God Himself. Do you not perceive the difference? I may know and I do know a great deal about a certain renowned person—say, if you please, Prince Bismarck. I have read his biography and I think I have some sort of an idea of his personal character—thus I know something about him. But if you were to ask me, "Do you know him?" I should at once answer, "No, I have not even seen him, I have never spoken with him, nor written to him, nor held any other communication with him. And therefore I cannot say that I know him."

Now, if this solemn question were passed round these pews—"Do you know God?"—how would you answer it? Many would reply, "We have read the Scriptures and so we know the attributes of God and we remember with great reverence all that God has done and promised to do—but still we cannot say that we *know* Him. Can anyone say as much as that?" Let me break up the question—Have you ever spoken with God? Did He ever speak with you? Believers can say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Fa-

ther.” Can you say that? Were you ever conscious of the Presence of God? Has He ever manifested Himself to you in any special way?

Alas, many a very knowing man must honestly confess that he does not know the Lord in the sense contained in my questions. Even among professing Christians this may be sadly true. Even as Paul said to the Corinthians—“Awake to righteousness and sin not. For some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.” The knowledge here spoken of is to know the Lord Himself—not to know that there is a God and that Jehovah, alone, is God and that He is to be had in reverence of them that are round about Him. But to *know* Him. We have such a tendency to run away from the Personality of God. Take an instance—godly people say, “I know *in* whom I have believed.” But this is not what Paul said. He declared, “I know whom I have believed.” He knew the Person He trusted. He was personally acquainted with Jesus Christ.

This is true godliness—personal acquaintance with a personal God. This is a grand support of faith. One said to a Christian lady that he did not believe in the Scriptures and she replied that she believed in them and delighted to read them. When asked her reason, she replied, “Perhaps it is because I know the Author.” Personal acquaintance with God turns faith into assurance. The knowledge of God is the basis of a faith of the surest and sweetest kind—we know and have believed the love which God has towards us. Knowing God, we believe in the Truth of His Words, the justice of His sentences, the goodness of His acts, the wisdom of His purposes—yes—and the love of His chastisements.

When a renewed heart truly knows God, it has no further quarrel with Him, or with anything that He does or says. The cry is, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems Him good.” Thus to know God is eternal life. Let us return to the question—Do we know the Lord? Hearken, my Hearers. Has the Lord ever been so near you as to make you say, “How dreadful is this place”? Did your flesh ever tremble and your lips quiver at His voice? Do you know the feeling which overcame the Prophet Habakkuk when he trembled in himself? Then I know that you are sure, beyond all other certainty of your previous life, that God is and that He deals with men. Do you know the Lord in this way? I put this question to each one.

Have you ever spoken to Him? Is it your habit to open your heart to Him? Do you tell Him all your secrets? I mean by this nothing bordering on fanaticism or superstition. But in sober earnestness, I ask—Is God real to you? Is He as real to you as she that lies in your bosom, or as the friend who walks with you by the way? Is the invisible God as real to you as any person that you can see, as much an actual fact as any substance which you can feel? Has the Lord ever spoken to your soul? I will not put any special question about the medium of that speech. It may be He has spoken through this Book, or through His minister, or by “a still small voice” within your soul—but has the Eternal One ever spoken with you?

O my Hearers, are you on speaking terms with your God? If not, you cannot be said to know Him. And if you do not know Him, you are not



among the renewed in heart. For of them the Lord says in this Scripture, "They shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."

Note, dear Friends, in the next place, that it is a *personal* knowledge. Each renewed person knows the Lord for himself. You cannot know God except for yourself. If I am asked whether I know such a person, it would be idle to answer, "Well, my brother knows him." That would be an admission that I did not myself know him. If the question were repeated, "Do *you* know him?" it would be folly to reply, "Well, I have a cousin who sometimes dines with him." That is not the question. So with regard to God. No second-hand knowledge can be admitted here. You cannot know God through other people.

And why should you wish to do so? Is not personal knowledge the most to be desired? Did not Job rejoice that when he should rise from the dead he should behold his Redeemer? And this was the essence of his joy—"Whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another." He would not have wished to see his Redeemer with another's eyes, nor that the vision should be his only by proxy. It is for our own lips to drink at the fountainhead of love and for our own eyes to look unto the Lord. No imaginary reception of grace by a sponsor can save, or even satisfy. You cannot see God with another man's eyes. You cannot know God through another man's knowledge. O my Hearers, you must *yourselves* be born again! You must *yourselves* be made pure in heart, or you cannot see God. Personal religion and individual knowledge of God are indispensable. Come, my Hearer, what have you to say to this?

Next, this knowledge is one which is worked in us by the Spirit of the Lord. It is the duty of every Christian man to say to his neighbor and to his brother, "Know the Lord." It is the instinct of a new-born child of God to try and convey what he knows. God uses this effort as His instrumentality for saving men. But the man who really knows the Lord does not know Him solely by such instruction. This may be the means used but the knowledge obtained comes from a higher source than brother or neighbor.

All Zion's children are taught of the Lord. They know God by His revealing Himself to them. You may know what the preacher can tell you and yet you may know nothing aright. You may know what this Book can tell you and yet if the Holy Spirit has not quickened you to perceive the living Truth within the Book, you know nothing truly. We may stand and preach, dear Friends, until our tongues are worn away and this inspired page may lie open before you until the ink is blanced and yet you, Hearers and Readers, may never know the Lord. Yes, I am sure you never will unless the Spirit shall show Him unto you.

You cannot know a man by hearing and reading of him—you must deal with himself. God, through Himself, must each one of you know. There is no other way of truly knowing Him. When Peter confessed Christ, you remember how the Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you." You may know a great deal intellectually by the teaching of men. But heart-knowledge—the knowl-

edge which is peculiar to God's elect—you can never receive except by the teaching of the Lord. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "He shall teach you all things." Is not that a fulfillment of the old promise, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord"? Those whom God teaches are taught, indeed. But neither nature, nor art, nor the will of man can supply the place of this heavenly instruction.

Beloved, true Believers know God because *God* has revealed Himself to them. Let me assure you the receivers of this personal teaching cannot be bamboozled by the doubts and denials of men. False prophets would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. But it is not possible that the elect should be deceived. For they have internal evidence which carnal reason cannot shake. They commune with the Most High God and the secret of the Lord is with them and consequently their hearts are fixed. What we have heard and seen, we testify—and if men receive not our witness it is none the less sure to our own hearts.

It is not possible for our faith to be destroyed, if it is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit. For that which God does shall be forever. The faith your mother gave you, your stepmother may take away from you. The religion which you inherited from your father may be sold off with the old furniture of the house—that which man gives, man may take away. But that which the Holy Spirit implants in us, all the devils in Hell cannot pluck up. It is not possible for all the powers of darkness to erase the inscription of the Spirit of God upon that heart which He has turned into flesh. Knowledge given by the Spirit is clear, definite, personal, assured, positive, and therefore, precious. We grow more and more persuaded as our experience ripens.

The Truth of God which has been burned into us as with a red hot iron by the operations of the Spirit of God becomes a vital portion of ourselves. Note carefully that this knowledge of God becomes manifest knowledge. It is so manifest that the most earnest workers who desire the conversion of their fellowmen no longer say to such a man, "Know the Lord"—for they perceive most clearly that he already possesses that knowledge—so as to be beyond the need of instruction upon that point.

There are many Truths of God, beloved Brethren, which I feel always bound to teach to you so long as I am the pastor of this flock. But if I had a company gathered here only of regenerated men and women, I should not think of saying to you, "Know the Lord." For I should be sure that you all knew Him, from the least even to the greatest. We assume the presence of this knowledge when we preach to God's people—we take it for granted that they know the Lord, and therefore, we do not again lay this foundation. A godly man's life is such that we perceive that he knows the Lord.

The absence of this becomes equally clear in many of the ungodly. When men commit a crime, the indictment often runs, "not having the fear of God before his eyes." You can tell when a man has not the fear of God before his eyes and you can tell when a man has that fear of God. Brethren, if you watch him and especially if you live with him, you will

perceive when a person has a knowledge of God. A mighty something operates upon him, checking or stimulating, cheering or calming him. Hear him as he wrestles in prayer. Stand outside the door and you will soon perceive that an invisible One is with him. This unseen Somebody is Everybody to this man and you can see it.

Mark him when he gets into trade. He might take an unfair advantage. But he scorns it. Does he not want money? Yes, badly. But he has respect to One whom others cannot see. By a word of falsehood he might profit largely. He will not speak it. Why? "So did not I, because of the fear of the Lord." All who have been renewed in spirit and have had God's Law written upon the fleshy tablets of their heart manifest to a greater or less degree that they know the Lord—and therefore their Brethren perceive it and cease to teach them what they are sure they know.

Next, this knowledge of God is universal among the regenerate. It is not universal among the sons of Adam, for multitudes know not God and have no dealings with Him! But all those who are under the Covenant of Grace know the Lord. Brethren, it would be a doubtful child that did not know its own father. All the boys and girls at home differ in knowledge. The big boy is going to the university soon and the eldest girl has taken a degree at the Oxford Examination. But yonder little child who does not know his letters yet, still knows his father, does he not?

Oh, how glad he is when Father comes home in the evening! Yes and God's children know their Father. Moreover, we all know the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. Whatever else I do not know, I can say—

***"Jesus, my God, I know His name;  
His name is all my trust"***

We know Jesus Himself and dwell in Him! We also know the Spirit of God. He has opened our eyes. He is our Comforter. He it is that brings us near to God. Thus we know, personally, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is no exception to this rule in all the family of love. The Prophet says they shall all know Him, from the least to the greatest. That is to say, from the new-born Believer up to the full-grown saint—they all know the Lord.

The descriptions given may relate to their littleness or greatness in grace. Or they may refer to their littleness or greatness in ability, position, or usefulness. But they all know the Lord. The regenerate man with one talent knows the Lord. The man with ten talents boasts not of them but rejoices that he knows the Lord. This is the distinguishing mark of the regenerate—that *they know the Lord*. Every grace that the Spirit has worked in them shows this. Faith is the special mark of God's people. But how shall they believe in Him whom they do not know? "They that know Your name will put their trust in You"—thus their knowledge of God is the basis of their faith in Him.

All God's people love Him supremely. But we cannot love a God whom we do not know. In proportion as our knowledge increases towards God, our love to Him burns more and more brightly. God is our hope, our con-

fidence, our expectation—but we can have no hope in an unknown God. The knowledge of God lies at the bottom of every virtue and grace. The Lord God is our Friend. We hold high conversation with Him every day. We walk with Him. We delight in Him. He is our exceeding joy. This, in a large degree, is true of all those with whom the grace of God has dealt to bring them under His Covenant and to give them new hearts and right spirits—they all know the Lord from the least even unto the greatest.

**II.** And this leads me to the second point, whereon I ask your earnest attention—THE ONE GRAND MEANS OF OBTAINING THIS KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. Here it is—“For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” Do you get the idea? The clearest knowledge of God comes out of *pardoned sin*. The most distinct, vivid, assured knowledge of Jehovah comes to us when our iniquity is blotted out and our sin is covered.

Just think a little. Without the pardon of sin it is not possible for us to know the Lord. We run away from Him. We do not want to know Him. Like father Adam we hide away among the trees of the garden. We do not desire to see our Maker, for we have offended Him. The thought of God is distasteful to every guilty man. It would be good news to him if he could be informed, on sure authority, that there was no God at all. He cannot know God, because his whole heart and mind and spirit are in such a state that he is incapable of knowing and appreciating the Holy One of Israel. Darkness covers the mind because sin has blinded the soul to all that is best and holy. The lover of sin does not know God and does not *want* to know Him.

While sin lies at the door, there is a difficulty on God’s part, too. How can He admit into an intimate knowledge of Himself the guilty man, as long as he is enamored of evil? Shall the great king entertain rebels? Shall two walk together, except they be agreed? “God is angry with the wicked every day.” He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Hence the guilty man is—by reason of his own impurity of nature and by reason of the holy nature of God—shut out from all knowledge of God.

Beyond this, an awful dread comes over the guilty mind, even when it begins to be awakened. Conscience testifies that God must punish sin. It matters not what controversy may be raised over that question—conscience, which makes cowards of us all—assures us that sin cannot go unpunished. I have heard a great many arguments about the future of the impenitent but I am sure of this—that God has ingrained it in our nature to believe that He will not spare the guilty. Down deep in the soul of the most hardened unbeliever there is that conviction. You have only to let him lie long enough on a sickbed and gaze into eternity and he is forced to confess it—whether he likes to do so or not.

Now, while that dread is on a man he does not want to know God and he even becomes incapable of knowing Him. But as the prodigal best knew his father when he had been received in love, so does man best know God when his sin is put away. When sin is forgiven, communion is

commenced—sin is the great stone which lies at the door, and when this is rolled away, we enter in and see God. Beloved, we now speak of a matter which we have proved by experience—in the pardon of sin there is made to the pardoned man a clear and unmistakable revelation of God to his own soul. I venture to say that there is a clearer revelation of God to the individual in the forgiveness of his sin than can be found anywhere else.

God is to be seen in nature. Who among us would wish to question it? Walk abroad and look around you and above you and behold your God! But while men are under the dominion of sin, nature does not reveal God to them. Their eyes are blinded and they will not perceive Him. The most eminent students of nature have some of them remained without the discovery of a God. The same is true of Providence. God comes very close to many men by preserving their lives from imminent peril, or by providing them with things necessary in the moment of great need.

And yet we have known men living in the center of wondrous Providences and they have only thought themselves lucky fellows—or clever persons and so have traced God's mercy to chance or self. And let me go a little further. The revelation which God has made in this Holy Book—though it is an eminently clear and heavenly revelation—does not bring the personal assurance to men which comes by pardon of sin. Many have read the Book from their childhood and know large portions of it by heart and yet they have never seen God in His own Word.

But let me tell you—if you have ever felt the guilt and burden of sin and God has come to you and brought you to the Savior's feet—and you have looked up and seen the great Sacrifice and put your trust in Him and the Spirit has borne witness with your spirit that your sins and your iniquities have been forgiven you—*then* you know the Lord with emphasis and beyond all doubt. In such a discovery of the Godhead there is a joyful conviction, an absolute certainty, a more than mathematical demonstration. The knowledge of God received by a distinct sense of pardoned sin is more certain than knowledge derived by the use of the senses in things pertaining to this life.

This personal manifestation has about it a singular glory of overwhelming self-evidence. Did you ever notice, when reading the Scripture, how sometimes God makes the pardon of sin the proof of His Deity? In the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah you will see how God, through the Prophet, laughs at the false gods. He makes sport of the wooden deities. "The smith with the tongs both works in the coals and fashions it with hammers and works it with the strength of his arms. The carpenter stretches out his rule—he marks it out with a line." All this is sacred sarcasm against the false gods. But when Jehovah comes to prove that He is the true God, what does He say?

Read verse 22 of that same chapter—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and as a cloud your sins—return unto Me; for I have redeemed you." Here He does not quote the creation of the heavens

and the earth, nor the working of miracles of power. But to a sinful people He makes this the master proof—“*I have blotted out your sins.*” Did any of the gods of the heathen forgive sins? These things that are made of carved work and gilt by the carpenter and the goldsmith—did they ever blot out iniquity? Did they ever pretend to do so? Jehovah’s Godhead is proved by His forgiveness of sin. And it is so proved to all who receive that pardon.

Look again and see how God calls men to Himself to receive salvation because He is God. See Isaiah 45:22—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else.” He alone is God, and therefore they are bid to look to Him for salvation. As He proved His *Godhead by salvation*, so now He proves *salvation by His Godhead*. The two are bound up in one bundle. Let the burdened sinner see how they are joined together.

In the thirty-third chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, beginning in verse 11, let me read to you concerning Manasseh, who had shed innocent blood very much—“Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns and bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.” When Jehovah pardoned him, *then* the great sinner knew that Jehovah was God. There is no evidence like it. Infinite mercy personally received is a demonstration of the Godhead.

The Church of God, when she was in her praiseful frame of mind and full of joy—what do you think was her song? Micah 7:18-19 gives it to us—“Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us. He will subdue our iniquities. And You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” Hallelujah! Who is a God like unto You? We wonder more at the God of pardons than at the God of thunders. There is a more vivid apprehension of the Godhead in obtaining mercy than in beholding works of power.

Beloved, you must bear with me a minute or two while I speak upon this delightful theme. I should just like a week in which to preach from this text and then I should need another month. How a man sees God when he comes to know in his own soul the fullness of pardon intended by this matchless Word, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”! Can this be so? Does the Lord make a clean sweep of all my sins? Can it be that the Lord has cast them all behind His back? Has He blotted out the record which accused me? Has He cast my sin into the depths of the sea?

Hallelujah! He is a God indeed. This is a God-like act. O Jehovah! Who is like unto You? When I know my sins to be forgiven, I need no one to say to me, “Know the Lord”—the fullness of His pardon has made Him known. Mark, also, how freely out of His mere love, the Lord forgives and herein displays His Godhead! No payment on our part, of suffering or service, is required. The Lord pardons for His own name’s sake. He blots out sin because He delights in mercy. This is like a God. I know Him, I rejoice in Him, since He has so freely pardoned me.

When the soul comes to think of the method of mercy, it has a further knowledge of God. There is a great point in this. Conscience inquires—“If God forgives me, can He do it justly? Can He forgive consistently with His Character and His position as the great moral Governor?” We see that He has set forth a Propitiation—that He has provided a great Sacrifice by which He can be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes. Herein is wisdom. We spell over the Revelation, even the word Substitution—Jesus was made a curse for us. Then we cry out, “Oh, the wisdom of God!”

In the extraordinary plan of salvation by grace through Christ Jesus all the Divine attributes are set in a glorious light and God is made known as never before. Oh, the splendor of redeeming love! Does not every soul that knows the mystery of the Cross know the Lord? Jesus says, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father.”

Brethren, do not forget the great love which, when the plan was struck out, provided the august Person for the working out of that plan! “He spared not His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us all.” When I think that the God who was offended by sin was Himself the Sufferer on its account, my thoughts of God are raised far above any height to which the interesting facts of science have elevated them. As I see God in nature, I reverence Him. As I see him in Providence, I adore Him. As I see Him in Christ Jesus, pardoning my sin, I *know* Him.

If you just turn my text over a little, you will perceive another Truth—“I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” To my mind, the immutability of Divine pardon is one of the most brilliant facets of the diamond. Some think that God forgives but afterwards punishes—that you may be justified today but condemned tomorrow. Such is not the teaching of our text. God does not play fast and loose with pardon in that fashion. “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” He will not recollect one of them. They are gone clean out of the Divine memory.

Of course it is a figure of speech—since in a certain sense God cannot forget. But as He says that He will not remember, I am content to believe Him. The Lord looks upon the forgiven one as if he had never sinned. Our debts are so fully paid by our Lord Jesus that there is not an account upon the file of omniscience against any pardoned one. God Himself cannot recall His people’s sin. He vows that He will remember it no more. Remember how the Lord has said, “In those days and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none.

And the sins of Judah and they shall not be found—for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”

If you know this irreversible pardon, my Brethren, you know the Lord better than you will ever know Him through gazing at the stars, or cutting through the rocks to the center of the globe. This, to you, is a manifestation of God of a more powerful and effectual sort than all that you will ever read of or hear of from your fellowmen. If the Lord God this morning not only permits me to speak to you but if He Himself by His own Spirit applies the pardoning blood of Jesus to you so that you enjoy a sense of reconciliation—this will put all Gospel matters beyond the shadow of a doubt.

If you are made by the Spirit to know that you are accepted in the Beloved—if a sense of that acceptance comes streaming into your soul just as yonder sunshine pours through that window, you will say to yourself, I do indeed *know* the Lord. That heavenly joy, that “peace of God” will bring to you a full assurance which nothing can disturb. Arguments, words, reasons—these are all the froth of the pot. But real contact with God and conscious enjoyment of the peace-giving power of the Holy Spirit—these are solid food for souls. If God deals with you, my Brother and you *know* Him, this is sure knowledge.

Neither time with its lapse, nor suffering with its fret, nor doubt with its venom, nor death with its terrors can take from you that certainty of faith which comes with the pardon of sin. If you do not know the Lord by His personal manifestation of Himself in pardoning your sin, I do not wonder that you are easily turned about by every wind of doctrine. But if you do know the Lord by His appearing to you in Divine Grace, you are beyond the short-range guns of the enemy. Our memories must fail us and our senses must leave us before we can doubt the glorious Godhead of our Jehovah.

We may be beaten in argument by the sophistries of the new theologians. But we cling to the facts of our experience and cannot be parted from them. When the God of the Old Testament is decried, we glory in Him, saying, “He has pardoned my sin and thus He has proved Himself to be God, indeed.” Our opponents may turn round and say, “That is no argument to us.” We only reply, “We dare say it is not. But it is argument enough for us and we must leave you to judge for yourselves. If you will not believe our testimony, we are clear.”

May the Lord renew to our souls, from day to day, our sense of pardoned sin and we shall be happily established in His faith and fear, whatever others may have to say. Oh, how I desire that all my hearers may seek and find this sin-pardoning God in Christ Jesus! Look to your Savior hanging on the tree, bearing the curse that you might be blessed. Look, I say and you also shall *know* the Lord. The Lord help you—Amen and amen.



# SEALED AND OPEN EVIDENCES NO. 2297

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1893.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Take these deeds, this deed of the purchase, which is sealed, and this deed which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days.”  
Jeremiah 32:14.***

THE discourse of this evening is suggested by the transaction of Jeremiah with his uncle's son in the purchase of a field at Anathoth which he conducted in a business-like and legal way. I will begin with just a few remarks upon the transaction itself.

Jeremiah was called to forego the comforts of the present for the blessings of the future. He was a poor man and he was shut up in prison. A little money must have been a very great thing to him at such a time—even food could not be purchased during the siege except at fabulous prices—and his allowance was very small. Yet he paid down 17 shekels of silver—not a great sum in itself, but very great to him in such circumstances—to buy the field which, as I said in the exposition, he could not go and see, for he was a prisoner, and which he could not have reached even if he had been free, for it was in the hand of the Chaldeans and laid desolate by the invading army. He was commanded by the Lord to buy a field which, speaking after the manner of men, was on the moon! It was what we call, “an estate in Spain,” which Jeremiah could not possibly visit, but because he had God's orders to buy it, he did buy it and he paid the purchase money right cheerfully.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, this is exactly what we have to do—we have to pawn the present for the future! We must be satisfied to give up *anything* which Christ may require of us for the sake of that which is yet to come. Our inheritance is not on this side of Jordan. Our joy is yet to be revealed. I grant you that we have much thrown in, for the Lord is a good Paymaster, but on the road to Heaven He gives us only our spending money. Our inheritance is in the land of the hereafter, in the regions of the blessed—and we must not look for it here—*this is not our rest!* It is worth while to give up a great deal that belongs to the present for the eternal inheritance which is yet to be ours. “There remains a rest to the people of God.” And if ever it should come to this, that your present comfort, yes, and your present *life*, must be given up for the sake of the land of promise and the Covenant heritage, make no delay. Do not hesitate for a moment, but yield everything up, that the greater blessings of the future may be assuredly yours.

My second remark is that, when a man acts by faith, he ought still to act in a clear, business-like way. We who believe in God are no fools.

Some may think that we are; but they would not find us to be so if they had to deal with us in matters requiring judgment and consideration. Jeremiah buys the field in the presence of witnesses, weighs the money, and has the purchase deed drawn up, and the counterpart of the deed, all after a legal manner, just as Abraham did when he bought the field of Machpelah from the sons of Heth. That passage in Genesis is an ancient legal document, containing just such words as you would find in an Oriental purchase deed of the present day. The man of God counts things, which to others are dreams, as realities, and he treats them as such.

Faith is sanctified commonsense. It believes in God—is that stupidity? It believes in God's promises—is that foolishness? It believes that God will keep His Word—is that a folly? If so, we purpose to be more foolish, still, but, knowing that it is not folly, but truest wisdom, we act in this case as we act in other matters and we make sure as far as we can. "Fast bind, fast find," says our proverb and, therefore, we exercise in the things of God that discretion and prudence which we use in the things of men. Faith is not folly—and the Believer must not, *in anything*, act like a fool!

Perhaps you might wonder why Jeremiah, whose business it was to prophesy, should be set to buy land? There is nothing like division of labor. Let the politician attend to politics, let the keeper of a theater supply amusement to the people who want it—and let the Christian minister keep to his preaching. Yes, but Jeremiah was commanded *by God* to do this because he was really *preaching* by what he did! The preacher must believe in what he preaches and it may be that he will be called to do something which will be, to his people, the best possible proof that he really *does* believe it. Jeremiah believes that the city, though it was to be destroyed, would afterwards be rebuilt and that land would be valuable, trade would be restored and agriculture would again flourish. He has *said* this—he has now to *prove* it. The few shekels that he has, he must invest in a bit of land which is worth nothing, today, but may be worth a good deal, if not to himself, yet to his heirs. He must buy the field to prove his sincerity!

Oh, Beloved, if we are called to preach, we must believe what we preach, or else we had better give it up! "I believed, therefore have I spoken," is a text which should be written over every minister's study door, and over his pulpit, too. What have we to say if we have a doubt about it? How can we move others if we have no fulcrum for our lever, if we are not, ourselves, sure and certain? If there is no element of dogmatism in our message because of our confidence concerning what we have to deliver, in God's name, let us go to bed and hold our tongues until we believe it! The monk that shook the world owed his power, under God, to the fact that the world could not shake him! Martin Luther believed with an unshakable faith and, therefore, he had power over others. God called Jeremiah to effect the purchase of this little estate to prove to the people that he believed what he preached!

And now, leaving Jeremiah, I am going to make a parable, not to bring out what the text teaches, but to use it parable-wise. When he bought this piece of land, it was transferred to him by two documents. The first was a purchase deed, drawn up and signed by witnesses and then sealed up,

not to be opened, anymore, unless required to settle a dispute. That was his real purchase or title deed. Then there was a counterpart of this transfer made and signed by witnesses. This was not rolled up and it was not sealed—but it was left open so that Jeremiah might refer to it and that, when desired, the open deed might be read and examined by others. It is not at all a bad custom and one which we, to a large extent, follow, that there should be two deeds of transfer, the one to be kept and laid up by itself, only to be opened in case of litigation, or absolute necessity—the other being the certified *copy*—the open deed or evidence for daily use if anybody wished to examine it and see how the property had been transferred.

Now, with regard to our redemption, our inheritance which Christ has bought for us at an immense price, we, too, have two sets of deeds or evidences. The one is sealed up from all eyes but our own. In part, too, I might say that it is sealed up from our own eyes. The other, the counterpart of that, equally valid, is open to ourselves and open to others. So I shall talk, first, about *the sealed evidences of our faith*. And, secondly, about *the open evidences of our faith*. And, then, thirdly, about *the use of these two sets of evidences*. May the Holy Spirit make us wise to speak things to edification and to heart searching, as He, alone, can!

**I.** First, then, I want you to think a little OF THE SEALED EVIDENCES OF OUR FAITH, the evidences which are sealed, at least in a measure, from our fellow men.

And, first, I would say, among the sealed evidences is this—*the Word of the Lord has come to us with power*. If anyone asked himself, “Have I a right to the Covenant of Grace and to the ‘all things’ which are ours if we are in that Covenant? Have I a right to the purchased possession? Have I a right to the Lord Jesus Christ and all that comes to Believers in Him?” In part, the answer must be, “Has the Word of the Lord come to you with power, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God?” Some of my hearers will not understand what I am now saying. I noticed, in one of the daily papers, this remark about a sermon I preached a few Sunday mornings ago, “Mr. Spurgeon will admit that it needed an education to understand him.” Yes, I do admit it. And I admit another thing, namely, that very many newspaper writers have not that education and that, therefore, they cannot understand what we preach.

It is with our preaching of such things as it was with Dr. Hawker, when preaching at Plymouth. One of his members brought down from London a great scientist and he thought that the learned man would like to hear Dr. Hawker, the eminent preacher of the Gospel. The next morning, this member said to the doctor, “I brought So-and-So to hear you yesterday.” “Did you?” “Yes. And what do you think he said, Dr. Hawker? He said that he did not understand a sentence of what you were talking about.” “Did he?” said Dr. Hawker, “Well, there were lots of old women in the aisles who understood it all.” They had been taught of God and the other person had not!

Now, only he who has felt it will know what I mean by this expression—the Word of God has come with power to our soul! There is a mystic influence, a Divine unction which really goes with the Word of God, in many

cases, so that it enters the heart, sheds a radiance upon the understanding, pours a flood of delightful peace and joy upon the soul—and affects the whole mental and spiritual being in a way which nothing else does! You cannot explain this to others! Do you know it yourself? If so, that will be to you the *sealed evidence or deed* that the eternal heritage is yours! The Lord has *given* you the *spiritual* perception of these things. You had no such faculty when He gave it to you, but He took you from being carnal, in which state you could not understand *spiritual* things, and he made you spiritual! And now His spiritual Truth has come with the demonstration of the Spirit to your heart and you now know, by a witness which you cannot communicate to anybody but yourself, that these things are so and that you have a part in them!

The next one of these sealed evidences is this—if, indeed, this heavenly heritage is ours—we *have a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” Unless fearfully deceived, some of us can say, tonight, that we are resting wholly upon Christ. We depend upon the blood of Christ for cleansing, the righteousness of Christ for clothing, the death of Christ to be the death of sin, and the life of Christ to be our life unto God! All that we have we derive from Him. As for myself, I have not a shadow of a shade of the ghost of a hope apart from the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ—and I know that many of you can say the same.

Well now, the possession of that confidence, that child-like trust, that real faith, is an evidence to you that the heritage is yours. “Without faith, it is impossible to please God,” but he that believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. He that accepts Christ and His great Sacrifice to be the one ground of his trust—and does this with all his heart and soul—has that sealed evidence which others cannot read, but which he may read with confidence, for Christ said, “He that hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” He is a justified man and, “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I can give you only just a hint or two upon these evidences. Another sealed evidence of our interest in Christ is that *we have life in Jesus*. Of this nobody but yourself can judge—and you must be sure to judge very carefully according to the Word of God. It is *not* the old life *educated*. It is *not* the old nature *improved*. It is a distinctly *new* life, so that you have hopes to which you once were strangers. You have fears which once never affected you. You have come into a new world—you are, indeed, born again! All around you seems new, it is with you as with one I spoke to the other day. She said to me, “Sir, either I am new, or else all the world is.” And I said, “Yes, but the world is *not* new—that remains old.” “Oh, but!” she replied, “my relation to it, my thoughts about it, my thoughts about everything are totally different from what they ever were before.”

You can tell if this change has been worked in you. If a horse could suddenly be inspired with mental faculty so as to be able to understand astronomy, what a new life it would be for it as it began to study the stars! Ah, but *yours* is a greater change than *that*! You have risen from the lower

sphere of mere soulish life into the higher condition of *spiritual life* and now you consort with God, you speak with Christ, you have become familiar with heavenly things and are raised up to sit in the heavenlies with Christ Jesus! It is a new life altogether with you and you feel it beating within your soul. You cannot tell this to everybody. If you did, perhaps you would have your testimony received with a laugh. To yourself, however, it is a sealed evidence, but a very sure one.

And this leads me to the fourth evidence, which is that *we now have communion with God in prayer*. Worldlings may pray after a sort, that is, they can utter a few good words, or repeat a form of prayer. But true Believers speak with God as a man speaks with his friend! We tell Him our daily troubles. We detail our needs, we express our joys. Prayer is, to us, a reality—and God hears it and He answers us—and gives us many evidences of His love in the answers to our prayers. Some of these we can tell to the praise of His Glory, but there are 10 times as many which we would not tell for all the world, for they are like love passages between two enamored souls—they are too precious to be whispered to other ears! It would be casting pearls before swine if the spiritual man, who dwells with God, were to tell all that he asks of God, and all the Lord's answers to his prayers! But, oh, believe me, you cannot enjoy real fellowship with God in prayer and come out of the closet with Luther's, "Vici! Vici!" "I have conquered! I have conquered!" on your lips, and live to enjoy the fruits of your victory in wrestling with God in secret—and then have any doubt whether you have a right and title to the eternal heritage! That is a sealed evidence, but it is a sure one. You cannot but look back upon it with extreme satisfaction. The prophet Micah said, "My God will hear me," and if you can truly, from your soul, say the same, you have a blessed evidence that you are an heir of Heaven!

But, next, I rank very highly among the sealed evidences of our inheritance the fact that *we have the fear of God before our eyes*. Fear looks like one of the minor Graces, but it is a very leading one in the spiritual life. That holy awe of God, that consciousness of His majestic Presence, that dread of doing anything contrary to His will, that tender, loving, filial fear which love does not cast out, but rather nourishes and cherishes—he that has this holy fear is a child of God! They sometimes speak in indictments against criminals of their "not having the fear of God before their eyes," and, mark you, if a man has not the fear of God before his eyes, you need not wonder at anything that he does. Take away the fear of God from a nation and to what lengths of evil will it not go? Remember the great and terrible Revolution in France, when, at the end of the last century, she had cast off all fear of God? When a nation comes to that point, rebellion against authority is the least thing to be looked for. The horrors of the guillotine and the constant flow of blood will be sure to come—but in the child of God there is a holy, filial fear, which keeps him from doing things that others do. Remember how Nehemiah says, "So did not I, because of the fear of God"? A Christian is not held back from a certain course by a dread of punishment, but by that loving dread of offending so good and so gracious a God as he has.

Now, if you feel, tonight, that you can honestly say that you walk in the fear of God all the day long—that is a sealed evidence—and it is a very sure proof that the inheritance of the saints really belongs to you.

Another evidence is this—*we have secret supports in the time of trouble*. Here one could expatiate at great length if time would permit. “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” You are sustained when enduring awful pain, comforted under deep depression of spirit, strengthened for the work for which, in yourself, alone, you are quite unequal, borne upward with holy joy in the midst of cruel slander! Surely that is enough evidence for you!

Besides, the Lord gives to His people *secret delights* and we sing, “He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.” At such times, the Lord gives us *secret directions and instructions* which come to the soul directly from Himself. Do not think me fanatical, for it is even as I say. These love tokens come to the soul with a demonstration and a power, a delight and a rapture which no words can ever express. They cannot be expressed, seeing that, in many instances, we hear, in the time of ecstatic joy, words which it is not lawful for a man to utter! We wrap these proofs up among the sealed evidences of our right to the heavenly inheritance!

Another sealed evidence is *the secret love which the child of God has to all others of the children of God*. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” As to the love we have to Jesus, “We love Him because He first loved us,” and our love to Him is one of the evidences of His love to us. We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. “God, my exceeding joy” is a sweet name that David gives to the Lord, and then he adds, “I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” I love to sing it as the hymn version puts it—

**“For yet I know I shall Him praise,  
Who graciously to me,  
The health is of my countenance,  
Yes, my own God is He.”**

If you feel this intense love to the Lord and to His people, that is one of your sealed evidences.

But once again, and I should like to enlarge on all these points, but I must not, those *inward conflicts* which you now have, that struggling in your soul between right and wrong, the new man seeking to get the victory over the old corrupt nature—all these are your sealed evidences. So, also, are the *victories* which God gives you, when He treads evil passions beneath the feet of the new-born man-child, who is the image of Christ within you, when you conquer yourself, when you subdue anger, when you go forth to do, by the strength of God, what otherwise your nature would shrink from—all these are blessed evidences, signed and sealed, to be rolled up and put away—to be seen by no eyes but your own—and the eyes of the Most High. These, then, are the sealed evidences of our faith.

I have been obliged to hurry over this part of my subject because I need just a few minutes, now, to dwell upon the open evidences.

**II.** Let us consider, secondly, THE OPEN EVIDENCES OF OUR FAITH. There is a counterpart, or copy, of the sealed title, or purchase deed. What are these open evidences of our faith?

They are such proofs as *others can see*—and the first of such evidences that we are the children of God must be the *open Word of God itself*. I read the Bible and I say, “Well, if this Book is true, I am a saved man! If this is really a Divine Revelation, then I am saved!” Beloved, have you that open evidence of your salvation? That is the best evidence in the whole world! When Peter was writing concerning the Transfiguration of Christ, he added, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place.” The Lord Jesus said, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” I believe in Him, therefore I shall not perish, but have everlasting life. The open volume of the Word of God is our open evidence of salvation!

Next to that, the open evidence of our right to the inheritance is *a thorough change of life such as other people can see*. Is it so with you? Has there been a distinct crisis in your being? Have you been turned from darkness unto light? Have you been brought from the power of Satan unto God? Does your husband know of the change? Does your wife see it? Do your father and mother notice it? Does your master perceive it, if you are a domestic servant? I think that, in some persons, conversion works so marked a change that the people of the neighborhood in which they live must see it! Distinctly do I recall, here, a man whose voice was uncommonly loud when he prayed at the Prayer Meetings. I was only a child, then, but I said to myself, “I have heard that man’s voice before,” and so I had, but I was surprised to hear it in *prayer*, for I had heard him swear on board ship! He was a captain and he swore as if he had swallowed a trumpet—and there he was, converted, and he was speaking in the same trumpet-tones to the praise of the glory of God’s Grace! When a man has been a gross offender, there will be a conversion which men and angels and devils will be sure to see—and this is one of the open evidences that he is a Christian. May you all be such Epistles of Christ that you may be known and read of all men!

Another open evidence is *separation from the world*. A man who is really a child of God cannot, after his conversion, consort with his old companions. As one said to me this week, “When I was in the shop, they began to talk some lewdness and to utter filthy words. And I just took up my hat and went away, for I heard this text in my ears, “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” Separation from the world is one of the open evidences of a child of God. You do not come away from them because you dislike the people, but because you cannot bear their evil ways. They find pleasure in that which is a sorrow to you—that which is food to them is poison to you—and you say to yourself, “My Lord would not wish to come and find me in this society,” so you et away from them.

The next open evidence is found in *union with the people of God*, making them your companions, taking a delight in them. Depend upon it, we shall forever go with those who are our chosen friends here—the people who are our companions on earth will be our companions in the world to

come! Tares will be bound up in bundles with the tares, but the wheat will be bound up with the wheat. This, then, is another open evidence of your adoption into the family of God—when you love the people of God and seek their company.

One very clear open evidence is *strict honesty, uprightness and integrity in business*. Do not tell me that you are a child of God if you can cheat your fellow men! You may tell that to whomever you like, but it will not be believed by any man who reads his Bible. Straightforward honesty should always be the mark of every professor of the religion of Christ! Your word must be your bond, and you must sooner fail in business than do the smallest thing that would be contrary to the strictest integrity. This will become, to many, an open evidence which they can read.

One very open evidence of a change of heart and of our possession of the inheritance, is a *readiness to forgive*. If you cannot suffer a wrong and continue to cherish resentment for it, how dwells the love of God in you? How can you ever pray the prayer of the Believer and say, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” when you have to stammer as you come to, “Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us.” Cheerful readiness to forgive any injury done to ourselves—to overlook any wrongdoing whatever—is one of the open evidences that we are the children of God!

Another open evidence is one which we often get and do not like, that is, *the opposition of the world*. If any man will serve God faithfully, he will be sure to have the dogs of Hell at him. If you were to go through a village where you had never been, before, the dogs would come out and bark at you. But if you belonged to the parish, they would know you, and they would not take any notice of you. If you are a stranger to the world and a citizen of Heaven, the devil’s dogs will howl at your heels! They cannot help it, for it is their nature. Thank God, Isaac, when Ishmael mocks you, for it is a mark that you are of the true seed and that Ishmael is not!

Another open evidence, and one that is very sweet, is *a holy patience in time of trouble and especially in the hour of death*. Often have God’s people, when racked with pain, been able to rejoice in God. And when heart and flesh have failed them and the death-sweat has been standing on their brow, they have been able, even then, if not to sing, at least to say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.”

**III.** I wish that Time would have paused for a while, tonight, but he has not. I must not keep you beyond our usual hour, so I will close with just two or three words upon THE USES TO WHICH WE PUT THESE EVIDENCES.

One of them is that *they often yield us comfort*. There is truth in Dr. Watt’s hymn—

**“When I can read my title clear  
To mansions in the skies,  
I bid farewell to every fear,  
And wipe my weeping eyes.”**

It takes the sting out of every trouble when we know that the heavenly inheritance is surely ours.



Then again, these evidences *answer the unjust charges of Satan* when he comes and says, “You are *not* a child of God.” Ah, but we have the evidences of our salvation, the sealed evidence and the open evidence, and we answer him boldly!

And above all things, I think that we ought to value these evidences because they will be *produced in court at the Last Day*. That is the most solemn thing of all. See how the Lord Jesus, the great Advocate of His people, produces the evidence in court—“I was hungry, and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink,” and so on. He produces this evidence of a work of Grace in their hearts, and says to them, “Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Brothers and Sisters, do you possess these evidences? If you have none, do not try to counterfeit them. For God’s sake and your own sake, do not commit forgery in such a matter as this! If you have not these evidences, pray God that you may know that you have not, and go straight-way to Christ, tonight, as a *sinner*. You have plenty of evidence that you are a sinner and Jesus came into the world to save sinners! Put your trust in Him, now, and receive from Him the evidence that you are one of His people. If you have bad evidences, worthless evidences, counterfeited evidences—fling them away and pray God that you may get rid of whatever false comfort you have ever derived from them! If God has given you the true evidences, still come to Jesus, just as you are, for it will be your continual coming to Christ that will be your best standing evidence that you are truly in Him!

The Lord bring you all to Jesus, tonight, just as you are, whether saints or sinners—and then shall you rejoice in Him! The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. JEREMIAH 32:6-41.**

**Verses 6, 7.** *And Jeremiah, said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel, the son of Shallum, your uncle, shall come unto you, saying, Buy you my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is yours to buy it.* God gave His servant an intimation of what was about to happen so that he might know how to act. It did seem a very strange thing to come to a poor Prophet in prison and to ask him to buy a piece of land when the Chaldeans were in possession of it—and when there seemed to be no hope that he would ever see it! One said, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it,” but Jeremiah could not do this, for he was shut up in prison, and the enemy had possession of the field he was to buy! Still, the thing was of the Lord, and therefore it was right. And there is many an action which, in itself, might seem absurd, but which, nevertheless, is to be performed because it is according to the will of God.

**8.** *So Hanameel, my uncle’s son, came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray you, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of*

*inheritance is yours, and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.* Should a minister be concerned about the buying of land? Yes, if God bids him buy it. He is not to be entangled with the affairs of this life, but Jeremiah certainly could not be entangled with this field.

**9.** *And I bought the field of Hanameel, my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. They always paid by weight to make sure that the amount was correct.*

**10, 11.** *And I signed the deed and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the purchase deed, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open.* The transaction was all in proper legal form. We are not to be neglectful in business because we are the servants of the Lord, but in all things we should act as men of prudence and commonsense.

**12-14.** *And I gave the purchase deed unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel, my uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that signed the purchase deed, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; take these deeds, both this purchase deed, which is sealed, and this deed which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days.* They had no iron safes in those days, so their practice was to put their documents into earthen vessels and bury them deep in the earth, where they reckoned they would be secure.

**15.** *For thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.* Therefore, as an act of faith in God, the Prophet bought this meadow.

**16.** *Now when I had delivered the purchase deed to Baruch, the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying.* Jeremiah completes the business, puts the securities into safe keeping, and now he prays. It is always well to be free from care before you pray. Let nothing remain to be done, if it is possible, and then get alone and let your heart be free to speak with God. I do not suppose that Jeremiah prayed any the less or any the worse because he had attended to this business transaction. A man who lives near to God ought to be able to go from his counting-house to his closet with a happy heart!

**17-19.** *Ah Lord GOD! behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You: You show loving kindness unto thousands, and recompense the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of Hosts, is His name, great in counsel, and mighty in work: for Your eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.* Whenever you are troubled, think much of God! Speak much of Him. This is true adoration. It will be a great help to your own spirit. Your own littleness will be forgotten in the greatness of your God.

**20-24.** *You have set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and have made You a name, as at this day; and have brought forth Your people Israel out of the land of*

*Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror; and You have given them this land, which You did swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; and they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not Your voice, neither walked in Your Law; they have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do: therefore You have caused all this evil to come upon them. Behold the siege mounds! The earthworks thrown up about Jerusalem completely surrounded it and the Chaldeans were hard at work breaking down the walls to capture the city while the people were dying of famine and disease.*

**24, 25.** *They are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what You have spoken is come to pass; and, behold, You see it. And You have said unto me, O Lord GOD, Buy you the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.* Observe, it is hardly a prayer that Jeremiah utters—it is just a statement of his condition—and yet that *is real prayer*. When you do not know what to ask God, state your difficulty, for that is the very best thing you can do. When you cannot see any way out of the maze, never mind—it is for God to show you the clue. There is often much sanctified commonsense in laying the difficulty before the Lord, spreading the letter before Him, and leaving it there. When you cannot ask for deliverance in this way or that, it will be sufficient just to state the case as Jeremiah did.

**26, 27.** *Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?* This is a grand question, an unanswerable question!

**28-31.** *Therefore thus says the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hands of the Chaldeans, and into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it: and the Chaldeans that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke Me to anger. For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before Me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked Me to anger with the work of their hands, says the LORD. For this city has been to Me as a provocation of My anger and of My fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before My face.* Jerusalem was such a sinful city that it must be destroyed. The very roofs of the houses had been defiled by the sacrifices offered to idols. If these words were true of Jerusalem, surely they are also true in great measure of London! It has been a provocation of God's anger, "from the day that they built it even unto this day."

**32.** *Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their Prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* They seemed, from the very highest to the lowest, determined to provoke the Lord, to show how little they cared for the Most High.

**33.** *And they have turned unto Me the back, and not the face. Like men who wished to insult a king in his very court.*

**33.** *Though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. It is a great aggravation of an offense against God when He has taught us and yet we “have not hearkened to receive instruction.”*

**34, 35.** *But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by My name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into My mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. If God had commanded them to offer up their children, they would have stood aghast at such cruelty, but they willingly sacrificed them to Molech in opposition to His will.*

**36, 37.** *And now, therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, of which you say, It shall be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. Behold, I will gather them, out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. God is angry, and yet gracious! The rest of the chapter is full of tenderness and love. It is enough to make our eyes fill with tears as we note how God speaks concerning those who had rebelled against Him.*

**38.** *And they shall be My people, and I will be their God: This is, indeed, a Covenant of Grace! It is not dealing with men after their sins, but according to the inexhaustible bounty of eternal love.*

**39, 40.** *And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. There is, here, a promise of double bliss! The Lord will not turn from His people and they shall not turn from Him. What more could God do than He, here, promises? It looks like a trial of strength between sin and Grace! Sin was like a mountain, but the Lord’s love was like the flood which prevailed till even the mountains were covered!*

**41.** *Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul. See how God puts His whole heart to the work when He is blessing His people? When He forgives sin, it is with His whole heart and soul. May we, with our whole heart and soul, repent of our sins and then, with all our heart and soul, serve the Lord! Amen.*

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# CREATION—AN ARGUMENT FOR FAITH NO. 462

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 27, 1862,  
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Ah Lord God, behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by  
Your great power and stretched out arm, and there  
is nothing too hard for You.”  
Jeremiah 32:17.*

AT the very time when the Chaldeans had cast up mounds round about the city of Jerusalem, and when the sword and famine and pestilence had desolated the whole land, Jeremiah, while in prison, was commanded by his God to purchase a field of Hanamel, his uncle's son at Anathoth. He was to subscribe the evidence of purchase by the usual witnesses, to seal the deed of transfer according to law and custom, and to do this *publicly* in the presence of all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.

Now, this was a strange purchase for a rational man to make. Prudence could not justify it—it was purchasing an estate which was utterly valueless. Reason would repudiate the notion. It was buying with scarcely a probability that the person purchasing could ever enjoy the possession. But it was enough for Jeremiah that his God had bid him, for well he knew that God will be justified of all His children who act in faith. He bought the piece of land, and it was secured to him. He did as he was commanded and returned to his dungeon.

When he came into his chamber alone, it is possible that he began to question himself as to what he had been doing and troubled thoughts rolled over his mind. “I have been purchasing a useless possession,” said he. See how he refuses to indulge the thought. He gets as far as saying, “Ah, Lord God!” as if he were about to utter some unbelieving or rebellious sentence—but he stops himself, “You can make this plot of ground of use to me. You can rid this land of these oppressors. You can make me yet sit under my vine and my fig tree in the heritage which I have bought. For You did make the heavens and the earth and there is nothing too hard for You.”

Beloved, this gave a majesty to the early saints, that they dared to do at God's command, things which were unaccountable to sense and which reason would condemn. They consulted not with flesh and blood. But whether it is a Noah who is to build a ship on dry land, an Abraham who is to offer up his only son, or a Moses who is to despise the treasures of Egypt, or a Joshua who is to besiege Jericho seven days using no weapons but the blasts of rams' horns—they all act upon God's command. They act contrary to all the dictates of carnal reason. And God, even the Lord God, gives a rich reward as the result of their obedient faith.

I would to God we had in the religion of these modern times, a more potent infusion of this heroic faith in God. But no. I see the Christian

Church degenerating more and more into a society acting upon the same principles as commercial companies. The Church, I fear, cannot now say, “We walk by faith and not by sight.” When Edward Irving preached that memorable sermon concerning the missionary, who, he thought, was bound to go forth without purse or scrip, and trust in his God alone, to preach the Word, a howl went up to Heaven against the man as a fanatic.

They said he was visionary, unpractical, mad—and all because he dared to preach a sermon full of faith in God. I do avow myself fully in sympathy with the views which he then enunciated. And I think, if the power of God were once more to baptize the Church, we should have men who would dare to trust in God instead of putting confidence in men. Men who would act once more as if God’s bare arm were quite enough to lean on, as if faith were not fanaticism, as if confidence in an unseen Being were not an unjustifiable enthusiasm.

I would to God the Church had once again a rich anointing of the supernatural, and I believe she would have, if she would again act by faith. And if you and I, Brothers and Sisters, would venture more upon the naked promises of God, we should enter a world of wonders to which as yet we are strangers. If we would but walk the waters of trouble by a living faith, we should find them solid as marble beneath our feet. If once again we could, like the world, be hung upon nothing but the simple power and Providence of God, I am sure we should find it a blessed and a safe way of living—glorious to God and honorable to ourselves.

I would that once again the Master would raise up a race of heroes who would be ridiculed by the world, and despised by mere professors. Men who would act by faith in the God that lives and abides forever. Men who venture on bold deeds where the weakness of the human arm would be manifest, and the might of Deity revealed. Then should we see the millennial age dawning upon us, and God, even our own God, would bless us, and all the ends of the earth would fear Him.

Dear Fiends, it is my business this morning to conduct you to Jeremiah’s place of confidence. Seeing that his case is hopeless, knowing that man can do nothing at all for him, the Prophet resorts at once to the God that created the Heaven and the earth and he exclaims, “Nothing is too hard for You.” I shall use my text in addressing three characters—to *stimulate the evangelist*. To *encourage the enquirer*. And to *comfort the Believer*.

**I. TO STIMULATE THE EVANGELIST.** And who *is* the evangelist? Every man and woman who has tasted that the Lord is gracious should be an Evangelist. We should, without exception, if we have been begotten again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, tell to all around us what they must do to be saved. There should be no dumb tongue in all our host. We should have no idle hand in the harvest field, but everyone in his measure, whether man or woman, should be doing something to extend the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And here, dear Brother in Christ, my friend and Fellow laborer, here is your encouragement—the work is God’s—and your success is in the hand of Him who made the Heaven and the earth. Let me refresh your memory

with the old story of creation and I think you will perceive flashes of light upon your work which will greatly encourage you in it.

**1.** Remember, in the first place, that *the world was created from nothing*. You have often said, “Mine is a very hard task, for I address myself to men in whom I see nothing hopeful. I batter against a granite conscience, but it is not moved. I thunder forth the Law but the dead and callous heart has not been stirred. I talk of the love of Christ but the eye is not suffused with tears. I point to Hell but no terror follows. And to Heaven but no holy desire is kindled! There is nothing in man that encourages me in my work, and I am ready to give up.”

Brother, come back with me to the world’s creation. Of what did God make the world? Was there any substance available to His hand out of which to mold this round globe? What do the Scriptures say? Did He not make it of nothing? You have never yet grasped the idea of *nothing*. The eye cannot see it. It might peer into space, but space itself is something. We look up, and yonder is the blue ether, though we know not what it is. But the eye could not look on nothing. It would be blinded. Nothing is a thing which the senses cannot grasp, and yet it is out of this awful nothing that God made the sun and moon and stars and all things that are.

Had He spoken before creation, there would have been no voice to answer Him. Had He cried, there would have been no echo to repeat His voice. Nothing was there anywhere, and yet He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast! The case of the sinner is a parallel one. You say there is nothing in the sinner? Yes, there is room here for a recreating work. Inasmuch as that heart is now empty and void, there is space for the Eternal God to come, and with His outstretched arm, to create a new heart and a right spirit, and put His Grace where there was none before.

If *you* had to convert the sinner, then, indeed, your task were as hopeless as to create new orbs out of nothing. But, inasmuch as it is not *you*, but your God who works all things, you may console yourselves with this thought—He who has created all this marvelous earth and had nothing to begin with, can give life, and fear, and hope, and faith, and love, where there were no heavenly ingredients upon which He might work. Take that, then, for your joy.

**2.** But you tell me you have none to help you or go forth in your work, you have no patronage. “Ah, Sir,” says one, “if I had a *society* at my back. If I had at least a few warm-hearted friends that were banded with me, that would give me some encouragement. But I have to go forth alone—of the people there are none with me. I stand up to preach in a village where all are cold and callous—where even my minister tells me I am a rash, bold young man, and had better hold my tongue. I look to the world and it hates me. I turn to the Church and it despises me. I am too enthusiastic for the Church. I am too fanatical for the world. What can I do? I am a man alone, and I have no helper!”

Brother, when God made the world—and the same God is with you—*He worked alone*. With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him? When He balanced the clouds and laid the foundations for the earth, who taught Him the laws of gravity? Who has weighed the mountains in scales

and the hills in a balance? Was He not alone? No parliament of angels bowed at His right hand, for He created even them. No archangel bowed his head and offered advice to the Most High, for the archangel, himself, is but a creature. Cherubim and seraphim might sing when the work was over, but they could not help in the work.

Look, now—what star did the angels make? What spot of earth is the creation of an archangel? Look to the heavens above or to the deeps beneath—where do you see you the work of any hand but God’s—and that hand a solitary one? The lonely worker out of emptiness creates fullness, out of non-existence calls all things, and out of Himself gets both the matter and the manner, the way and the how. His courts need no revenue from abroad to sustain them, for from Himself, alone, He draws the force which is needed.

Roll, then, your burden on your God if you are alone, for alone with Him you have the best of company. If you had the hosts of Heaven with you, what were you without your God? If all the Church were at your back, terrible as an army with banners, your defeat were certain if the Holy Spirit did not dwell in you. I tell you, Man, if all the saints and angels in earth and Heaven should unite to help you in your pursuit, yet, if your God should stand aloof from you, you would labor in vain and spend your strength for nothing. But with Him you shall prevail though all men forsake you—

***“When He makes bare His arm,  
What shall His work withstand?  
When He His people’s cause defends,  
Who, who shall stay His hand?”***

Let not this, then, trouble you, that you are alone. “Ah Lord God, behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You.”

3. But you will reply to me, “My sorrow lies not so much in that I am alone, as in the melancholy fact that I am very conscious of my own weakness and of my want of adaptation for my peculiar work. I come back from my Sunday’s toil, saying, ‘Who has believed my report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?’ It seems to me as though I plowed a rock, a rock so hard that it blunted the plowshare. I can make no impression upon it. I have beaten the air.

“I seem to have lashed the waters. I fear that I have not the gifts which are necessary, nor have I the Divine Grace that I should have. Woe is me, for I am a man of uncircumcised lips! I am not sufficient for these things. But rather I feel like Jonah, that I would flee into Tarshish, that I might escape from the burden of the Lord against this Nineveh.” Yes. But Brother, come, cast your thought back again upon creation. *The Eternal needed no instruments in creation.* What tools did God use when He made the heavens and the earth? When the blacksmith brings forth his work, he fashions it with hammer and anvil—upon what anvil did God beat the red-hot matter of this earth when He formed it and made it what it is?

I know that the engraver needs a sharp tool, upon which he bears with all his might when he traces out the lines of beauty. But when God drew this fair picture—this wondrous landscape of the heavens and the earth—



what engraving tools did He have? Where do you learn that He had any instruments in His mighty hands? The carpenter has his plane, and his hammer, and his awl—what plane, what hammer, and what awl did the Eternal use? Had He anything beside His own hands?

Are not the heavens the works of His fingers, and the sun and the moon His handiwork? So then, if God can work without instruments in the creation of a world, He can surely work with a poor, and a mean instrument, in the conversion of a sinner! When I think of myself, it seems to me as if the Almighty Worker did take a straw into His hand with which to penetrate a granite rock. Yet, I know, though it is a straw, if it is in His hands, it would be able to pierce the globe and thread the spheres as on a string.

I know that if the Lord takes in His hands but a smooth stone out of the current, yet when He hurls it from His sling, it shall pierce even a giant's brow. He saves not by *man's* strength, nor by *human* learning and eloquence and talent. It is *His strength* and not the strength or weakness of the instruments to which we must look. I pray you, turn your eye away from yourself. What are you? A son of man, in whom is no strength! A man that is born of woman—unclean in your origin and unhallowed in your actions. Is there anything in you to give our God one reason to make you a winner of souls?

But, inasmuch as you are nothing, you are all the better fitted to be used by Him. He shall have all the more glory because of your weakness. I pray you, therefore, say, with Paul, "I glory in infirmities, that the power of God may rest on me." And let this be your song—"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." "Ah Lord God, behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You." You can do wonders even by the mean instrument of sinful man.

**4.** Do I hear you still complain and say—"Alas, alas! It is little I can say! When I speak, I can but give out the text and utter a few plain words upon it—true and earnest, but not mighty. I cannot sound out the rolling periods of a Robert Hall, nor wing my flight to the majestic heights of a Chalmers. I have no power to plead with souls with the tears and the seraphic zeal of a Whitfield. I can only tell the tale of mercy simply and leave it there"?

Well, and *did not God create all things by His naked Word*? Was there any eloquence when God spoke and it was done? "Let there be light," and there was light. Can you perceive any trappings of oratory here? At this day, is not the Gospel in itself the rod of Jehovah's strength? Is it not the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes? And does not our Beloved Apostle constantly insist upon it, that it is not with wisdom of words, nor with fineness of speech, lest the excellency of the power should not be of God but of man? And lest man's faith should stand in the wisdom of man and not in the power of the Most High?

Go on, my Brother Evangelist, go on and speak God's Word still, for it is the Word which is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. 'Twas His naked Word, unadorned, simple and plain, which at the

beginning made the Heaven and the earth. What can be more sublimely simple than, “Let there be light”? Go and say in the same simplicity, “Sinner, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,” and your message shall be the voice of God from Heaven which shall not return unto Him void but shall prosper in the thing whereunto He has sent it.

5. “Alas,” I hear a Brother crying from some corner of the building, “You are not aware of the darkness of the district in which I labor. I toil among a benighted, unintelligent, ignorant people. I cannot expect to see fruit there, toil as I may.” Ah, Brother, and while you talk so, you never will see any fruit, for God gives not great things to unbelieving men. For the encouragement of your faith, let me remind you that it is the God that made the heavens and the earth on whom you have to lean—and what is that which was written of old: “The earth was without form and void and *darkness was upon the face of the deep.*”

How dense that darkness was, I cannot tell. That primeval darkness which had never been stirred by a single ray of light. That dense, thick seven-fold Egyptian darkness that had never known a sun or moon and had never been pierced by light of star. And yet, primeval though it was—I was about to call it eternal darkness but nothing can be eternal but the Most High—yet there was but a Word—“Light be,” and light was. And do you think the darkness of your hearers is thicker than this ancient darkness of the everlasting night? Even were it so, still, God is Almighty. He has but to speak through *you*, has but to make *your* word *His* Word and the films of blindness shall fall from the eyes, and he that was wrapped in midnight shall be brought out into marvelous day!

I would like to know where the dark place on the earth is, for there it is that the missionaries should first be sent. O that we had faith to do and dare for God, and undertake the hardest tasks first! But alas! We are such cowards, we love fair fields of labor. We want promising prospects. We will plant a Chapel where there is a likelihood that the people will appreciate it. We send a missionary where we think there is a probability that they will receive His Word. But shall we send the man where, in our judgment, they will not receive Christ, and bid him go where they will cast out His name as evil? This is to act by *faith*, and this is what the heroism of the Gospel demands.

Gird up your loins, followers of Christ, seek for difficulties and overcome them. If you are not greater than other men, how are you the followers of the Divine Jesus? If you cannot go where others despair, how dwells the Holy Spirit in you? If you will not risk where others flee, where is the glorious majesty of your faith?

6. Further—and still to press the same blessed argument. “Yes,” says one, “but the men among whom I labor are so confused in their notions. They put darkness for light and light for darkness. Their moral sense is blunted. If I try to teach them, their ears are dull of hearing and their hearts are given to slumber. Besides, they are full of vain jangling and oppose themselves to the Truth of God. I endure much contradiction of sinners, and they will not receive the Truth of God in the love of it.”

Yes, then, I bid you go back to the old creation that you may be comforted concerning the new. *Did not the Holy Spirit brood with shadowing wings over the earth when it was chaos?* Did He not bring out order from confusion? Do you not remember how, on a certain day, the Lord divided the waters that were above the firmament from those that were under the firmament? Do you not know how He rolled together the waters into their place and called the dry land, earth, and the gathering together of the waters called He seas? What greater confusion could there be? That incandescent mass which had once, perhaps, been gas, and afterwards condensed itself into a globe of liquid fire, was cooled with the blessed breath of God.

And when its crust grew hard and the tumultuous waters threw their waves over the heads of Alpine heights. When the winds came roaring forth and with carnival of hurricanes mingled sky and earth together. When cloud, and hill, and sea, and air, were all one seething mass, the blue sky appeared and clouds rolled upwards to their place and seas came downwards to their beds. He spoke, and lo, the obedient waters which had flung their white crests like the manes of wild horses tossing in the wind, hastened to their appointed stable in the deep. And there they remain, kept in check by no more mighty a bridle than a belt of sand. Then the earth stood out all fair and glittering, for God had done it. Disorder yielded to law. Darkness gave place to light. Chaos turned to glorious order in His sight.

Well, now, the same marvels can be worked in your case, only take care that you act *for God and in God's strength*, or else you might as well bid a stormy sea be still, as you command the confused notions of men to find rest and peace in Christ. He that made the heavens and the earth, even the everlasting God, can move your difficulty away—only trust in *Him* and He shall bring it to pass.

**7.** “Ah,” you say, “they are all so dead, so dead!” Yes, Sir, and do you not remember *how the waters brought forth* life abundantly—fish and fowl that should fly in the midst of Heaven? And how the earth—yes, this dull, dusky earth—brought forth the creeping things and the cattle after its kind? And how at last, man was made out of the very dust of the earth? O Sir, God can readily give life to the dead nature of evil men! You have but to rely on Him, and the quickening influence shall descend and you shall live.

**8.** *See how fair and glorious this earth is now!* Well might the morning stars shout together and the sons of God shout for joy! And do you think that God cannot make as fair a heart in man, and make it bud and blossom and teem with hallowed life? Do you think that Christ cannot make the angels sing even a nobler song of joy over a soul that is washed in blood, and a spirit robed in white, that shall praise God and the Lamb forever? And all this He can do through you and me, my Brother!

O, let us labor, then! Let us work and toil. Let us think difficulties, delights, and troubles, but trifles. Let us lean upon Him that made the heavens and the earth, for there is nothing too hard for Him. Unbelief will make you unhappy. It will cause your service to be a stench in the nostrils

of the Most High. Unbelief will prevent God from blessing you. “He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” “If you will believe all things are possible to him that believes.” And if you will act as one who sees Him that is invisible, you shall see greater things than these, and God shall make your path to be as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day.

**II.** In this large assembly, there are no doubt, many to be found who are really desirous to be saved, but are full of doubts and difficulties and questionings. I speak, then, TO THE ANXIOUS.

May I cut a knot in a moment by making one observation. Remember, my troubled Friend, that the question about your salvation is not whether you can save yourself, for that is answered in a thundering negative from God’s throne—*You cannot!* “By the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified.” The question is—*Can God save you?* And if you will put it on that ground, I think your answer need not be a very difficult one.

Can God save you? That is the question. Now I know your unbelief will suggest first the difficulty that *your mind is so dark*. “I cannot see Christ,” says one. “I am in such trouble of mind, I cannot understand as I would. I feel benighted. I am like the inhabitants of Zebulon and Napthali, a people that sat in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. I cannot see—it is all darkness, thick as night with me.” Yes, but then there is the question—Can God roll this night away? And the answer comes, He who said, “Let there be light,” and there was light, can certainly repeat the miracle.

Another of your doubts will arise from the fact that *you feel so weak—*

***“I would, but cannot sing.  
I would, but cannot pray.  
For Satan meets me when I try,  
And frights my soul away.  
I would, but can’t repent,  
Though I endeavor often.  
This stony heart can never relent  
Till Jesus makes it soft.  
I would, but cannot love,  
Though wooed by love Divine.  
No arguments have power to move  
A soul so base as mine.  
I would, but cannot rest  
In God’s most holy will.  
I know what He appoints is best,  
Yet murmur at it still.  
O could I but believe!  
Then all would easy be.  
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve—  
My help must come from You!”***

I cannot do what I would. I would leave sin, but still I fall into it. I would lay hold on Christ, but I cannot. Then comes the question—*Can God do it?* And we answer, He who made the heavens and the earth without a helper, can certainly save you when you can not help yourself.

Let me remind you that no part of the world helped its own creation. It is absolutely certain that no mountain uplifted its own head. It is quite

clear that no star appointed its own path of brightness. No flower can lift its head and say, "I created my own loveliness." No eagle that cuts the air can say, "I gave myself my soaring wings and my piercing eyes." God has made them all. And so, Sinner, you who are troubled because of your impotency—He wants nor needs no power in you. He gives power to the weak, and to them that have no might He increases strength. Rest upon God in Christ, and cast yourself on Him, and He will do it all.

"Yes," you say again, "but I am in such an awful state of mind—*there is such a confusion within me*—Hell is opened from beneath and the sluices of my soul's sorrows are drawn up. Grief streams forth in rivers from my eyes. I cannot tell what is the matter with me. My heart is like a battleground torn up with the prancing of the horses. I know not what I am. I cannot understand myself." Pause, I pray, and answer me, Was not the world just so of old, and did not all the beauty of all lands rise out of this dire confusion? Cannot God, then, do this for *you*, and give you a peace that passes all understanding? I beseech you, my dear distressed Friend, trust in Christ, for He can hush the hurricane to slumber, and lay the storm to sleep.

Let me remind you, O Enquirer, that there is more hope in your case than there was in the creation of the world, for in the creation there was nothing done beforehand. The plan was drawn, no doubt, but no material was provided, no stores laid in to effect the purpose. We read not that God had piled up a mass of nebulae that He worked out into worlds. No, He began the work and finished it without any previous preparations. But in *your* case the work is done already, *beforehand*. On the bloody tree Christ has carried sin. In the grave He has vanquished death. In His resurrection He has rent forever the bonds of the grave. In His ascension He has opened Heaven to all Believers.

And in His intercession He is pleading still for them that trust Him. It is finished, remember, so that it is easier to save you than to make a world, for the world had nothing prepared for it. There was nothing ready—but here everything is ready and all you are bid to do is to come and sit at a feast that is already spread—to wear a garment that is already woven, to wash in a bath that is already filled with blood. Sinner, what do you say? Will you believe in God's Anointed or not?

Yet again, remember that God has done something more in you than there was done before He made the world. Emptiness did not cry, "Oh, God, create me." Darkness could not pray, "Oh, Lord, give me light." Confusion could not cry, "Oh, God, ordain me into order." But see what He has done for you! He has taught you to cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." He has made you plead, "Lighten my darkness, O Lord, lest I sleep the sleep of death." He has taught you to say, "I have gone astray, like a lost sheep, seek Your servant." See, Friend, the grass cannot pray for dew, and yet it falls—and shall *you* cry for it, and God withhold it?

The thirsty earth has no voice to ask for showers, and yet they descend, and will God let you cry and not answer you? Look at the forests in winter, they cannot ask for leaves, and yet the verdure comes in its season.

Nor can the corn entreat for sunshine, and yet God gives good things to all in due season. And *you*, made in His own image, will He let you cry and not hear you? When He has Himself said, “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies but would rather that he should turn unto Me and live”?

Yet once again, and here is a rich thought of comfort—it was in God’s power to make the world or not, just as He pleased. No promise bound Him. No Covenant made it imperative upon Him that His arm should be outstretched. Sinner, the Lord is not bound to save you except from His own promise—and that promise is—“He that calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” He cannot, He *cannot* withhold saving you if you call upon Him. His Covenant has bound Him to be merciful to those who confess their sins. He is merciful and just to forgive us our sins and to save us from all unrighteousness. This, then, is a case that glistens with brighter light than did the case of the uncreated world. And as, of His own will, without pledge or Covenant, He made the earth what it is—most surely now He has promised it—He will save you if you trust in Jesus.

Once more here. It is certain that there is more room in your case for God to glorify Himself, than there was in the making of the world. In making the world He glorified His wisdom and He magnified His power. But He could not show His mercy. He could have no mercy upon floods and mountains, upon cattle and flying fowl. There was kindness, but no mercy, for they had not sinned. Now, here in your case, there is room for every attribute of God, for His loving-kindness, His faithfulness, His veracity, His power, His Grace. Yours is a hopeful case, because it is hopeless to you.

There is room for God, because, certainly, there is no space for you. You can do nothing. It is your extremity, and it is, therefore, God’s opportunity. What would I give this morning if I could turn one tearful eye away from itself to Christ! I know how foolish we all are that we all look to flesh and blood. Turn your eyes, Sinner, to the Cross where the Savior bleeds. Rest on Him—He, without whom was not anything made that was made, died for you. He who was in the beginning with God and who was God, works out your redemption. Trust *Him* and the work is done. Rest on *Him* and your soul is brought today into the realm of safety, and you have passed from death unto life.

I will tell you a little anecdote which will show how foolish we are, when we depend on self. I have heard that lately, a ship on her way to Australia met with a very terrible storm and sprung a leak. And a little while after, a hurricane overtook her. There happened to be a gentleman on board, of the most nervous temperament that can be imagined, whose rambling tongue and important air were calculated to alarm all the passengers. When the storm came on, the captain, who knew what damage had been done, managed to get near him.

And the gentleman said to the captain, “What an awful storm. I am afraid we shall go to the bottom, for I hear the leak is very bad.” “Well,” said the captain, “as you seem to know it, and perhaps the others do not, you had better not tell them, lest you should dispirit my men. Perhaps, as

it is a very bad case, you would lend us your valuable aid and we may possibly get through it. Would you have the goodness to stand here and hold hard on this rope? Pray do not leave it, but pull as hard as ever you can till I tell you to let it go.”

So our friend clenched his fists and put his feet stiff down and kept on holding this rope with all his might for several hours. The storm abated. The ship was brought right and our friend let go of his rope. He expected a deputation would bring him the thanks of all the passengers but they were unconscious of his merits. He thought at least there would be a contribution for a trophy or plaque for what he had done but no plaque came. Even the captain did not seem very grateful, so he ventured, very distantly and in a roundabout style to hint that such valuable services as his, having saved the vessel, ought to be rewarded with some few words of gratitude, at any rate. He was shocked to hear the captain say, “What? Do *you* think you saved the vessel? Why, I gave you that rope to hold to keep you out of the way! You did a world of mischief till I got you quiet.”

So now, mark you, there are some people who are wanting to *do* so much. They think they can certainly save themselves, and there they stand, holding the rope with their clenched fists and their feet tightly fixed, while they are really doing no more than our poor friend. If ever you get to Heaven, you will find that everything you did towards your own salvation was about as useful as what this man did when he was holding the rope—the safety of the vessel lies somewhere else, and not in you. And that what is wanted with you is just to get you out of the way—and when you are out of the way, and are made a fool of, then Christ comes in and shows His wisdom. While, perhaps, all the while you are bemoaning yourself that you should be so badly treated, it would not have been possible for you to be saved unless you had been put out of the way, that Almighty God might do the work from first to last.

**III.** And now I have to conclude with one or two words of ENCOURAGEMENT TO BELIEVERS.

And so, my Brothers in Christ, you are greatly troubled are you? It is a common lot with us all. And so you have nothing on earth to trust to now, and are going to be cast on your God alone? Your vessel is on her beam-ends, and now there is nothing for you but just to be rolled on the Providence and care of God. What a blessed place to be rolled on! Happy storm that wrecks a man on such a Rock as this! O blessed hurricane that drives the soul to God, and God alone! On some few occasions I have had troubles which I could not tell to any but my God and I thank God that I have, for I learned more of my Lord then than at any other time.

There is no getting at our God sometimes because of the multitude of our friends. But when a man is so poor, so friendless, so helpless that he has nothing, he flies into his Father’s arms and how blessedly he is clasped there! So that I say again, happy trouble that drives you to your Father! Blessed storm that wrecks you on the Rock of Ages! Glorious billow that washes you upon this heavenly shore! And now you have nothing but your God to trust to, what are you going to do? To fret? To whine? O, I pray you do not thus dishonor your Lord and Master! Now, play the man,

play the man of God. Show the world that your God is worth ten thousand worlds to you.

Show rich men how rich you are in your poverty when the Lord God is your Helper. Show the strong man how strong you are in your weakness when underneath you are the everlasting arms. Now Man, now Man, *now* is your time to glorify God! You know there was no room for your courage before, but now there is space for feats of faith and valiant exploits. Our present mode of warfare bids fair to annihilate courage altogether, for now men fight at such a distance that the hand-to-hand fight is impossible. But in those brave days of old, when the troops of Rupert and of Cromwell met hand-to-hand, when uphill the Puritanical legions spurred their horses against the hosts of “the man of blood”—then there was room for bravery!

Then men could fight not at two miles’ distance but foot-to-foot. Then there was room for the solitary bravo to lead the way against a multitude. Then the scaling ladder clicked on the top of the wall and the brave man of the forlorn hope went up it step by step, with his cutlass between his teeth, until he reached the top. Then men could make themselves famous. But now, what with iron ships, and large Armstrong guns, there is hardly room for men to be courageous. But, Believer, you, in your lonely distress, have returned to “the brave days of old.”

When you had your regular income from the Consuls, when your business prospered, when you had your children and your friends about you, why there was no room for you to perform heroic deeds of resignation and trust! But now you are stripped, now at it, for your foes are before you. When the Duke of Wellington asked a soldier what kind of dress he would like to wear if he had to fight another Waterloo—“Please, Your Grace,” said the man, “I’d like to fight in my shirtsleeves.” Well now, you have come to that. You have nothing now to encumber you. You can fight in your shirtsleeves, and now is the time to win the victory. Be strong and very courageous, and the Lord your God shall certainly, as surely as He built the heavens and the earth, glorify Himself in your weakness and magnify His might in the midst of your distress.

The Lord help us to lean wholly on Him and never on ourselves. And let His name be had in remembrance while the earth endures. Amen and Amen.

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# **“IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?”**

## **NO. 2020**

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, APRIL 22, 1888,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?”  
Jeremiah 32:26, 27.*

THIS method of questioning the person to be instructed is known to teachers as the Socratic method. Socrates was likely, not so much to state a fact as to ask a question and draw out thoughts from those whom he taught. His method had long before been used by a far greater teacher. Putting questions is Jehovah’s frequent method of instruction. When the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind it was with a series of questions. “Know you the ordinances of Heaven? Can you set the dominion thereof in the earth? Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover you? Can you send lightning, that they may go and say unto you, Here we are?” and so forth.

Questions from the Lord are very often the strongest affirmations. He would have us perceive their absolute certainty. They are put in this particular form because He would have us think over His great thought and confirm it by our own reflections. The Lord shines upon us in the question and our answer to it is the reflection of His light. The Infallible One challenges a contradiction, or even a doubt. “Is anything too hard for Me?” is the strongest way of saying that nothing can be too hard for Him, for it proclaims defiance to Heaven and earth and Hell, to produce a difficulty which can perplex the Lord.

I invite you, therefore, dear Friends, to turn the question over in your minds till the omnipotence of Jehovah shall be your one all-absorbing thought. You cannot think of anything which renders it necessary to put a footnote to the text. Search well and see if it needs qualification. See whether there is an exception to the rule of absolute omnipotence. Revolve the Divine question long and well—“Is anything too hard for Me?” May your thoughts be awake at this time! May the Truth of the text take possession of your minds and fill them with its fragrance even as the woman’s box of ointment filled the room with its perfume!

**I.** I shall ask you, first, to consider the wonderful question of our text which the Lord put to the Prophet, VIEWING IT AS NECESSARY. The utterance of these words was no superfluity, there was need for them to be spoken. Flesh is frail and mortal minds are forgetful. And Jeremiah, great as he was, was but a man.

It was needful to tell the Prophet this though he knew it. He never doubted that the Lord is Almighty and yet it was needful for Jehovah Himself to speak home this Truth to his mind and heart. It is often necessary for the Lord Himself to drive home a Truth into the mind of His most faithful servant. None can teach as the Lord teaches. Truth is never fully known by the sons of Zion until the Lord teaches it to them. Hence it is written, “all your children shall be taught of the Lord.”

We learn much in many ways, but we learn nothing vitally and practically till the Spirit of God becomes our schoolmaster. The God of Truth must teach us the Truth of God or we shall never learn it. Jeremiah knew this Truth in his inmost soul—see the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of this chapter—“I prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm and there is nothing too hard for You.” He expressed the Truth admirably and yet the Lord saw it needful to give him a special Divine Revelation to impress it more fully upon his heart.

Brethren, it is one thing to know that such a doctrine is true and quite another thing to know the Truth itself. We need to be persuaded of it so as to embrace it. It is a glorious thing to see Truth blaze out as if written in letters of fire. We are far too apt to put Truth down in our creed and after that to shut it away from practical everyday use. We believe it and we should be indignant if anybody disputed it. And yet we ignore it. The Truth of God laid upon the shelf is as good as unknown. Doctrines which are disputed often have the most influence upon the community because they are brought clearly before men’s minds. And being threshed out, they yield seed for the sower and bread for the eater.

We read in one of the Epistles, “I put you in remembrance of these things, though you know them and are established in the present truth.” There is a Proverb which says that, “Truth is mighty and will prevail.” That is true, as far as it goes. But the Truth of God may be formally admitted and then it may be laid aside and so may never prevail. It is ill to treat a Truth like some great Egyptian king who is swathed in fine linen, embalmed with precious spices and pompously placed in the tomb with other honorable mummies. The Lord would not have the Truth of His own omnipotence thus dealt with, and therefore He comes forth from His secret place and speaks personally to His servant, saying, “Is anything too hard for Me?”

May the Lord do the same with us in reference to the precious Truths of His Gospel! May the Holy Spirit Himself take of the things of Christ and show them to us. Then shall we see them in their own light and know them as Divine realities!

But I go a step further and say that it is necessary for us to be thus specially instructed, even though we know a Truth well enough to plead it in prayer, as Jeremiah did when he cried, “There is nothing too hard for You.” That man is no mean scholar in the classes of Christ who has

learned to handle Scriptural Truths when pleading with the Lord. Oh, that we used more argument in prayer! Prayers are weak when they lack pleadings. “Bring forth your strong reasons, says the Lord.” The sinews of prayer are the holy arguments which we urge with the Lord, such as His own promises and our great needs—His own glory, His covenant, the malice of the enemy, and so forth. We know great Truths of God well when we see their bearing towards God in supplication.

And yet, though we may be able to plead it in supplication, we may not even, then, know the Truth to the full. O men of God, you that are fathers in Israel, may the Holy Spirit still teach you, till you know all the power and fullness of His Truth. In lowliness of spirit I doubt not that you still cry—

***“I find myself a learner yet,  
Unstable, weak and apt to slide.”***

May the Comforter continually bring to your remembrance the things which Jesus has told you till you know the heart and soul of them.

You gracious mothers in Israel, may God reveal Himself to you more and more and even those Truths which you already plead in your closet may He yet cause you to realize more vividly still. May you weave songs as well as prayers out of the Truth of God. This Truth of His omnipotence may He come and speak to our hearts as He did to the heart of Jeremiah—

***“Behold, I am Jehovah, the God of all flesh—  
Is there anything too hard for Me?”***

But I must yet go a step further. It is necessary for God thus to reveal Truth individually to each of our hearts even though we may have acted on it. Jeremiah had acted on the fact that nothing was too hard for God. He had but very little money. And in days of famine and pestilence money was very precious. A morsel of bread was worth silver during the siege. Poor Jeremiah had not many shekels and those shekels would all be wanted in one way and another for the necessaries of life. And yet he had counted into the scales the price of a piece of land at Anathoth, which he would probably never see, much less enjoy.

The Lord had bid him do so and he had done it without demur. Beloved, it is a great thing to be a little child before God, unquestioningly obedient to our Father’s will. We may not calculate consequences, nor estimate difficulties. We are to do what the Lord tells us, as He tells us, when He tells us. O you Jeremiahs, it is—

***“Yours not to reason why,  
Yours at all price to buy.”***

Jeremiah did not doubt, debate, or even delay. He signed the deed and took care to have it properly preserved. If you see any difficulty, obey the Lord first and seek an explanation afterwards, for so the Prophet did. He obeyed in the full confidence that nothing was too hard for God.

After his obedience he began to look back on what he had done and to be considerably bewildered while trying to make out how God would jus-

tify what He had done. Elijah himself was faint, though he had taken the Prophets of Baal and slain them before the Lord—but the faintness came *after* the conflict and not before it. This is much the best time for faintness, if we faint at all. He was the Prophet of fire, a man of iron firmness for his Master, yet after the strong excitement had passed he was overcome and it was needful for his Lord to revive him.

The best of men are men at the best. If the Lord lifts you up into the purity and dignity of a child-like faith, yet you will have your moments when you will cry, “Lord, speak to me Yourself again, even though it be out of the whirlwind. And let me know that I have done all these things according to Your word and not after my own fancy.” Even the practice of Truth does not raise us above the need of having it again and again laid home to the soul. So, you see, our gracious God applies to our hearts the Truth which we know, which we plead and which we practice—that it may come even yet more fully into our soul and abide there.

Another necessity for this arises out of further manifestations with which we are to be favored. God had caused Jeremiah to know His omnipotence so far but he was to see still more of it. Faith has led you into marvelous places. But there are greater things before you and the Lord presses Truth upon you that you may receive more of it. Did you ever climb a mountain? A friend of mine, when among the Alps, asserted confidently that he could reach the top of a certain mountain in half-an-hour. It certainly looked very near us but my eye had been better educated to estimate distances among mountains and I assured him that it would take him all the day to stand upon that ridge.

The fact is, that when you have climbed one stiff bit of hill you find yourself bound to go down into a valley before you can tackle the next ascent. There are hills above hills and one summit is a sort of lookout from which you see that you have much further to go. That which looked like a part of the side of the hill may really be a mountain by itself. And when you have ascended it, you have the cheering privilege of seeing that you are now at the bottom of the next. In fact, although you are decidedly higher, you often seem to have further to go than when you started.

It is just so with our experience of Divine things—when we know the Lord to the full of our capacity, that capacity enlarges and we begin to learn again. We know more and for that very reason are far more conscious of our ignorance than we were at the first. The Lord Himself came to His servant Jeremiah and thus prepared him for those greater things which He was about to reveal. The Lord had told him what to do and he had done it and thus he had believed up to the highest degree of that which was revealed to him. And therefore the Lord was going to reward his obedient faith by committing to him other mysteries and prophecies of the future.

The city was to be burned and to be destroyed. God would wash out the footprints of sin in the blood of the sinners and lay their land utterly

waste. And yet the day would come when the scattered people would come back and lands and vineyards would be bought and sold, whereof the buying of the field at Anathoth was a type and a pledge. Then the Lord would restore the nation to more than its former prosperity and make with the people an Everlasting Covenant that He would not turn away from them to do them good and would put His fear in their hearts that they should not depart from Him.

All that he had already believed would prepare Jeremiah to believe in this amazing blessing. Possibly some of you imagine that it would be an easy thing for him to believe well of Israel but, indeed, you forget how the people had treated him. He had been dealing with them patiently and tearfully for many years and they had proved a most perverse, rebellious and cruel people. They had jested at his tears, disbelieved his prophecies and refused his warnings. He was even then in prison for having spoken the Truth. So that it needed that God Himself should come to him and cheer him as to these people, saying, “I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?”

The stiff-necked people could be brought to obedience and should be, for the Lord Himself would do it. The Lord would take away the stony heart out of their flesh and make them a lovingly obedient people. This was impossible with Jeremiah but possible with Jehovah. He will yet be glorified even in the midst of those who have dishonored Him and despised His Prophets. Thus you see how wise it was of the Lord to repeat to His servant that which he knew, pleaded and acted on—that he might be made to believe still more fully in the all-sufficiency of the Lord his God.

**II.** Under the second head of our discourse we shall look at the text REGARDING IT AS DECISIVE. “Then came the Word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?” This argument is decisive. For the argument is fetched from the Lord Himself. Note this—in his prayer, Jeremiah drew his encouragement from what the Lord had done. Observe “Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm and there is nothing too hard for You.”

Creation is a fine argument. The God that made the heavens and the earth without help from any can surely do anything He pleases. He who made the mountains and the sea and the isles thereof can do anything. He who created the skies and made the stars also in the far-off space—those great and mighty orbs—what is there that He cannot do? This was good argument for Jeremiah. But Jehovah does not point to His works, nor quote creation nor Providence—He speaks of Himself—the source of all, from where a thousand earths and heavens might flow like streams from a fountain. There it stands in its majestic simplicity—“I am Jehovah.”

When we look to God alone and think, by the help of His Spirit, of who He is and what He must be, then we realize that nothing can be too hard

for Him. Alas, what feeble notions we have of God! I dare say we think that we magnify Him but in reality we belittle Him with our highest thoughts. When we go down to the sea of trial and do business on great waters of trouble we find that we know little enough of God. When we see His wonders on the deep we are astonished and overwhelmed and if one of His storms should arise, our faith is staggered. If we did but rise to an idea of God—if we could but form a fair idea of the immeasurable greatness of His power—doubt and mistrust would become impossible. “Is anything too hard for Me?” says Jehovah.

Meditate much upon the Divine Father, Creator and Preserver. Meditate upon the Divine Son, the risen Redeemer, who has all power in Heaven and in earth. Meditate upon the sacred Spirit, of whom the rushing mighty wind in the tornado is but a faint symbol and you will feel that here is the source of all might. “I am Jehovah.” The argument takes you to Himself and coming to you from His own mouth the reason is a decisive one.

But He means us also to see the argument as founded on His name, “I am Jehovah.” I am always sorry that our revisers had not the courage of their knowledge and had left the Divine name as it is in the original Hebrew and given us the word “Jehovah” where they usually put LORD. It is a name of awe and glory, and the Christian Church must get back to it and return more distinctly to the worship of Jehovah. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—this God is our God forever and ever. And we might more clearly have recognized this if the incommunicable name had been preserved to us in our version of the sacred Scriptures.

The name brings out the personality of God. Those who say that there is no God, are, some of them, forced to admit that there is a central force—a power which makes for righteousness. They talk of an impersonal something but we believe in a personal God and he who has no personal God has, in truth, no God at all. I cannot call an *unknown force* my Father, and I cannot address my trust or my prayer to it. It, indeed! The Creator of persons an it! We want *Him*, a Person, a conscious, thinking, acting personality. This we have here—“I am Jehovah.” The name signifies self-existence. God does not exist because of His surroundings—He draws nothing from without. His life is in Himself. He derives no support or aid from anything outside of Himself. Indeed, there is nothing which has not come of Him. All things were made by Him and He sustains all things by the word of His power.

The name of Jehovah reminds us that He has within Himself sufficiency for all His will. He has adequate power of performance for all His purposes and decrees. Jehovah wills and it is done. He has created legions of angels but He borrows nothing from them. He can truly say, “I Am and there is none beside Me.” Those mysterious living creatures which are nearest to His Throne are His creatures and not His helpers. The best instructed and the most willing of His servants derive their all from Him

but supply Him with nothing. Remembering the name, Shaddai, God All-Sufficient, we understand all the better His question, “Is anything too hard for Me?”

He lays the burden of the question upon His own Self. The whole stress of that which is hard in itself and too hard for others, He meets with that word, “I am Jehovah.” All the power that can possibly be required in any imaginable case is in that name “Jehovah”! It is an immeasurable word—the eagle’s wing cannot rise to its height. He that dives into the abyss cannot reach its depth. Jehovah’s name is higher than Heaven, deeper than Hell, broader than space and greater than all things. What can we know of this infinite Word, “I am Jehovah”?

Moreover, the name sets forth the Truth that He is immutable—He is “I Am that I Am.” Time does not affect Him, nor change come near Him. He is never less than Jehovah. He cannot be more. We may at any moment of the dark night rest as confidently upon the I AM as in the brightest day. In fact, the meaning of that glorious word is infinite and unutterable. I do not wonder that the Jew should fear to write it and substitute for it the word Adonai, or Lord. We, casting away the superstition, feel an equal reverence and when our God says to us, “I am Jehovah,” we bow before Him and confess that all questioning of possibility is ended forever.

Yet in the text please notice that the argument is also founded on the Lord’s relation to man. “I am the Lord, the God of all flesh.” There is no other God for man anywhere or at any time save Jehovah. The gods of the heathen, aha, aha! They deserve no such name—they are idols but our God made the heavens. There is one living and true God for all flesh. There is, there can be no other. There is no room for another god, for our God fills all things. He is the God of all flesh, for “it is He that made us and not we ourselves.”

We have neither been evolved by Law, nor struck out by chance. The wretched *it*, which idiots talk of, is no sire of ours—Jehovah is the Maker of all flesh—

***“His sovereign power, without our aid,  
Made us of clay and formed us men.”***

We rejoice that all flesh have such a God. Yet note that before the Lord, men are only “flesh.” Hear this, you kings and great ones of the earth! He calls you “flesh.” How sorrowfully do we see the truth of this in the heart-rending sickness of one of the greatest and best beloved of potentates! How wretchedly do we see it amidst the pomp of the funeral when the greatest of the great are carried out to be laid in the pasture of the worm!

Hear this, you men of light and leading! You who have bedecked your names with all the letters of the alphabet! You, too, with all your learning, are but flesh. Do I hear you say of such a one—he is a great man? Is “great” a word which can be linked with flesh? What is the grandeur, the glory, the pomp of *flesh*? All flesh is grass and grass is cut down and withers. Right surely is he accursed that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm. You tell me of the charms of beauty. You sing of your beloved so

white and ruddy—think what they will come to by-and-by. Flesh! Ah me! Leave it to itself. Is there anything fouler or more putrid than flesh when God calls back the spirit which quickens it?

Behold the harvest of flesh in the garner of the sepulcher! See how the great reaper heaps up corruption! This is what we are, Brothers and Sisters. God sees us in our true condition and He calls us “flesh.” Yet I do rejoice that, while we are flesh, He is our God. How is the worm linked to the immortal! Happy men who have such a God! Not that flesh and blood, as they are, can inherit the kingdom of God, nor that corruption can dwell with incorruption. But for Believers in the Lord Jesus there is a resurrection which shall lift us into a body of a nobler sort. We shall soon be rid of this carrion and we shall be aloft with Him where He dwells. And then, in the day of His appearing, even this poor body shall put on glory and in our flesh shall we see God.

As the Lord makes the dull gold of earth into clear gold, like unto transparent glass, even so He makes this vile body to be like the glorious body of our risen and ascended Lord. We bow before the Lord, even we who are but dust and ashes, yes, worse—who are but flesh—and we bless His name, that yet He deigns to call us His people and to be our God. The argument is that since Jehovah is the God of all flesh He can effect His purposes by men and work among them things which seem impossible. The argument is so great that it puts all other arguments out of court.

Poor Jeremiah is puzzled—he has been buying that acre or two of land which he will never see and his pockets are empty. And Baruch has been putting away the title-deeds in an earthen vessel, with a half-smile upon his face. The Prophet sits down and thinks over the transaction and his reason as the devil whispers, “What a fool you are! You might just as well have bought a horn of the new moon.” Yet, somehow it must be made to appear a wise and sensible transaction, for the Lord never makes fools of His people. Jeremiah feels that as the command came from Jehovah, his own judgment is out of court—it is for the Lord and not for him to make good the transaction.

All Jerusalem was to be burned and destroyed. What could be the use of his purchase? But, then, the condition of Jerusalem was not the point to be considered. God had said, “I am Jehovah,” and that had put the King of Judah and his mighty men out of the reckoning. Is anything too hard for Jehovah? Come, Jeremiah, rake up your difficulties. Set in order the discouraging circumstances. Call in your friends, who all shake their heads at you and point their fingers to their brows, as much as to insinuate that you are a little gone from your senses. And then, answer them all with this—“nothing is too hard for Jehovah.”

This clears the deck of every doubt that would board your vessel. This is the blessed argument which answers every difficulty and sets faith upon a rock from which it cannot be removed! “My soul, wait you only upon God. For my expectation is from Him.”



**III.** Having led you thus far, I now would have you follow me in something practical, namely, APPLYING IT IN DETAIL. The text says, “Is anything too hard for Me?” Apply this question to the justification of your obedience. When you know what is right it will happen, more often than not, that to do right will be costly or at least risky—and if you judge after the manner of worldly-wise men you will consider yourselves likely to be losers by obeying God. You may lose friends, reputation, assistance and peace. This question of loss is answered at once by this fact—if you do what God bids you—the responsibility of your conduct lies with Him and He will bear you through. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

As He justified the action of His servant Elijah at Carmel and justified the purchase made by Jeremiah, so will He justify all the obedient actions of His people. He will bring forth our judgment as the light and our righteousness as the noonday. Apply this glorious Truth of God to the sure fulfillment of all the Divine promises. Consider a great one to begin with. This chapter evidently shows that the Jews are one day to be converted and restored. Do you believe it? “Oh,” says one, “that would be a wonder”! It will be a wonder and the text may be read, “Is anything too wonderful for Me?”

He can call them off from money-hunting—can take away their unbelief concerning the Lord Jesus. He can cause the lips which now revile the name of the Crucified to sing praises to the Nazarene. Glory be to His name, He can cause the waters of Siloa, which flow softly, again to flow with blessing and make the desolate land again to blossom as the rose. They that crucified the Lord of Glory shall look on Him whom they pierced and shall mourn for Him. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

Apply this to any case of great sin. Select anyone whom you knew to be especially hard-hearted and pray for him earnestly and hopefully. Choose out some glaring sinner, or special heretic, or fierce hater of religion and pray for him. You say to yourself, “I will choose an easier case.” Do not. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Will you, in your judgment, set anyone beyond the reach of mercy and out of the bounds of grace? Make an application of our text to the most desperate and loathsome sinner and believe that nothing is too hard for the Lord. O chief of sinners, if you are here this morning—blasphemer, swearer, thief, drunkard, whoremonger, harlot, take home this question to yourself—Thus says the Lord, “Is anything too hard for Me?”

If you believe in the Lord Jesus, God has saved you, saved you now. He can and will wash every believing sinner from all his sins through the blood of Jesus and He will graciously blot out all his iniquities. Remember how He forgave David and Manasseh and the dying thief and Saul of Tarsus and the woman that was a sinner? May the Holy Spirit make a personal application of omnipotent love to each of you who now feel your sins! Salvation is not too hard a thing for the Lord.

Apply this to difficult Truths of God. I will put before you a problem. There is the Truth of man’s free agency. It is an easy cut, you know, to deny that there is such a thing as free will. But it is not fair, for men are responsible, free agents, and God has endowed them with will. But the knotty question arises—if man acts freely in his sinful actions how can predestination be a fact? If every man acts after his own will, how, then, does God foreordain all things? I answer, “Is anything too hard for Jehovah?” The solving of this great problem constrains me to worship the Lord. For He does solve it in actual history.

I could understand God’s executing His purposes upon material substances such as stones and wood. But this is the grandeur of His power, that while He leaves men free agents and does not in any case lead them to sin, yet they do act exactly as He foretold that they would do. The responsibility lies with them, for they do as they please. But yet His Divine purpose is effected. Peter said to the Jews concerning our Lord, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” They did their evil deed most willingly and yet it was in the Divine purpose from of old.

They were eager to destroy Christ out of diabolical malice and yet all the while they were the instruments of the death by which we are redeemed from destruction. Have faith enough to believe that Jehovah rules in the world of mind as well as in that of matter. He does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world. Consider another hard case—the hardest of all—human salvation. Sin must bring with it punishment. It is an inevitable Law of moral government that if you break the commandment, the command will be avenged upon you.

Yet God is merciful and He is willing to forgive sin. How can it be possible for God to exercise the fullness of His mercy and yet discharge the necessities of His justice? All men and all angels put together would have made but one fool in trying to solve that difficulty. The Lord has answered it. He gave His Son to bear our sin. Jehovah Jesus died and presented Himself as the great sacrifice for our iniquities. On yonder Cross the Law is honored and man is justly saved. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

Bring here your own little problems. You are always getting into tangles and snarls. Prudent friends try to help you but the tangle grows worse. Bring your hard cases to One who is wiser than Solomon and He will draw out a clear thread for you. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” After Calvary nothing is intricate or difficult. The atoning sacrifice is such a triumph of wisdom and grace as can never be paralleled. Love here wore the girdle of omnipotence. All things are possible since Jesus has died. We believe in the deep depravity of humanity but Jehovah can change its nature. The Lord of Love can make sinners into saints. We tremble lest some have lost the very capacity for virtue. We ask in despair, “Can the Ethio-

pian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” But with God such marvels are everyday things.

For the salvation of great multitudes we are also exercised. We look on wicked London and despair of it. We look on China and India and Africa and say, “Can these dry bones live?” “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” The tears are in our eyes as we think of the Congo and the heroic ones who have perished by its pestilential waters. Will Africa ever stretch out its hands to Christ? “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

We look upon the Church at home in the present day. It is steeped in worldliness and smothered with false doctrine. Many have turned aside from the Gospel and given themselves up to a thousand errors—how can the evil be cured? It is to be cured. It must be cured. It shall be cured, for thus says Jehovah—“Is anything too hard for Me?” If the Lord had left but one faithful man under Heaven He would with that one man deliver Israel. But He has reserved for Himself thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Let us have no fear about it but let us exhibit a boundless confidence. God’s Truth will win the day whoever comes against it. “Is anything too hard for Jehovah?”

I have lived to see and shall yet live to see such marvels in this respect as fill my mouth with laughter and my tongue with singing. “The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.” If the Lord waits a little it is that He may gain the more glory. If He even seems to draw back, does not many a man draw back when he is about to take the longer leap? Have you ever seen a man draw back his hand when he is about to strike a tremendous blow? God is never baffled—Jesus shall not fail, nor be discouraged. The living Christ has died in weakness once. But now that He lives He lives, in all the power and majesty of the living God. To what may we not apply the text, when Jehovah asks us, “Is anything too hard for Me?”

**IV.** Lastly, dear Friends, I beg you to treat the text as USING IT WITH DELIGHT. Time allows but few words. Use the text as a preventive of unbelieving sin. You say you are in a nasty hobble. I know you are. And therefore the devil says, “Put forth your hand unto iniquity.” An evil transaction seems the sure way to get you out of your difficulty. What? Do you wish to help the Lord? Do you dream that He needs your sin to aid Him in delivering you? Flee from the rash action. Let not your hand reproach you, as Crammer’s did. When at the stake he held it in the fire and cried, “That unworthy right hand,” because it had once signed a recantation.

Do not sin. Be poor, but be holy. Be straightforward and honest, come what may. God does not need the help of your sin in order that He may give you your daily bread. When I think of a man supposing that sin is necessary to help God’s Providence, I am ashamed. Even in what is right, our aid to God is like an ant lending help to an elephant. But to do wrong to help the Lord to provide for us is a sort of acted blasphemy. And such a

poor creature as you are, do you think that your foul finger is needed for God’s Divine work?

Away with the idea of its ever being needful to do wrong. Let all sins of haste, all tricks of policy, all compromises with error, all silence through the fear of consequences, all doings or not doings which would involve a blot on your conscience be put away forever. That filthy thing—temporizing and parleying with evil, which men call prudence—let it be hanged upon the gallows of scorn. Do God’s work thoroughly, heartily, intensely—and God will reward you in His grace.

Use it next for consolation in the time of trouble. You are now in a pit wherein there is no water—how can you ever get out? Listen—“Is anything too hard for the Lord?” It is worse than a pit, you say—it seems like a living Hell. The Lord can deliver you. Remember Jonah in the belly of the great fish which went down deeper and deeper till it seemed to dive below the bottoms of the mountains? It seemed all over with Jonah. But it was not so. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Jonah owned that “salvation is of the Lord,” and the fish was not able to imprison him any longer. Forth came Jonah to life and liberty. Jehovah has delivered those who trust in Him, and He will yet deliver us.

Next, use the text as a window through which you look with expectation. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Expect the unexpected to happen to you. He who whispers to himself—“God is going to do something for me that I have never looked for” is the brave man. “A storm is brewing,” cries one. Is it? My way of putting it is—rain is being prepared for the earth. Brethren, the Lord’s blessing is coming upon the Churches—look for it! Let this text be a stimulus to you to engage in great enterprises. Launch out into the deep. Do not always keep on fishing for shrimp along the shore.

Attempt great things for God. Attempt something which as yet you cannot do. Any fool can do what he can do. It is only the Believer who does what he cannot do. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Fall back upon omnipotence and then go forward in the strength of it.

Let the text be a reason for adoration. O You to whom nothing is hard, we adore You! We worship You with all our hearts and this day we believingly link our weakness with Your omnipotence. We trust You for life, for death, for eternity. Dear Savior, we trust You now with all our sins and sorrows. Nothing is too hard for You, therefore save Your poor servants according to the riches of Your grace—

***“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,  
On Your kind arms I fall;  
Be You my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my All.”***

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# JEHOVAH'S CHALLENGE

## NO. 2675

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 20, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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*“Is there anything too hard for Me?”*  
*Jeremiah 32:27.*

A Truth of God may be sincerely believed by us and yet it may do us good to have it put in the form of a question. As I read the chapter, I called your attention to Jeremiah's confident declaration to God, “There is nothing too hard for You.” Yet in our text, which is only a few verses further on in the chapter, the Lord says to this same Prophet, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” I think the explanation of this mystery is that we do not always thoroughly believe even all that we do truly believe. We may believe it so as to have no doubt about it, but not so believe it as to be prepared to put it into practice. Jeremiah might say to the Lord, “There is nothing too hard for You,” and he might be confident of the truth of his words, yet there might be, in the background, so much mistrust, possibly imperceptible to himself, that it might be necessary for God to put the matter to him in the form of a question and to say, even to believing Jeremiah, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” Ah, we little know what unbelievers we really are! The most of us are scarcely aware of what an awful amount of skepticism still lies lurking within our breasts, only waiting for the opportunity to show itself.

Besides, dear Friends, you must always remember that it is one thing to believe a general doctrine, but it is quite another thing to make a particular and personal application of it. Jeremiah believes that God can drive away the Chaldeans and leave the land free for the use of its owners—but can he believe that the little plot of ground at Anathoth, for which he has just paid 17 shekels of silver, will ever be worth the money it has cost him? I expect the devil began to inject doubts into his mind concerning that transaction by saying to him, “Can you trust God about that purchase of land?” So the Lord does not, at once, accept Jeremiah's declaration when the Prophet says, “There is nothing too hard for You,” but He puts to him a direct question relating to that very point, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” Some of you think you could believe concerning the *conversion of a nation*, but do you never have doubts concerning the *conversion of a perverse child*? You believe in the peacefulness that is to reign during the millennium, but have you never had a doubt about the peace of your own domestic circle? You could trust God, you say, in a storm at sea, but can you trust Him about that bad debt on your books?

You could depend upon Him, you say, in death and throughout eternity, but can you depend upon Him about that trifling matter which is just now bothering you and giving you so much vexation? Is there anything, great or small, that is too hard for God? That is the question I am going to try to answer. I throw down the challenge, in the name of the glorious God who said to Jeremiah, "Is there anything too hard for Me?" Now is your opportunity to bring up your hard things, your difficult things, your apparently impossible things and to see how they are affected by this challenge of the Most High—"Is there anything too hard for Me?"

In calling attention to this challenge of Jehovah, I ask you to remember, first, that *the hardest conceivable things have already been done by God*. Next, I will mention *some of the hard things which remain to be done*. And, lastly, since nothing is too hard for the Lord, I will try to answer the short and simple question, "What then?"

**I.** First, then, I want you to remember that THE HARDEST CONCEIVABLE THINGS HAVE ALREADY BEEN DONE BY GOD.

Let us begin at the beginning, with *God's work of creation*, as Jeremiah does in this very chapter, and we shall then say, with him, that Jehovah "made the Heaven and the earth." There was a time when there was nothing that had been created and God dwelt alone. There was no raw material out of which to construct the universe, yet, when it pleased Him to do so, everything was formed and fashioned by God out of nothing. What, then, can He not do after having done that? I ask you to also think what God did afterwards. At first, when He made the world, He left it for ages in an unfinished state, for "in the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void." But, long afterwards, when He came to put it in order, and make it fit for man's abode—and then to create man to have dominion over all the earth—who was with Him to help Him? "With whom took He counsel and who instructed Him?" With His own hands He piled up the mountains and dug the foundations of the great deep. His unaided power achieved it all! Everything was in darkness even after He had made it, but He spoke, and said, "Light, be," "and there was light." Everything was in confusion and chaos. The earth and the waters were mingled together, but again He spoke, and divided the land from the sea, and the clouds rose up to paint the sky, the rivers sought their bed and old Ocean was girt about with his belt of sand!

God did it all, but, even then, the world was dead. No life was anywhere to be seen. But again God spoke and, straightway, the earth was green with grass, herbs and trees! The waters teemed with fish, all kinds of birds began to fly in the open firmament of Heaven and multitudes of beasts ranged the plain. Then, last of all, God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." Now, whenever we doubt the power of God to do anything, let us read again the first chapter of the Book of Genesis and then say, with Jeremiah, "Ah, Lord God, behold, You have

made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You!" There is nothing which the Lord did not make and He made it all unaided. He did it all alone, by His own unguided wisdom and skill. Therefore, one of the hardest things that ever could be done, was done by God when He accomplished His great work of Creation!

Now let us think of His work under a different aspect, that is, *His work of destruction*. And let any who doubt the power of God tremble as they hear or read how He has displayed it. Again and again has the Lord shown how easily He can rid Himself of His adversaries and shake them off, as Paul shook off the viper into the fire. Go far back in the history of the world and note how all mankind had become corrupt—they who ought to have been holy and separate from sinners, had mixed themselves with the ungodly—and on a certain day, when God's patience had at last reached its limit, He spoke and down came torrents of rain, descending with tremendous power and, at the same time, the sluices of the great deep were unlocked and up leaped the fountains that, till then, had been sealed! And, very soon, over the whole earth, there was one great sheet of water, for God had determined that He would destroy all flesh from off the face of the earth, save a "few, that is, eight souls," whom He had housed within the ark. Terrible as the work of destruction must have been, it was done as God determined and, after that, let none ever think that God cannot overcome His enemies! Let no one ever imagine that a warfare can be successfully waged against Him! When He bares His arm for battle, His foes shall all flee before Him like chaff before the wind, or they shall fall before Him like the wheat falls before the reaper. He can create and He can destroy! In looking back upon what He has already done, we can see that He has accomplished inconceivably great and difficult things both in making and in unmaking. "Ah," you say, "perhaps these are sublime things on an enormous scale." Yes, but God is great on *any* scale, and almighty wherever you perceive the signs and tokens of His working!

Think, next, of *His work for the defense and deliverance of His chosen people*. Read the Book of Exodus—you cannot too often read the wondrous story of how, when the children of Israel were few in Egypt, God nevertheless preserved them. And how, when they multiplied and the cruel Pharaoh arose and tried, first, to curb and then to crush them, God remembered His people and determined to bring them out of the land of bondage. Moses and Aaron said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go." How that proud monarch bridled up when he heard those words! "Who is the Lord," he said, "that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?" He soon knew who Jehovah was, for plague followed plague till everything that Egypt had was destroyed and, last of all, God "smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham." Then the oppressors opened wide their gates and Egypt was glad when Israel departed. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, the Lord brought forth His people! And when they came to the Red Sea and the Egyptians pursued them—and the tyrant thought that he would surely destroy them, for the wilderness had shut them in—

then the Lord divided the sea and led His people through the depths in safety! "But the sea overwhelmed their enemies," and on the farther shore, Miriam and the women joined in the jubilant refrain to the triumphant song of Moses and the Israelite host, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea."

Brothers and Sisters, after this mighty act of Jehovah, you need never imagine that He cannot deliver His people! You need not suppose that a little Church, or a little island, or a little nation shall be domineered over by the proud ones of the earth! If God shall but repeat that ancient command, "Touch not My anointed, and do My Prophets no harm," it will be a case of, "Hands off," for the oppressors, however mighty they may be—and they will have to learn that they must not touch the elect of the Most High to do them harm!

If you need another instance of God's wonderful working, I remind you that harder things than we need to have done for us by God have been done by Him in *the work of His Providence*. Think how He led His people through the wilderness and fed them for 40 years, though all that time they never stirred a plow in the furrow, or gathered fruit from fig trees or from olive trees. A pathless desert was the highway of the millions who were His people! Heaven dropped with daily manna for them and the smitten Rock yielded a perennial stream to quench their thirst. When they craved flesh to eat, the Lord sent them innumerable feathered fowl. Their garments waxed not old upon them, neither did their feet swell for 40 years in that great and terrible wilderness. When you think of all this, my poor Brother, you may well say, "If God could do that great work, surely He can provide for *my* little family." Of course He can! The God who could, for 40 years, feed three millions of people who marched or stopped with nothing but bare sand beneath them, can much more feed you, O you of little faith!

All these are great things that God has done, but I am going to take you into much greater depths than we have traversed yet, for all this is as nothing compared with what God has done in His *great work of Redemption*. Creation is shorn of its glory. The terrors of God at the deluge may almost be forgotten. The deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea may take quite a secondary place and the leading of the people through the wilderness may be put quite in the background when I begin to tell the story of our redemption! This is the hardest thing, the most amazing thing God has ever done! His Son came down to live among men! He took on Him a human form and was born of the Virgin Mary, sheltered in a stable, cradled in a manger! This is such a miracle that all the other miracles I ever heard of seem commonplace affairs compared with this wonder of wonders—that God should take upon Himself the nature of man and then— still more marvelous—take upon Himself the sin of His people and bear the awful load of their transgression, all the burden of their punishment and endure it even to the last pang, drinking up the cup of Infinite Justice to its dregs! Never was God so Godlike as when Jesus died upon the Cross! Never was Omnipotence so potent as when He died that men might live, crushing the old dragon as He bled, leading



captivity captive while He was, Himself, bound to the accursed tree, casting death into an eternal grave when He, Himself, was laid in the sepulcher! I cannot adequately tell you the story of all these marvels! The very angels in Heaven have been set a-wondering ever since that day—and they have been continually telling to one another, over and over again, the story of the God that loved and died and, by His love, death and living again, defeated Satan, conquered death and led captivity captive for all His people! I feel more inclined to burst out with, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” than to say even a single syllable more concerning this greatest of all God’s works!

Certainly, in what I have said, I have fully proved that the hardest conceivable things have already been done by God and, therefore, He may well ring out the challenge of our text, “Is there anything too hard for Me?”

**II.** Now, secondly, I am going to mention SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH REMAIN TO BE DONE.

The hardest things have been done by God—what remains to be done? Look within you, look around you. Find all the difficult things that you need to have done for you and then see how easy it is for the Lord to meet your every need! *Some of the hard things relate to temporal matters.* “It would be a great thing for God to deliver me out of all my troubles,” says one, “for I am sorely afflicted and tried.” But, really, my dear Friend, after all that God has done, will you, *can you, dare you* think to yourself that He cannot deliver you? Are you His child? Do you love Him? Do you trust Him? Then, surely, you will not say that He will leave you—that He will forsake you—or that He cannot help you! I am certain that you would be ashamed to lead anybody to think that God could not deliver you, yet you have, perhaps, allowed the thought to creep into your own mind. Then drive it out at once! Do not let it remain there a moment longer. God can help you and in very simple ways, too.

I have known Him deliver His people in very extraordinary and unexpected ways. There was a poor man, not long ago, who had no bread for his family and they were almost starving. One of his children said to him, “Father, God sent bread to Elijah by ravens.” “Ah, yes,” he replied, “but God does not use birds in that way now.” He was a cobbler and a short time after he spoke those words, there flew into his workshop a bird, which he saw was a rare one, so he caught it and put it in a cage. A little later, a servant came in and said to him, “Have you seen such-and-such a bird?” “Yes,” he answered, “it flew into my shop, so I caught it and put it into a cage.” “It belongs to my mistress,” said the maid. “Well, then, take it,” he replied, and away she went. Perhaps you think that there was not anything very remarkable in that incident, but when the girl took the bird to her mistress, the lady sent her back to thank the cobbler for his care of her pet—and to give him half a sovereign! So, if the bird did not actually bring the bread and meat in its mouth, it was made the medium of feeding the hungry family although the father had doubted whether such a thing could happen! God has blessed ways of delivering His people if they will but trust Him. I do not doubt, if this were the time for such testimony to be given, that every Christian here could tell some

story of the way in which God has delivered in time past. "Oh, yes," says one, "I could, I know." What, you? Yet you are the very one who doubts God's power to deliver you! Cover your face for shame and cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me! Forgive my unbelief and help Your poor child to trust Your fatherly care and to know that You will provide for me."

But, next, *some of the hard things relate to spiritual matters*. I fancy that I hear someone say, "I have a trouble which causes me more anxiety than the things you have just mentioned. I know that God can provide for me in temporal matters, but I have a very hard fight of it, spiritually. I am tempted, first in one way, and then in another, till I sometimes fear that I shall not be able to hold out. Satan appears to know just where I am weakest. He shoots at the joints of my harness and all his fiery darts seem to sorely wound me. I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy." David said something very much like that, yet he did not perish by the hand of his enemy, King Saul. He died in his bed, rejoicing in his God! And very likely it will be the same with you. At any rate, if you are trusting in Christ, you shall not be overcome, for greater is He that is for you than all that can be against you! Do you believe that you, a child of God, cannot be so helped by Him that you shall be able to overcome any kind of sin? Surely you cannot believe anything so dishonoring to your Heavenly Father?

If you do, I do not. I cannot tell how God's mind comes into contact with man's mind, but I know that it does—that His Spirit comes into most intimate connection with our spirit and so influences our spirit that the sin, which once seemed to fascinate and charm us, loses all its attractions and delights. And the doubts and fears, which for a while depress us, have, by-and-by, no depressing power whatever! You remember how Eliphaz said to Job, "At destruction and famine you shall laugh," and God often helps His servants to laugh at those very things which before seemed great burdens to them. There is nothing in your spiritual case that is too hard for the Lord—so bring it before Him in faith and prayer this very hour!

I fancy that I can hear someone else saying, "*But I am not God's child!* Oh, how I wish that I could be! Alas, I am a great sinner." What has been your sin, my Friend? I do not want you to tell me—I only ask you what it was that you may tell it to yourself, and then answer the Lord's question, "Is there anything too hard for Me?" If Christ had not died, it would have been useless to ask you that question, but since Jesus died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." And since it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin," can there be anything conceivable that is too hard for the Lord? There is no sin which you have committed which the blood of Christ cannot wash out if you believe in Him! Though you were even red with murder, black with blasphemy and covered from head to foot with the filthiness of lust, yet, on your believing in Jesus, you will be made, then and there, as white as snow! Free pardon for every kind of sin is proclaimed to every soul that will believe in Jesus Christ. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," if they will only trust in Christ. So, in this sense, there is

nothing too hard for the Lord. There is no sinner too guilty for the Lord to forgive when he trusts the Savior's Sacrifice on Calvary.

"Yes," says another friend, "I can understand that I can have forgiveness, but *this* is a greater difficulty to me—I have been so long a transgressor of God's Law that *I do not think I ever could conquer my sin.*" No, I know that *you* could not and I want you to be fully persuaded that you could not! And then, when you are perfectly convinced upon that point, let me ask you this question, "Is even this thing—this power of overcoming sin—too hard for *the Lord*? Your successful resistance is out of the question—you cannot accomplish anything in this great conflict, for you are nobody and nothing—but is the struggle too hard for the Lord?" It often happens that a man says, "Well, I know that I have been a great drunkard. Drinking has been my besetting sin, but I can leave it off when I like, and become a sober man at once." So he does and he signs the pledge and wears his blue ribbon. But, by-and-by, the color of that ribbon ought to be ruby rather than blue, for the man has given way to strong drink again! The reason of his fall is that *he cured himself* and so the disease came back. But the drunkard who says, "I am afraid to trust myself, for this intemperance has got such a hold on me that I never can get out of its clutches by my own power. O God, deliver me! I trust You to save me! I look to Jesus Christ to save me!" He is the man who *shall* be helped and he shall be more than a conqueror through the might of God! Let me assure you, my dear Friend, that there is no form of sin from which you cannot be delivered by the Grace of God. After many years of vice—prolonged, continued, inveterate, *horrible* vice—men have not only been reformed and reclaimed, but they have been renewed, sanctified and made pure and holy!

I wonder how you would have felt, if you had been visiting in certain of the South Sea Islands, and you had been sitting at the Lord's Table with some good old deacon, and then, after you had been eating and drinking with him at the Communion and had heard him pray and preach, somebody had whispered in your ear, "That man used to be a cannibal. He has murdered many." "Oh," you would say, "and has the Grace of God changed such a lion as that into a lamb?" It would have struck you as a very remarkable illustration of the power of Divine Grace, yet there are, even in this Tabernacle tonight, cases that are quite as striking as that! If you could know all about them, you would agree with me that it is so. God's Grace can do marvelous things! It can change lions into lambs, ravens into doves and sinners into saints! In fact, the proof of Christianity is the moral change which it is continually working in the minds and lives of men and women. Above all other miracles stands this one—the miracle by which the dishonest are made just, the impure are made clean and the disobedient are brought to the obedience of faith.

Truly, there is no case that is too hard for the Lord. I suppose a good many of you never heard that "Satan" came into this place, one Sabbath, and was converted. [The remarkable story of this man's conversion is related at greater length in *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography*, Volume IV, with other similar narratives. Visit Pilgrim Publications for availability and pricing at [http://www.pilgrimpublications.com/spurgeon.htm#\\_BIOGRAPHIES](http://www.pilgrimpublications.com/spurgeon.htm#_BIOGRAPHIES).] "No," you say, "surely that has never happened." Yes, it has! I can vouch for the truth of the story. There was a sailor who lived at Wivenhoe, in

Essex, a man who was such a vile blasphemer and who lived altogether such a disgraceful life, that the people called him, "Old Satan." When the ship in which "Satan" sailed, came to London, a godly seaman, who was on the same vessel, persuaded the man to come to hear me. He was the more willing to do so because I once lived at Colchester, which is not far from Wivenhoe. As he heard the Word, the Lord touched "Old Satan's" heart and there was never before such a stir in Wivenhoe as when he went home, a converted man, to tell other sinners the power of the Grace of God! If there is anybody here who might be called a very devil, let him come and trust Christ, and he shall be saved straightway. Come along with you, poor slave of Satan! Leave your old master this very minute! Do not give him even a moment's notice, but speed away to the great Father's house and He will receive you, for He is expecting you! No, more—it is He who is *drawing you*, by His gracious Spirit! And it is His Son who has said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." God grant that many who have been hard sinners, may come to Christ and find in Him eternal life!

Once more, Jehovah's challenge, "Is there anything too hard for Me?" *contains a lesson for you who are trying to serve the Lord.* I want you also to catch the meaning and the message of my text—there is nothing too hard for God, so He can save the children in your Sunday school class! He can bless the people of the district where you visit. He can help you to talk to that dying person whom you went to see yesterday. There is nothing too hard for the Lord, so He can bless you, city missionary, to that dark slum which gives you so much anxiety. He can bless you, dear Friend, at that street corner where you scarcely get through a dozen sentences before you are interrupted! This question of Jehovah, "Is there anything too hard for Me?" seems to be like a rallying cry from God to urge all His followers to press on, like heroes, without a doubt about the victory! "Courage, my comrades," said Mohammed to his troops, one day, when the battle was going against them—"I can hear the angels coming to our rescue." There were no angels flying to help *him*, but they are always coming to aid *us* when we need them, for, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" If we are truly trusting in the living God, He will surely send the heavenly principalities and powers to help us, so that, in our weakness, His strength shall be glorified and sinners shall be saved!

I can believe in the conversion of the Jews when I hear Jehovah's challenge, "Is there anything too hard for Me?" I can believe in the spread of His Gospel over the whole world when I hear Him ask, "Is there anything too hard for Me?" I can believe in my Master setting up a Kingdom that shall have no bounds and no end, when I hear His royal enquiry, "Is there anything too hard for Me?" Very often, when we get among men and women, we seem to be surrounded by a lot of children playing with toys, for they bother, hinder, hamper and only increase our own helplessness. But when we get clear of them and just look to God, alone, then we seem to have elbowroom for our work. A thoroughly consecrated man can do something, by God's Grace, when he has got rid of the intolerable nuisance of having too many human helpers who are often only hin-

drances—and who has not any other helper but his God. Oh, it is a blessed thing to be flung back upon the bare arm of Omnipotence—to be gloriously compelled to rest on God and on God alone! May many of us know, by happy, personal experience, how blessed it is!

**III.** I have done, dear Friends, when I have, in the last place, very briefly answered a short and simple question. Since nothing is too hard for the Lord, WHAT THEN?

I want that we, as a people, should be true to the very core to our blessed God and, to that end, as there is nothing that is too hard for Him, *let us trust Him*, all of us, whatever our trials or our difficulties may be. Let us have no sham faith, no pretended confidence, but real trust in a real God!

Then, next, I want that we should *act as if we trusted God*. Do not let us waver, “for he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”

And, then, believing in God, *let us always do what is right*. Let us believe that to do the right is always right—that policy—that “hedging” a little, and doing what we call a “slight wrong,” can never be justified in the sight of God.

Finally, *let us live a life of love*, a life of forgiveness and kindness, trusting that God will cause love to overcome human hate and kindness to conquer all misrepresentation. Live in all respects so as to glorify God.

Beloved in the Lord, who are one with us in Christ Jesus, do be out-and-out Believers and let your faith be as evident as the color on a healthy cheek, that all men may see that the very life-blood of your spiritual being is your faith in God and in His Christ! What made brave Oliver Cromwell, in the days gone by, so terrible an enemy to all who loved not liberty and right? It was his faith! And he had gathered about him a band of men who also believed and so, when the Ironsides marched to the fight, you might as well have hoped to stop the stars in their courses as to keep those men back from victory! And today, what England needs is men of faith whose watchword is, “The Lord of Hosts!” and whose confidence it is that “with God all things are possible,” and also that “all things are possible to him that believes.” May all of us be such Believers, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JEREMIAH 32:1-27.**

**Verses 1-5.** *The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the Prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house. For Zedekiah, king of Judah, had shut him up, saying. Therefore do you prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall*

*behold his eyes; and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, says the Lord: though you fight with the Chaldeans, you shall not prosper.* So you see that Jeremiah was shut up in prison at the time here mentioned. Zedekiah, the king of Judah, had treated him very harshly because of his faithful utterance of the Word of the Lord. He was a true servant of Jehovah, yet he suffered much at the king's hands. One very remarkable event, which happened at that time, is here recorded.

**6-8.** *And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel, the son of Shallum, your uncle, shall come unto you, saying, Buy you my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is yours to buy it. So Hanameel, my uncle's son, came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray you, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is yours and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.* The Lord had told him beforehand that it would be so and, therefore, in due time, his cousin came to him with the offer of this plot of land in the country of Benjamin.

**9, 10.** *And I bought the field of Hanameel, my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances.* This was, in every respect, a very extraordinary transaction! Remember that the Chaldeans were already besieging Jerusalem and they were all over the land, carrying fire and sword into every part of it. Jerusalem was shut up, so that none of the inhabitants could get out of the city—yet here is Jeremiah, himself a prisoner, buying land which was virtually worth nothing whatever! But he believed so firmly that the Chaldeans would yet permit the Jews to live unmolested in that land that he paid down the purchase money for the field and saw to the legal execution of the deed of transfer, just as you or I might have done if we were purchasing a plot of land in our own country. This is a notable instance of the triumph of faith over unfavorable surroundings and, also, of the Prophet's *obedience* to the Word of the Lord.

**11, 12.** *So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open: and I gave the evidence of the purchase to Baruch, the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel, my uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.* Jeremiah did all this openly. What they may have thought to be an absurd action, he did not do in private, but in the presence of them all! True faith in God does not go in for hole-and-corner transactions. Faith can do its business in the light of the sun! Faith believes God under all circumstances and believes that the truest common sense is to obey His Word. Therefore she is not ashamed of what she does—neither shall she ever have cause to be ashamed or confounded, world without end! There is a living God and if we do what He

bids us, good must come of it. No harm shall happen to the man who confidently rests in the Most High.

**13-17.** *And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land. Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch, the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying, Ah Lord GOD! Faith cannot live without prayer. When she has performed her most heroic deeds, she turns to God and humbly asks for renewed strength, for oh, my Brothers and Sisters, the best of men are but men at the best—and those who have the most faith never have any to spare. Jeremiah says, “I prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah Lord God!” It looked, at first sight, as if the Prophet was going to utter some mournful complaint, or to express some doubt or misgiving concerning the purchase of the land, but it was not so. Having allowed that exclamation to escape from him, his faith came to the rescue and he continued—*

**17.** *Behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You. Is not that a grand sentence? “There is nothing too hard for You.” He that could make the Heaven and the earth can do anything! Read, in the Book of Genesis, the story of the creation, and see how, “He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” And then judge as to what can ever be a difficulty for the Almighty. Surely you must say to Him, as Jeremiah did, “There is nothing too hard for You.”*

**18.** *You show loving kindness unto thousands, and recompense the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them; the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of Hosts, is His name. See how these godly men, in their times of trouble, delighted in the great names and glorious attributes of God. There are, nowadays, many namby-pamby, fashionable religionists, wrapped in luxury, who have only a little God—they never seem to know “the Great, the Mighty God”—but Jeremiah, with the smell of the prison still clinging to him, talks grandly! “The Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of Hosts, is His name.”*

**19-21.** *Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for Your eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give everyone according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings: who has set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and have made You a name, as at this day; and have brought forth Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror. Those ancient Jews, in the time of their trouble, always looked gratefully back to the wonders worked by Jehovah in Egypt. That great deed of God, when He smote the might of Pharaoh, was always present to the Hebrew mind and the people, in every season of tribulation, refreshed themselves with the remembrance of it. Well, then, dear Friends, as they sang the song of Moses, shall not we sing the song of the Lamb? Will not we go back in thought to the glorious triumphs of our*

Redeemer and recount again and again, for the encouragement of our faith, what Christ did for us upon the Cross, even as the Jews thought often, for the strengthening of their confidence, of their wondrous deliverance from Egypt by the high hand and the stretched out arm of Jehovah?

**22-24.** *And have given them this land, which You did swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey, and they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not Your voice, neither walked in Your Law; they have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do: therefore You have caused all this evil to come upon them: behold the mounts.* The margin renders it, “the engines of shot,” which we see, by the next chapter, were powerful enough to throw down the houses in Jerusalem.

**24, 25.** *They are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence; and what You have spoken is come to pass and, behold, You see it. And You have said unto me, O LORD GOD, Buy you the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.* I suppose that, although Jeremiah, with unquestioning faith, had done as God had commanded him, yet afterwards, when he was alone in his prison cell, he began to think the whole matter over. And though he may not have had any actual doubts, yet he probably had some anxieties as to the issue of the whole affair. He could not quite understand it, so he wisely put it before the Lord. Some of you who have truly trusted God, may yet be just now perplexed with anxiety of one kind or another. Well, then, tell it to the Lord—go at once into His Presence and spread the case before Him, as Jeremiah did.

**26, 27.** *Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?* That question we will try to answer presently. [Remember, the exposition was before the sermon.]

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—34, 686, 1042 and from  
“Flowers and Fruits”—54.**

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY  
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# WHOLEHEARTED RELIGION

## NO. 1623

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 9, 1881,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever,  
for the good of them, and of their children after them.”  
Jeremiah 32:39.***

THOSE of you who were present last Lord's-Day morning will remember my sermon upon “Mongrel Religion,” [Sermon #1622] in which I dealt with those who feared the Lord and served other gods. Their heart was divided and, therefore, they were found faulty. They had, as the Hebrew puts it, a heart and a heart—a heart that went this way and a heart that went the other way. And so, as a matter of fact, they became, as the Prophet says, as “a silly dove that has no heart.” The discourse of this morning is intended to exhibit wholehearted religion which is the opposite of the sad mixture which we have so lately denounced. We wish to look upon persons of Caleb's stamp, who followed the Lord fully—in whom, by the Grace of God, the divided heart has become united—so that with their whole heart they serve the Lord their God.

Our text is an extract from Jeremiah's copy of the Covenant of Grace. The Lord promises to Israel, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God.” And in the 40<sup>th</sup> verse He says, “And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” This, then, is the Covenant of Grace which God has made with His people and it is highly suggestive that the first blessing of it relates to the *heart*, for God, when He begins with men, does not begin with the outward way, but with the inward spirit. He puts it, “I will give them one heart and one way”—the *way* is second—the heart comes first. Understand, then, that in all true godliness we must begin with heart-work.

It is no use hoping to polish the outside until, by degrees, you enlighten the interior. No, but the light must first be placed within and then, as it shines through, spots on the exterior will be discovered and will all the more readily be cleansed away. God works not *to* the center, but *in* the center, and then from the center into the outer life. In reference to the heart, one of the earliest works of Divine Grace is to unite it in one. Strange to say, but I would be equally truthful if I said that one of the first works of Grace is to *break* the heart—but so paradoxical is man that when his heart is unbroken, it is divided—and when his heart is broken, then, for the first time, it is united, for a broken heart, in every fragment of it, mourns over sin and cries out for mercy.

Every shattered particle of a contrite spirit is united in one desire to be reconciled to God. There is no union of the heart with itself till it is broken for sin and from sin. Early in the morning of Grace, the man comes to

himself and is restored to the unity of his manhood. The effect of this inner reunion is very salutary. We read of the prodigal, that, "when he came to himself," he said, "I will arise and go to my father." The heart is united in itself when it is united to the Lord! Even as the Lord has said by the mouth of the Prophet, "I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart."

It is of this unitedness of heart that I shall speak first. And then I shall go on to those other Covenant blessings which come after it, according to the text. These are placed *after* it, in order to show its great value, since it is the first step to exceedingly precious blessings. First, then, we will consider unitedness of heart—"I will give them one heart." Secondly, the blessing which immediately arises out of it, consistency of walk—"I will give them one way." From these two come the third blessing, "steadfastness of principle—"that they may fear Me forever." And consequent upon all this comes personal blessings, "for the good of them." And attendant upon that favor, relative benediction—"and for the good of their children after them." Our program is very extensive—may the Spirit of God help us to fill it up.

**I.** We begin, then, at the beginning, with UNITEDNESS OF THE HEART. Our first statement under this head shall be that it is naturally divided. Sin is confusion and at its entrance it created a Babel, or a confusion, within the heart of man. Until man sinned, his nature was one and undivided, but the Fall broke him and destroyed his unity. Within him, now, there are many voices, many imaginations and many devices. Within him there is strife and contention, wars and fights, which come of his lusts, which struggle with each other and with his understanding. Observe the contest which is constantly visible between his conscience and his affections. His affections choose that which is evil, while his conscience approves that which is right. The desires go after that which appears to be pleasant, but the judgment warns the mind of its folly and, therefore, a controversy between the two powers of the soul.

The lusts crave for that which the intellect condemns; the passions demand that which the reason would deny; the will persists in that which the judgment would forego! The ship of our manhood will not obey the helm; there is a mutiny on board and those powers which should be underlings, strive for the mastery. Man is dragged to and fro by contending forces; conscience draws this way and the affections drag in the opposite direction. Our propensities and faculties are, by nature, like the crowd in the Ephesian theater of whom we read, "Some, therefore, cried one thing and some another; for the assembly was confused."

We sin not without some measure of compunction and we do not quit our sin, thoroughly, even when we yield to conscience, for the heart still hankers after that which the conscience disallows. To many a man it is given to admire things that are excellent and still to delight in things which are abominable! His conscience bids him rise to a pure and noble life, but his baser passions hold him down to that which is earthly and sensual. Frequently, too, there is a very great division between a man's

inward knowledge and his outward conduct. Men are often wise in the head and foolish in the hand—they know the right and do the wrong! The Law of God is read in their hearing and written upon their memories and yet it is forgotten in their lives. They are men of great discernment in theory and yet in their actions they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; darkness for light and light for darkness!

They sin against the Light of God—“They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” Often and often the man is as right as Justice, herself, in his opinions, and clear as the day in his information—and yet he gropes as the blind and stumbles at noonday as in the night! His knowledge goes one way and his will another. He knows the consequences of sin and, therefore, fears! He perceives the pleasureableness or profit of sin and, therefore, presumes! He is sure that he will never be so base as to fall into a certain fault, but, by-and-by, he rushes into it and defends himself for so doing, till he changes his fickle mind—and then he denounces that which just now he allowed! How can he be right with God when he is not even right with himself?

All through the carnal man, if you look at him, there is confusion and mischief! We would call that creature a monster which had its head towards the earth and its feet towards Heaven—and yet the carnal man lives in that position! He ought to tread the world beneath his feet, but he places it above—while the Heaven to which he should aspire, he daily spurns! He lets his animal passions, which should be treated as the dogs of his flock, become his lords and masters. He reverses the order of Nature and bids the beast within him to have dominion over the spirit. Appetites, which in their way are good if they are kept in with bit and bridle, are permitted to become evil because they have unlimited indulgence and are allowed to be the tyrants of the soul! The Ishmael of the flesh mocks the Isaac of the conscience and is unreprieved! Solomon said, “I have seen servants upon horses and princes walking as servants upon the earth.” And the same may be seen in the little world within where appetites rule and grander capacities are placed in servitude.

Man is a puzzle and none can put him together but He that made him at the first. He is a self-contradiction, a house divided against itself, a mystery of iniquity, a maze of folly, a mass of perversity, obstinacy and contention! Sin has made the heart to be so inwardly divided as to be like the troubled sea which cannot rest, or like a cage of unclean birds—every one fighting its fellow—or like a den of wild beasts which cease not to rend each other. When man cast off the yoke of the One God, he fell under bondage to many gods and many lords who struggle for supremacy and make the one kingdom into many rival principalities.

Since sin became natural to man, it became natural that man’s heart should be divided. But it must be united—that is the point and, therefore, the Covenant promise, “I will give them one heart.” For, dear Friends, in the matters of godliness, if our heart is not whole and entire in following after God, we cannot meet with acceptance. God never did and never will receive the homage of a divided heart! Alexander, when Darius proposed that the two great monarchs should divide the world, replied that there

was only room for one sun in the heavens. What his ambition affirmed, God declares from the necessity of the case. Since one God fills all things, there is no room for another! It is not possible for a heart to be given up to falsehood and yet to be under the power of truth! It is idle to attempt to serve two such masters as holiness and iniquity.

God cannot smile upon an unhallowed compromise and allow men to bow in the house of Rimmon and yet worship in His holy Temple. God will have all or nothing—He will have us only, wholly, altogether and always His or else He will have nothing to do with us! False gods can bear a divided empire, but the true God cannot have it. You may assemble a parliament of idols, but Jehovah says, “I am God alone.” It was once proposed to the Roman senate to set up the image of Christ in the Pantheon among the gods, but when they were informed that He would not agree that any worship should be mingled with His own, the senate straightway refused Him a shrine. In this they acted in a manner consistent with itself—but those are altogether inexcusable who swear by the Lord and swear by Malcham!

We provoke the Lord to jealousy when we offer Him a corner in our souls and allow our vain thoughts to lodge within us. Errors can lie down like sheep in a field, but no error can lie side by side with the lordly lion of the Truth of God! There is no god but God. Jehovah, He is God! There is one Mediator between God and man—the Man Christ Jesus. Whatever a man sets up in his heart as the object of his affections in opposition to God is a vain, a vile, a vicious thing—and that man cannot be accepted of the Lord! Would you, then, serve God, O man? Him only must you serve. Would you bring unto Him an offering? You must first give Him your *heart*—your undivided heart. He cries, “My son, give Me your heart,” and He says not, “Give Me a *share* of it.”

He will not call that house His Temple where other things are worshipped as well as Himself. Abhorrence, not acceptance, shall fall to the lot of that man who is half-hearted with God! And is not this as it should be? Does not the love of Jesus deserve our wholehearted love in return? His love, which made Him become Man, deserves man’s entire homage! His love which led Him to the Cross deserves that we be crucified to the world for His sake! His love to death demands that we be dead to sin for His sake! His love which now rules all Heaven for our sakes deserves our soul, our life, our all. He gave Himself for us—His whole self—and we must give our whole hearts to Him.

In the chapter before us the Lord says, “Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.” Shall we give half a heart to our wholehearted God? Shall we be double-minded when He is so intense in blessing us? Shall we love the world and hope to have the love of the Father in us at the same time? God will not have it and we do not wish it. The heart must be united! We have seen that it must be united for acceptance. We now note that it must be united for sincerity—a divided heart is a false heart. Where there is no unity of heart there is no truth in the spirit. Tell me that you love the world and I will tell you that the love of the world is

enmity to God! Declare that you will serve Belial ever so little and I know that your service to Christ is but Judas' service—mercenary, temporary, traitorous! Sincerity does not open the front door to Christ and the back gate to the devil.

Our heart must be united, next, for intensity of life. True religion needs the soul to be always at a fervent heat. "The kingdom of Heaven," says our Lord, "suffers violence and the violent take it by force." None climb the hill whereon the New Jerusalem is built except such as go on hands and knees and, laying aside every weight, give themselves wholly to the divine ascent. The pilgrim who hopes to reach the better land and makes a pleasure trip of it is under a mistake—it is hard traveling and requires ardor and perseverance. It is so in every good word and work. A lazy prayer requests a denial and shall have it. Half-hearted praise is an insult to God and everything in religion that is not done with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength—is a sin—however much it may look like a virtue! When we are most intense, we do not come up to the zeal which these important things deserve—how can we, then, imagine that we can please God with less than our best?

Know you not that our Lord has said, "Because you are lukewarm, I will spue you out of My mouth"? No stronger expression of disgust can possibly be used and this disgust is not for the bold and hardened rebel, but for the *moderate* disciple who served God without fail, but without zeal! God loves a whole heart, but half a heart is His abhorrence. Only those who run with all their might will win the race and, as the man of divided heart is lame in both his feet, he can have no hope of the prize. Lord, make my heart one that I may give it all to You and spend and be spent in Your one service, since You, only, are the One in whom my soul delights!

The heart must be united to be consecrated. Will God be served with broken cups and cracked flagons? And shall His altars be polluted with torn and mangled sacrifices? All the things in Heaven and earth which the Lord acknowledges as consecrated things are dedicated to Him and to Him alone. Can you imagine that within the Holy Place there would be an altar, part of which was used for sacrifices offered to Jehovah—and another portion for victims presented to Molech? The idea cannot be endured! The Lord said of old to Ezekiel, "Son of man, the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever, and My holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, in their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their posts by My posts." God will not account that to be consecrated to Himself which is used by another. Brethren, we must be wholly consecrated unto the Lord, or we cannot be consecrated to Him at all! We are unconsecrated, we are polluted, we are as things accursed if we are divided in heart!

Once more, we must have our heart united or else none of the blessings which are to follow in Covenant order can possibly reach us. For, look, "I will give them one heart." And then it follows, "one way"—no man will have a consistent, uniform way while he has a divided heart! Read next,

“That they shall fear Me forever.” But no man will fear God forever unless fear has taken possession of his whole heart! The convert may profess to follow the Lord for a while, but he will soon turn aside. He who does not begin with his whole heart will soon tire of the race. “Forever” is a long day and requires our whole soul to hold on and to hold out!

The Lord also promises that this shall be “for the good of them, and of their children after them.” But those who give God a *part* of their heart neither win a blessing for themselves nor for their posterity—they are not among the seed that God has blessed, neither can they be. Oh men and women, if your hearts run here and there and your aims and desires are scattered like a flock of sheep—running abroad according to their own willfulness—the Good Shepherd will not feed you! When He comes to visit you, He will gather all your desires and aspirations into one fold—and then He will lead you into green pastures and make you to lie down therein. As under the old Law men might not sow with mingled seed, nor wear garments of linen and woolen mixed, so neither can those of divided way and heart come into the favor of God.

So I leave the first head when I have noticed that, according to the text, God will give His chosen this unified heart—“I will give them one heart.” Ah, we shall never obtain this blessing other than as a free gift of God’s Grace! Teachers may put holy thoughts into our heads, but they cannot alter our hearts. We may unite our thoughts in some system of divinity, but we can never unite our desires upon the Divinity, Himself, except we experience a work of Grace upon our souls. The one Lord must make our heart one! He who once *made* the heart, must make it *anew* to make it one. “There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” But none of these seven ones would ever be ours unless it were added, “But unto every one of us is given Grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” and only that Grace can make our heart one!

This the Lord does, in part, by enlightenment through the light of His Holy Spirit. He shows us the worthlessness and deceptiveness of everything that would attract our hearts away from Jesus and from our God. And when we see the evil of the rival, we give our heart entirely to Him whom we worship. The Lord works this, also, by a still more thorough process, for He weans us from all idolatrous loves. He makes our carnal delights to become bitter to us, so that we turn aside from them with disgust, even as the Egyptians loathed to drink of the waters of the river which they formerly idolized, for the Lord had turned it into blood. He puts gall upon the breasts of the world and then we look elsewhere for comfort. It takes much to make us cry with David, “My soul is even as a weaned child.”

Disease and death are summoned to shoot their fatal arrows at our dearest ones before we will give God the whole of our hearts. It is hard to love the creature much and yet not too much—it is a great thing to love our beloved ones in Christ and in subordination to Christ. Many a mother has had to lose child after child because she had stirred the jealousy of

the best Beloved by dividing her heart between Him and her little ones. Many a man in business has fallen from wealth and prosperity because God saw that His heart went astray after His possessions. Doubtless many have had eloquence, talent and gifts of various kinds—and they doted upon these things until it has been necessary to remove them to unite their hearts upon God and so they have been laid aside by sickness, or the mind has lost its vigor, or the voice has failed and the gift has become a plague, rather than a comfort—and thus their heart has lost its idol and has turned unto the Lord.

If Christ is married to us, He will have use chaste unto Himself. What would we think of a man who is engaged to a woman and is found spending his love upon another as well? We say he is false and treacherous, and we utterly despise him. He ought to give his heart to her whom he has espoused and to love her with constancy, or he cannot be esteemed a pure-minded man. Even so, in our dealings with the Lord Jesus, we must be watchful lest a single desire or affection should prove false to Him. Such a glorious Object of affection must fill the whole horizon of the soul, even as the sun fills all the heavens with his light and the stars are quite forgotten. All the rivers run into the sea and so must all our love run to Jesus. Oh Brothers and Sisters, shut the gates of your hearts lest any steal away by night from the Lord! The heart must be whole and wholly His.

Remember that you may have a great gash in your head and yet you may live. But if but a pin's point should divide your heart, you will die. Ask for Divine Grace to say with the Psalmist, "O God, my heart is fixed." Then, indeed, will you sing and give praise. This is not only important, it is essential! See, my Hearers, whether you have received this choice blessing of the Covenant of Grace, each one for himself—this holy, uniting work of the Spirit of God.

**II.** If we have this, we may now advance to the second blessing of the Covenant here mentioned, which is **CONSISTENCY OF WALK**—"I Will give them one way." When the heart is united, the man lives for a single objective and that alone. Running in one direction, striving for one purpose, he keeps to the one way which leads to Heaven. As Christ is our one life, so is He our one way. Without this unity, there can be no truth in a man's life. If he spins by day, and unravels at night, he is acting out a falsehood. If he runs to the right while men look at him, but trudges back, again, to the old post, as soon as men's eyes are taken from him, his life is double-talk—which is but a fine word for a lie!

It is a dreadful thing for a man's word to be a lie, but for a man's whole *life* to be a lie is still more horrible. We may have much more of the liar about us than we dream. Let us see to it and pray God, that, like Nathanael, we may have no guile in us. We may patch up our life with bits of religion and remnants of profession till it becomes like the beggar's coat, of which no man knows the original—such a garment may be fit for a beggar—but shall *we* wear it? The seamless garment of the Truth of God, woven from the top throughout, adorns a Christian, but motley raiment proves a man a fool. Unless we follow the Lord with one heart and one way, we shall be found to be liars, after all, and if all liars have their por-

tion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the Second Death, what will be his lot whose life was false to itself and false to God? Inconsistency of behavior shows that the Truth of God is little set by in the heart.

We must, dear Friends, have one walk, or else our life will make no progress. He who travels in two opposite directions will find himself not moving forward. How is it that some professors are at much the same place as they occupied 20 years ago? Years have made them more gray, but not more gracious! At night they fastened up their boat in a little creek of the river and when the tide ran out, they waited and waited until, close to the end of its running—and then they went down a little way with the tide but very soon the stream ceased to turn—and so they drifted back with the flood and hitched up near the same muddy shore as before! Like a pendulum, they travel far, but get no farther! Growth, progress, advancement—none of these can they know, for they are double-minded—and so run to and fro in the earth and wear themselves out with vanity.

Multitudes of people are doing this! They make such progress one Sunday that they resolve, from now on, to live unto God. They begin at a steam engine rate! They plow the sea of life in their eagerness—they are like a vessel which has had new boilers put into her! But by tomorrow where are they? They have burst their boilers, or they have allowed the fires to go out—and from now on they are without spiritual life or motion and lie like logs upon the stream. This will not do! We must have one way of uniform vitality. I do not say that we can always make apparent progress at the same *rate*, for powerful under-currents affect our life and a man may be doing much who is successfully over adverse influences.

When a fierce wind is blowing, a captain at the will may be driven on shore if he does not steam right into the teeth of the hurricane. If he does this, is he not making the surest *real* progress if he manages to stay where he is and avoid the fatal danger? I say, then, that if we do not seem to advance, we may, nevertheless, in the judgment of God, be making true progress if we resist the mighty impulses which would otherwise hurry us on to destruction. But if we have two ways and steer this way and that way and every way by turns—with the view of pleasing men and making things easy all round—we cannot speed towards the desired haven. We must choose and keep to one way or we cannot attain to usefulness.

What influence has a double-minded man? If a man speaks for God, today, and so lives, tomorrow, that he virtually speaks for the devil, what power has he over those around him? How can he lead who has no way of his own? If your actions play fast and loose with truth. If your life is a checkerboard of black and white. If you are everything by turns and nothing long, what force, for good, can you possibly exert? Consistency and unity of life are necessary to usefulness! And I am sure it is necessary for anything like assurance. The best of Believers may, through holy anxiety, question their own state, but the man who has two ways may well sing—

***“Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought,  
Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I His or am I not?”***



O you who are inconsistent in life, I must be bold to tell you that many of your friends are even more in doubt about you than you are about yourself! 'Tis a point we also long to know, for we cannot tell whether you love the Lord or no, whether you are His or not! Sometimes we see happy signs about you and our charity hopes all things. But when we see you falling, again, into evil ways, we are distressed and even our charity weeps over you! How can we be assured of your change of heart when we see so little change of *life*? What a pity to lead such a life that it puzzles those who love you best to form any judgment as to your condition! If you were to die as you are, we should not know which way you would go, for your present path is dubious and intricate.

Would you go to Heaven or Hell? Common judgment would depend upon whether you died in one of your good fits or in one of your bad ones! Is this a pleasant way of putting it? O you who blow hot and cold, you are strange beings! You seem, to the common observer, to be too good for Hell and not good enough for Heaven! You cannot be divided at the last and, therefore, you may rest assured that the powers of evil will seize you as their own! No person can come to any true personal assurance while his life is of a double character. But if I know that I have one heart and that my heart belongs to my Lord—and that I have one way, a way of obedience to Him—then may I be assured that I am His!

If I cannot make such progress as I would, yet if I follow my Lord and keep my face steadfastly set towards Jerusalem, then I know where I am, what I am and where I am going! Holiness of life proves our faith and faith ensures our salvation—and salvation begets joy, peace, and confidence! “Hereby we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.” A plain way will make our condition plain. This unity of way is a Covenant blessing—it comes not *of* man, neither *by* man, but God *gives* it to His own elect as one of the choice favors of His Grace—“I will give them one heart and one way.”

**III.** Briefly we notice, in the third place, the next Covenant blessing, STEADFASTNESS OF PRINCIPLE—“That they may fear Me forever.” Get the heart and the way right and then the spiritual force of the fear of God will abide in us in all days to come. Notice the basis of true religion—it is the fear of God—it is not said that they shall join a Church, make a profession and speak holy words forever. No, it is that, “They may fear Me forever.” Oh Brothers and Sisters, our religion must have the Lord in the very heart of it! We must be in constant contact with God and possess in our souls the true fear of God, for as this is the beginning of wisdom, so is it the only security of perseverance!

When God has given us a true spiritual fear of Him, it will abide all tests. Outward religion depends upon the excitement which created it. But the fear of the Lord lives on when all around it is frostbitten. What happens to many converts? The revivalists have gone and they have gone, too. But if God has given us one heart to love and obey Him and His fear is in us, we do not depend upon the mental thermometer! Like salamanders, we can live in the fire—and like seals, we can live in Arctic ice. We are not dependent upon special services and warm-hearted exhortations, for we

have a springing well within us! We live upon the *Master* and not upon the servants—the Spirit of God does not leave us because certain good men have gone elsewhere. No, God has given us to fear Him forever.

Persecution comes, Christians are ridiculed in the workshop, they are pointed out in the street and an opprobrious name is hooted at them! Now we shall know who are God's elect and who are not! Persecution acts as a winnowing fan and those who are light as chaff are driven away by its blast. But those who are true corn remain and are purified. Careless of man's esteem, the truly God-fearing man with one heart holds on his one way and fears the Lord forever! Then, perhaps, comes a more serious test, the trial of prosperity. A man grows rich. He rises into another class of society. If he is not a real Christian, he will forsake the Lord. But if he is a true-born heir of the Kingdom of God, he will fear the Lord *forever* and consecrate his substance to Him. A heart wholly given to God will stand the wear and tear of life in all conditions, whether in honor or in contempt.

Poverty is a severe test to many and I have known numbers of professors forsake the House of God because, as they say, their clothes were not fit to come in. That is a poor excuse! I fear their *hearts* were not fit to come in! The fear of God would make the godly man swallow his pride and follow Christ in *rags*—he will bear a famine of bread and a famine of water—but he cannot endure a famine of the Word of God! His soul must be fed and so he must and *will* be found where the Lord's Table is spread with the Bread of Heaven. When God stripped Job of all his riches, it was *then* that his integrity was seen and proven.

With some of you old age is creeping on, but I rejoice to know that your Grace is not decaying! You are becoming deaf; eyesight is failing you and your limbs are trembling—but you can still hear the voice of the Lord and behold the beauties of His Word and run in the ways of His statutes! If God has given the young man one heart and one way, he will fear God forever and will not forsake the Lord when infirmities multiply upon him. He will bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright! If our soul is wholly Christ's, we can never go back to perdition—"Who shall separate us from the love of God?"

The Lord has cast such cords of love about us that He holds us fast! We can lose father and mother, yes, and our own lives, also, but we cannot forsake the Lord whose blood has bought us from the lowest Hell! We are bound for the Kingdom—who shall keep us out of it? We have been shot like arrows from the bow of God and we must speed onward till we rest in the target of eternal bliss! Oh what a mercy it is to have within us a fear of God which is not to last for a period of years, but forever!

**IV.** Very hurriedly I mention the next thing, which is PERSONAL BLESSEDNESS, "for the good of them." Where God gives us one heart, one way and steadfast principle, it must be for our good in the highest sense. Tell me who are the happiest Christians. They will be found to be wholehearted Christians! When heart and life are divided, happiness leaks through the crack. We must be steady in the pursuit of righteousness if we would abide in the enjoyment of peace. Brothers and Sisters, if you

want to know the sweetness of religion, you must know the depth of it! The foam upon the top of the sacred cup is often bitter, but at the bottom lies the essence of sweetness. I will not say, drink deep or drink not at all, but I will say this, that those who are content with superficial godliness have no idea of the delights which dwell in the deep places of communion with God.

Plunge into the River of Life! Let body, soul and spirit be immersed into its floods and you shall swim in unspeakable joy! Lose sight of the shores of worldliness and you shall see God's wonders in the deeps! In intense devotion to the Lord you will find the rare jewel, satisfaction. "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord!" Sweet content never dwells with half-heartedness. This shall be for your good every way—for your guidance in business, for your direction in devotion, for the good of your mind here—for the good of your spirit hereafter. To be endowed by Grace with one heart and one way is to be rendered fit to live and fit to die! I am sure if you read the biographies of men, if they are fairly written, you will find that the good, the true, the great, the noble were single-minded.

Those who have the clearest sight of God are the pure in heart and the undivided in heart—and those who enjoy a Heaven below are those whose hearts and lives are engrossed with heavenly things. The blessed life is that of fervent love and thorough consecration. Do these things abound among you, Brethren? I believe that in this assembly there are more wholehearted Christian men and women than I am likely to meet with in any other gathering. And yet, for all that, I cannot help fearing that even here there are professing Christians who never knew what it was to give their hearts perfectly to God's work, or to the love of Jesus!

When these people come to the hour of trouble, they are dispirited and rebellious. Would it be so if they were perfectly resigned to God's will? These people are often short of spiritual comforts. Would they be short of them if they had made a clean and clear surrender to their God? I believe they would not. Men who will not eat are starved and weak—and many a disease finds soil within them through the weakness of their constitution. But those who feed on Christ, the Bread of Heaven, are nourished and strong—and are preserved from a thousand ills by that very fact. O God the Holy Spirit, I cannot talk to Christ's servants as I wish to do, but You can move them, now, to aspire after a complete giving up of themselves to You, for this shall be for their good!

**V.** The last is a RELATIVE BLESSING—"And for their children after them." Wholehearted Christians are usually blessed with a posterity of a like kind. Consecrated men and women live to see their children following in their steps. When sons and daughters forsake the ways of godliness, do you wonder, when you spy out the home life of their parents? If religion is a sham, do you expect frank young men to respect it? If the father was hollow-hearted in his profession, will not the children despise it? The genuine, thoroughbred Christian is often hated, but he is never the object of contempt. Men may ridicule him and say that he is a fool, but they

cannot help admitting that he is happy! And the wiser sort among them wish that they were such fools, themselves!

Be thorough and true, and your family will respect your faith. The almost inevitable consequence of respect in a child towards his parent is a desire to imitate him. It is not always so, but as a rule it is so. If the parents live unto God in a thorough-hearted way, their sons and daughters aspire to the same thing. They see the beauty of religion at home around the fireside and their conscience, being quickened, lead them to pray to God that they may have the same piety, so that when they, themselves, commence a household, they may enjoy the same happiness. Certainly if any of you are the children of eminently godly parents and are living in sin, your parents' lives condemn you!

Are they in Heaven? Dare you go to their grave and sit upon the grassy hillock and think of how you are living? It will force tears to your eyes to contrast yourself with them! You may well tremble to think that you neglect your mother's Savior, that you forget your father's God! It will go hard with those who leap into Hell-fire over a father's prayers and a mother's entreaties—yet some seem desperately resolved on such suicide! I hope these are comparatively few and that it is still true, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Temporal and spiritual blessings come upon households where the heads of the family are completely consecrated to God. Try it! Try it! I will be bound that you will find it profitable! If at the Last Great Day you shall find that consecration to Christ is an error, I will be willing to bear the blame myself! I am not afraid that anyone among you will ever censure me for having excited you into a too fervent zeal, or a too devoted life!

Brothers and Sisters, I am afraid of those of you who go ankle deep into religion and never venture further—I am afraid lest you should, by-and-by, return to the shore! But as for you who plunge into the center of the stream and find waters to swim in, I have no fears! You shall be borne onward by a current ever increasing in strength till in the ocean of eternal love you lose yourselves in Heaven above! I can wish you no greater blessing than that the Holy Spirit may make you wholehearted, consistent, persistent, ardent, established and persevering in the things of God! On you and on your household my heart pronounces this benediction—the Lord give you one heart and one way that you may fear Him forever. Amen.

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## PERSEVERANCE IN HOLINESS

### NO. 2108

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6, 1889,  
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good. But I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me”*  
*Jeremiah 32:40.*

LAST Sabbath morning we were called to deep searching of heart. It was a very painful discourse to the preacher and it was not less so to many of his hearers. Some of us will never forget that fig tree, covered with untimely leaves, which yielded no fruit and was condemned to stand a beacon to the unfruitful of all ages. I felt that I was in the surgery, using the knife—I felt great tenderness and the operation was grievous to my soul. When the winnowing fan was used to chase away the chaff, some of the wheat felt that it was none too heavy—the wind stirred it in its place, so as to make it fear that it would be carried into the fire. Today, I trust we shall see that, despite all sifting, not one true grain shall be lost.

May the King himself come near and feast His saints today! May the Comforter who convicts of sin now come to cheer us with the Promise!

We noticed concerning the fig tree, that it was confirmed in its barrenness—it had borne no fruit, though it made large professions of doing so, and it was made to abide as it was. Let us consider another form of confirmation—not the curse of continuance in the rooted habit of evil—but the blessing of perseverance in a settled way of Divine Grace.

May the Lord show us how He establishes His saints in righteousness and makes the works which He has begun in them to abide, and remain, and even to go onward towards perfection, so that they shall not be ashamed in the day of His appearing!

We will go to our text at once. In the world there are men and women towards whom God stands in Covenant relationship. Mixed up with these myriads of God-forgetting, or even God-defying people, there are a number of Covenanted ones, who think of God, know God, trust God and are even in league with God. God has made with them a Covenant. It is a wonder of mercy that Jehovah should enter into Covenant with men. But He has done so. God has pledged Himself to His people and they have, in return, through His Grace, pledged themselves to God.

These are Heaven's Covenanters, in bonds of amity, alliance, and even union with the Lord their God. This Covenant shall stand when the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed—it is not a thing of passing time—but, like its Author, it is everlasting. Happy people who are joined unto the Lord by an eternal bond!

These Covenanted ones may be known by certain marks and evidences. It is most important that we should know that we ourselves belong to them. They are a people, according to the text, to whom God is doing good. Friend, do you perceive that He is doing good to you? Has the Lord dealt graciously with you? Has He appeared to you and said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you”?

Do all things work together for good for you? I mean, for your spiritual good? Your lasting good? Have you received the greatest good by the renewal of the Holy Spirit? Has He given Christ to you? Has He made you hate evil and cleave to that which is good? If these good gifts have been bestowed on you, He has done you good. For these gifts are the outcome of the Covenant and are sure guarantees that it stands fast between God and your soul.

These people are known by having the fear of God in their hearts. Judge you, whether it is so in your own case. This is the Covenant promise—“I will put My fear in their hearts.” Do you fear the Lord? Do you reverence Jehovah, our God? Do you desire to please the Lord? Do you please Him? Do you desire to be like He is? Are you like He is in some humble degree? Do you feel ashamed when you see how sadly you come short? And does this make you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is the gracious Presence of God your Heaven below? Is it all the Heaven you desire above? If so, this fear of God in your heart is the seal of the Covenant to you. Towards you God has thoughts of love which shall never change.

This leads us to a close consideration of our text. We notice in it, first, the Everlasting Covenant—"I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them." Secondly, we reverently perceive the unchanging God of the Covenant—"I will not turn away from them, to do them good." Thirdly, we see with joy the persevering people in that Covenant—"I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." I am sure I shall not find language suitable to such a theme as this. But I am cheered with the reflection that, however poor and simple my words may be, the matter of which I speak, is, in itself, enough for the delight of all true Believers.

When you have an abundance of solid food to make a meal, you need not fret, even though you miss the tasteful adornments of the table. Hungry men are not eager for a display of plate or of damask. Nor even for a show of flowers bedecking the table. They are best satisfied with solid food. In my subject there is meat fit for kings—however badly I may carve it—you who have appetites will not fail to feed on it. May the Holy Spirit make it so!

I. First, here is THE EVERLASTING COVENANT—"I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them."

In the previous chapter, in the thirty-first verse, this Covenant is called "a new Covenant." And it is new in contrast with the former one which the Lord made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. It is new as to the principle upon which it is based. The Lord had said unto His people, that if they would keep His Laws and walk in His statutes, He would bless them. He set before them a long line of blessings, rich and full—all these would be their portion if they would hearken to the Lord and obey His Law.

Truly, Jehovah was a husband to them, tenderly supplying all their needs, and upholding them in all their journeying. He fed them with angels' food. He sheltered them by day from the heat, and at night He lit up their canvas city with a pillar of fire. He Himself walked in the midst of them and revealed Himself to them as He had done to no other nation—they were a people near unto Him, a nation beloved of the Lord.

But under the exceedingly favorable circumstances in which they lived in the wilderness, where they had no temporal cares and no neighbors to mislead them, they did not keep the statutes of their God. No, they did not even remain faithful to Him as their God. For they worshipped a molten image and likened the Lord of Glory to an ox that eats grass. They bowed down before the image of a bullock that has horns and hoofs. And they cried, "These be your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

Thus they broke the Covenant in a most wanton and wicked manner. Such a Covenant was easily violated by a rebellious people—therefore the Lord, in His immeasurable Grace, resolves to make with them a Covenant of a new kind, which cannot, thus, be broken. The Lord was faithful to the old Covenant—the breaking was on the part of the people, as we read in Jeremiah 31:32—"Which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them."

After long patience, He visited them for their iniquities and their carcasses fell in the wilderness, for they could not enter into His rest. Later He gave them into the hands of their enemies, who were a scourge to them. He made them to be carried away captive. And at last He allowed the Romans to burn their holy city and scatter the people throughout all lands. They would not keep the Covenant of God, and therefore their treachery was visited upon them.

But in these days the Lord has, in Christ Jesus, made with the true seed of Abraham, even with all Believers, a new Covenant. Not after the tenor of the old, nor liable to be broken as it was. Brethren, take care to distinguish between the old and the new Covenants. For they must never be mingled. Many never catch the true idea of the Covenant of Grace—they do not understand a compact of pure promise. They talk about Divine Grace, but they regard it as dependent upon *merit*. They speak about God's mercy and then combine with it *conditions* which make it *justice* rather than Grace.

Distinguish between things which differ. If salvation is of Divine Grace, it is not of works—otherwise Grace is no more Grace. And if it is of works, it is not of Divine Grace, otherwise work is no more work. The new Covenant is all of Grace, from its first letter to its closing word. And we shall have to show you this as we go on.

It is an "everlasting" Covenant, however—that is the point upon which the text insists. The other covenant was of very short duration. But this is an "Everlasting Covenant." Despite modern thought, I hope I shall be allowed to believe that the word "everlasting" means lasting forever. While there is any meaning in language, we shall be satisfied that "an Everlasting Covenant" means a Covenant that will never come to an end. Why is it so?

The first reason why it is an Everlasting Covenant is that it was made with us in Christ Jesus. The Covenant of Works was made with the race in the first Adam. But the first Adam was faulty and failed full soon. He could not bear the stress

of his responsibility and so that Covenant was broken. But the surety of the new Covenant is our Lord Jesus Christ. And He is not faulty but perfect. The Lord Jesus is the federal head of His chosen and He stands for them—they are regarded as members of His body and He is their head, their mouthpiece, their representative.

The Lord Jesus, as the second Adam, entered into Covenant with God on the behalf of His people. And because He cannot fail—for in Him there is no infirmity or sin—therefore the Covenant of which He is the Surety must stand. He abides forever in His Melchizedek priesthood and in the power of an endless life. He is, both in His nature and in His work, eternally qualified to stand before the living God. He stands in absolute perfectness under every strain and, therefore, the Covenant stands in Him.

When it is written, “I have given Him for a Covenant to My people,” we see that the Covenant cannot fail, because He cannot fail who is the sum and substance of it. Because the Lord Jesus represents all His believing people in the Covenant, therefore the Covenant is everlasting.

Next, the Covenant cannot fail because the human side of it has been fulfilled. The human side might be regarded as the weak side of it. But when Jesus became the representative of man that side was sure. He has at this hour fulfilled to the letter every stipulation upon that side of which He was the Surety. He has magnified the Law and made it honorable by His own obedience to it. He has met the demands of moral government and made amends to holiness for man’s offenses.

The Law is more glorified by His atoning death than it was dishonored by man’s sin. This Man has offered one sacrifice for sins forever. And that is so effectual for the fulfillment of the Covenant that He sits down at the right hand of God. Since, then, that side of the Covenant has been fulfilled which appertains to man, there remains only God’s side of it to be fulfilled, which consists of promises—unconditional promises, full of Grace and Truth, such as these—“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh.

“And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them.” Will not God be true to His engagements? Yes, verily. When He makes a Covenant and on man’s part the compact has been fulfilled, depend upon it, on the Lord’s side no Word will fall to the ground. Even to the jots and tittles, all shall be carried out.

Furthermore, the Covenant must be everlasting, for it is founded upon the Free Grace of God. The first Covenant was conditioned upon the obedience of men. If they kept the Law, God would bless them. But they failed through disobedience and inherited the curse. The Divine sovereignty determined to deal with men, not according to merit but according to mercy. Not according to the personal character of men but according to the personal character of God. Not according to what men might do, but according to what the Lord Jesus would perform.

Sovereign Grace declares that He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. This basis of sovereignty cannot be shaken. The Covenant which saves men according to God’s will and good pleasure is founded upon a rock. For God’s Free Grace is always the same, and God’s sovereignty is linked to immutability, even as it is written, “I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” The slightest touch of merit puts perishable material into the Covenant. But if it is of pure Divine Grace, then the Covenant is everlasting.

Again, in the Everlasting Covenant, *everything* that can be supposed to be a condition is *provided* by God’s Grace. It is necessary that a man, to be forgiven, should repent. But the Lord Jesus is exalted on high to *give* repentance and remission of sins. It is necessary that a man, in order to be saved, should have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But faith is of the operation of God, and the Holy Spirit works in us this fruit of the Spirit. It is needful, before we enter Heaven, that we should be holy. But the Lord sanctifies us through the Word, and works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

All that is required is also supplied. If there is, anywhere in the Word of God, any act or Grace mentioned as though it were a condition of salvation, it is in another Scripture described as a Covenant *gift* which will be bestowed upon the heirs of salvation by Christ Jesus. So that a condition, which might seem to put the Covenant in danger, is so surely provided for that there arises no flaw or fracture.

Moreover, the Covenant must be everlasting, because it cannot be superseded by anything more glorious. In the order of God's working, He always advances from the good to the better. The old Law was put away because He found fault with it, and therefore the new Covenant must last till a fault can be found with it—which will never be. This is the glory which excels—no brightness can exceed the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There can be nothing more gracious, nothing more righteous, nothing more just to God—or more safe to man—than the plan of salvation set forth in the Covenant of Grace.

The moon gives way to the sun and the sun gives way to a luster which shall exceed the light of seven days. But what is to supersede the light of Free Grace and dying love, the glory of the love which gave the Only-Begotten that we might live through Him? The Covenant of Grace made with us in Christ Jesus is the masterpiece of Divine wisdom and love, and it is established on such sure principles that it must last forever.

Beloved, rest in the Everlasting Covenant as affording you eternal security and boundless comfort. It may well be everlasting, since it was Divine in its conception. Surely the counsel of the Lord shall stand. Who else could have thought of a Covenant, “ordered in all things and sure,” to be made with guilty man? It was also Divine in its carrying out, and therefore it shall endure. Who could have provided a Savior like the Only-Begotten of the Father? Who could have given Him for a Covenant, but the Father?

The Covenant is Divine in its maintenance. Note well the Word of the Lord—“I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them.” He does not say, “They shall make a covenant with Me.” But, “I will make a covenant with *them*.” That God is the maker of the Covenant is a reason for its certainty and everlastingness. The faithful God has given guarantees which fix it fast, even His promise and His oath—those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie. Through these we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first head. And very little it is, compared with the grandeur of the subject.

II. Secondly, we have now devoutly to think upon THE UNCHANGING GOD OF THE COVENANT—“I will not turn away from them, to do them good.”

Please notice the terms here—the Lord does not merely say, “I will not turn away from them,” but, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.” He will not cease to work good for His chosen. The Lord is always doing His people good. And here He promises that He will never leave off blessing them. Not only will He always love them but He will always prove His love by active kindness and blessing. He is pledged to continue the gifts and work of His goodness. In effect He says, “I will not cease blessing them. I will continually, everlastingly be doing them good.”

Now, why is this, that God is thus unchanging in His doings towards His Covenanted ones? He will not turn away from doing them good, first, because He has said so. That is enough. Jehovah speaks and in His voice lies the end of all controversy. He says, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good”—and we are sure that He will not forfeit His Word. I do not need to bring forth more reasons—this suffices, the Lord has said it. Has He said and will He not do it?

Still, let us remember that there is no valid reason why He should turn away from them to do them good. You remind me of their unworthiness. Yes, but observe that when He began to do them good, they were as unworthy as they could possibly be. He began to do them good when they were “dead in trespasses and sins.” He began to do them good when they were enemies, rebels and under condemnation. When first the sinner feels the movement of Divine love upon his heart, he is in no commendable state.

In some cases the man is a drunkard, a swearer, a liar, or a profane person. In certain cases the man has been a persecutor like Manasseh or Saul. If God left off blessing us because He could see no good in us, why did He begin to do us good when we were without desire towards Him? We were a mass of misery, a pit of wants and a dunghill of sins when He began to do us good. Whatever we may be *now*, we are not otherwise than we were when first He revealed His love towards us. The same motive which led Him to begin leads Him to continue. And that motive is nothing but His Grace.

Moreover, there can be no reason in the faultiness of the Believer why the Lord should cease to do him good, seeing that He foresaw all the evil that would be in us. No wandering child of God surprises His heavenly Father. He foreknew every sin we should commit—He proposed to do us good notwithstanding all this foreknown iniquity. If, then, He entered into a Covenant with us and began to bless us with all our sin before His mind, nothing new can spring up which can alter the Covenant once made with all these drawbacks known and taken into account.



There is no scarlet sin which has been omitted, for the Lord has said, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet.” He entered into a Covenant that He would not turn away from us, to do us good. And no circumstance has arisen, or can arise, which was unknown to Him when He thus pledged His Word of Grace.

Moreover, I would have you remember that we are by God, at this day, viewed in the same light as ever. He saw us at the first as under sin, fallen and depraved and yet He promised to do us good—

*“He saw me ruined in the Fall,  
Yet loved me notwithstanding all.”*

And if today I am sinful, if today I have to groan by reason of my evil nature—I am but where I was when He chose me and called me and redeemed me by the blood of His Son.

“When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” We were undeserving objects upon whom He bestowed His mercy, out of no motive but that which He drew from His own nature. And if we are still undeserving, His Grace is still the same. If it is so, that He still deals with us in the way of Grace, it is evident that He still views us as undeserving. And why should He not do good towards us now as He did at the first? Assuredly, the fountain being the same, the stream will continue to flow.

Moreover, remember that He sees us now *in Christ*. Behold, He has put His people into the hands of His dear Son. He has even put us into Christ’s body—“for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” He sees us in Christ to have died, in Him to have been buried, and in Him to have risen again. As the Lord Jesus Christ is well-pleasing to the Father, so in Him are we well-pleasing to the Father. Our being in Him identifies us with Him. If, then, our acceptance with God stands on the footing of Christ’s acceptance with God, it stands firmly and is an unchanging argument with the Lord God for doing us good.

If we stood before God in our own individual righteousness, our ruin would be sure and speedy. But in Jesus our life is hid beyond peril. Firmly believe that until the Lord rejects Christ, He cannot reject His people—until He repudiates the atonement and the resurrection—He cannot cast away any of those with whom He has entered into Covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord will not turn away from His people, from doing them good, because He has shown them so much kindness already. And all that He has done would be lost if He did not go through with it. When He gave His Son, He gave us a sure pledge that He meant to finish His work of love. They say of a man that does not finish his work, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” But that shall never be said of the Lord Jehovah. The Lord God has laid out His whole Deity to save His people and has given His whole Self in the Person of the Well-Beloved for our redemption.

And can you believe that He will fail in it? Surely, the idea is blasphemous! Some of us have known too much love already to believe that it will ever cease to flow towards us. We have been so favored that we dare not fear that His favor toward us will cease. So heavenly, so Divine, is the sense of the love of God, when it is revealed to the soul, that we cannot believe that it has been given to mock us. We have been carried away with such torrents of love that we will never believe that they can be dried up. The Lord has communed with us so closely that the secret of the Lord is with us, and He will forever recognize that mystic token by which our union has been sealed.

Like Paul, each one of us may say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” The cost to which our Lord has gone assures us that He will complete His designs of Grace.

Beloved, we feel sure that He will not cease to bless us, because we have proved that even when He has hidden His face He has not turned away from doing us good. The Lord has withdrawn the light of His countenance, but never the love of His heart. When the Lord has turned away His face from His people, it has been to do them good, by making them sick of self and eager for His love. How often He has brought us back from wandering by making us feel the evil of the sin which grieves His Spirit!

When we have cried, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” we have been greatly blessed by the anguish of our search. Bear me witness, you tried people of God—the Lord’s chastening has always been for our good. When the Lord has bruised us till the wound has been blue, our heart has been bettered. When the Lord has taken away our comforts, He has done us good by driving us closer to the highest good. The Lord has enriched us by our losses and made us healthy by

our sicknesses. If, then, the Lord our God, when He is seen in dark colors, has not turned away from doing us good—we are persuaded that He will never cease daily to load us with benefits.

Moreover, I close with this argument—that He has involved His honor in the salvation of His people. If the Lord's chosen and redeemed are cast away, where is the glory of His redemption? Will not the Enemy say of the Lord, "He had not the power to carry out His Covenant, nor the constancy to continue blessing them"? Shall that ever be said of God? Will He thus lose the glory of His omnipotence and immutability? I cannot believe that any purpose of the Lord can fail—neither can I conceive that He can withdraw His declarations of love to those with whom He is in Covenant.

The God whom we adore and reverence, the God of Abraham, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, faints not, neither is weary. "He is in one mind and who can turn Him?" "He will ever be mindful of His Covenant." Of our Lord Jesus we truly sing—

*"His honor is engaged to save  
The meanest of His sheep;  
All that His heavenly Father gave,  
His hands securely keep."*

Whether my arguments seem good to you or not, is of small consequence—for the text is the inspired Word of God—and it cannot be misunderstood or questioned. Thus says the Lord, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good."

III. The third part of our subject leads us to see THE PERSEVERING PEOPLE IN THE COVENANT—"I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me."

Let me read very distinctly these words—"They shall not depart from Me." If there were only that text in the Bible, it would suffice to prove the final perseverance of the saints—"They SHALL NOT depart from Me." The salvation of those who are in Covenant with God is herein provided for by an absolute promise of the omnipotent God, which must be carried out. It is plain, clear, unconditional, positive—"They shall not depart from Me."

It is not carried out by altering the effect of apostasy. If they did depart from God, it would be fatal. Suppose a child of God should utterly depart from the Lord and wholly lose the life of God—what then? Would he nevertheless be saved? I answer, His salvation lies in the fact that he will never utterly lose the life of God. Why are we to ask what would happen in a case which can never occur? But if we must suppose it, we are not slow to say that if the Believer were wholly separated from Christ, he must, without doubt, perish everlastingly.

If a man abides not in Christ, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. The Scripture is very positive about it—if Divine Grace were gone, safety would be gone. "Salt is good: but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" "If these shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." If the work of Grace could wholly and totally fail in any man, the case would be beyond all remedy, since the best means has, on that supposition, been tried and has failed. If the Holy Spirit has, indeed, regenerated a soul, and yet that regeneration does not save it from total apostasy, what can be done?

There is such a thing as being "born again." But there is no such thing as being born again *and again*. Regeneration is once and for all—it cannot be repeated. Scripture has no word or hint that it could be. If men have been washed in the blood of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit, and this sacred process has failed, there remains no more. When old things have passed away and all things have become new, can it be imagined that these will grow old again? No man may therefore say, "Though I go back to my old sin and cease to pray, or repent, or believe, or have any life of God in me, yet I shall be saved because I was once a Believer."

No! No, profane talker! The text says not, "They shall be saved though they depart from Me." But, "They shall *not depart* from Me"—which is a very different matter. Woe unto them that depart from the living God! For they must perish and with them no Covenant of peace has ever been made.

Neither does this perseverance of the saints come in by the removal of temptation. It is not said, "I will put them where they shall not be tempted. I will give them such a sufficient livelihood that they shall not be tried by poverty, and at the same time they shall never be so rich as to know the temptations of wealth." No, the Lord does not take His people out of the world. But He allows them to fight the battle of life in the same field as others. He does not remove us from the conflict but, "He gives us the victory."

We are tempted as was our Lord. But we have a way of escape provided. Our heart is prone to wander and we are not kept from the scene of possible wandering. But what is said is this—“They shall not depart from Me.” What a blessed assurance! They may be tempted—but they shall not be overcome. Though they sin in measure, yet shall they not so sin as to depart from God. They shall still hold on to Him and live in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

How, then, are they preserved? Well, not as some falsely talk, as though we preached, “that the man who is converted may live as he likes.” We have never said so. We have never even *thought* so. The man who is converted cannot live as he likes. Or, rather, he is so changed by the Holy Spirit, that if he *could* live as he likes, he would never sin but live an absolutely perfect life. Oh, how deeply do we long to be kept clear of every sin! We preach not that men may depart from God and yet live—but that they shall not depart from Him!

This is effected by putting a Divine principle within their hearts. The Lord says, “I will put My fear in their hearts.” It would never be found there if He did not put it there. It will never spring up naturally in any heart. “I will put My fear in their hearts.” That is, regeneration and conversion. He makes us tremble before His Law. He makes us feel the smart and bitterness of sin. He causes us to remember the God we once forgot and to obey the Lord whom once we defied. “I will put My fear in their hearts” is the first great act of conversion—and it is continued throughout life by the perpetual working of the Spirit upon the heart.

The work which commences at conversion is duly carried on in the converted ones. For the Lord still puts His fear into their hearts. How the Spirit of God works we cannot tell—He has ways of acting directly upon our minds which are all His own and cannot be understood by us. But without violating the freedom of our nature, leaving us men as we were before, He knows how to make us continue in the fear of God. This is God’s great holdfast upon His people, “I will put My fear in their hearts.”

What is this *fear of God*? It is, first, a holy awe and reverence of the great God. Taught of God, we come to see His infinite greatness and the fact that He is everywhere present with us. And then, filled with a devout sense of His Godhead, we dare not sin. Since God is near, we cannot offend. The words, “My fear,” also intend filial fear. God is our Father and we feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.” This child-like love kindles in us a fear to *grieve* Him whom we love, and therefore we have no desire to depart from Him.

There moves also in our hearts a deep sense of grateful obligation. God is so good to me, how can I sin? He loves me so, how can I vex Him? He favors me so greatly from day to day that I cannot do that which is contrary to His will. Did you ever receive a choice and special mercy? It has often fallen to my lot. And when the tears have been in my eyes at the sight of so great a favor, I have felt that if a temptation came to me, it would come at a time when I had neither heart, nor eye, nor ear for it. Gratitude bars the door against sin. Great love received overthrows great temptation to wander.

Our cry is, “The Lord bathes me in His love, He indulges me with the nearest and dearest fellowship with Himself—how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Loved of Him so especially and united to Him by an Everlasting Covenant, how can we fly in the face of love so wonderful? Surely, we can find no pleasure in offending so gracious a God! But it is our joy to do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word.

See, Beloved, this perseverance of the saints is perseverance in holiness—“They shall not depart from Me.” If the Grace of God has really changed you, you are radically and lastingly changed. If you have come to Christ, He has not placed in you a mere cup of the water of life but He has said it—“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

The work that is done in regeneration is not a temporary work, by which a man is, for a time, reformed. It is an everlasting work, by which the man is born for Heaven. There is a life implanted at the new birth which cannot die—for it is a living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever. Grace will go on working in a man until it leads him to Glory.

If any disagree with what I have said, I cannot help it. But I would beg them not to differ from the text. For the Scripture cannot be broken. Read it—“I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer 32:40). There it stands, “They shall not depart from Me.” But if you ask, By what instrumentality does God maintain this fear in the hearts of His people? I answer, it is the work of the Spirit of God—and the Holy Spirit usually works by *means*. The fear of God is kept alive in our hearts by the hearing of the Word. For faith comes by hearing and holy fear comes through faith. Be diligent, then, in hearing the Word.

That fear is kept alive in our hearts by reading the Scriptures. For as we feed on the Word, it breathes within us that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. This fear of God is maintained in us by the belief of revealed Truth and meditation thereon. Study the Doctrines of Grace and be instructed in the analogy of the faith. Know the Gospel well and thoroughly, and this will bring fuel to the fire of the fear of God in your hearts.

Be much in private prayer. For that stirs up the fire and makes it burn more brilliantly. Seek to live near to God, to abide in Him. For as you abide in Him and His Words abide in you, you shall bring forth much fruit and so shall you be His disciples. I find this precious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to be a very fruitful one. One Thursday night, not long ago, I preached this doctrine with all my might and many were comforted by it. But, better still, many were set thinking and were led to turn their faces Christ-ward.

Some preach a doctrine which has a very wide door but it is all door and when you get in, there is nothing to be had. You are no safer than you were outside. Sheep are not in a hurry to enter where there is no pasture. Some have thought my doctrine narrow, though I am sure it is not. But if a door should seem strait, yet, if there is something worth the having when you get in, many will seek admission. There are such wonderful blessings provided in the Covenant of Grace that those who are wise are anxious to obtain them.

“Oh,” says one, “if salvation is an everlasting thing, if this regeneration means a change of nature such as can never be undone, let me have it! If salvation is a mere plated article which will wear out, I do not want it. But if it is pure silver all through, let me have it. Does the gift of Divine Grace make us partakers of the Divine nature and cause us to escape the corruption which is in the world through lust? Then let us have it.” I pray that some here may desire salvation, because it secures a life of holiness.

The sweet meat which tempted me to Christ was this—I believed that salvation was an insurance of character. In what better way can a young man cleanse his life than by putting himself into the holy hands of the Lord Jesus, to be kept from falling? I said—If I give myself to Christ, He will save me from my sins. Therefore, I came to Him and He keeps me. Oh, how musical these words, “They shall not depart from Me!”

To use an old figure—be sure that you take a ticket all the way through. Many people have only believed in God to save them for a time—so long as they are faithful, or so long as they are earnest. Beloved, believe in God to keep you faithful and earnest all your life—take a ticket all the way through. Get a salvation which covers all risks. There is no other ticket issued from the authorized office but a through-ticket. Other tickets are forgeries. He that cannot keep you forever cannot keep you a day. If the power of regeneration will not last through life, it may not last an hour.

Faith in the Everlasting Covenant stirs my heart’s blood, fills me with grateful joy, inspires me with confidence, fires me with enthusiasm! I can never give up my belief in what the Lord has said, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

***Portions of Scripture Read before Sermon—Hebrews 8; 10:12-39.***  
**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—27, 229, 228.**

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# PERSEVERANCE IN HOLINESS

## NO. 2108

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6, 1889,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good. But I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me”  
Jeremiah 32:40.***

LAST Sabbath morning we were called to deep searching of heart. It was a very painful discourse to the preacher and it was not less so to many of his hearers. Some of us will never forget that fig tree, covered with untimely leaves, which yielded no fruit and was condemned to stand a beacon to the unfruitful of all ages. I felt that I was in the surgery, using the knife—I felt great tenderness and the operation was grievous to my soul. When the winnowing fan was used to chase away the chaff, some of the wheat felt that it was none too heavy—the wind stirred it in its place, so as to make it fear that it would be carried into the fire. Today, I trust we shall see that, despite all sifting, not one true grain shall be lost.

May the King himself come near and feast His saints today! May the Comforter who convicts of sin now come to cheer us with the Promise!

We noticed concerning the fig tree, that it was confirmed in its barrenness—it had borne no fruit, though it made large professions of doing so, and it was made to abide as it was. Let us consider another form of confirmation—not the curse of continuance in the rooted habit of evil—but the blessing of perseverance in a settled way of Divine Grace.

May the Lord show us how He establishes His saints in righteousness and makes the works which He has begun in them to abide, and remain, and even to go onward towards perfection, so that they shall not be ashamed in the day of His appearing!

We will go to our text at once. In the world there are men and women towards whom God stands in Covenant relationship. Mixed up with these myriads of God-forgetting, or even God-defying people, there are a number of Covenanted ones, who think of God, know God, trust God and are even in league with God. God has made with them a Covenant. It is a wonder of mercy that Jehovah should enter into Covenant with men. But He has done so. God has pledged Himself to His people and they have, in return, through His Grace, pledged themselves to God.

These are Heaven's Covenanters, in bonds of amity, alliance, and even union with the Lord their God. This Covenant shall stand when the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed—it is not a thing of passing time—but, like its Author, it is everlasting. Happy people who are joined unto the Lord by an eternal bond!

These Covenanted ones may be known by certain marks and evidences. It is most important that we should know that we ourselves belong to them. They are a people, according to the text, to whom God is doing

good. Friend, do you perceive that He is doing good to you? Has the Lord dealt graciously with you? Has He appeared to you and said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you"?

Do all things work together for good for you? I mean, for your spiritual good? Your lasting good? Have you received the greatest good by the renewal of the Holy Spirit? Has He given Christ to you? Has He made you hate evil and cleave to that which is good? If these good gifts have been bestowed on you, He has done you good. For these gifts are the outcome of the Covenant and are sure guarantees that it stands fast between God and your soul.

These people are known by having the fear of God in their hearts. Judge you, whether it is so in your own case. This is the Covenant promise—"I will put My fear in their hearts." Do you fear the Lord? Do you reverence Jehovah, our God? Do you desire to please the Lord? Do you please Him? Do you desire to be like He is? Are you like He is in some humble degree? Do you feel ashamed when you see how sadly you come short? And does this make you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is the gracious Presence of God your Heaven below? Is it all the Heaven you desire above? If so, this fear of God in your heart is the seal of the Covenant to you. Towards you God has thoughts of love which shall never change.

This leads us to a close consideration of our text. We notice in it, first, the Everlasting Covenant—"I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them." Secondly, we reverently perceive the unchanging God of the Covenant—"I will not turn away from them, to do them good." Thirdly, we see with joy the persevering people in that Covenant—"I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." I am sure I shall not find language suitable to such a theme as this. But I am cheered with the reflection that, however poor and simple my words may be, the matter of which I speak, is, in itself, enough for the delight of all true Believers.

When you have an abundance of solid food to make a meal, you need not fret, even though you miss the tasteful adornments of the table. Hungry men are not eager for a display of plate or of damask. Nor even for a show of flowers bedecking the table. They are best satisfied with solid food. In my subject there is meat fit for kings—however badly I may carve it—you who have appetites will not fail to feed on it. May the Holy Spirit make it so!

**I.** First, here is THE EVERLASTING COVENANT—"I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them."

In the previous chapter, in the thirty-first verse, this Covenant is called "a new Covenant." And it is new in contrast with the former one which the Lord made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. It is new as to the principle upon which it is based. The Lord had said unto His people, that if they would keep His Laws and walk in His statutes, He would bless them. He set before them a long line of blessings, rich and full—all these would be their portion if they would hearken to the Lord and obey His Law.

Truly, Jehovah was a husband to them, tenderly supplying all their needs, and upholding them in all their journeying. He fed them with angels' food. He sheltered them by day from the heat, and at night He lit up their canvas city with a pillar of fire. He Himself walked in the midst of them and revealed Himself to them as He had done to no other nation—they were a people near unto Him, a nation beloved of the Lord.

But under the exceedingly favorable circumstances in which they lived in the wilderness, where they had no temporal cares and no neighbors to mislead them, they did not keep the statutes of their God. No, they did not even remain faithful to Him as their God. For they worshipped a molten image and likened the Lord of Glory to an ox that eats grass. They bowed down before the image of a bullock that has horns and hoofs. And they cried, "These be your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

Thus they broke the Covenant in a most wanton and wicked manner. Such a Covenant was easily violated by a rebellious people—therefore the Lord, in His immeasurable Grace, resolves to make with them a Covenant of a new kind, which cannot, thus, be broken. The Lord was faithful to the old Covenant—the breaking was on the part of the people, as we read in Jeremiah 31:32—"Which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them."

After long patience, He visited them for their iniquities and their carcasses fell in the wilderness, for they could not enter into His rest. Later He gave them into the hands of their enemies, who were a scourge to them. He made them to be carried away captive. And at last He allowed the Romans to burn their holy city and scatter the people throughout all lands. They would not keep the Covenant of God, and therefore their treachery was visited upon them.

But in these days the Lord has, in Christ Jesus, made with the true seed of Abraham, even with all Believers, a new Covenant. Not after the tenor of the old, nor liable to be broken as it was. Brethren, take care to distinguish between the old and the new Covenants. For they must never be mingled. Many never catch the true idea of the Covenant of Grace—they do not understand a compact of pure promise. They talk about Divine Grace, but they regard it as dependent upon *merit*. They speak about God's mercy and then combine with it *conditions* which make it *justice* rather than Grace.

Distinguish between things which differ. If salvation is of Divine Grace, it is not of works—otherwise Grace is no more Grace. And if it is of works, it is not of Divine Grace, otherwise work is no more work. The new Covenant is all of Grace, from its first letter to its closing word. And we shall have to show you this as we go on.

It is an "everlasting" Covenant, however—that is the point upon which the text insists. The other covenant was of very short duration. But this is an "Everlasting Covenant." Despite modern thought, I hope I shall be allowed to believe that the word "everlasting" means lasting forever. While there is any meaning in language, we shall be satisfied that "an Everlasting Covenant" means a Covenant that will never come to an end. Why is it so?

The first reason why it is an Everlasting Covenant is that it was made with us in Christ Jesus. The Covenant of Works was made with the race in the first Adam. But the first Adam was faulty and failed full soon. He could not bear the stress of his responsibility and so that Covenant was broken. But the surety of the new Covenant is our Lord Jesus Christ. And He is not faulty but perfect. The Lord Jesus is the federal head of His chosen and He stands for them—they are regarded as members of His body and He is their head, their mouthpiece, their representative.

The Lord Jesus, as the second Adam, entered into Covenant with God on the behalf of His people. And because He cannot fail—for in Him there is no infirmity or sin—therefore the Covenant of which He is the Surety must stand. He abides forever in His Melchizedek priesthood and in the power of an endless life. He is, both in His nature and in His work, eternally qualified to stand before the living God. He stands in absolute perfectness under every strain and, therefore, the Covenant stands in Him.

When it is written, “I have given Him for a Covenant to My people,” we see that the Covenant cannot fail, because He cannot fail who is the sum and substance of it. Because the Lord Jesus represents all His believing people in the Covenant, therefore the Covenant is everlasting.

Next, the Covenant cannot fail because the human side of it has been fulfilled. The human side might be regarded as the weak side of it. But when Jesus became the representative of man that side was sure. He has at this hour fulfilled to the letter every stipulation upon that side of which He was the Surety. He has magnified the Law and made it honorable by His own obedience to it. He has met the demands of moral government and made amends to holiness for man’s offenses.

The Law is more glorified by His atoning death than it was dishonored by man’s sin. This Man has offered one sacrifice for sins forever. And that is so effectual for the fulfillment of the Covenant that He sits down at the right hand of God. Since, then, that side of the Covenant has been fulfilled which appertains to man, there remains only God’s side of it to be fulfilled, which consists of promises—unconditional promises, full of Grace and Truth, such as these—“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh.

“And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them.” Will not God be true to His engagements? Yes, verily. When He makes a Covenant and on man’s part the compact has been fulfilled, depend upon it, on the Lord’s side no Word will fall to the ground. Even to the jots and tittles, all shall be carried out.

Furthermore, the Covenant must be everlasting, for it is founded upon the Free Grace of God. The first Covenant was conditioned upon the obedience of men. If they kept the Law, God would bless them. But they failed through disobedience and inherited the curse. The Divine sovereignty determined to deal with men, not according to merit but according to mercy. Not according to the personal character of men but according to



the personal character of God. Not according to what men might do, but according to what the Lord Jesus would perform.

Sovereign Grace declares that He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. This basis of sovereignty cannot be shaken. The Covenant which saves men according to God's will and good pleasure is founded upon a rock. For God's Free Grace is always the same, and God's sovereignty is linked to immutability, even as it is written, "I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." The slightest touch of merit puts perishable material into the Covenant. But if it is of pure Divine Grace, then the Covenant is everlasting.

Again, in the Everlasting Covenant, *everything* that can be supposed to be a condition is *provided* by God's Grace. It is necessary that a man, to be forgiven, should repent. But the Lord Jesus is exalted on high to *give* repentance and remission of sins. It is necessary that a man, in order to be saved, should have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But faith is of the operation of God, and the Holy Spirit works in us this fruit of the Spirit. It is needful, before we enter Heaven, that we should be holy. But the Lord sanctifies us through the Word, and works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

All that is required is also supplied. If there is, anywhere in the Word of God, any act or Grace mentioned as though it were a condition of salvation, it is in another Scripture described as a Covenant *gift* which will be bestowed upon the heirs of salvation by Christ Jesus. So that a condition, which might seem to put the Covenant in danger, is so surely provided for that there arises no flaw or fracture.

Moreover, the Covenant must be everlasting, because it cannot be superseded by anything more glorious. In the order of God's working, He always advances from the good to the better. The old Law was put away because He found fault with it, and therefore the new Covenant must last till a fault can be found with it—which will never be. This is the glory which excels—no brightness can exceed the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There can be nothing more gracious, nothing more righteous, nothing more just to God—or more safe to man—than the plan of salvation set forth in the Covenant of Grace.

The moon gives way to the sun and the sun gives way to a luster which shall exceed the light of seven days. But what is to supersede the light of Free Grace and dying love, the glory of the love which gave the Only-Begotten that we might live through Him? The Covenant of Grace made with us in Christ Jesus is the masterpiece of Divine wisdom and love, and it is established on such sure principles that it must last forever.

Beloved, rest in the Everlasting Covenant as affording you eternal security and boundless comfort. It may well be everlasting, since it was Divine in its conception. Surely the counsel of the Lord shall stand. Who else could have thought of a Covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," to be made with guilty man? It was also Divine in its carrying out, and therefore it shall endure. Who could have provided a Savior like the Only-Begotten of the Father? Who could have given Him for a Covenant, but the Father?

The Covenant is Divine in its maintenance. Note well the Word of the Lord—"I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them." He does not say, "They shall make a covenant with Me." But, "*I* will make a covenant with *them*." That God is the maker of the Covenant is a reason for its certainty and everlastingness. The faithful God has given guarantees which fix it fast, even His promise and His oath—those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie. Through these we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first head. And very little it is, compared with the grandeur of the subject.

**II.** Secondly, we have now devoutly to think upon THE UNCHANGING GOD OF THE COVENANT—"I will not turn away from them, to do them good."

Please notice the terms here—the Lord does not merely say, "I will not turn away from them," but, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good." He will not cease to work good for His chosen. The Lord is always doing His people good. And here He promises that He will never leave off blessing them. Not only will He always love them but He will always prove His love by active kindness and blessing. He is pledged to continue the gifts and work of His goodness. In effect He says, "I will not cease blessing them. I will continually, everlastingly be doing them good."

Now, why is this, that God is thus unchanging in His doings towards His Covenanted ones? He will not turn away from doing them good, first, because He has said so. That is enough. Jehovah speaks and in His voice lies the end of all controversy. He says, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good"—and we are sure that He will not forfeit His Word. I do not need to bring forth more reasons—this suffices, the Lord has said it. Has He said and will He not do it?

Still, let us remember that there is no valid reason why He should turn away from them to do them good. You remind me of their unworthiness. Yes, but observe that when He began to do them good, they were as unworthy as they could possibly be. He began to do them good when they were "dead in trespasses and sins." He began to do them good when they were enemies, rebels and under condemnation. When first the sinner feels the movement of Divine love upon his heart, he is in no commendable state.

In some cases the man is a drunkard, a swearer, a liar, or a profane person. In certain cases the man has been a persecutor like Manasseh or Saul. If God left off blessing us because He could see no good in us, why did He begin to do us good when we were without desire towards Him? We were a mass of misery, a pit of wants and a dunghill of sins when He began to do us good. Whatever we may be *now*, we are not otherwise than we were when first He revealed His love towards us. The same motive which led Him to begin leads Him to continue. And that motive is nothing but His Grace.

Moreover, there can be no reason in the faultiness of the Believer why the Lord should cease to do him good, seeing that He foresaw all the evil that would be in us. No wandering child of God surprises His heavenly Father. He foreknew every sin we should commit—He proposed to do us good notwithstanding all this foreknown iniquity. If, then, He entered into

a Covenant with us and began to bless us with all our sin before His mind, nothing new can spring up which can alter the Covenant once made with all these drawbacks known and taken into account.

There is no scarlet sin which has been omitted, for the Lord has said, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet." He entered into a Covenant that He would not turn away from us, to do us good. And no circumstance has arisen, or can arise, which was unknown to Him when He thus pledged His Word of Grace.

Moreover, I would have you remember that we are by God, at this day, viewed in the same light as ever. He saw us at the first as under sin, fallen and depraved and yet He promised to do us good—

***"He saw me ruined in the Fall,  
Yet loved me notwithstanding all."***

And if today I am sinful, if today I have to groan by reason of my evil nature—I am but where I was when He chose me and called me and redeemed me by the blood of His Son.

"When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We were undeserving objects upon whom He bestowed His mercy, out of no motive but that which He drew from His own nature. And if we are still undeserving, His Grace is still the same. If it is so, that He still deals with us in the way of Grace, it is evident that He still views us as undeserving. And why should He not do good towards us now as He did at the first? Assuredly, the fountain being the same, the stream will continue to flow.

Moreover, remember that He sees us now *in Christ*. Behold, He has put His people into the hands of His dear Son. He has even put us into Christ's body—"for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." He sees us in Christ to have died, in Him to have been buried, and in Him to have risen again. As the Lord Jesus Christ is well-pleasing to the Father, so in Him are we well-pleasing to the Father. Our being in Him identifies us with Him. If, then, our acceptance with God stands on the footing of Christ's acceptance with God, it stands firmly and is an unchanging argument with the Lord God for doing us good.

If we stood before God in our own individual righteousness, our ruin would be sure and speedy. But in Jesus our life is hid beyond peril. Firmly believe that until the Lord rejects Christ, He cannot reject His people—until He repudiates the atonement and the resurrection—He cannot cast away any of those with whom He has entered into Covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord will not turn away from His people, from doing them good, because He has shown them so much kindness already. And all that He has done would be lost if He did not go through with it. When He gave His Son, He gave us a sure pledge that He meant to finish His work of love. They say of a man that does not finish his work, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." But that shall never be said of the Lord Jehovah. The Lord God has laid out His whole Deity to save His people and has given His whole Self in the Person of the Well-Beloved for our redemption.

And can you believe that He will fail in it? Surely, the idea is blasphemous! Some of us have known too much love already to believe that it will ever cease to flow towards us. We have been so favored that we dare not

fear that His favor toward us will cease. So heavenly, so Divine, is the sense of the love of God, when it is revealed to the soul, that we cannot believe that it has been given to mock us. We have been carried away with such torrents of love that we will never believe that they can be dried up. The Lord has communed with us so closely that the secret of the Lord is with us, and He will forever recognize that mystic token by which our union has been sealed.

Like Paul, each one of us may say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." The cost to which our Lord has gone assures us that He will complete His designs of Grace.

Beloved, we feel sure that He will not cease to bless us, because we have proved that even when He has hidden His face He has not turned away from doing us good. The Lord has withdrawn the light of His countenance, but never the love of His heart. When the Lord has turned away His face from His people, it has been to do them good, by making them sick of self and eager for His love. How often He has brought us back from wandering by making us feel the evil of the sin which grieves His Spirit!

When we have cried, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" we have been greatly blessed by the anguish of our search. Bear me witness, you tried people of God—the Lord's chastening has always been for our good. When the Lord has bruised us till the wound has been blue, our heart has been bettered. When the Lord has taken away our comforts, He has done us good by driving us closer to the highest good. The Lord has enriched us by our losses and made us healthy by our sicknesses. If, then, the Lord our God, when He is seen in dark colors, has not turned away from doing us good—we are persuaded that He will never cease daily to load us with benefits.

Moreover, I close with this argument—that He has involved His honor in the salvation of His people. If the Lord's chosen and redeemed are cast away, where is the glory of His redemption? Will not the Enemy say of the Lord, "He had not the power to carry out His Covenant, nor the constancy to continue blessing them"? Shall that ever be said of God? Will He thus lose the glory of His omnipotence and immutability? I cannot believe that any purpose of the Lord can fail—neither can I conceive that He can withdraw His declarations of love to those with whom He is in Covenant.

The God whom we adore and reverence, the God of Abraham, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, faints not, neither is weary. "He is in one mind and who can turn Him?" "He will ever be mindful of His Covenant." Of our Lord Jesus we truly sing —

***"His honor is engaged to save  
The meanest of His sheep;  
All that His heavenly Father gave,  
His hands securely keep."***

Whether my arguments seem good to you or not, is of small consequence—for the text is the inspired Word of God—and it cannot be misunderstood or questioned. Thus says the Lord, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good."

**III.** The third part of our subject leads us to see THE PERSEVERING PEOPLE IN THE COVENANT—"I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me."

Let me read very distinctly these words—"They shall not depart from Me." If there were only that text in the Bible, it would suffice to prove the final perseverance of the saints—"They SHALL NOT depart from Me." The salvation of those who are in Covenant with God is herein provided for by an absolute promise of the omnipotent God, which must be carried out. It is plain, clear, unconditional, positive—"They shall not depart from Me."

It is not carried out by altering the effect of apostasy. If they did depart from God, it would be fatal. Suppose a child of God should utterly depart from the Lord and wholly lose the life of God—what then? Would he nevertheless be saved? I answer, His salvation lies in the fact that he will never utterly lose the life of God. Why are we to ask what would happen in a case which can never occur? But if we must suppose it, we are not slow to say that if the Believer were wholly separated from Christ, he must, without doubt, perish everlastingly.

If a man abides not in Christ, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. The Scripture is very positive about it—if Divine Grace were gone, safety would be gone. "Salt is good: but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" "If these shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." If the work of Grace could wholly and totally fail in any man, the case would be beyond all remedy, since the best means has, on that supposition, been tried and has failed. If the Holy Spirit has, indeed, regenerated a soul, and yet that regeneration does not save it from total apostasy, what can be done?

There is such a thing as being "born again." But there is no such thing as being born again *and again*. Regeneration is once and for all—it cannot be repeated. Scripture has no word or hint that it could be. If men have been washed in the blood of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit, and this sacred process has failed, there remains no more. When old things have passed away and all things have become new, can it be imagined that these will grow old again? No man may therefore say, "Though I go back to my old sin and cease to pray, or repent, or believe, or have any life of God in me, yet I shall be saved because I was once a Believer."

No! No, profane talker! The text says not, "They shall be saved though they depart from Me." But, "They shall *not depart* from Me"—which is a very different matter. Woe unto them that depart from the living God! For they must perish and with them no Covenant of peace has ever been made.

Neither does this perseverance of the saints come in by the removal of temptation. It is not said, "I will put them where they shall not be tempted. I will give them such a sufficient livelihood that they shall not be tried by poverty, and at the same time they shall never be so rich as to know the temptations of wealth." No, the Lord does not take His people out of the world. But He allows them to fight the battle of life in the same field as others. He does not remove us from the conflict but, "He gives us the victory."

We are tempted as was our Lord. But we have a way of escape provided. Our heart is prone to wander and we are not kept from the scene of possible wandering. But what is said is this—"They shall not depart from Me." What a blessed assurance! They may be tempted—but they shall not be overcome. Though they sin in measure, yet shall they not so sin as to depart from God. They shall still hold on to Him and live in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

How, then, are they preserved? Well, not as some falsely talk, as though we preached, "that the man who is converted may live as he likes." We have never said so. We have never even *thought* so. The man who is converted cannot live as he likes. Or, rather, he is so changed by the Holy Spirit, that if he *could* live as he likes, he would never sin but live an absolutely perfect life. Oh, how deeply do we long to be kept clear of every sin! We preach not that men may depart from God and yet live—but that they shall not depart from Him!

This is effected by putting a Divine principle within their hearts. The Lord says, "I will put My fear in their hearts." It would never be found there if He did not put it there. It will never spring up naturally in any heart. "I will put My fear in their hearts." That is, regeneration and conversion. He makes us tremble before His Law. He makes us feel the smart and bitterness of sin. He causes us to remember the God we once forgot and to obey the Lord whom once we defied. "I will put My fear in their hearts" is the first great act of conversion—and it is continued throughout life by the perpetual working of the Spirit upon the heart.

The work which commences at conversion is duly carried on in the converted ones. For the Lord still puts His fear into their hearts. How the Spirit of God works we cannot tell—He has ways of acting directly upon our minds which are all His own and cannot be understood by us. But without violating the freedom of our nature, leaving us men as we were before, He knows how to make us continue in the fear of God. This is God's great holdfast upon His people, "I will put My fear in their hearts."

What is this *fear of God*? It is, first, a holy awe and reverence of the great God. Taught of God, we come to see His infinite greatness and the fact that He is everywhere present with us. And then, filled with a devout sense of His Godhead, we dare not sin. Since God is near, we cannot offend. The words, "My fear," also intend filial fear. God is our Father and we feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." This child-like love kindles in us a fear to *grieve* Him whom we love, and therefore we have no desire to depart from Him.

There moves also in our hearts a deep sense of grateful obligation. God is so good to me, how can I sin? He loves me so, how can I vex Him? He favors me so greatly from day to day that I cannot do that which is contrary to His will. Did you ever receive a choice and special mercy? It has often fallen to my lot. And when the tears have been in my eyes at the sight of so great a favor, I have felt that if a temptation came to me, it would come at a time when I had neither heart, nor eye, nor ear for it. Gratitude bars the door against sin. Great love received overthrows great temptation to wander.

Our cry is, "The Lord bathes me in His love, He indulges me with the nearest and dearest fellowship with Himself—how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Loved of Him so especially and united to Him by an Everlasting Covenant, how can we fly in the face of love so wonderful? Surely, we can find no pleasure in offending so gracious a God! But it is our joy to do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word.

See, Beloved, this perseverance of the saints is perseverance in holiness—"They shall not depart from Me." If the Grace of God has really changed you, you are radically and lastingly changed. If you have come to Christ, He has not placed in you a mere cup of the water of life but He has said it—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The work that is done in regeneration is not a temporary work, by which a man is, for a time, reformed. It is an everlasting work, by which the man is born for Heaven. There is a life implanted at the new birth which cannot die—for it is a living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever. Grace will go on working in a man until it leads him to Glory.

If any disagree with what I have said, I cannot help it. But I would beg them not to differ from the text. For the Scripture cannot be broken. Read it—"I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer 32:40). There it stands, "They shall not depart from Me." But if you ask, By what instrumentality does God maintain this fear in the hearts of His people? I answer, it is the work of the Spirit of God—and the Holy Spirit usually works by *means*. The fear of God is kept alive in our hearts by the hearing of the Word. For faith comes by hearing and holy fear comes through faith. Be diligent, then, in hearing the Word.

That fear is kept alive in our hearts by reading the Scriptures. For as we feed on the Word, it breathes within us that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. This fear of God is maintained in us by the belief of revealed Truth and meditation thereon. Study the Doctrines of Grace and be instructed in the analogy of the faith. Know the Gospel well and thoroughly, and this will bring fuel to the fire of the fear of God in your hearts.

Be much in private prayer. For that stirs up the fire and makes it burn more brilliantly. Seek to live near to God, to abide in Him. For as you abide in Him and His Words abide in you, you shall bring forth much fruit and so shall you be His disciples. I find this precious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to be a very fruitful one. One Thursday night, not long ago, I preached this doctrine with all my might and many were comforted by it. But, better still, many were set thinking and were led to turn their faces Christ-ward.

Some preach a doctrine which has a very wide door but it is all door and when you get in, there is nothing to be had. You are no safer than you were outside. Sheep are not in a hurry to enter where there is no pasture. Some have thought my doctrine narrow, though I am sure it is not. But if a door should seem strait, yet, if there is something worth the having when you get in, many will seek admission. There are such wonderful

blessings provided in the Covenant of Grace that those who are wise are anxious to obtain them.

“Oh,” says one, “if salvation is an everlasting thing, if this regeneration means a change of nature such as can never be undone, let me have it! If salvation is a mere plated article which will wear out, I do not want it. But if it is pure silver all through, let me have it. Does the gift of Divine Grace make us partakers of the Divine nature and cause us to escape the corruption which is in the world through lust? Then let us have it.” I pray that some here may desire salvation, because it secures a life of holiness.

The sweet meat which tempted me to Christ was this—I believed that salvation was an insurance of character. In what better way can a young man cleanse his life than by putting himself into the holy hands of the Lord Jesus, to be kept from falling? I said—If I give myself to Christ, He will save me from my sins. Therefore, I came to Him and He keeps me. Oh, how musical these words, “They shall not depart from Me!”

To use an old figure—be sure that you take a ticket all the way through. Many people have only believed in God to save them for a time—so long as they are faithful, or so long as they are earnest. Beloved, believe in God to keep you faithful and earnest all your life—take a ticket all the way through. Get a salvation which covers all risks. There is no other ticket issued from the authorized office but a through-ticket. Other tickets are forgeries. He that cannot keep you forever cannot keep you a day. If the power of regeneration will not last through life, it may not last an hour.

Faith in the Everlasting Covenant stirs my heart’s blood, fills me with grateful joy, inspires me with confidence, fires me with enthusiasm! I can never give up my belief in what the Lord has said, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

***Portions of Scripture Read before Sermon—Hebrews 8; 10:12-39.***  
**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—27, 229, 228.**

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

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



# THE WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS OF GOD IN BLESSING HIS PEOPLE NO. 2036

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 29, 1888,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.”  
Jeremiah 32:41.*

WE cannot help looking for the restoration of the scattered Israelites to the land which God has given to them by a covenant of salt—we also look for the time when they shall believe in the Messiah whom they have rejected, and shall rejoice in Jesus of Nazareth whom today they despise. There is great encouragement in prophecy to those who work among the seed of Israel. And it is greatly needed, for of all mission fields it has been commonly represented to be one of the most barren and upon the work the utmost ridicule has been poured.

God has, therefore, supplied our faith with encouragements larger than we have in almost any other direction of service. Let those who believe work on! Those who believe not may give it up. They shall not have the honor of having helped to gather together the ancient nation to which our Lord Himself belonged. For be it never forgotten that Jesus was a Jew. If we, who are branches of the wild olive, have been engrafted into the good olive, how much more easy shall it be, when God wills it, that the natural branches, which for a while were cut off because of unbelief, should be again grafted into their own native stock?

God send it speedily! Oh, that it were so even now! May the house of Israel look on Him whom they have pierced and turn unto Him with all their hearts. At present we have to say and sing—

*“You chosen seed of Israel’s race,  
A remnant weak and small;  
Hail Him who saves you by His Grace,  
And crown Him Lord of all.”*

It is a rule, in interpreting the Word of God, that the promises made to the natural Israel, so far as they are spiritual, belong to the spiritual Israel.

Believers in Christ are the true seed of Abraham. “Though Abraham is ignorant of us and Sara acknowledge us not,” after the flesh, yet Abraham is the father of the faithful. And they that are faithful justly claim him to be their father. They that are of faith are of the spiritual seed of Abraham, who believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. The covenant made with Abraham is a covenant made with all who are in Abraham, with all the seed born according to promise, as was Isaac. And we may lay hold, without doubt or hesitancy, upon all the spiritual promises

made to the seed of Israel as being made to all who, like Israel, know what it is to wrestle with God and to prevail.

I have, therefore, no doubt whatever in taking such a promise as this and using it with reference to the whole company of God's elect—those peculiar people, whom God has created for Himself, who shall show forth His praise. Viewed in that light, we have before us a text of exceeding glory, one of those great Scriptures that make me fear and tremble for all the goodness which the Lord causes to pass before me. I have presumed to handle it, but I do not presume to say that I can take you into its innermost meaning. I shall pick up a nugget here and there which I find upon the surface. But I am painfully conscious that the great gold-mines underneath are not, as yet, within my reach.

Oh, that we had Divine Grace to dig deeper! Oh, that we had greater capacity for comprehending the heights, depths, lengths and breadths of the love of God to His people! I am forced to say to each one of you, "Silver and gold have I none. But such as I have I give you." I can only present to my hearers such as I am able to grasp with my own mind. May the Lord bless it!

I shall say to you, first, consider this text for instruction. Secondly, consider it with evidence. And thirdly, consider the inferences which naturally flow from it, Oh, that the Holy Spirit may take of these deep things of God and show them unto you!

**I. First, CONSIDER OUR TEXT FOR INSTRUCTION.** When you do so, the first thought is, God blesses His people heartily. "I will rejoice over them to do them good and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart." Notice, in passing, that word "assuredly." For it confirms the word as full of truth and certainty. There must be no doubt here—assuredly banishes it utterly. When the Lord looks upon His chosen and opens His liberal hand towards them, assuredly His heart goes with His hand. There are some works of God in which His heart does not go. He smites the guilty with His left hand. But He says, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies but that he turn unto Me and live."

But when He is dealing with His right hand of loving kindness, His heart goes out with His hand. O Beloved, you that receive His Grace may know assuredly that besides the blessings which you receive, you also have God's whole heart. He blesses you with His whole soul or life. He concentrates His nature upon you that He may bless you to the full. He is slow to wrath but He is swift to mercy, for He delights in it. When He deals out His Grace to His people, then you see the loving God, for "God is love." And you see the living God, for He blesses you with His whole soul. His Godhead is displayed in the deeds of His love.

There is a way of doing things and there is another way of doing things—a work can be done and done according to rule and no great fault can be found with it. But yet it may be done listlessly and as a matter of routine. Another worker takes pleasure in his work and throws his heart and soul into it. The result will show the difference in points which one

can hardly mention in words. A painting with a great painter's heart and soul in it is a rare treasure. When the worker puts himself forth to his utmost, that he may do the work in the noblest fashion, the product is most precious. Even so has God determined that in the wonders of His Grace, through Jesus Christ, He will show Himself more fully than in any other labor to which He has set His hand. No other work so clearly displays the heart of Jehovah.

But then, next, He does this work of blessing His people thoughtfully, for it is added, "and with My whole soul." Not only the affections of God, speaking after the manner of man, but the great mind and life of God is thrown into the work of saving and blessing His people. His essence, His soul, is here at home. The design argument, when brought to bear upon nature, proves the existence of God. We see in nature clear marks of design and a design argues a designer. Much more when that argument is brought to bear upon the works of Divine Grace do we see the Lord.

For in the transactions of Divine Grace there is design in everything. There is no one act of Grace but has its design of perfecting the chosen—not one blessing of the Covenant but has its aim for their eternal blessedness. Salvation is full of those thoughts of God which are as much higher than our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. What a wonderful thought of God was the purpose to save His people at all! When He brought His foreknowledge to bear upon the future condition of the chosen, He knew what they would be and provided for it. He determined to meet all the difficulties that He knew would arise, especially when He saw them ruined in the Fall.

He determined to undo by the second Adam the mischief worked by the first. He saw His chosen dead and determined to give them eternal life in His Son. He saw them guilty and condemned to punishment and He resolved to remove that condemnation by a Sacrifice. Perhaps the grandest thought of all was that God should meet Law by Law and death by death—and bring His people, guilty as they were, to bear the punishment in the Person of their glorious Substitute. And yet cause them never to bear the punishment at all in their own proper persons—for they were set free through the one perfect Sacrifice.

If you would learn God's wisdom to the full, as far as a human mind can grasp it, you should study the marvelous system of redemption, that whole scheme which begins in election and which will never cease

***"Till all the chosen race  
Shall meet around the Throne;  
Shall bless the conduct of His Grace,  
And make His Glory known."***

Can you catch the thought that all the affections of God go out to His chosen and that all the thoughts of God concentrate themselves upon them?

Though He upholds high Heaven and rules the universe, though illimitable space is filled with the marvels of His power and skill, yet is His whole heart and soul with His beloved ones. As a man, however wide his business, thinks still continually of his home, so does God, however many

are His thoughts, consider first and last those of whom He says that He has engraved upon the palms of His hands. With His whole heart and His whole soul He gives them undivided attention. Did not I tell you I could not dive into the depths of this sea? I have thought of God's heart as I dared. I have thought of God's soul as best I could. But how can I know what is meant by the whole heart and the whole soul of the Infinite? Yet all this goes forth when the Lord blesses His people, whom He has redeemed unto Himself. He says it Himself and so we may dare repeat it—"With My whole heart and with My whole soul."

We notice next, that if that is so, then He employs all His resources to bless His elect. When a man is doing a thing with his whole heart and with his whole soul, you know that there is nothing in that man but what will come out if necessary—there is nothing the man has but what he will use it to accomplish his purpose. He counts all things cheap so that he may achieve the design which has absorbed him. The Lord our God—I speak as a man and with deep reverence—is absorbed in doing good to His people—there is nothing that He is, there is nothing that He has but what He will bring it to bear upon the design upon which He has set His whole heart and His whole soul.

When the prodigal returned to his father's house, his father, in joy over him, did not keep back anything. Had he love in his heart? He kissed him. Had he language on his lips? He spoke his love—"Bring forth the best robe," says he—it was always kept locked up by itself. But the best robe is for him—"put it on him. Put a ring on his hand." Go to the jewel chest and fetch out the rarest treasure. Put shoes on his feet—the most costly sandals you can find, bring them here and let him be shod right royally. The whole resources of the mansion were lavished on him. "Bring here the fatted calf and kill it. And let us eat and be merry."

They had not music every day but the father will not let a single harp or timbrel be silent on that day. The tinkling feet of the maidens shall keep time to the music—nothing shall be wanting to show forth the father's love and joy and make his son rejoice. Behold, what God has done for His people! He has given them His all—all the wisdom of His Providence shall be theirs while here and all the glory of His Heaven hereafter. God has His abode in Heaven—behold, He makes it the abode of His chosen forever. Angels are His courtiers—they shall be ministering spirits to His elect. The Throne of His Son they shall sit upon with Him. The victories of God shall furnish them with palms and the delight of God shall find them harps.

But stop, there is something more than all that! It was little for God to give earth and Heaven but He must needs give *His Son*, the express image of His Glory, His other self. Out of the bosom of His love must Jesus Christ be taken. For He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life. Great God, You have all things and You have given all things to Your people! You have not held back of Your power, or of Your majesty. For we see Your strength, Your sovereignty, Your whole Self, in their salvation!

You have not kept back Your wisdom or immutability. For we see both of these in their attaining to eternal glory! You have laid out Your own boundless all-sufficiency, that You might bring Your many sons to glory. Oh for a well-tuned harp! My soul does magnify the Lord. But how can I fitly praise Him?

The Lord subordinates all other works to that of His love. When a man is absorbed by a mighty purpose, he may be doing other things—it may be needful that he should. But you will see him bend all other matters towards his chief end. He will bring home the sheaves from all the fields he tills and lay them up in the garner of his main purpose. Now see what God has done. When He made the heavens and the earth, His infinite wisdom thought of His people. And when He came to order the nations in Providence, “He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.”

At this hour no king ascends the throne and no dynasty vacates it, without reference in God’s mind to His ultimate object. Pestilence, famine, earthquake, wars—all have some relation to the Church of God. All that happens, all that is yet to happen—whether it is the falling of the star Wormwood, or the pouring out of the vials, or whatever else we dimly see in the mystery of prophecy—all shall move toward the grand purpose of almighty love. These events are the bow but His love purposes are the arrows. Everything, from the first opening of the seals to the complete unfolding of the Book, shall have to do with the calling, cleansing, training, preserving and perfecting of those chosen ones whom He has given unto His Son.

In the end, the heavens and the earth that now are shall be rolled up, like a worn-out vesture and pass away. But in that day the Lord will have respect unto His chosen and for them shall be prepared a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. For the Bride of Christ, who shall have made herself ready for the marriage supper, there shall be a fit dwelling. Everything, whether of creation or destruction, mercy or judgment, shall work, like the wheels of some vast machinery, to produce good to those who are the people of the living God.

I would add to these thoughts, feeble and superficial as they are, by noticing, next, that the Lord gives to His people and for His people without stint. He blesses them with His whole heart and with His whole soul. Some persons of a half-hearted nature, even if they entertain you kindly, yet betray their want of warmth. Others in every little act prove their intense heartiness. I recollect when I was able to journey through the country preaching, I for several years stayed occasionally with a fine old English farmer.

He used to have a piece of beef upon the table, I do not know how many pounds it weighed but it was enormous and I said to him one day, “Why is it that whenever I come here you have such immense joints? Do you think that I can eat like a giant? If so, it is a great mistake. Look at that joint, there,” I said, “if I were to take it home, it might last me a month.” “Well,” he said, “if I could get a bigger bit I would, for I am so glad to see you. And

if you could eat it all, you should be heartily welcome. I want everybody that comes here today to feel that I will do my very best for you.”

He did not measure my necessities to the half-ounce but he provided on a lavish scale. I quote this homely instance of giving heartily to show you how, on a Divine scale, the Lord makes ready for His guests. When He entertains His people, ah Sirs, He does not give them a measured portion of hard, dry bread but He sets forth “fat things full of marrow and wines on the lees well refined.” The festivals of God are on a scale of splendor commensurate with His measureless dominion. When He feeds His children—though once they would have been thankful to eat the crumbs from His table—He sets them among princes and gives them to eat of the king’s meat.

He lays eternity under contribution to provide for the needs, no, for the desires, for the joys of His people. We are not straitened in our God. He has not arrayed us in coarse garments but He has covered us with the robe of righteousness. He has not merely washed us but He has put jewels on us as a bride adorns herself with ornaments. He has not provided workmen’s tenements for us to dwell in but, “in my Father’s house are many mansions.” The Lord has not merely put at our disposal the beasts of the earth but His angels are our bodyguards. In the Temple of God’s love no stone is commonplace. They are all great jewels.

Read in the Revelation how every course is jasper, or sapphire, or chalcidony, or emerald. The walls of His temple of Grace are of all manner of precious stones, from the foundation to the top stone. But even jewels are mere toys compared with the infinite wealth of the Divine liberality towards His own chosen. There is no stint supposable when the infinite Jehovah gives with His whole heart. How narrow are my expressions when I would set forth His illimitable goodness!

Beloved, another point sets forth most plainly that the Lord blesses His people with His whole heart and with His whole soul, for He perseveres in it. When did He begin with us?—

***“Before His hands had made  
The sun to rule the day,  
Or earth’s foundations laid,  
Or fashioned Adam’s clay.”***

When will He end with us? Never. For our souls are bound up in the bundle of life with the soul of the Lord our God. Truly, if He had been mindful of our shortcomings He might have found abundant cause for casting us off. But He has not dealt with us after our sins.

I appeal to your own consciences, you that are the people of God—might He not many a time have said, “I am weary of you”? But the weariness has been on the other side—His love complains of you, “You have been weary of Me, O Israel.” The Lord has rejoiced to do us good and has multiplied His mercies. Are you not surprised with the variety of His favors towards you? An old writer says that “God’s flowers bloom double,” for He sends two blessings where there seems but one. But I would say

they are like the light—they are sevenfold, even as in every ray from the sun we have seven colors blended in harmony.

What sevens and sevens of infinite love are contained in every beam of mercy that comes to the redeemed! As every sin is many sins, so every pardon is many pardons. As every need contains many needs within it, so every supply is many supplies. God blesses us many times every time He blesses us. And the wonder of it is that He continues these heaped-up mercies. He has not forgotten His Covenant of day and night. And certainly His mercies have been new every morning and fresh every evening. Great is His faithfulness.

Sometimes we think that the Ruler of the Universe has surely set aside His Covenant as to seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat. For this year it is cold in summer-time. But yet our mind is sure that His Word will not be violated in this respect. And even so, our gracious Lord may for a while answer us roughly and smite us sharply, till the blueness of the wound alarms us. But all this is no evidence of want of love. Did He not say, "As many as I tenderly love I rebuke and chasten"? His Covenant stands secure—there is with God no variableness, nor shadow of a turning. He continues, still, to hold fast to the purpose of His Grace towards His chosen and He will do so even to the end. All glory be unto His name!

As the Lord perseveres in His work, so He succeeds in it. God is determined to make something of His people and He will. He has made a great deal more of us now than we ever dreamed that He would have done. He has made saints out of sinners, servants out of rebels, children out of aliens. Some of you are now being used in His service who were once the tools of Satan. Remember what you were once. Do not forget the dunghills whereon you grew. Think you of the mire out of which the Lord of Love lifted you. What a change He has worked! When you are very depressed you ought to recollect that change.

The Lord has done for you already that which should make you thunder out His praise forever. But the Lord is going on to do far more for you. He has taken off some of the coarsest surface but He will polish you yet to an exceeding beauty. I verily believe, if we could see ourselves as we shall be, it would make us laugh for very joy. If we could look in some magic glass in which a man could see himself in the glorified state, we should sit down and look at it with amazement, till we should cry, "Can that be I? Is it possible that I shall ever come to such glory and beauty?"

O my Brothers and Sisters, you are only in the egg as yet. You have chipped a little bit of it and you have looked out. But the most that you have seen is your own shell. Know you not that you have wings? Yes, wings which you cannot stretch as yet, for they are bound down by the shell. But you shall spread them soon and mount aloft into that clear blue where eagles are at home. You shall rise above all visible things and reach the serene abodes of the blessed. There shall you—

***"From all this earthly grossness quit,  
With glory crowned forever sit;***

***And triumph over death and you, O Time!***

I suppose that God's great purpose was to multiply the glory of His only begotten Son. For the second Adam there was not found a helpmeet and the Lord resolved to fashion for Him a bride, a dear companion. The glorious Son rejoiced in the thought and henceforth His delights were with the sons of men. To this end the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His Glory and for the same purpose we are to be made like He. He is the image of the invisible God. But He is also the first-born among many Brethren who are all to bear the same likeness. "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like He. For we shall see Him as He is."

I think Milton was not far from the truth when he supposed that Satan made a great gap among the courtiers of Heaven when he led astray the third part of the stars of Heaven, and that God resolved to repair that wall of service with living stones more costly and more beautiful than those which were removed from their place. Certainly He is doing so. In Heaven there sits a Man nearest to the eternal God and we are there with Him and made like He—sons and yet servants, servants and yet sons. Does not Jehovah bless us with His whole heart and with His whole soul? I am getting a little deeper now. Here are waters to swim in. What I say is true but it is not the tenth part of the Truth of God. Blessed is that promise, "What you know not now, you shall know hereafter."

Closing up this first division, we note that God delights in all that He does for His own. We are happy when God blesses us but not so happy as God is. We are glad when we are pardoned but He that pardons us is more glad, still. The prodigal, going back to his home, was very, very happy. But not so delighted as his father, who could say, "This my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found." The father's heart was the fullest of delight and it was by far the larger heart, so that it could hold more joy. The Lord rejoices over His people, resting in His love and joy over them with singing.

Beloved, you think it impossible that God should delight in you, for you do not delight in yourselves. Yet it is true that He "takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy." A little babe, if it had wit and could look at itself, would say, "How inferior I am to my father! What feeble hands! What tottering feet! I am a poor, puny, dependent creature." Yes, but that is not the way in which the mother thinks of it. She spies out a loveliness in the weakness and a beauty in the littleness of her babe. She looks at it until her eyes swim with tears lest anything should harm it. She thinks it the most beautiful thing that ever was and doubtless it is so to her.

Our God has all the instincts of motherhood and fatherhood blended in one. And when He looks upon His Church He calls her "Hephzibah"—"My delight is in her." I read not that He delights in the works of nature, alone, but He rejoices in the habitable parts of the earth. He does not rejoice in the works of His hands so much as in the works of His heart. The whole



Godhead is at home in blessing those whom everlasting love has ordained to everlasting life.

Brethren, I will say no more. I leave this choice subject with you. Unlock this casket and examine the pearls, although you will not be able to estimate their full value—"I will rejoice over them to do them good and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul."

**II.** Secondly and, I am sorry to say, briefly, CONSIDER THE TEXT WITH THE EVIDENCE. I have already given you large evidence, and, therefore, I may have to go over the same ground again. In order to prove that God does thus bless us with His whole heart and with His whole soul, I would remind you that the whole Trinity is engaged in the blessing of the chosen. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in essence and one in this loving object.

First comes the Father. It was He that chose us—chose us, not because He must choose us or not, but freely with "His whole heart." He chose us when kings and great ones were passed by. With a deliberate, unchangeable, eternal choice, He made us His own. Having chosen us, He planned for us. Oh, the plans of Infinite Grace in the council chamber of eternity—far-reaching, all-comprehending plans of unfailing love! Wisdom from her throne determined the way in which God would lead His people and bless His people and sanctify His people and perfect His people.

The great Father then entered into a Divine Covenant with His whole heart and His whole soul, pledging His royal Word and then adding His oath, that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. That Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, is proof of the whole-heartedness of God. Remember, also, the gift of His dear Son. Here are two wonders—the gift of Christ *for* the chosen and the gift of the chosen *to* Christ. The more you think of these two mysteries, the more will your mind be overflowed with gratitude. "O world of wonders! I can say no less."

When all this was done for us before we were born, was it not a striking thing that the Father should resolve to give us of His own life? Seeing we were spiritually dead, "He has begotten us again unto a lively hope." This is marvelous! We that are His chosen are also His children, partakers of the Divine nature. No, I cannot speak of that. That is to be thought of in your inmost souls—and I had almost said, dreamed of in your sleep.

Next, the Lord adopted us, for He does nothing by halves. Regeneration gives us the nature of children but adoption gives us the status and *rights* of children. "If children, then heirs, heirs of—what?—Heirs of the world? No. Heirs of the world to come? Yes, if you please. But the Scripture speaks more largely—"Heirs of God." God Himself has become the heritage of His own people and they are "joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." Surely I have proved that the Father has blessed us with His whole heart and with His whole soul.

In reference to the ever-blessed Son of God, whom we worship as most truly God, we have the same Truth to state. He loved us ages before He

came to earth as man. Long before He came to earth to bleed and die, He visited His people in different forms and was seen by Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua and others. In all this He proved how His whole heart and His whole soul went out to men. But, lo! the fullness of time is come. What do I see yonder? A Babe in a manger! An infant at a woman's breast! Thus the Son of the Highest condescends for our sakes. I see Him, further on, a humble Man, despised as a Nazarene. With weary feet He traverses Galilee and Judea and Samaria, bearing our sicknesses, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.

It is He. It is the Son of God! Start not as I lead you unto the garden of agony where His groans amaze the angels and the bloody sweat dyes all His garment as if He had trod the winepress. It is He whom all the heavens adore. Is He not serving us with His whole heart and with His whole soul? I see Him bowing His head down to kiss our fallen humanity and stretching out His hands on the Cross to embrace the guilty. His feet meanwhile fast nailed as though He meant to await the latest comer. Yes, it is He—it is He who loved us with an everlasting love. Alas, His side was pierced and blood and water flowed. Say, did He not bless us with His whole heart and with His whole soul? Was there ever one who lived so intensely as Christ did, or died with such whole-hearted self-sacrifice?

Truly, the zeal of God's house had eaten Him up. His whole heart and His whole soul went out in our redemption. After He was dead He rose again and He was as intent to bless after His resurrection as when He fell asleep. He visited His disciples and comforted them. Then He went up to Heaven and rejoined the Father's majesty but He changed not his mind. Still with His whole heart and with His whole soul He lives for us. He is preparing Heaven for us. He has taken possession of our celestial estates and He is pleading for us before the Throne. Do you not hear His intercession at this hour?

Every day he continues to promote the interests of His redeemed with His whole heart. Moreover, He is hurrying to come to us. "Behold," says He, "I come quickly." Always, ever, with His whole heart and with His whole soul, this glorious Son of God is blessing His people. All honor be to His Divine majesty!

I must not omit the Holy Spirit, "to whom be all honor and glory." The sacred Spirit of all Divine Grace blesses us with His whole heart and with His whole soul. He came after us when we went not after Him. When we were mad with sin and ravenous after the pleasures of it, He followed us, to check us in our headlong career, to beckon us to better things, to draw us there and to help us when we began to incline to the holy. He gave us life and light and liberty. The most wonderful thing about the Holy Spirit is that He should ever deign to dwell in us. Is the Holy Spirit within this body?

Does He dwell within the child of God? It is even so. For a prince to reside in a hovel is little condescension compared with the Spirit of God dwelling in these vile bodies of ours. Yet He is within us. And, being here, He works with all His heart. He quickens, but He leaves not that life un-

taught, for He instructs us. He teaches us to profit, “line upon line, precept upon precept.” But He is not content with teaching—He comforts us. When we are sad, He comes with Divine consolations—this is very, very tender of Him. He would not do this if He were not befriending us with His whole heart and with His whole soul. But He stops not at comforting. He goes on to render aid—“He helps our infirmities.” Nor is this all—He strengthens us and works in us to will and do of His own good pleasure.

My time is gone and perhaps it is as well, for I have not the grace or wisdom to set out all this great matter. But if Father, Son and Holy Spirit are found blessing us thus, we see in the sacred Unity in Trinity, not only unity of nature but unity of purpose. And the One Jehovah is blessing us with His whole heart and with His whole soul. How I chatter! My text is majesty, my talk is poverty. One cannot preach upon such a text as this. How shall I reach the height of this great argument? Here is manna for your souls! It tastes as wafers made with honey. Digest it well and let it saturate the secret parts of your nature and there let it sweeten spirit, soul and body.

**III.** So I close by saying to you—CONSIDER THE INFERENCES WHICH FLOW FROM THE TEXT. The first inference is one of consolation. Does God bless us with His whole heart and with His whole soul? Oh, then, how happy we ought to be! Come, my Sister, wipe those tears away! Come, my Brother, you must get out of your despondency! You must not be down in the dumps while such a Truth as this is before you. This unseasonable weather fills our bones with rheumatism and our spirits with depression. But the eternal Truth must influence more than the transient weather.

While meditating on this theme, I said to myself, “Come, come, this will not do—with such a subject as this you ought to sing for joy.” I felt that my preparation for the pulpit ought to be one continuous song. The Lord blesses me with His whole heart and with His whole soul, what better news can I hear? This sweet assurance is a bath of milk. Of the man who believes it we may say, “Butter and honey shall he eat.” You breathe the perfume of Heaven when you can get at the meaning of this text. Oh, the joy that lies asleep in these words, as odors hide away in flowers! Come, heavenly wind and wake the slumbering joys—constrain the celestial perfumes to flow abroad, that we may exult in them.

Our God does not give us His mercies off-hand, as we see a man fling a penny to a beggar. No, no, He blesses us with His whole heart and with His whole soul. When the wicked are increased in riches, God’s heart does not go with the gifts which enrich them—they are as bullocks fattened for the slaughter. The Lord does not think much of riches, and, therefore, He usually gives them to the ungodly as men give bones to dogs. But when He deals with His people, ah, then His heart goes with every penny that He gives them, with every crust that He puts on their table, with every drink of water that refreshes them, with every breath of air which sustains their lives.

When your pulse beats, it keeps time to the goodness of God. In heights or in depths, in brightness or in darkness, God's endless, boundless, measureless love is always shining on you. Come, come, I say again, sorrow is out of place in this house this day. This is a feast day! Let us rejoice with heart and soul, seeing the Lord our God so largely blesses us.

Another inference and I have done—it is one of exhortation. Let *us* love our God with *our* whole heart and with *our* whole soul. Let us begin with trusting Him with our whole heart and with our whole soul. Lay the whole of your burden upon God—tell the whole of your sorrow to your Father. Trust Him for the past, the present and the future. Trust Him completely, implicitly, unhesitatingly. Then love Him with all your heart and soul. We do not half love our God. I think I spy a spark or two of love down there in those ashes and among those half-charred logs of wood. Come, let us wake up the flames till they blaze again.

Blow carefully on the drowsy fires. Let us create a great fire and then heap on fresh logs. Oh, to love the Lord with something like His own love! Let us also serve Him with our whole heart and our whole soul. How often the service that is done for God is slovenly, heartless, dull! Let it not be so again. Brothers, if we preach, let us preach with our whole heart and with our whole soul. Sisters, if you teach your classes, teach them with your whole heart and with your whole soul. If all you can do is to give away a tract, give it away with your whole heart and with your whole soul.

He that gives His whole heart and soul to you, great as they are, may well claim that you give your whole heart and your whole soul to Him, little as they are. May the blessed Spirit lead you to whole-hearted consecration and this will be a truly practical sermon! They say, "Put the whip into the manger." And that is what I have tried to do. I have fed you that you may go the faster. Away, then, you courageous steeds! Be strong as oxen and swift as eagles! Fed on such food as this, you are bound to do the work of God with energy and perseverance.

Glorify God's name, seeing He has done all this for you. Oh, that you would all feed on this meat! Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God—and being born of God he has God's heart and soul engaged for him. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you may take to yourself all that I have said. But if you believe not, I fear that you will die in your sins. God save you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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# THINGS UNKNOWN

## NO. 2664

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 4, 1900.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL SOUTHWARK,  
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1858.**

***“Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you  
great and mighty things which you know not.”  
Jeremiah 33:3.***

GOD'S people will never thrive on anything less substantial than bread from Heaven. Israel in Egypt might live on garlic and onions, but Israel in the wilderness must be fed with the manna that came down from Heaven, and with the water that gushed out of the Rock when it was smitten by the rod of God. The child of God, while he is yet in his sins, may, like other men, revel in them, and the pleasures and follies of this world may be his delight. But when he is once brought out of Egypt by the high hand of God's purpose, and the almighty hand of God's strength, he will never live on anything less than God's promise and God's Truth! It is vain for men to try to remove his doubts and strengthen his self-confidence. It is vain for men to endeavor to feed himself with man-made doctrine or with rationalistic ideas—he must have something that is Divine, that has the stamp of Revelation upon it. In fact, unless we can come forth every Sabbath with a, “Thus says the Lord,” we are not capable ministers of the New Covenant and it is not in our power to comfort the Lord's children.

In this chapter we find the Prophet Jeremiah in prison. He was shut up in the court of the prison and, in order to comfort him, the Word of the Lord came to him saying, “Thus says the Lord.” Something less than that may suffice in the time of our prosperity, to make our hopes buoyant, for, alas, there is enough of the natural man in the Christian to make him rejoice even in carnal things when he is far from being thoroughly sanctified. But when we are in trouble. When affliction and adversity, sickness and suffering are trying us, there is no man-made raft upon which our soul can float through floods of tribulation and waves of deep distress—we must have the Divine life buoy of a, “Thus says the Lord.” That is what the Christian needs in every time and in every place, but this is what he most especially needs when he does business in deep waters and is sorely exercised by affliction, “Thus says the Lord.” My text is a, “Thus says the Lord.” “Thus says the Lord, call unto Me, and I will

answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.”

Here is, first, *a large promise*. Here is, secondly, *an implied imperfection*. And here is, thirdly, *a particular application of the promise, making up for that imperfection*.

**I.** Here is, first A LARGE PROMISE. “Call unto Me, and I will answer you.”

Now, if any friend should write us a letter containing such words as those, “Call unto me, and I will answer you,” we would naturally understand by them that whatever we might ask of our friend, he would most assuredly give us. And if he were a person in whose ability and kindness we had confidence, we would not be very slow in availing ourselves of his permission to seek his aid. If we were in debt, we would apply to him for financial help so that we might be able to meet our liabilities. If we were tried by sickness, we would apply to him that he might give us medicines to relieve our pains. If our friends had been ungrateful to us, we would most likely call upon him for sympathy. And if our spirits were distressed from some unknown cause—if we believed him to have immense wisdom—we would ask him for some cordial to raise us from our distress.

But how different is the case when we read these Words as coming from the lips of God! Then, my Brothers and Sisters, how strange it is that, instead of making use of them, we just read them as a matter of course—we seldom think of making use of them! “Yes,” we say, “it is a very comforting doctrine, that God answers prayer. It is truly consolatory to hear our minister inform us that whatever we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive.” But there the matter ends. And, except with a few choice spirits, it *remains* a matter of doctrine and not a matter of practice to us! “O fools, and slow of heart to believe,” our Master might well say to us! And if He should come into our heart, He would administer a thousand rebukes to us for our slackness in proving the Truth of His promise. For God means what He says and, inasmuch as He has said, “Call unto Me, and I will answer you,” He intends that His Words should stand good. And He wishes us to believe them to be true and, therefore, to prove our faith by acting upon them. Alas, the Truth of God is too plain to be disputed, that the most of us, while, in a sense, we receive this doctrine because it is in the Bible, do not so receive it as to put it into practice! In introducing to your notice the great general Truth of God, “Call unto Me, and I will answer you,” I shall probably have to answer a host of objections and questions.

“Well,” says one person, “would you wish us to believe, Sir, that whatever we ask in prayer we shall receive?” I must reply to you with discretion. In the first place, who are you who now ask that question? Are you a child God, or are you a worldling? Have you been born again, or are you still what you were by nature, without any renewal from the Holy Spirit? For, upon your answer to those questions, mine must depend. If you are still without the Spirit of God, and are unrenewed, I would re-

mind you of that passage which says, concerning the wicked, “Even his prayer shall be an abomination”—and if your prayer is an abomination, of course you cannot expect God to accept an abomination and answer it! You must, therefore, know that you, yourself, are a partaker of the Grace of God, or else this promise does not belong to you.

You grant me that, and then you ask me this question, “Sir, I hope I am a child of God. Am I, therefore, to understand that whatever I shall ask for in prayer, I shall receive of God?” To you, also, I must answer with discretion, lest, in endeavoring to state a truth, I should utter a falsehood. I must first ask you in what state of heart you are as a child of God. Have you been lately communing with Christ? Have you been constant in the study of His Word? What are your wishes? What are your needs? What are your desires? For, upon your answers to these questions, my reply to your enquiry must depend. It may be that you are a Christian, but, nevertheless, though an Israelite, you, like Israel in the wilderness, are asking for meat that you may satisfy your own lust, even as they did. And when they craved for flesh and the Lord sent them quails, while the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse of the Lord came upon them!

We are sure to have our prayers answered if it is right that they should be answered. Sometimes even the Lord’s people ask for things which it would not be for God’s Glory to give, nor for their profit to receive. If you should tell your child you would give him anything he asked for, you would not, for a moment, suppose that you included in the promise any absurd request he might make! Suppose he should ask you for a dose of arsenic? Suppose he should request you to kill him? Would you fulfill your promise? Certainly not! You would say, “My child, I love you too well to listen to the ravings of your madness. I desire your good too much to grant your absurd request and I cannot listen to you.” God says the same—“Call upon Me, and I will answer you, but I will not always answer you as you wish to be answered. If you ask for a thing which is not fit for you to receive, I will give you something better—I will not give you that very thing. I will hear your prayers, but I will not give you exactly what you ask for—I will grant you something infinitely superior to the thing itself.”

It would be a sad thing if God always heard our prayers and gave us just what we asked of Him. If He always gave us the exact thing we asked for, we should ruin ourselves! You may have heard the story of a woman who had a child who was very ill. When her pastor called to see her, she asked him to pray for the child’s life, and in the prayer he very properly said, “O Lord, spare this child’s life, if it is Your will.” The mother interrupted him and said, “No, I cannot have it so—this child must live. I want you to pray to God that the child may live whether God wills it or not.” The minister said, “Woman, you will have cause to tremble on account of this petition. If you ask such a thing as this of God, there will be a curse upon it.” Nevertheless, the prayer was prayed and, 20 years af-

terwards, that woman, with an aching heart, saw her son riding in a cart to Tyburn where he was to be hanged! Better would it have been for him and also for her that he had perished at the breast and be carried to an untimely grave, than that he should send her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. God, therefore, makes this very kind reservation that if we ask for absurd things, things which would not be for our profit, He will not grant them.

But the question is put to me again, “Sir, if I ask for a thing which is obviously a good thing, which is most assuredly for my profit, may I be certain, after I have asked in prayer for that thing, that I shall have it?” Once more, I must ask another question. Have you yet learned the heavenly art of believing God? Because you may be a Christian, you may believe in Christ enough for your soul’s salvation, but you may be so small a Christian that you have never yet attained the mountain height of belief in all your Lord has uttered. And, mark you, the promise of an answer to our prayers is only given to our *faith*. The Lord Jesus Christ put it thus to His disciples—“What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.” Now, if you go on your knees in prayer and ask God for anything and do not believe that He will give it to you, it may come in God’s extraordinary bounty, but it will not come in answer to your prayer! Your prayers shall be answered in proportion to your faith. So, if you believe and ask for a thing that is for your good and God’s Glory, you will have it as surely as the promise is a promise and God is God! I have talked with many Christians and some of my aged friends have talked with far more than I have, but both they and myself can bear witness that we have never yet met with any Christian that could charge God with breaking His promise. We have met with many who have been far from having the faith they ought to have, but we have never discovered one so faithless to God as to charge Him with not answering the prayer that was stamped with believing. Whenever there is faith, there will be the answer to the prayer of faith—you will never hear a Christian deny that Truth of God.

It was my privilege, some two years ago, when at Bristol, to visit the Orphanage of Mr. Muller, and I never saw a more striking or startling exhibition of the power of faith than I did there. Mr. Muller supports 300 orphan children on no resources but his own faith and prayer. When he needs anything, he calls them together, offers supplication to God, and asks that necessities may be supplied. And, although there are 300 to be fed, to be clothed and to be housed—and though they have often been brought so low that there has not been a farthing in their coffers, nor a handful of meal in their barrel—when mealtime has come, there has always been abundance of bread in the house in answer to prayer.

I shall never forget my interview with that holy man of God. Some gentleman said to me, “I wish you would ask Mr. Muller a question or two, if you see him, as to the foundation of a new Orphan House which he proposes to build to hold 700 more children. Now, I feel that three hundred



is quite enough for one man to care for," the old gentleman said. "I think it is very absurd for him to have 700 more. He will never be able to support a thousand. As to the preset Institution, I believe that generous persons hear about it and send him subscriptions for its maintenance. But as to his supporting 700 more orphans, that is impossible!"

I replied, "I think there is something in what you say. I will ask him when I see him." But when I saw him, I could not and dared not ask him any such questions! And when I saw what a great work he had done by his faith, and began to remark upon it, he said, "Oh, it is only a little thing that I have done—faith could do far more than that. If it were God's will that I should feed the universe on prayer and faith, I could do it. If I had more faith, it could be accomplished." I was just going to say that, possibly, a thousand orphans would be more than he could support, when he said, "When I got three hundred children, I began to pray God to send me money to build an Orphan House to hold seven hundred more, and I already have £17,000 sent in for it, although I have never solicited a contribution from anybody but the Lord. I believe God has made me to be here, to be to the world a proof that He hears and answers prayer." I thought so, too, when I saw that huge building and the many dear children rising up to praise their God, and singing so sweetly in honor of the Good Shepherd who had gathered them like lambs to His bosom, and had gently folded them there.

Brothers and Sisters, we do not speak without solid facts to confirm our assertion when we affirm that whatever a saint asks in prayer, if he asks in faith, and it is for his own profit and for God's Glory, he will be sure to have it. I daresay you have read Huntington's, "*Bank of Faith*." He certainly gives us too many of those instances for most people to believe, but I fancy there are plenty of persons alive who have had as many answers to their prayers as ever William Huntington had, and who, if they were to write the minutiae of their lives, could bear most solemn testimony to the truth that never could they remember God being unfaithful to His promises, or their prayers unanswered. This, however, must always depend upon the person, himself, for if we ask waveringly, or without faith, we must not expect to be answered. We must not forge that what God implies, when He does not grant unbelieving requests, is just this, "Inasmuch as you have no faith, I have nothing to give you."

We must do as the people did at Christmas time in the olden days. It used to be the custom for the poor inhabitants in a village to go round with basins to the rich people in the parish and beg bread and other victuals of them. And the rule was that every gentleman was to fill the bowl that was brought to his door. Of course, the wisest among the poor folk brought a very large bowl for the Christmas gathering, but those who had little faith in the generosity of their wealthy neighbors took a small bowl, and that was filled. But those who took a big bowl had theirs filled too! So, dear Friends, you must always try, in your prayers, to bring a big bowl to God! Bring great faith and rest assured that, according to your

faith, it shall be done unto you. If you have little faith, you shall have a little answer. If you have tolerable faith, you shall have a tolerable answer. But if you have a mighty faith, you shall have such a mighty answer that you shall wonder at it, yet you shall feel that it is according to the promise of our text, "Call unto Me, and I will answer you."

**II.** Now we come to the second part of our subject and we notice AN IMPLIED IMPERFECTION. "Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you know not." It is implied that God's people do not know everything.

Did you ever meet a man who knew everything? I have happened to meet half-a-dozen such. I once met with a minister who knew all things—according to his own account, I mean—not according to mine. He told me when I saw him that in the parish where he lived, there were not more than a dozen people who knew the Lord Jesus Christ in truth. I was interested in that man, for I knew a little about him, so I said to him, "Well, who are they?" So he began, "Well, there is myself, and my wife, and my two deacons," and so on. "Oh," I answered, "the only person I should dispute out of that number would be yourself, because I think you know too much by a great deal—you seem to have climbed up and to have looked into the secret roll of God's Decrees. No child of God would do that. Children do not look into their father's secrets—it is only thieves who do that. I doubt your claim to be a child of God."

Each of us, at times, meets with an interesting individual who knows far too much, in whose company one always feels uncomfortable. We never introduce any subject—we leave him to do that because he is the Pope of our circle. He hates Popery, of course! Two Popes cannot agree, so, naturally, he has a very strong objection to the Pope of Rome. He himself knows all things. You utter a sentiment—he tells you, directly, that it is not sound—he knows, of course. You talk about a matter of experience, but he says, "That is not the experience of the living child of God." He is umpire, of course. He knows all about it. He is the judge who ends all strife. He settles everything. Bring him in, his vote is the casting vote, which it were almost profane to controvert! He is King, Lords and Commons, all rolled into one. He makes the laws and he fulfils them. He is, in his own sphere, the Autocrat of all Christians!

Now, God's children belong to a very different order of beings from this very respectable and very venerable individual! They do *not* know everything and they do not pretend to be full of all knowledge. One of the best of them, whose name was Paul, said, "Not as though I have already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark or the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

An old man once met a young one who had been to College about six months and he said to him, "Do you know much?" "Yes," the young man answered, "I am getting on very fast." The old man said, "You will not say that in a year's time, or else I shall have no hope for you." In a year's time, he asked him whether he knew much more than he did six months before. He replied, "Sometimes I think I know a great deal more, but, at other times, I think I know a great deal less. I have discovered my own ignorance more than ever this last year." Then the old man said, "By the time you have been in college four years, you will confess yourself to be a very great fool." And when he met him, during the fourth year, he said, "What do you know now?" The student replied, "I think, perhaps, I know more than when I entered College, but, in my own opinion, I know much less. When I first came, I thought myself competent to give a decisive opinion upon every subject. Now, I am obliged to weigh everything before I am able to state anything positively. My own ignorance has been discovered."

Now, depend upon it, dear Friends, it will be the same with each of you! We may think, when we first join the Church, "We know almost everything." Some people suppose that all the Truths of God are found in the Baptist denomination. Others imagine it is all in the Episcopalian, Independent, or Wesleyan denomination, or in whatever sect they belong. But when we have been members of the Baptist denomination for a considerable time, we discover that there are several faults among us. And we think, perhaps, that if we were fashioned according to the Presbyterian model, we might be improved. By-and-by, we find a friend who attends an Episcopal Church, where he hears the Gospel very plainly preached by a very earnest clergyman and we say we think there is something good in the Episcopalians! And the longer we live, the more we find that there is something good in all and that, after all, we do not know as much as we thought we did, and that our Church, though it seemed to be the very model of perfection, is found to be full of infirmities as well as any other Church, and it is not exactly *the* Church after all.

I repeat, then, the assertion that is implied in the text, that we have, all of us, a certain amount of ignorance and imperfection, for if we knew all things, we would have no necessity for this promise, that God would show us great and mighty things which we do not know. But, as we are still imperfect and growing in our knowledge, this promise is exceedingly precious to us. I can scarcely think that I have any person here of that particular clique who fancy they know everything. If I have, I would say a word to him. There is a certain body of excellent men who call themselves "God's dear people!" That is just what they are—they are dear to anybody—nobody would think of buying them. If they were to be given away, they would be scarcely worth having! They are God's dear people. They hear their minister preach a sermon made up of the extract of gall and bitterness, and that just pleases them. His people rejoice in that kind of talk and say that he is a faithful minister. If he were to leave off being

bitter, he would not be faithful—faithfulness, according to their meaning, consists in finding fault with all the world besides. They tell you to go to “Little Bethel,” “Rehoboth,” or “Bethesda,” because there is no truth anywhere else. It is only there that the Truth of God is to be had, and all other congregations are schismatics, whom it is their duty to denounce and persecute with the utmost rigor of the Gospel—and you are aware that the utmost rigor of the Gospel is worse than the utmost rigor of the law!

The rigor of the Gospel is more intolerable than even the rule of Draco, himself, for those persons exclude, denounce, and condemn every man who is not to the very turn of a hair’s breadth in conformity with *their* views. To every such person we say, “Dear Brother, you are very wise! All hail to you! We will put you in the chair as the marvelous Doctor of Divinity! You are the man! Wisdom will die with you and, while we humbly bow at your feet, we are obliged to say that you do not yet know everything—there are a few things that need to be revealed, even to you! And while we keep ourselves at a respectful distance from anything like your superior knowledge, we are compelled to think that you have not yet attained unto perfection—and we cannot admit that you are the only man in all the world who understands and knows the Gospel.”

Well, though our Brother will not join with us in saying, “We do not know all things,” I think that all who are here present will bow their heads and each one will say, “Lord, teach me what I do not know; for the little that I know is nothing to be compared with the volumes of Your wisdom which I have not read and do not yet understand.”

**III.** Now we come to the third head of our subject, which is the best of all. We have, here, THE PARTICULAR APPLICATION OF THE PROMISE. “Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.”

First, we understand this promise to relate to *Gospel doctrines*. I confess that when I first preached in a country village as its pastor, I read all Dr. Gill’s, “*Body of Divinity*,” and Calvin’s, “*Institutes*.” And when I had done that, I thought, “Now I have got hold of the Truth of God, I am certain I have, and I can meet all opponents. And if they are not conformed to the views of that most learned man, Dr. Gill, and that excellent confessor, John Calvin, I will soon cut them up root and branch.” Well, I began to preach what I had learned from these great and good men, and I have never been ashamed of having done so, for, as a successor of Dr. Gill, I am not ashamed to endorse his views, even now, and to subscribe to the doctrinal statements that John Calvin uttered.

However, I soon began to find out that there was a good deal to be said, after all, concerning some matters that Dr. Gill and John Calvin did not mention! And I found that I was obliged, somewhat, to stretch my charity and to take to my heart some Brothers and Sisters who did not quite see all things which those enlightened men saw! And, moreover, I found out that I did not know everything and that I had a good deal, still,

to learn, and I find the same thing every day. I hope at all times to hold firmly all the Truths of God I have received. I intend to grasp tightly with one hand the Truths I have already learned and to keep the other hand wide open to take in the things I do not yet know.

Perhaps I have some young man here who has a notion that some minister has got all the Truth, or that he, himself, has embraced all the Truth. Now, young man, there are a great many things that you do not know! There are some doctrines you do not understand. If you will wait a little while and study your Bible more, you will go down on your knees, and say, "Lord, I never knew my own ignorance as much as I do now. Will You teach me Your Truth?" Do we desire to understand the faith of God? Let us not be discouraged. In answer to our prayer, God will show us "great and mighty things" which we do not now know. You are a Christian, yet you do not comprehend the Doctrine of Election. Or, perhaps, the Doctrine of Effectual Calling puzzles you. You are a Churchman, perhaps, yet you do not know anything about these things. You are like a man I met once in a railway carriage. He said he was a High Churchman and I said I was a High Churchman, too. "How can that be?" he enquired, "you are a Dissenter." "But," I replied, "I believe many of the doctrines of your Church." He said, "I think not." "Well," I said "I believe in the Doctrine of Election, Predestination and so on." "Oh," he said, "I do not." "But," I said, "they are in your Articles." He said, "I believe the Catechism, but I have not read the Articles." "Then," I rejoined, "I am the better Churchman of the two—you are the Dissenter, and I am the High Churchman! You ought to be turned out of the Church if you do not believe the Articles. They ought to take me, and give me a first-rate living and make me one of their bishops, for I have read the Articles, and studied them."

A great many people do not know what they believe. No person has a right to say he is a Churchman till he has read the Prayer Book. You have no right to say you are Wesleyan till you have read Wesley's sermons. And you have no right to say you are a Calvinist till you have read what Calvin believed. And you have no right to say you are a Christian till you have read your Bible, for the Bible is the standard of Christian faith and practice! And when you come to read your Bible, you will find this one thing out, that your own little views were not quite so wide as the Bible, after all—and you will have to say, "Lord, show me great and mighty things, which I know not now." I am persuaded that neither the Church of England, nor the Wesleyans, nor the Independents, nor the Baptists have all the Truth. I would not belong to any one of these denominations for all the land that is beneath the sky, if I had to endorse all that is held by them! I believe that the Church ought to be governed by an Episcopalian Presbyterian Baptist Independency. I believe we are all right in a great many of our doctrines, but that we all have something yet to learn. The Doctrine of "Man's Responsibility" is not to be denied, nor the Doctrine of "God's Sovereignty" to be disputed. I hope that, some

day, we shall all bring our views to the test of the Sacred Scriptures. Then shall we have one Church, “one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.” Then shall we know great and mighty things which we know not now. I would persuade you, my Baptist friends, that your system is not perfect, and you members of the Episcopalian Church, that your polity is not altogether without imperfection. And I would entreat you, my Friend, though you are a member of an excellent body of Believers, however excellent that Church may be, not to think it is infallible! Go down on your knees and ask God to teach you what you do not know, and to make you better than your creed. Or else, in nine cases out of ten, you will not be worth much.

But, next, “great, and mighty things, which you know not,” God will show you *in Providence*. A poor man is in trouble. He has not funds to buy daily bread. Let him call upon God and ask for it—and though he has never seen the Lord thrust out His hand from Heaven, or feed him by the ravens, or quench his thirst with water out of the Rock—let him go down on his knees and he will find that there are more wonders in Providence than you and I have yet seen! In answer to prayer, we shall see how God’s Providence, though it is far beyond our ideas, is according to our prayers. There are many Christians who have been in great trouble and have experienced a most marvelous deliverance in Providence. If we have great trouble, let us bring them to our great God. Let us cry unto Him and, in Providence, we shall see “great and mighty things” which we know not as yet.

In the next place, very briefly passing over these points, “great and mighty things, which you know not,” God will show you in *matters of Christian experience*. Let us search God’s Word and give ourselves to prayer and then, in matters of experience, we shall see “great and mighty things” which we yet know not. A Christian is immeasurably beyond the worldling and there is a possibility of a Christian becoming as much beyond himself as he now is beyond a sinner dead in sins. There is no telling how great he may become even on earth. I do not think we can ever, on earth, become perfect, but we know not how near to perfection we may come. We may not, while on earth, dwell in Heaven, but, who can tell how much of Heaven may dwell in us while we are here? Did you ever sit down and read the *Life of Herbert*, or Whitefield, or Haliburton? After we have read such books, we say within ourselves, “What poor worms we are!”

We feel like Robert Hall, who, when a certain minister came to see him, said, “I am so glad to see you! Mr. So-and-So has been here. He is so far above me that I felt myself to be nothing in his presence, but now I begin to feel myself a man again.” Have you never felt, when in the company of some great and mighty man, as if you were nothing at all? When I first read *Henry Martyn’s Life*, I could not refrain from weeping for some hours afterwards, to think how much below such a life as his I was living! Yet you know not but that you may climb where these men did! The

steps of the mountain of piety may be steep to look upon, but they are accessible to the feet of diligence. Go on and you shall yet stand where Moses stood, and behold Canaan from the top of Nebo! Remember that you are as yet upon the lowlands. Be not ashamed to acknowledge that you are desirous to climb upwards. Bend your knees and God will show you in experience “great and mighty things” that you yet know not.

If any man is content with his own experience, it is entirely through ignorance. I will defy anyone to take *Rutherford’s Letters* and sit down and, after reading them, to not say, “Rutherford seems to have been like an angel of God! I am only a man, I never can stand where Rutherford stood.” Frequently, when I return home from Chapel on the Sabbath evening, I get down George Herbert’s *Book of Songs*. And when I see how much he loved the Lord, it seems to me as if he had struck upon his harp the very notes that he shall heard in Paradise—and sung them all again. Let us not be discouraged—we may yet become Herberts, and Rutherfords, and Whitfields! No, there is no reason why we should not become as great as the Old or New Testament saints! There is no reason why we should not be as great as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! For why should not every child of God, in these days, become a mighty a man of faith as was Abraham of old? Let us plead the promise of the text—“Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.”

And, to conclude, the same Truth of God holds good *with regard to the universal Church of God*. I do not know whether you may have noticed that the devil, in his wisdom, has just tried to pervert all our services. My heart has been made glad by the opening of Exeter Hall for the preaching of the Gospel! Never did my heart so leap for joy as when I heard that our Brothers of the Church of England had to begun to preach in Exeter Hall, though I felt sad when those doors were shut against them. Now our joys are blasted and our happiness is clouded. It appears that because some have lately endeavored to turn to good account the earnestness of the people to hear the Word in their own churches and chapels, next Sunday we shall see the lamentable spectacle in this great metropolis of a place, not open simply for the preaching of the Word, but actually for a Sabbath Concert.

[MR. SPURGEON was referring to the arrangements which had been made for a sacred concert and a Gospel address combined at the Alhambra Palace. Happily, the minister who took the service abandoned it after one attempt, being convinced that more harm than good would result from it. But, unhappily, since then, not only have sacred concerts been regularly established, either with or without Gospel addresses, but many places are open on the Lord’s-Day for secular concerts, at which there is not even the pretence of any religious service. Our comfort still is, as it was MR. SPURGEON’S over 40 years ago, that “the Lord reigns,” and He will get the victory over all His adversaries.]

We shall read of multitudes assembled in a building, the property of one connected with a theatre. We shall hear of people being gathered together and there will be a person found who will profess to preach the Gospel to them, and the “Messiah” will be performed as the great inducement for attracting them. Perhaps there is no person who feels more sorrow than I do that this fearful cloud has fallen upon us. The devil may one day open the Crystal Palace, the Museum and every other place on Sunday—but the Lord reigns—and if this nation shall be given up to Sabbath-breaking, let us not despair! God sits as the Ruler in Heaven and, as surely as He is God, He will get the victory! The devil will outwit himself, as he has always done—Satan will fall into his own pit. I hope, however, that the Christians of Great Britain will be very earnest in calling upon God. Pray continually to the Most High, that He will prosper the preaching of the Gospel to the multitude, but that He will never allow our entering into unconsecrated places to be twisted and turned to unhallowed uses! And pray that God will bring forth greater good out of the great evil, and so glorify Himself, and thus show us great and mighty things that we know not.

I can only now beseech the Lord to pour His blessing upon each of you. May you be earnest in prayer and constant in supplication. And if you have yet never known Christ, may He soon be made known to you by the Holy Spirit and may your prayers be lifted up to Heaven that He may show you His salvation—which is one of the “great and mighty things” which you know not now!

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

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



# THE GOLDEN KEY OF PRAYER

## NO. 619

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 12, 1865,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great  
and mighty things, which you know not.”  
Jeremiah 33:3.***

SOME of the most learned works in the world smell of midnight oil. But the most spiritual and most comforting books and sayings of men usually have a savor about them of prison dampness. I might quote many instances—John Bunyan’s Pilgrim may suffice instead of a hundred others. And this good text of ours, all moldy and cold with the prison in which Jeremiah lay, has nevertheless a brightness and a beauty about it which it might never have had if it had not come as a cheering word to the prisoner of the Lord shut up in the court of the prison.

God’s people have always, in their worst condition, found out the best of their God. He is good at all times, but He seems to be at His best when they are at their worst. “How could you bear your long imprisonment so well?” said one to the Landgrave of Hesse who had been shut up for his attachment to the principles of the Reformation. He replied, “The Divine consolations of martyrs were with me.”

Doubtless there is a consolation more deep, more strong than any other which God keeps for those who, being His faithful witnesses, have to endure exceedingly great tribulation from the enmity of man. There is a glorious aurora for the frigid zone. And stars glisten in northern skies with unusual splendor. Rutherford had a quaint saying that when he was cast into the cellars of affliction, he remembered that the great King always kept his wine there and he began to seek at once for the wine bottles and to drink of the “wines on the lees well refined.”

They who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls. You know, my companions in affliction, that it is so. You whose bones have been ready to come through the skin through long lying upon the weary couch. You who have seen your earthly goods carried away from you and have been reduced well-near to penury. You who have gone to the grave these seven times, till you have feared that your last earthly friend would be borne away by un pitying Death. You have all proven that He is a faithful God and that as your tribulations abound, so your consolations also abound by Christ Jesus!

My prayer is, in taking this text this morning, that some other prisoners of the Lord may have its joyous promise spoken home to them! That you who are shut up and cannot come forth by reason of present heaviness of spirit may hear Him say, as with a soft whisper in your ears and in your hearts, “Call upon Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.”

The text naturally splits itself up into three distinct particles of the Truth of God. Upon these let us speak as we are enabled by God the Holy Spirit. First, prayer commanded—"Call unto Me." Secondly, an answer promised—"And I will answer you." Thirdly, faith encouraged—"And show you great and mighty things, which you know not."

I. The first head is PRAYER COMMANDED. We are not merely counseled and recommended to pray, but *bid* to pray. This is great condescension. An hospital is built—it is considered sufficient that free admission shall be given to the sick when they seek it. But no order in council is made that a man must enter its gates. A soup kitchen is well provided for in the depth of winter. Notice is promulgated that those who are poor may receive food on application. But no one thinks of passing an Act of Parliament *compelling* the poor to come and wait at the door to take the charity.

It is thought to be enough to proffer it without issuing any sort of mandate that men shall accept it. Yet so strange is the infatuation of man, on the one hand, which makes him *need* a command to be merciful to his own soul! And so marvelous is the condescension of our gracious God on the other—that He issues a command of love without which not a man of Adam born would partake of the Gospel feast, but would rather starve than come! In the matter of prayer it is even so. God's own people need, or else they would not receive it, a *command* to pray.

Why is this? Because, dear Friends, we are very subject to fits of worldliness, if indeed that is not our *usual* state. We do not forget to eat—we do not forget to take the shop shutters down—we do not forget to be diligent in business—we do not forget to go to our beds to rest—but we often forget to wrestle with God in prayer and to spend, as we ought to spend, long periods in consecrated fellowship with our Father and our God. With too many professors the ledger is so bulky that you cannot move it! And the Bible, representing their devotion, is so small that you might almost put it in your waistcoat pocket.

Hours for the world! Moments for Christ! The world has our best and our prayer closet the remnants of our time. We give our strength and freshness to the ways of mammon and our fatigue to the ways of God. Therefore it is that we need to be commanded to attend to that very act which it ought to be our greatest happiness, as it is our highest privilege to perform—to meet with our God! "Call upon Me," He says, for He knows that we are apt to forget to call upon God.

"What do you mean, oh, Sleeper? Arise and call upon your God," is an exhortation which is needed by us as well as by Jonah in the storm. He understands what heavy hearts we have, sometimes, when under a sense of sin. Satan says to us, "Why should you pray? How can you hope to prevail? You say in vain, 'I will arise and go to my Father,' for you are not worthy to be one of His hired servants! How can you see the King's face after you have played the traitor against Him? How will you dare to approach unto the altar when you have, yourself, defiled it and when the sacrifice which you would bring there is a poor polluted one?"

O Brothers and Sisters, it is well for us that we are commanded to pray, or else in times of heaviness we might give it up! If God commands me, unfit as I may be, I will creep to the footstool of Divine Grace. And since

He says, "Pray without ceasing," though my words fail me and my heart itself will wander, yet I will still stammer out the wishes of my hungering soul and say, "O God, at least teach me to pray and help me to prevail with You."

Are we not commanded to pray, also, because of our frequent unbelief? Unbelief whispers, "What profit is there if you should seek the Lord upon such-and-such a matter? This is a case quite out of the list of those things wherein God has interposed and, therefore, (says the devil), if you were in any other position you might rest upon the mighty arm of God. But *here* your prayer will not avail you. Either it is too trivial a matter, or it is too connected with temporals, or else it is a matter in which you have sinned too much, or else it is too high, too hard, too complicated a piece of business—you have no right to take that before God!" So suggests the foul Fiend of Hell.

Therefore there stands written as an everyday precept suitable to every case into which a Christian can be cast, "Call unto Me." "Call unto Me. Are you sick? Would you be healed? Cry unto Me, for I am the Great Physician. Does Providence trouble you? Are you fearful that you shall not provide things honest in the sight of man? Call unto Me! Do your children vex you? Do you feel that which is sharper than an adder's tooth—a thankless child? Call unto Me! Are your griefs little, yet painful, like small points and pricks of thorns? Call unto Me! Is your burden heavy as though it would make your back break beneath its load? Call unto Me! Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you! He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

In the valley—on the mountain—on the barren rock—in the briny sea! Submerged beneath the billows and lifted up by-and-by upon the crest of the waves—in the furnace when the coals are glowing—in the gates of death when the jaws of Hell would shut themselves upon you—cease not, for the commandment forevermore addresses you with, "Call unto Me." Prayer is still mighty and must prevail with God to bring you your deliverance. These are some of the reasons why the privilege of supplication is also in Holy Scripture spoken of as a *duty*—there are many more—but these will suffice this morning.

We must not leave our first part till we have made another remark. We ought to be very glad that God has given us this command in His Word that it may be sure and abiding. You may turn to fifty passages where the same precept is uttered. I do not often read in Scripture, "You shall not kill." "You shall not covet." Twice the Law is given, but I often read Gospel precepts, for if the *Law* is given twice, the *Gospel* is given seventy times seven. For every precept which I cannot keep by reason of my being weak through the flesh, I find a thousand precepts which it is sweet and pleasant for me to keep by reason of the power of the Holy Spirit which dwells in the children of God!

And this command to pray is insisted upon again and again. It may be a seasonable exercise for some of you to find out how often in Scripture you are told to pray. You will be surprised to find how many times such words as these are given—"Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you." "You people, pour out your heart before Him." "Seek you the

Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near.” “Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.” “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.” “Pray without ceasing.” “Come boldly unto the Throne of Grace.” “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” “Continue in prayer.”

I need not multiply where I could not possibly exhaust. I pick two or three out of this great bag of pearls. Come, Christian, you ought never to question whether you have a right to pray—you should never ask, “May I be permitted to come into His Presence?” When you have so many commands, (and God’s commands are all promises and all enablings), you may come boldly unto the Throne of Grace by the new and living way through the rent veil. But there are times when God not only commands His people to pray in the Bible—He also commands them to pray directly by the motions of His Holy Spirit.

You who know the inner life comprehend me at once. You feel suddenly, possibly in the midst of business, the pressing thought that you must retire to pray. It may be you do not at first take particular notice of the inclination, but it comes again and again and again—“Retire and pray!” I find that in the matter of prayer I am myself very much like a water-wheel which runs well when there is plenty of water, but which turns with very little force when the brook is growing shallow. Or, like the ship which flies over the waves putting out all her canvas when the wind is favorable, but which has to tack about most laboriously when there is but little of the favoring breeze.

Now it strikes me that whenever our Lord gives you the special inclination to pray that you should double your diligence. You ought always to pray and not to faint—yet when He gives you the special longing after prayer and you feel a peculiar aptness and enjoyment in it, you have, over and above the command which is constantly binding, another command which should compel you to cheerful obedience. At such times I think we may stand in the position of David to whom the Lord said. “When you hear a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then shall you bestir yourself.”

That going in the tops of the mulberry trees may have been the footfalls of angels hastening to the help of David and then David was to smite the Philistines. And when God’s mercies are coming, their footfalls are our desires to pray. And our desires to pray should be at once an indication that the set time to favor Zion is come. Sow plentifully now, for you can sow in hope! Plow joyously now, for your harvest is sure! Wrestle now, Jacob, for you are about to be made a prevailing prince and your name shall be called Israel! Now is your time, spiritual merchantmen! The market is high, trade much—your profit shall be large. See to it that you use right well the golden hour and reap your harvest while the sun shines.

When we enjoy visitations from on high we should be peculiarly constant in prayer. And if some other duty less pressing should have first place for a season, it will not be amiss and we shall be no loser—for when God bids us specially pray by the monitions of His Spirit, then should we bestir ourselves in prayer.

**II.** Let us now take the second head—AN ANSWER PROMISED. We ought not to tolerate for a minute the ghastly and grievous thought that God will not answer prayer! His Nature, as manifested in Christ Jesus, demands it. He has revealed Himself in the Gospel as a God of love, full of Grace and truth. And how can He refuse to help those of His creatures who humbly, in His own appointed way, seek His face and favor? When the Athenian senate upon one occasion found it most convenient to meet together in the open air, as they were sitting in their deliberations, a sparrow, pursued by a hawk, flew in the direction of the senate.

Being hard pressed by the bird of prey, it sought shelter in the bosom of one of the senators. He, being a man of rough and vulgar mold, took the bird from his bosom, dashed it on the ground and so killed it. Whereupon the whole senate rose in uproar and without one single dissenting voice, condemned him to die, as being unworthy of a seat in the senate with them, or to be called an Athenian if he did not render succor to a creature that confided in him. Can we suppose that the God of Heaven, whose Nature is love, could tear out of His bosom the poor fluttering dove that flies from the eagle of Justice into the bosom of His Mercy?

Will He give the invitation to us to seek His face and when we, as He knows, with so much trepidation of fear, yet summon courage enough to fly into His bosom—will He then be unjust and ungracious enough to forget to hear our cry and to answer us? Let us not think so harshly of the God of Heaven! Let us recollect next His vast Character as well as His Nature. I mean the Character which He has won for Himself by His past deeds of Grace. Consider, my Brothers and Sisters, that one stupendous display of bounty—if I were to mention a thousand I could not give a better illustration of the Character of God than that one deed—“He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all.” And it is not my inference only, but the inspired conclusion of an Apostle—“How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

If the Lord did not refuse to listen to my voice when I was a guilty sinner and an enemy, how can He disregard my cry now, that I am justified and saved? How is it that He heard the voice of my misery when my *heart* knew it not and would not seek relief, if after all He will not hear me now that I am His child, His friend? The streaming wounds of Jesus are the sure guarantees for answered prayer. George Herbert represents in that quaint poem of his, “The Bag,” the Savior saying—

***“If you have anything to send or write  
(I have no bag, but here is room)  
Unto My Father’s hands and sight,  
(Believe me) it shall safely come.  
That I shall mind what you impart  
Look, you may put it very near My heart,  
Or if hereafter any of friends  
Will use Me in this kind, the door  
Shall still be open; what he sends  
I will present and somewhat more  
Not to his hurt.”***

Surely, George Herbert’s thought was that the Atonement was in itself a guarantee that prayer must be heard—that the great gash made near the

Savior's heart which let the light into the very depths of the heart of Deity—was proof that He who sits in Heaven would hear the cry of His people! You misread Calvary if you think that prayer is useless. But, Beloved, we have the Lord's own promise for it and He is a God that cannot lie—"Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will answer you." Has He not said, "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believe that you shall have it and you shall have it"? We cannot pray, indeed, unless we believe this doctrine—"for he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

And if we have any question at all about whether our prayer will be heard, we are comparable to him that wavers—"for he who wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Furthermore, it is not necessary, but still it may strengthen the point if we add that our own experience leads us to believe that God will answer prayer. I must not speak for you, but I may speak for myself. If there is anything I know, anything that I am quite assured of beyond all question, it is that praying breath is never spent in vain. If no other man here can say it, I dare to say it and I know that I can prove it.

My own conversion is the result of prayer—long, affectionate, earnest, importunate. Parents prayed for me! God heard their cries and here I am to preach the Gospel. Since then I have adventured upon some things that were far beyond my capacity, as I thought. But I have never failed, because I have cast myself upon the Lord. You know as a Church that I have not scrupled to indulge large ideas of what we might do for God. And we have accomplished all that we purposed. I have sought God's aid and assistance and help in all my manifold undertakings! And though I cannot tell here the story of my private life in God's work, yet if it were written it would be a standing proof that there is a God that answers prayer!

He has heard my prayers, not now and then, nor once or twice, but so many times that it has grown into a habit with me to spread my case before God with the absolute certainty that whatever I ask of God, He will give it to me. It is not now a, "perhaps," or a possibility—I know that my Lord answers me and I dare not doubt! It were, indeed, folly if I did. As I am sure that a certain amount of leverage will lift a weight, so I know that a certain amount of prayer will get anything from God. As the rain cloud brings the shower, so prayer brings the blessing. As spring scatters flowers, so supplication ensures mercies. In all labor there is profit, but most of all in the work of intercession—I am sure of this—for I have reaped it.

As I put trust in the queen's money and have never failed yet to buy what I want when I produce the cash, so I put my trust in God's promises and mean to do so till I find that He shall tell me just once that they are base coins and will not do to trade with in Heaven's market. But why should I speak? O Brothers and Sisters, you all know in your own selves that God hears prayer! If you do not, then where is your Christianity? Where is your religion? You will need to learn what are the first elements of the Truth of God, for all saints, young or old, set it down as certain that He does hear prayer!

Still, remember that prayer is always to be offered in submission to God's will. When we say, "God hears prayer," we do not intend by that that He always gives us literally what we ask for. We do mean, however, this—that He gives us what is best for us. And that if He does not give us the mercy we ask for in silver, He bestows it upon us in gold. If He does not take away the thorn in the flesh, yet He says, "My Grace is sufficient for you," and that comes to the same in the end. Lord Bolingbroke said to the Countess of Huntingdon, "I cannot understand, Your Ladyship, how you can make out earnest prayer to be consistent with submission to the Divine will."

"My Lord," she said, "that is a matter of no difficulty. If I were a courtier of some generous king and he gave me permission to ask any favor I pleased of him, I should be sure to put it thus, 'Will Your Majesty be graciously pleased to grant me such-and-such a favor—but at the same time, though I very much desire it, if it would in any way detract from Your Majesty's honor, or if in Your Majesty's judgment it should seem better that I did not have this favor, I shall be quite as content to go without it as to receive it.' So you see I might earnestly offer a petition and yet I might submissively leave it in the king's hands."

So with God. We never offer up prayer without inserting that clause, either in spirit or in words, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will. Not my will but Yours be done." We can only pray without an "if" when we are quite sure that our will must be God's will, because God's will is fully our will. A much-slandered poet has well said—"Man, regard your prayers as a purpose of love to your soul. Esteem the Providence that led to them as an index of God's good will. So shall you pray aright and your words shall meet with acceptance. Also, in pleading for others, be thankful for the fullness of your prayer. For if you are ready to ask, the Lord is more than ready to bestow. The salt preserves the sea and the saints uphold the earth. Their prayers are the thousand pillars that prop the canopy of Nature.

"Verily, an hour without prayer, from some terrestrial mind, were a curse in the calendar of time, a spot of the blackness of darkness. Perchance the terrible day when the world must rock into ruins, will be one unwhitened by prayer—shall He find faith on the earth? For there is an economy of mercy, as of wisdom and power and means. Neither is one blessing granted unsought from the treasury of good—and the charitable heart of the Being, to depend upon whom is happiness, never withholds a bounty, so long as His subject prays. Yes, ask what you will, to the second throne in Heaven, it is yours, for whom it was appointed. There is no limit unto prayer—but if you cease to ask, tremble, you self-suspended creature, for your strength is cut off as was Samson's—and the hour of your doom is come."

**III.** I come to our third point, which I think is full of encouragement to all those who exercise the hallowed art of prayer—ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITH. "I will show you great and mighty things, which you know not." Let us just remark that this was originally spoken to a Prophet in prison, and therefore it applies, in the first place, to every teacher and, indeed, as

every teacher must be a *learner*, it has a bearing upon every learner in Divine Truth.

The best way by which a prophet and teacher and learner can know the reserved Truths of God—the higher and more mysterious Truths of God—is by waiting upon God in prayer. I noticed very specially yesterday in reading the Book of the Prophet Daniel, how Daniel found out Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The soothsayers, the magicians, the astrologers of the Chaldeans brought out their curious books and their strange-looking instruments and began to mutter their abracadabra and all sorts of mysterious incantations, but they all failed.

What did Daniel do? He set himself to *prayer*, and knowing that the prayer of a united body of men has more prevalence than the prayer of one, we find that Daniel called together his brethren and bade them unite with him in earnest prayer that God would be pleased in His infinite mercy to open up the vision. "Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, his companions, that they would desire mercies of the God of Heaven concerning this secret, that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon."

And in the case of John, who was the Daniel of the New Testament, you remember he saw a book in the right hand of Him that sat on the Throne—a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open or to look upon. What did John do? The book was by-and-by opened by the Lion of the Tribe of Judah who had prevailed to open the book. But it is written, first, before the book was opened, "I wept much." Yes, and the tears of John which were his liquid prayers, were, as far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded book was opened.

Brethren in the ministry, you who are teachers in the Sunday school and all of you who are learners in the college of Christ Jesus, I pray you remember that prayer is your best means of study—like Daniel you shall understand the dream and the interpretation when you have sought God. And like John you shall see the seven seals of the precious Truth of God unloosed after you have wept much. "Yes, if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding: if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hid treasures: then shall you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

Stones are not broken except by an earnest use of the hammer. And the stone-breaker usually goes down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence and let the knees of prayer be exercised, too, and there is not a stony doctrine in Revelation which is useful for you to understand which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith. "Bene orasse est bene studuisse" was a wise sentence of Luther which has been so often quoted that we hardly venture but to hint at it. "To have prayed well is to have studied well."

You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayers. Thoughts and reasoning may be like the steel wedges which may open a way into the Truth of God. But prayer is the lever which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery so that we may get at the treasure that is hidden there for those who can force their way to reach it. The kingdom of



Heaven still suffers violence and the violent takes it by force. Take care that you work always with the mighty implement of prayer and nothing can stand against you.

We must not, however, stop there. We have applied the text to only one case—it is applicable to a hundred. We single out another. The saint may expect to discover deeper experience and to know more of the higher spiritual life by being much in prayer. There are different translations of my text. One version renders it, “I will show you great and fortified things, which you know not.” Another reads, “Great and reserved things, which you know not.” Now all the developments of spiritual life are not alike easy of attainment. There are the common frames and feelings of repentance and faith and joy and hope which are enjoyed by the entire family—but there is an upper realm of rapture, of communion and conscious union with Christ—which is far from being the common dwelling place of Believers.

All Believers see Christ, but all Believers do not put their fingers into the prints of the nails, nor thrust their hand into His side. We have not the high privilege of John to lean upon Jesus’ bosom, nor of Paul to be caught up into the third Heaven. In the ark of salvation we find a lower, second and third story. All are in the ark, but all are not in the same story. Most Christians, as to the river of experience, are only up to the ankles. Some others have waded till the stream is up to the knees. A few find it chest high. And a few—oh, how few!—find it a river to *swim* in, the bottom of which they cannot touch.

My Brethren, there are heights in experimental knowledge of the things of God which the eagle’s eye of acumen and philosophical thought has never seen. And there are secret paths which the lion’s whelp of reason and judgment has not as yet learned to travel. God alone can bear us there, but the chariot in which He takes us up, and the fiery steeds with which that chariot is dragged are prevailing PRAYERS. Prevailing prayer is victorious over the God of Mercy. “By his strength he had power with God: yes, he had power over the angel and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto Him: he found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us.” Prevailing prayer takes the Christian to Carmel and enables him to cover Heaven with clouds of blessing and earth with floods of mercy.

Prevailing prayer bears the Christian aloft to Pisgah and shows him the inheritance reserved. Yes, and it elevates him to Tabor and transfigures him, till in the likeness of his Lord, as He is, so are we! In this world, if you would reach to something higher than ordinary groveling experience, look to the Rock that is higher than you and look with the eye of faith through the windows of importunate prayer. To grow in experience then, there must be much prayer.

You must have patience with me while I apply this text to two or three more cases. It is certainly true of the sufferer under trial—if he waits upon God in prayer he shall receive much greater deliverances than he has ever dreamed of—“great and mighty things, which you know not.” Here is Jeremiah’s testimony—“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. You have redeemed my life.” And David’s is the same—“I called upon the Lord

in distress: the Lord answered me and set me in a large place...I will praise You: for You have heard me and are become my salvation.”

And yet again—“Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.” “My husband is dead,” said the poor woman, “and my creditor is come to take my two sons as bondsmen.” She hoped that Elijah would possibly say, “What are your debts? I will pay them.” Instead of that, he multiplies her oil till it is written, “Go and pay your debts and”—what was the “and”?—“live you and your children upon the rest.” So often it will happen that God will not only help His people through the miry places of the way so that they may just stand on the other side of the slough—but He will bring them safely far on the journey.

That was a remarkable miracle, when in the midst of the storm, Jesus Christ came walking upon the sea! The disciples received Him into the ship and not only was the sea calm, but it is recorded, “Immediately the ship was at the land where they went.” That was a mercy over and above what they asked. I sometimes hear you pray and make use of a quotation which is *not* in the Bible—“He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or even think.” It is not so written in the Bible. I do not know what we *can* ask or what we *can* think. But it is said, “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.”

Let us, then, dear Friends, when we are in great trial, only say, “Now I am in prison. Like Jeremiah I will pray as he did, for I have God’s command to do it. And I will look out as he did, expecting that He will show me reserved mercies which I know nothing of at present.” He will not merely bring His people through the battle, covering their heads in it, but He will bring them forth with banners waving to divide the spoil with the mighty and to claim their portion with the strong! Expect great things of a God who gives such great promises as these!

Again, here is encouragement for the worker. Most of you are doing something for Christ. I am happy to be able to say this, knowing that I do not flatter you. My dear Friends, wait upon God much in prayer and you have the promise that He will do greater things for you than you know of. We know not how much capacity for usefulness there may be in us. That ass’s jawbone lying there upon the earth—what can it do? Nobody knows what it can do. It gets into Samson’s hands—what can it *not* do? No one knows what it cannot do now that a Samson wields it! And you, Friend, have often thought yourself to be as contemptible as that bone and you have said, “What can I do?” Yes, but when Christ, by His Spirit grips you—what can *you* not do?

Truly you may adopt Paul’s language and say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” However, do not depend upon prayer without *effort*. In a certain school there was one girl who knew the Lord. She was a very gracious, simple-hearted, trustful child. As usual, Divine Grace developed itself in the child according to the child’s position. Her lessons were always best said of any in the class. Another girl said to her, “How is it that your lessons are always so well said?” “I pray God to help me,” she said, “to learn my lesson.” “Well,” thought the other, “then I

will do the same.” The next morning when she stood up in the class she knew nothing. And when she was in disgrace she complained to the other, “I prayed God to help me learn my lesson and I do not know anything of it. What is the use of prayer?”

“But did you sit down and try to learn it?” “Oh, no,” she said, “I never looked at the book.” “Ah, then,” said the other, “I asked God to help me to learn my lesson—but I then sat down to it studiously and I kept at it till I knew it well and I learned it easily, because my earnest desire, which I had expressed to God was, help me to be diligent in endeavoring to do my duty.” So is it with some who come up to Prayer Meetings and pray and then they fold their arms and go away hoping that God’s work will go on. Like the Negro woman singing, “Fly abroad, you mighty Gospel,” but not putting a penny in the plate—so that her friend touched her and said, “But how can it fly if you don’t give it wings to fly with?”

There are many who appear to be very mighty in prayer, wondrous in supplications! But then they require God to do what they can do themselves and therefore God does nothing at all for them. “I shall leave my camel untied,” said an Arab once to Mahomet, “and trust to providence.” “Tie it up,” said Mahomet, “and *then* trust to providence.” So you that say, “I shall pray and trust my Church, or my class, or my work to God’s goodness,” may rather hear the voice of Experience and Wisdom which say, “Do your best. Work as if all rested upon your toil—as if your own aim would bring your salvation. And when you have done all, cast yourself on Him without whom it is in vain to rise up early and to sit up late and to eat the bread of carefulness. And if He speeds you give Him the praise.”

I shall not detain you many minutes longer, but I want to notice that this promise ought to prove useful for the comforting of those who are intercessors for others. You who are calling upon God to save your children, to bless your neighbors, to remember your husbands or your wives in mercy may take comfort from this! “I will show you great and mighty things, which you know not.” A celebrated minister in the last century, one Mr. Bailey, was the child of a godly mother. This mother had almost ceased to pray for her husband who was a man of a most ungodly stamp and a bitter persecutor.

The mother prayed for her boy and while he was yet eleven or twelve years of age, eternal mercy met with him. So sweetly instructed was the child in the things of the kingdom of God that the mother requested him—and for some time he always did so—to conduct family prayer in the house. Morning and evening this little one laid open the Bible. And though the father would not deign to stop for the family prayer, yet on one occasion he was rather curious to know, “what sort of an out the boy would make of it,” so he stopped on the other side of the door and God blessed the prayer of his own child under thirteen years of age to his conversion!

Said the mother, “I might well have read my text with streaming eyes and said, ‘Yes, Lord, You have shown me great and mighty things, which I knew not! You have not only saved my boy, but through my boy You have brought my husband to the Truth.’” You cannot *guess* how greatly God will bless you! Only go and stand at His door—you cannot tell what is in reserve for you. If you do not beg at all, you will get nothing. But if you

beg He may not only give you, as it were, the bones and broken meat, but He may say to the servant at His table, "Take that dainty meat and set that before the poor man."

Ruth went to glean. She expected to get a few good ears—but Boaz said, "Let her glean even among the sheaves and rebuke her not." He said, moreover, to her, "At mealtime come here and eat of the bread and dip your morsel in the vinegar." She found a *husband* where she only expected to find a handful of barley. So in prayer for others, God may give us such mercies that we shall be astounded at them since we expected but little. Hear what is said of Job and learn its lesson, "And the Lord said, My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, like My servant Job...And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

Now, this word to close with. Some of you are seekers for your own conversion. God has quickened you to solemn prayer about your own souls. You are not content to go to Hell. You want Heaven. You want washing in the precious blood—you want eternal life. Dear Friends, I pray you take this text—God Himself speaks it to you—"Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things, which you know not." At once take God at His Word. Get home—go into your chamber and shut the door and try Him!

Young man, I say, Try the Lord! Young woman, prove Him—see whether He is true or not! If God is true, you cannot seek mercy at His hands through Jesus Christ and get a negative reply. He must—for His own promise and Character bind him to it—open Mercy's gate to you who knock with all your heart! God help you, believing in Christ Jesus, to cry aloud unto God and His answer of peace is already on the way to meet you! You shall hear Him say, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven." The Lord bless you for His love's sake. Amen.

[NOTE—In a former sermon, while denouncing the error of the "non-confession of sin by Believers," we wrongly imputed that gross heresy to the Plymouth Brethren. We have since learned that the persons to whom we alluded have been expelled from that body and we therefore desire to exonerate the community from a fault of which they are not guilty. We are sorry to have made this charge, as it is far from our wish to speak evil of any, but we were not aware of the expulsion of the guilty persons.]

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# CHASTENED HAPPINESS

## NO. 1636

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER. 25, 1881,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness  
and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.”  
Jeremiah 33:9.*

GOD'S ancient people sadly provoked Him with their idolatries from age to age. He was longsuffering to them to the last degree, but at length He grew weary of them and, according to His own words, “He abhorred His own inheritance.” He caused them to be carried away into captivity and their land became a desert, or the heritage of strangers. Israel became a scattered people on the brink of national extinction, for their iniquities had hidden the face of the Lord from them. Yet the Lord, even Jehovah, had entered into a Covenant concerning them with Abraham, His friend, which Covenant He had afterwards renewed with His servant David.

This latter Covenant the Lord is said, by the Prophet Jeremiah, to remember even when Jerusalem is desolate. We read in the 20<sup>th</sup> verse and onward these words—“Thus says the Lord: If you can break My Covenant of the day, and My Covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also My Covenant be broken with David, My servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne.” Even in Israel's worst days, when her representative man was the weeping Prophet Jeremiah, and when her sorrows were greater than even *he* could express, yet the Lord revealed His love and promised that blessed days should dawn for the seed of Abraham!

These days have not yet come, but they shall surely arrive, for God has not cast away His people whom He did foreknow. There is yet a history for Israel—her sun is clouded, but it has not set. As surely as stands the Covenant with day and night, so surely shall the chosen people return from their captivity and possess the land which the Lord has given them. In those days the Lord will build them as at the first and cleanse them from all their iniquities. Then they shall not be proud or arrogant, for His goodness shall startle and astound them and they shall be amazed, even, unto trembling when they see what great things Jehovah has done for them! The memory of their great national offenses and especially of their long rejection of the Messiah shall cause them to wear their high dignity without pride—they shall be subdued by love to a child-like fear of again offending—they shall tremble as they see the Lord God of their fathers glorifying all His Grace in them. Thus much for the strict context of the text.

At this time we shall loosen the verse from its stall and bring it forth to our own pastures. Its primary significance is not only its teaching, for the words of the Lord are full of eyes and look in many ways. We may use this

promise in reference to *all* the Lord's people, for the promise is sure to all the seed. That which is true of the Jew, one way, is true of all the chosen seed in the same sense or in another. No privilege of the Covenant is absolutely private, either to Jew or Gentile, but in its highest form, if not in its lowest, it is the common property of all the heirs of salvation. We are joint heirs with Christ Jesus and as He inherits all blessing, so, also, do we. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, has well said, "If you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Let me, then, read the text, again, and let us appropriate it to ourselves—"They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it." Such honor and blessing have all the saints! Our text suggests, at the outset, the remark that all the good things which make up prosperity are to be traced unto the Lord. Woe unto us if we receive good and perfect gifts and yet forget the Father of Lights from whom they come! These benefits are not from beneath, but from above—let them not be passed by in ungrateful silence—but let us send, upward, humble and warm acknowledgments. He who forgets mercy deserves that mercy should forget him. God grant we may never be such practical atheists as to receive daily bounties from God and not return a daily song.

As each gleaming wave of the sea reflects the light of the sun, so let each ripple of our life flash with gratitude for the benediction of Heaven. All good comes from the Altogether Good, who is of good the *essence*, the Creator and the Giver. Especially is this true of all *spiritual* blessings—of such goodness as comes not so much from benevolence to creatures as from mercy to *sinners*. As a being, I am grateful that my Creator is kind to me. But as a sinner, if my Judge smiles upon me, I admire His exceeding Grace! His justice had left me unblessed to perish through my sin if His mercy had not found a way to spare and to cleanse. You who know not only your insignificance, but also your unworthiness, are held under special bonds to lift up your hearts in fervent gratitude to the Lord.

I remark, next, that temporal mercies are always best when they come in their proper order. I have no doubt our text includes both temporal and spiritual good, but certainly the temporals are arranged in the second rank, for the eighth verse runs—"I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me." And after this we have mention of goodness and prosperity. After pardon, peace and plenty are golden blessings—without which they might prove a curse. To an unforgiven sinner the richest enjoyments of this life are as the food which fattens the bullock for the slaughter. But when sin is pardoned, common mercies become tokens of a Father's love and ripen beneath the sun of Divine Love into an inexpressible sweetness!

The children of God bless God for bread and water because God has made these things matters of promise and they come as Covenant provisions. Cheered by Grace, the child of poverty finds contentment in that which otherwise might seem but prison fare. Much or little must depend upon the way in which you look upon it and what to the Believer is

enough, might be to the worldling a mere pittance because Grace has not trained his mind to rejoice in the will of the Lord. Blessed be God if He has given us first, the fruits of the sun of Grace, and then the fruits put forth by the moon of Providence! The main thing is to be able to sing, "Bless the Lord who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases," and after that it is most pleasant to add, "who satisfies your mouth with good things."

What shall I say of the happiness of those persons who have spiritual and temporal blessings united, to whom God has given both the upper and the nether springs, so that they possess all things necessary for this life in fair proportion and then, far above all, enjoy the blessings of the life to come? Such are first blessed in their spirits and then blessed in their basket and in their store! In their case, double favor calls for double praise, double service, double delight in God! Let them take for their example the Psalmist in the 71<sup>st</sup> Psalm, who found himself increased in greatness, comforted on every side and then exclaimed, "I will also praise You with the psaltery, even Your truth, O my God unto You will I sing with the harp, O You Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto You; and my soul, which You have redeemed."

And yet, and yet, and yet—if we are very happy, today, and though that happiness is lawful and proper because it arises both out of spiritual and temporal things in due order—yet in all human happiness there lurks a danger! There is a wealth which has a sorrow necessarily connected with it. And I think that even when God makes rich and adds no sorrow therewith, yet He makes provision against an ill which otherwise would surely come. Let me remind you of that memorable passage, "There the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams." The Lord is all that to His believing people. But then, broad rivers and streams have a danger appertaining to them, for these are waterways by which the pirates of the sea approach a city and plunder it—and hence for Zion's protection it is added, "Wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby."

Thus the Lord gives the benefit without the danger naturally attendant upon it! He gives peace, but prevents carnal security. And He gives happiness but prevents the pride and presumption which are too apt to grow out of it. The text speaks of goodness and prosperity procured for us and then tells us that all danger which might arise out of it is averted by a gracious work upon the heart. The Lord sends a chastened joy—"They shall fear and tremble." Instead of unduly exulting in their possessions and becoming high-minded and vain-glorious, the Lord's people are kept lowly and self-distrustful, O Glory to God! The Lord's Word is, and thus their happiness brings Glory fulfilled, "It shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them."

This, then, is our subject—the sanctifying and mellowing of our joy. We shall try to see the Lord's loving wisdom in this matter, that we may the more wisely love Him and the more intelligently estimate His prudent conduct towards us. We shall first notice this toning down of our joy. And

then, in the second place, we shall observe the feelings by which this chastened effect is produced. And thirdly we shall look to the measure in which most of us can enter into this experience of a joy, toned and tinted by fear and trembling.

**I.** Let us think a little about THE TONING DOWN OF OUR GREAT JOYS. As I have said, we need Grace in enjoying both temporal and spiritual prosperity and, therefore, I shall speak upon them both. Even when we are filled with holy delight it is hard to carry a full cup with a steady hand. When most lifted up with spiritual joy, we are not beyond gunshot of the enemy. We need the armor of God on the right hand as well as on the left. Even when we serve the Lord, it must be with fear and in His glorious Presence we must rejoice with trembling. In the cup of salvation there are drops of bitterness and so must it be—for unmixed delight in this world would be dangerous.

Unbroken prosperity in worldly things has proved perilous to many Christians. It is no theory, but a matter of sad fact, that many men, as they rise as to one world, sink as to another. I am even afraid that long-continued health of body is not always for the health of a man's *soul* and that to be without care and trouble is *not* the best way to soul-prosperity. When the sea is smooth, the ship makes poor sailing. Men are bird-limed by their rest and ease and have small care to fly Heavenward. We are apt to lose our God among our goods! Is it not so? If the world's roses had no thorns, should we not think it Paradise and forego all desires for the gardens above?

If Israel in Egypt had dwelt luxuriously, would a cry for deliverance have ever gone up to Heaven? And had Pharaoh been content to ease their burdens, would they ever have marched for Canaan? Alas, we are apt to chill in our desires for Heaven when we get to the warm side of the hedge and hear the smooth side of the world's tongue. When the flowers of earth charm us, we cast our eyes downward and forget the stars of Heaven—at least the danger lies that way. Wise men dare not ask for unmingled prosperity, for they are not sure they can bear it! When first we travel to the south and escape this land of fog, we delight without measure in the sunshine and are anxious to bask in it throughout the whole day. Do you wonder?

Yet, before long, experience suggests a sunshade, for the stranger finds that his head cannot endure the full rays of the sun! In the same way, many a man has suffered a sunstroke in his mind, heart and character, by making money too fast and prospering too much. There is a danger of another kind in a spiritual experience which is all smooth and pleasant. You all remember the fate of Moab who had been at ease from his youth and had become settled upon his lees—may it never be ours. Yet I have seen professors lose their balance while filled with delight. I am not one of those who would speak evil of excitement in religion—men get excited about politics—why should they not be excited about eternal things? Still, there is a kind of delirious religion abroad which I would have men avoid. Its joys are not calm and quiet, but fanatical and noisy. Be sober! Do not



give up the reins of your judgment and permit your feelings to run away with you.

Some Christians have been so uniformly joyous that they have grown elated and self-conceited, even as Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. A few have even supposed themselves to be absolutely perfect while in the flesh—a mere supposition, disproved by their own need of modesty! We have seen brethren carry their heads so high that they could hardly understand a poor Believer who was wrestling against sin and in the strength of God overcoming his corruptions—they have become censorious and have condemned their brethren as if they had been appointed to be judges in Israel to set up whom they would, and put down whom they chose. Repose of mind, caused as much by sound bodily health as by spiritual joy, has made men think uncharitably of sick and sorrowful saints who have been very dear to Jesus, though very doubtful to themselves. Alas, a succession of excitements has, in some cases, bred self-sufficiency. And this has made men light-headed and they have been carried away by different heresies.

Ecclesiastical history will tell you that some who have boasted of their high spiritual delights have gone far in vain imaginings and have ended in the worst forms of immorality. It is an extraordinary fact that super-spirituality has often been found to dwell next door to sensuality—and men have turned the wine of holy love into the vinegar of lust. I need not go to ancient chronicles to prove this—a word to the wise suffices. Even spiritual joy needs a dash of salt, if not of wormwood, to be mingled with it. Holy delight needs to be coupled with sacred grief. Repentance must go with faith, patience with hope, humility with full assurance and conscious self-emptiness with a sense of the all-sufficiency of Christ.

I would remind you, next, that unmixed joy would be fallacious because there is no such thing here below. If a man should become perfectly content with the things of this world, it would be the result of a false view of things. This is an error against which we should pray, for this world cannot fill the soul—and if a man thinks he has filled his soul with it—he is under a gross delusion! The best thing of earth is but a bubble, tinted with rainbow hues and unsubstantial as a dream! Every earthly joy has within it, the seeds of its own destruction! Oh Man, if you did but know yourself, much more your God, you would be assured that *visible* things can never satisfy the desires of a spiritual being!

As to spiritual joy, I say that in no man's experience can it be long without admixture and yet be true. Never, at any moment, can a Christian be in such a position that he has not some cause, either for dissatisfaction with himself, or fear of the tempter, or anxiety to be faithful in service. Our streams of joy blend with currents of fear. Blessed be God, my sin is forgiven me—this joy calls up its balancing thought—Oh that the Spirit of God may help me not to sin again! Again I sing—Blessed be God, I have gotten the victory over an evil habit. But my song is followed by the prayer—Lord, enable me to conquer all evils, even those which as yet I know not. Thus joy and fear hang like the two scales of a balance—I mean not the fear which love casts out, but the *filial* fear which love fosters.

If God has preserved His servant in the day of battle, he has no room to boast, for here comes another enemy. Temptations come wave after wave and, having breasted one, we prepare for another. We cannot yet shout the victory, for, lo, the foes advance, squadron upon squadron! Their routed battalions are succeeded by new armies and it behooves us to quit ourselves like men. We dwell where, in our God, we have the utmost reason for delight, but where, in all things, we perceive the most weighty arguments for solemnity. Rejoice always, but cease not to fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that the Lord has procured for you.

Once more, unmixed delight on earth would be unnatural. We are not in Heaven, yet, and perfect bliss lives not beneath these cloudy skies, nor within the pale sway of the moon. While we are in this body we groan, though we have the first fruits of the Spirit, for we are in a creation which together groans and travails in pain until now. Our years must have their winters while the world revolves. When the Dutch had the trade of the East in their hands, they were accustomed to sell “birds of paradise” to the untraveled people of these realms. These specimen birds had no feet, for they had craftily removed them. The merchants declared that the species lived on the wing and never alighted. There was so much of truth in the fable, that had they been really and veritably, “birds of paradise,” they would not have found a place for their feet upon this globe! Truly, birds of paradise do come and go, and flit from Heaven to earth, but we see them not, neither can we build cages to detain them!

While you are here, expect reminders of the fact that this is not your rest. If you could attain to perfect joy on earth you might be justified in saying, “I have no longing for Heaven. I am perfectly clear of sin, care and trouble—I may as well stay where I am. What need to go further if I can fare no better?” Let no man dream that things will ever come to this with him. Ah, yon lovely flowers of spring this year, you have looked forth too soon! It is strangely mild weather for December, but Spring has not yet arrived. Possibly it is so with some of my hearers—because the Lord is smiling upon you it is very mild weather with your souls—and you dream that the winter of trouble is ended and that your Heaven has begun. Be not deceived! You are not yet—

***“Where everlasting spring abides  
With never-withering flowers.”***

Perhaps a touch of frost may do you good by preventing your getting into an unnatural and unsound condition!

Thus much, then, upon the first point, the toning down of our joys which is wisely managed by our Father’s wisdom and prudence.

**II.** Secondly, we are to see how this toning down is done and observe THE FEELINGS BY WHICH THIS SOBERING EFFECT IS PRODUCED—“They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.” Why fear and tremble? Is not this, in part, a holy awe of God’s Presence? Remember that text, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” The argument for fear and trembling is the

work of God in the soul! Because God is working in you, there must be no trifling. If the eternal Deity deigns to make a workshop of my nature, I, too, must work, but it must be with fear and trembling. So, then, the blessed Presence of God is the Believer's joy, and the very fact that He has worked it in him is a cause for the fear and trembling which comes over the spirit of the joyous Believer. That, I think, is the first meaning of our text.

God has been very good to me, unspeakably good to me, and I have plainly seen the traces of His fatherly hand in my life. Yes, I have so seen them that I have cried out with adoring amazement in many a Bethel, "How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven." So has it been with you, dear Friends. When God has come very near to you in a blaze of mercy. When He has done things that you looked not for when your mouth has been filled with laughter and your tongue with singing because of His goodness, have you not, at the same time, felt overcome by the excess of His favor? Have you not been able to sympathize with Peter when, at the sight of his boat full of fish, he cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"? Have you not felt a solemn trembling like Manoah when he feared that he must die because he had seen an angel of the Lord?

I know it has been so with you! A little mercy would have made you sing, but a great mercy has made you sit in silence before the Lord, or fall on your knees in adoration! A common Providence would have charmed you, but an extraordinary Providence has overwhelmed you. You have lain in the dust at Jesus' feet, feeling yourself to be but dust and ashes—and yet every particle of dust has been full of wondering love to God. This is one way in which God keeps His people right in the days of their joy—where a shallow drink might have intoxicated—He gives so deep a draught that the danger is past and holy wonder takes the place of unholy pride!

But next to that, there rises up in the mind of every favored Christian a deep repentance for past sin. He asks himself this question, "How could I have lived as I have done when God has entertained such love towards me?" When I discovered the election of God's Grace and when I saw at what a price I had been redeemed by our Lord Jesus, I was ashamed of all my evil ways. When I read my name inscribed on the palms of Jesus' hands; when I understood that I was united to Him by a union that never could be broken, I said to myself, "What a thousand fools I have been to have lived forgetful of my highest glory, unmindful of my dearest Friend!" To have lived year after year in open enmity against my Lord seemed like a grim and ghastly dream—almost too horrible to be true!

Have you not felt the same? Have you not felt ashamed and confounded at the memory of your former life? Have you not felt as if you could never open your mouth any more because of all your unkindness to your heavenly Friend? Such penitent reflections keep the Lord's people right, by creating a fear and trembling in the presence of His overflowing goodness. Let me ask you another question. Has not your deepest sense of unworthiness come upon you when you have been conscious of superlative mercy? When the Lord has scourged and chastened you, you have seen

your sins, in your sorrows, and have been ashamed, but, by the memory of His great goodness, you have been far more corrected and humbled.

When our secret sins are set in the light of God's countenance, it is a light, indeed! Oh, the shame my soul has known when the Lord has caressed me, when He has kissed me with the kisses of His mouth! Then I have said, "Ah, Lord, why this to *me*? What am I that you deal thus lovingly with me?" It was when Jehovah came and showed Himself to Job, not in chastening, not with fire of God, or whirlwind, nor with sore boils and blains, but as His own dear Covenant God—it was *then* that Job said—"Now my eyes see You, therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." Love makes the crimson of sin more red than ever! Blood-bought pardon makes sin look black as sackcloth of hair! I tell you, Sirs, it is not the flames of Hell, but the glories of Heaven that most of all fill us with trembling before the Lord!

Nothing touches the heart like undeserved and unexpected love. Love's glance flashes to the very core of the heart and makes the offender, like Peter, go forth and weep bitterly. Do we not each cry, "Would God I could never sin again! Oh, that I could perfectly serve my God without a slip, even to my last day, because of His great love for me"? We tremble and are afraid because of the unutterable Grace which has met our utter unworthiness and rivaled it, until Grace has gotten unto itself the victory! Have you never noticed how the Lord brings His people to their bearings and keeps them steady, under a sense of great love, by suggesting to their hearts the question, "How can I live as becomes one who has been favored like this?"

Did you ever feel that the glory of the palace of love made you afraid to dwell in it? When you have put on your best apparel, those garments which are whiter than any fuller on earth could make them—the matchless righteousness of God—have you not felt fearful of defiling your robes? Did you ever see yourselves adorned as a bride for her husband in all the gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit and have you not said to yourselves "What manner of people ought we to be?" You have scarcely known which way to turn, or how to move! You feared to walk lest you should defile those silver sandals and those feet so newly washed! You did not know what to touch for fear you should stain those hands which Christ had jeweled with His love and made white as ivory with His effectual cleansing! Have you not felt as if you dared not speak till you had prayed, "Lord, open You my lips"?

You have been afraid to look for fear your eyes should glance on evil and, therefore, you have prayed, "Turn my eyes away from beholding vanity." There has been such a fear, such a caution, such a holy jealousy upon you that instead of being lifted up by favor, you have been *humbled* by it! Grace never makes a man vain. When a soul is adorned with glory and beauty and made to shine like the star of the morning, it acknowledges its borrowed comeliness and brightness—and is mildly radiant with reflected rays. When raised up by the special favor of our God into communion with Himself, we are afraid of trespassing against the decorum of almighty love, fearful of violating the propriety of Sovereign Grace!

The Lord our God is a jealous God and He will be had in reverence by those who are around Him. This fact has made us feel like those Apostles who were filled with fear as well as with great joy. To know how to behave ourselves in the House of God has been our anxiety! We have felt like a poor countryman, bred and born in the wilds, who finds himself in a court and feels strange in such a place. Thus have we been clothed with humility as we have worn the garments of praise. Exalted to be kings and priests, our kingdom and priesthood have called forth our careful thought and vainglory has thus been banished.

And have you never felt a fear lest God's goodness should be abused by you? I have been smitten to the very heart as with a secret blow in moments of delight when I have thought, "And suppose, after all, I should not serve God faithfully in my favored position and should not be approved of Him at the last? What if I should *seem* to be an Apostle and prove to be a Judas? What if I should speak of Christ and yet be nothing better than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal?" That heart-piercing fear will wound pride if anything will! Have you never been thus put to the question by your conscience? Have not other questions arisen of a similar character? You have seen your children around you and you have been happy with them, but have you not thought, "What if I should not train them aright and they should grow up to be a sorrow to me and a dishonor to the Church of God?"

When prospered in business, have you never said to yourself, "What if I should become a worshipper of the golden calf? What if covetousness should eat out the heart of my devotion? What if, when my Master calls me to account for my talents, He should cast me away for having hid them in a napkin?" Have you never been tried by such thoughts? If you have never thus examined yourself, you had better do so at once! He who has never questioned his own condition had better make an immediate enquiry. He who has never felt great searching of heart needs to be searched with candles. It is idle to take things for granted, for all of us must be tried by fire and even "the righteous scarcely are saved." No man's Hell shall be more terrible than that of the self-confident one who felt so sure of Heaven that he would not take the ordinary precaution to ask whether his title deeds were genuine or not.

One more thought may also occur to the most joyous Believer. He will say, "What if after rejoicing in all this blessedness I should lose it?" "What," cries one, "do you not believe in the final perseverance of the saints?" Assuredly I do, but are we saints? There's the question! Moreover, many a Believer who has not lost his soul has, nevertheless, lost his present joy and prosperity, and why may not we? The good man has shone as a star of the first magnitude, but suddenly he has dwindled into darkness. He has been unwatchful and in consequence, by the dozen years together, he has had to go softly in the bitterness of his soul.

We have known fathers in Israel who have stepped aside and though they have, by deep repentance, found their way to Heaven, they have gone sorrowing there. Look at David's history! Who was happier all the early part of his life? Note that one sin with Bathsheba and ask who was more

tried and troubled than David throughout the rest of his pilgrimage? The doctrine of Final Perseverance was never intended for the comfort of any who are afraid of self-examination, or who are not watchful—for it is by no means at variance with the other doctrine that many who are sure of Heaven in their own minds will never enter there because Jesus never knew them! Great joy may be only a meteor, great excitement may be a mirage of the desert, great confidence may be a will-o'-the-wisp luring to destruction! The highest seats in the synagogue do not secure for their occupants a place among the shining ones above.

Many rejoicing professors will yet discover that their spot was not the spot of God's people and their song was not the new song which God puts into the mouth. And what if that should be your case and mine? So, when I stand upon my high mountain, let me pray, "Lord, hold You me up." Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall, for he is the man who is most in danger. He who is most full of holy delight is still to watch, for did not Jesus say, "What I say unto all, watch"? God grant that we may be helped to watch against the arrow which flies by day as much as against the pestilence which walks in darkness!

Thus you see how the Lord, by working upon our innermost feelings, sobers us in the hour of joy, even as the text has it—"They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it."

**III.** By way of practical application, let us now consider THE MEASURE IN WHICH YOU AND I CAN ENTER INTO THIS EXPERIENCE. I thought to myself, if I begin to make individual applications I shall have before me a never-ending task because every man has had a distinct experience of this Truth of God if he has safely stood upon the high places of joy. We have, hundreds of us, perceived the benefits of the dark lines and shades of life's picture, and we see how fit and proper it is that trembling should mingle with transport. As the fruit of experience I have learned to look for a hurricane soon after an unusually delightful calm. When the wind blows hard and the tempest lowers, I hope that before long there will be a lull—but when the seabirds sit on the waves and the sail hangs idly, I wonder when a gale will come.

To my mind there is no temptation so bad as not being tempted at all. The worst devil in the world is when you cannot see the devil at all because the villain has hidden himself away within the heart and is preparing to give you a fatal stab—

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

This general statement may suffice and as I cannot make an application to each one, personally, I think I will apply the truth to this Church as a whole. When this building was not yet ready for opening, we held a meeting in it and I remember among the speakers there was one who is now with God, Mr. Jonathan George, of Walworth. He made use of this text in a little speech that he made—he said, "It would be well for us all to remember when God blesses us with any measure of prosperity, that prosperity is very hard to bear. How is that? Cannot Christianity or the Grace

of God bear it? No, it is because of the extreme carnality and pride of our hearts. Here is a portion of Scripture we should all remember—"They shall fear and tremble for all the prosperity that I send."

"It is a blessing when God has succeeded our poor efforts and poured out a blessing upon us, if we are jealous of our own hearts and fear and tremble! Oh God, how rich, how beneficent You are! Let us not lose Your full blessing by our own pride, by pointing to some second cause and saying, 'It was I. It was ourselves. It was our ministers.'" Verily I say unto you, the words of the man of God have been fulfilled! How I have feared and trembled because the Lord's mercy to us has been so extraordinary! As a Church we have enjoyed so many years of growth, prosperity, unity and happiness, that one is apt to fear that it cannot last much longer! Certainly it cannot be perpetuated except by fresh power from the Lord who is wonderful in working.

One begins to think, "Must not something happen to spoil our concord? Will power always continue with the preached Word? Will not the candle burn low in the socket? Such holy jealousy, if faith is also active, will help to keep us right. Evils may be prevented by the foresight of them. Through Grace, by our fear of falling, we may be helped to stand. Brothers and Sisters, we are just now in a critical time of our life as a Church. Whatever of novelty there was about our movements has long since vanished—and those who came among us from curiosity know us no more. Your pastor's ministry cannot be expected to be as fresh and vigorous as it used to be, for upon his head the gray hairs far outnumber the darker ones—and perhaps gray hairs are stealing over his preaching, too! If natural vigor fails, now is the time to see whether the power which has sustained us is of God or not! We know what the answer to the text will be—out of weakness we shall be made strong!

Besides, my Brethren, certain invaluable helpers who were with us in the beginning—and rare men they were—are going Home. One by one our leaders are being called away—will more be found? Will they be of equal worth and weight? I know they will, yet these are solemn questions. We are in the middle of the river, now, and in the middle the river is deepest and hardest to ford. Now we need that underneath us there should be the everlasting arms! I am weaker than ever. You, also, are weaker than ever—but the eternal God faints not! We have the same old Gospel and you will not grow tired of it, though it is preached by the same old Spurgeon. The Holy Spirit will abide with us and that will make up for the weakness of our spirit! You who have been earnest at prayer will not, I hope, lose your zeal, for the Mercy Seat is still accessible. To persevere is the difficulty.

It would be easy to burn at a stake for five minutes, but to be surrounded with smoldering firewood of green wood and to burn by slow degrees would be torture, indeed! Yet such is the patience of saints. Keeping up your burning zeal, your personal holiness, your evangelizing efforts and all your spiritual works after 27 years is no mean test of your faith! He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, these are the thoughts that come into my mind and prevent my

saying we have done well and may rest on our oars. Far from anything like exaltation or self-congratulation, I feel more than ever inclined to lie low at the feet of my Master and kiss the very dust He stands upon! I feel more disqualified, more unsuitable, more unable for my Lord's work than ever—and yet I am glad in the Lord and find joy in His name! Since there is an everlasting arm that never can be palsied—since there is a brow that knows no wrinkle and a Divine mind that is never perplexed—we go forward in hope and cast ourselves upon our eternal Helper once again!

You have heard of the ancient giant, Antaeus, who could not be overcome because as often as Hercules threw him to the ground, he touched his mother, Earth, and rose renewed. Such is your lot and mine, often to be cast down, and as often to rise by that casting down! “When I am weak then am I strong.” Let us glory in infirmity because the power of Christ does rest upon us! Let us be content to decrease, that Christ may increase—to be *nothing* that Jesus may be All-in-All! If we fear and tremble for all the goodness that God has procured for us, it is not a fear that He will change, or a trembling lest He should be defeated. The fear and trembling are for *ourselves*—not for Him! I have no fear and trembling about the Gospel! I have preached it many years in this place and its attractive perfume is undiminished.

I read the other day of a grain of musk which had been kept for 10 years in a room where the air was perpetually changed—it scented that chamber from year to year—and yet when it was weighed by the most delicate scales—no diminution of its bulk was apparent! So the Gospel continues to be as ointment poured forth, savoring the thousands that come here year by year—and yet it is as full of fragrance and freshness as ever—and so shall it be even if, for a thousand ages, it should be our theme!

Come we, then, with comfort back to the unalterable Gospel, to the undying Spirit, to the unchanging God—here is room for joy unspeakable and full of Glory! Up with your banners, then! Forward to new victories! In the name of the God of Jacob let us be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Amen.

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## **END OF VOLUME 27**



# **ZEDEKIAH—OR, THE MAN WHO CANNOT SAY, “NO” NO. 2178**

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 21,  
1890.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 30, 1890.**

***“Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hands: for the king  
is not he that can do anything against you.”  
Jeremiah 38:5.***

“PUT not your trust in princes.” Zedekiah professed to be a friend to Jeremiah, but when the princes sought permission to put the Prophet to death, Zedekiah’s friendship was not worth much. He said, “He is in your hands: for the king is not he that can do anything against you.” Instead of protecting his friend and adviser, he gave him over at once and left him as a lamb at the mercy of wolves. It seems very natural for men to trust in men and yet the Scripture warns us that, “Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” He that makes a mortal man his confidence will find that his anchor has no grip. Even good men are but broken reeds and cannot bear the strain of the day of trouble—while the bad are like sharp spears that prick the man who dares to lean upon them.

But, if we cannot trust in men, we think that surely we may trust in princes. If honor were banished from all the rest of the world, it ought to find a home in the breasts of kings! Great men, noble men, men of renown, men of high standing—may we not trust in them? Brethren, “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes,” for princes are but men, and sometimes hardly that. Princes are not always the truest of men—they are seldom the best of men to trust. Many have had to say at the end of life what Wolsey is represented as saying to Sir William Kingston, “Had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king, He would not in my age have left me naked to my enemies.” If “uneasy lies the head that wears the crown,” certainly uneasy is the heart which rests on the wearer of a diadem!

Trust in God and you have trusted in the true King, “the King immortal, invisible.” Trust in the Christ of God and you have trusted in the only Prince who can never falter, fail, or forget. I think that is clearly a lesson of the text. We all know someone who, to us, is as a prince—let us not rest too much on a wealthy uncle, or a generous friend, or a capable patron—but let our trust be in the Lord, alone. Had Jeremiah been trusting in Zedekiah, he would have been sorrowfully deceived. Yet this is not the lesson that I am going to teach at this time.

Zedekiah was a gentleman of a sort wonderfully common nowadays. A good-natured, easy man. His nobles could get anything they liked from him. He would not act amiss of his own self, but he would follow the lead of others, wherever that might lead him. He had a great respect for the Prophet—he liked to visit him and know what message he had received from God. He did not wish to have it known that he consulted him, but still he liked to steal away in private and have a talk with the man of God. He much respected the man so sorrowful and yet so heroic. But when the princes came round him, though he was an autocratic king and could have snuffed out those gentlemen at once, yet half-a-dozen of them, all very glib of speech, most easily persuaded him.

He did not want to have any bother—he would do anything for a quiet life. “The king is not he that can do anything against you.” As much as to say—“I cannot say, ‘No,’ to you, if you wish it. I am sorry—I think you are wrong, but I will not insist upon my own idea. If you wish it, although I am a king and perhaps ought not to be so yielding, yet I so much wish to please everybody that I cannot refuse you anything. You may take the Prophet and, if you like, you may put him into a dungeon where he will die. I think you are too hard on a good man, for whom I have a great respect, but at the same time, gentlemen, I am not a man that can stand out against you—so take him and do as you please.”

This is that king, Zedekiah—he does not rule, but is ruled by the princes whom he ought to command. “Oh,” says one, “you do not mean to insinuate that we have any Zedekiahs about now?” I shall not insinuate anything, but boldly declare that these soft, molluscous beings make up a large proportion of the population, and I think it is highly probable that some of them are here now! I shall be very glad if what I say should make them feel much ashamed and should cause them to cry to God to give them new hearts and right spirits!

It shall not be my fault if they do not feel their seat grow hard and the house grow warm. I would gladly make them pray to God to put some kind of moral backbone into them so that, when they know the right, they may stand up for it and may not weakly yield to the persuasions of those who tempt them. May the Holy Spirit be here to convict men of sin in this matter!

**I.** I am going, first of all, to DESCRIBE THE LIKES OF THIS MAN ZEDEKIAH that I may deal plainly with such. This softness of character takes different shapes, but it is the same base metal, the same worthless dross in every case. In some it takes the form of *enquiring into what religion is fashionable when they settle down in a district*. They have a pretty good idea of what the Truth of God is. They were taught it by their parents. They have read it in God’s Word. They have made up their minds with some distinctness as to what is the correct thing according to Holy Scripture—but they waive their judgment and prepare to compromise.

You see, if you want to get on in business, the best thing is to join with those religious people who are the wealthiest and most respectable—and the most fashionable. If you have prospered in business and have saved money, well, the girls want to be married and the family requires to get

into “society,” whatever that may mean—so the best thing is not to enquire, “Who preaches the Gospel in this district?” But, “Where will it be most for our commercial advantage, or best for our position in society and most eligible for the girls? Children of Judas! Thus you soil your Master for 40 pieces of silver and perhaps for less! Iscariot’s tribe is a large one! Not that they want to be wrong, they would prefer to be right! Not that they wish to take up with false doctrine, they would much rather take up with right doctrine, but, you see, they must be “respectable.”

Sound doctrine in preference, but good society at any price! They cannot be expected to go with the poorest and the least educated class of people, they must be respectable! And so, when they are asked to worship in a fine architectural building, though they know that it is not where their souls will profit, they will make no bones about doctrine or practice, but go at once. By their conduct they say, “I am by no means so bound up with any religious views as to love anything for their sake. I am not one that can refuse a kind invitation from people of fashion.” Did you ever meet with such folk? I have met them frequently. I know that soft fellow, Zedekiah—I have seen him a great many times and I have no very great liking for him. Is he here before me? My dear Sir, be not offended with your own portrait!

Another one is of this kind. He is a Christian—at least he hopes that he is—and, on examining his own heart, he trusts that he is. But *he has never made any profession*—he never intends to do so, because, you see, if you make a profession, then you are distinctly coming out from the world and declaring yourself to be on the side of Christ and holiness—and a great deal will be expected of you. This may involve you in a good deal of trouble. Is there not an easier path than this? The strait way, the narrow way, is described in the Word of God as, “the way which leads unto life.” But can you not keep as near the way as possible without going into it? Can you not travel along on the other side of the hedge?

The grass is very nice there. The primroses are coming up. You can look over the fence and keep the high road in view so as not to wander far from the track! Why should you choose an unpopular way which will cost you many a friendship and a good deal of enjoyable company? If you openly follow the narrow way you will be pointed at—people will expect you to be so very careful and so very holy—and this will cost a deal of painful self-denial. Why should you expose yourself to all that trouble when there are so many friends on the sheltered side of the hedge who assure you that their path will lead to the same end?

It is not quite what it ought to be. Still, God is very merciful and you may hope to come out right in the long run if you are careful to pick your way and do not get into the worst of the ditches. Is it not always a good thing to take a short cut? Well, I used to think so once but now, whenever I am in the country, I always scrupulously avoid short cuts, for they almost always get you up to your ankles in mud and often land you further off than you were when you started. And you may depend upon it that, in this life, the man who thinks that he is not going to make a profession, but will go to Heaven secretly by the new cut, will find himself, before

long, much farther off from God and Christ than he ever thought to be! The way to Heaven, according to Scripture, is, “With the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” and, “What God has joined together let no man put asunder.”

It is written, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” The inward faith and the public avowal of it, must never be divided. Do you dare to remove even a linchpin from the Gospel chariot? Mind what you are doing! O you cowards, you think to make a new way to Heaven—to make the walk more pleasing to your taste and more gratifying to your pride—but you will ruin your souls! Do you hope to be allowed to sneak into Heaven by a back door! Take heed to yourselves lest you be deceived in this!

This Zedekiah—I know that he is here tonight—means to join the Church any time within the next 60 years and he has always meant that for the last 30 years that I have known him! I wonder whether he will live till the time comes! I am in great fear about him and I pray him to consider what is now said and no longer be ashamed of Christ!

Another form of Zedekiah is not uncommon. *It is the man who is on both sides.* A Christian? Yes, by all means! He takes a class in the Sunday school. “Certainly, Sir. Would you not have me active in the cause of Christ?” Of course. He talks to others about the necessity of being found in Christ and of the excellence of Christian endeavor. We like this young man. But tomorrow night there will be an entertainment of a loose character and he will be asked to go. Will our virtuous young gentleman yield to the invitations of his worldly friends? Assuredly he will, for he is like putty and you can mold him at will! “Well,” he says, “you know we must not be too strict”—and off he goes! Another time there will be sung, in his presence, a song which is a little loud—and others laugh and he laughs, too. He says that he did not quite like it, yet I do not hear any difference between his laugh and the laugh of others.

He is a gentleman who is, “Hail fellow, well met!” with any company that he gets into. A most genial man, is he not? He never raises questions. He is far from squeamish, for that might land him in difficulties. “The king is not he that can do anything against you”—he will do everything *for* you. He holds with the hare. Poor thing, it is a shame to hunt so timid a creature! But his sympathy is not worth much, for he runs with the hounds as fast as any dog among them and he would be glad to get the hare by the nape of the neck if he could do it and not be seen. Do you not know the gentleman? You know him, but you do not esteem him. Who could? To me he is a frequent sorrow. God deliver us from duplicity! Of all things that must be accursed in God’s sight, the chief must be this—to pretend respect to our holy faith and then to live in constant opposition to it. “If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him,” but do not attempt to worship Jehovah and Baal at the same altar and bring them the same sacrifice, for this must not be! No man can serve two masters!

Then we have another class of Zedekiahs who are of a better sort, but none too good. I trust that they wish to be true at heart, but *they are very weak and apt to yield.* If they live in a godly family they will be pleased to be there and they will be happy and develop into something very good in

its way. But if, in the order of Providence, they should be cast in a family where there is no religion, certainly they will not attempt to alter the state of things except it be in the mildest half-hearted manner! The family will still be without religion though they are there. And if they happen to move to a circle openly opposed to godliness—well, it will grieve them very much at first and they will be rather restless. It will not grieve them quite so much, by-and-by, and after a while they will, themselves, become as much opposed to the thing they now admire as the rest of the folks.

O dear Friends, we have a number of Christians—I will not condemn them—but they are very feeble! They give way in the day of temptation. They cannot stand alone—false doctrine, cleverly spoken—carries them clean away. These are the prey of wolves in sheep’s clothing. They have no stamina, no backbone, no inward root. Be you not of this sort! Oh, pray every morning, “Lead us not into temptation,” and when you have breathed that prayer to God, add the other, “But deliver us from the Evil One.” If we must be tempted, let us not fall under the temptation. In these perilous days we need men who have put on the whole armor of God! It is not every child that can wear armor. We need men strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, who, having put on armor, are not afraid to come to the front of the battle where the arrows fly thickest—for they know that their armor is mail of proof and will throw off all the poisoned darts of the enemy.

But alas, we have many whom we love, and for whom we pray, who are so apt to yield, so ready to give way, that they fall in battle at the very first assault of the deceiver! They get with persons of cunning character and commanding mind and they fly like feathers in the wind, having no power to resist even the breath of a childish foe. Thus I have described Zedekiah in four of the forms which he commonly takes. If the cap fits any one of you, pray wear it! If I have made a photograph of you, put it in the album of your meditation and look at it till you loathe your own likeness!

**II.** Now, very briefly, let me SEARCH OUT THE CAUSE OF THIS ERROR which spoils the character of Zedekiah. Maybe we may put our finger on an evil which may be cured by Divine Grace. It is not always the same in everybody, but *with some there is a general softness of character*. I do not say that they have a soft place in their head! Possibly I may not say the whole truth if I suggest that they have a soft piece in their heart, but they are altogether soft—fine material for a potter to work upon. You can cast them into any shape you choose.

Remember one whom Mr. Bunyan graphically describes. His name was Pliable. Evangelist and Christian told him about the Celestial City. “Yes, yes,” Pliable said. Oh, yes, he would go to the Celestial City. Of course he would go to the Celestial City! He liked the idea. It was a beautiful thing to start for Heaven and Glory and escape from the City of Destruction which was to be burned up. Of course, he quite agreed with his friends and he would start with them on pilgrimage. He went on with his companion, Christian, till they came to the Slough of Despond. Suddenly in they went, up to their necks in the mire!

Christian made desperate efforts to get out on the farther shore, nearest to the city that he sought. But Pliable had never reckoned upon any such floundering—if there was to be a slough, he thought it would not be so deep as *this* one—and that the mud would not be quite so foul. Finding it to be a horrible bog, he turned round and as he was not very far from the spot at which he entered, he scrambled out on the side nearest home. And as he climbed the bank, he said that as far as he was concerned, whoever liked might have the Celestial City, but he would not venture again into such a slough, even though 50 Celestial Cities should tempt him before, and 50 Destructions should threaten him behind!

So we have fluid people like that—nothing in their character is substantial. I will tell you what has often happened in this Tabernacle. A man has come into this place and stood in the aisle, hating the very thought of true religion with a heart like a flint. And when I have been busy with my hammer, by God’s Grace I have come down on that flint and the flint has gone to pieces in a minute, broken to shivers! But others are here who are India-rubber men and when I am hammering they yield to each blow. I can mold them as I please, but when the sermon is done, they always get back into the old shape. There is a vast difference between the honest obstinacy of the one and the trivial submission of the other! Without any gracious yielding of the heart to the force of Divine Truth, many encourage us for a time, but deceive us in the end. Zedekiah talks very pleasantly and hopefully, but betrays those who seek his good, for he is unstable and not to be depended on.

Another reason for this softness is *a selfish love of ease*. Sluggards are by no means an extinct race. Many will pay any tax if they may but dwell at ease. Beware of this in your personal character! A man says, “I admit that I ought to have spoken right out and denounced evil.” “Why didn’t you?” “Well, I did not want to.” The next time that he is asked to do a wrong thing, he will yield and turn with his company like a vane in the wind! He knows that he ought to resist, but he does not. And why not? “Well, you see, I do not like offending people.” Lazy, lazy lover of yourself! That is all it comes to. His wish to please his fellows is only a phase of his desire to please himself! The coward wishes to save his precious carcass from trouble and let himself go sauntering along the road of pleasure without distressing exertion, so he says, “Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir. Well, yes, Sir,” to everybody!

He destroys his soul for the sake of taking things easy. Do I not speak to a great many here who are of this kind? Some are sharp, decisive—too sharp, perhaps—but they have minds and mean what they say. Others are always afraid to speak the truth unless it is popular. Contending for the Truth of God is a thing they cannot endure, for it involves too much effort. They are especially afraid to say that little word, “No,” a word which I strongly recommend to every young man. “No” is one of the most useful words in the world! A man is more than half-educated when he can say, “No,” distinctly. He has not much more to learn after that. There are great men and wise men, so called, who cannot say, “No.” They say, “N—n—no, perhaps.” They get the word out without meaning it or, possibly, in the

middle of their attempt at saying it, they break down and end with the admission, “I am not one that can tell you no.” Thus they copy Zedekiah when he said, “The king is not he that can do anything against you.” Dear Friends, peace at any price is peace bought too dearly. Will you fling away your souls, your Heaven, your all, for the sake of ease? Selfish love of a quiet life, what a folly you are!

Some others, I must say, are, if possible, even more contemptible than these. *They are cowards.* I will not run the risk of being attacked by an angry hearer, when the sermon is over, for calling him a coward. But I do believe that such people are about, and that some of them are here. Men that would face a dragon, or go up to the cannon’s mouth, I have known to be afraid of a woman, or of some idle reprobate whose opinion was not worth the breath he used in speaking it. You remember how Peter was terribly put out because a maid said to him, “You, also, were with Jesus of Galilee”? A maid! What was it to Peter what that maidservant thought about him? But poor Peter was all in a heat and was so frightened that he denied that he even knew his Lord! Do not condemn *his* weakness, but remember your own! Have not some of you been frightened by a silly maid, or by a foolish boy? Are there not some here that have thought about eternal life and would long ago have given serious consideration to their soul’s affairs, but they are afraid of—well, I will not mention him—you know who it is that you are afraid of!

And so it is the world over. I have known a man afraid of his daughter! I have known many more daughters afraid of their fathers! Many a wife afraid of her husband and some husbands afraid of their wives, their employers, their brothers, their friends. Soldiers in the barracks are often fearful of their messmates and workmen down at the shop are alarmed because there is one sharp fellow in the room who is an infidel and would give them no peace if they made an avowal of their faith! It would demean a great many if we were to expose their petty cowardice. Are you not ashamed of yourselves if it is so?

The bottom of all is, however, that when a man is thus timid about doing right and can be easily persuaded to do wrong, there is *a lack of the fear of God in him.* He that fears God is under no necessity to fear anybody else. True godliness infuses courage into the heart—in this respect, also, “perfect love casts out fear.” If you have learned to tremble before the great, almighty, living God, you have ceased to tremble before a living man! I must correct myself—before a *dying* man—for in very truth, life is in God, but man is a creature that will die and perish like the moth. “Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgets the Lord your Maker?”

If we had a sense of God’s Presence everywhere, we should not dare consent to sin, whoever it was that bade us do so. We should be like the three holy children who stood for God. “Do you see that burning fiery furnace?” “Yes, we see it, but we also see the living God.” “It shall be heated seven times hotter,” said Nebuchadnezzar. “Do you hear that?” They hear the furious threat of the despot, but they also hear a voice which Nebuchadnezzar did not hear—the voice of God bidding them serve Him and

strengthening them to do so! I remember in the life of my dear friend, Mr. Oncken, of Hamburg, when he began to baptize people in the Alster contrary to the law. He was brought up before the burgomaster and that worthy magistrate put him in prison several times.

At last Mr. Burgomaster said, “I tell you what it is, Mr. Oncken—the law must be obeyed. Do you see that little finger of mine? As long as that little finger will move, I will put you down in your illegal Baptisms.” “Well,” said my brave old friend, “Mr. Burgomaster, with all respect to you, I do see that little finger of yours. But do you see that great hand of God? I am afraid that you do not see it as I do. But, as long as that great hand of God is with me, you cannot put me down.” I opened Mr. Oncken’s chapel in Hamburg some years afterwards and I had a most respectable audience gathered together to hear me preach the Gospel—and in the center of that audience sat the Burgomaster! He was far more rejoiced to be there than to be carrying out an oppressive law. His little finger had ceased its movements against the Baptist and there he sat to show what the power of God’s right arm could do—for he was listening to the Word of God from a Baptist preacher in a meeting house built by the man whom he had been called upon to put down!

Oh, why are we afraid of men? Six feet or less of bone, blood and flesh—and you are afraid of it! Yet, yonder is the eternal God that fills all things and you are so little afraid of Him that you disobey Him though He can cast both body and soul into Hell! “I say unto you,” said Christ, “fear Him.” So say I, His unworthy servant! And when you once fear Him, you will lose the Zedekiah weakness and become strong for God. But I must not stay. May the good Spirit bless these searching words!

**III.** I want, in the next place, to show YOU WHERE THIS KIND OF SOFTNESS LEADS. When a man is like Zedekiah, who cannot say anything against the princes, but must let them have their own way, what comes of it? Certainly nothing that is good! First, I think that such an easy-going creature *dishonors himself*. Does yonder young man confess that he cannot say, “no,” that he must do as he is asked and cannot stand out against even a wicked request? Then I am sorry for him. Is he a man? Is he not lowering himself beneath the dignity of manhood? I do not know, dear Friends, what you think about the opinions of others, but I have always felt that if I could keep a good opinion of myself, so far that my conscience could not accuse me of doing wrong, I was not particularly anxious about what anybody else’s opinion of me might be.

“But,” said one to a good man, “if you do that one pleasant thing nobody will know of it and so you will not be disgraced in the eyes of *anybody*.” “No,” said the good man, “but I should be *disgraced* in my own eyes if I did it and I have more respect for my own judgment of myself than I have for other people’s opinion of me.” This is not egotism, but uprightness of heart! The world’s poet makes Brutus say, “I had as life not be, as live to be in awe of such a thing as I myself.” What? Creep and cringe and beg leave to do right and crave permission to believe the truth and speak it? Ask another man’s leave, or some woman’s leave to obey my God? Not I! No, let the worms eat me before it comes to that! O Sirs, it is a fearful



thing for a man to get into that humiliating state that he has no mind of his own. Call such a creature a spaniel that must fetch and carry at his lady’s bidding—but call him not a man! He has reduced himself to nothing! From such dishonor, great Lord, deliver us!

Again, dear Friends, such trimming *brings dishonor upon one’s position*. Only think of this. “The king—the *king*,” says, “The king is not he that can do anything against you.” And further on we read, “Zedekiah the king said, I am afraid.” Pretty king, that! His kingship was defiled and his crown was stained when he came into that condition of bondage! King? Call him “slave!” Yet, remember, this also may apply to yourself. You, too, may hold a position which you degrade. You are a father yet you fear your boys and girls! You have no family prayer—you do not know how your children might like it. You are a father, are you? Do you obey your own children and call yourself a father?

You are a master, but you never speak to your servants or your work-people about religion. You do not know how they might take it! You are some master! Names are strangely given nowadays—there is not much that is masterly about you. Poor slave! Is there not many a person in this world who labors to gain an office and then is afraid to carry it out? God intended us, when He gave us a position in life, to live worthy of that position and rightly to exercise the authority and influence which it brings. Think of a king saying, “I am afraid”—but that is what the French king said to Bernard Palissy, the potter.

As nearly as I can remember the story, the monarch said, “Palissy, you must go to mass.” “That I never will,” said Palissy. “Then I am afraid that I shall have to give you up to be burnt.” “There,” said Palissy, “your majesty could not make me say such a word as that with all the power you have. I am no king, but only a poor potter, but nobody ever made me say, ‘I am afraid.’” Oh, that fear of men, that dread of ridicule, that wishing to avoid sarcasm! How it has made a man come down from the dignity of his office, from the honor of the position which God has conferred upon him and has made him baser than the menials about him! Will men never learn to honor themselves and their position by a dignified resolve to do the right at all costs?

Shall I tell you what this will still further lead to? Well, you will demean yourself, degrade your position and then the day will probably come when *you will give up all religion*. I have seen it actually done. Yes, I have seen a young man who has been at home almost all that you could desire—and he has come up to London and dropped into a warehouse where there was no Christian feeling. At first he has gone to a place of worship and written home to his mother to tell her the text, as you are going to do tonight, Mr. John. But after a while he has gone wandering out for a little excursion on the Sabbath and by-and-by he has become a ringleader among those who dare to laugh at sacred things!

One has a tower of observation here and sees sad sights perpetually! Little by little every gracious habit is trampled on through fear of man. The weak young man slides down, down, down. By easy descents his life vessel has glided down the rapids with the current, till at last, he that

bade fair for Heaven, shoots over the dread Niagara of everlasting ruin! I am afraid, young man, that your easy compliance with bad companions will ultimately lead to your giving up all religion. I pray you, pause.

Then *it will come to your doing injustice to God and good men*. The king did not like it, but he gave Jeremiah over to the cruel princes. “He is in your hands.” You do not believe that you could ever come to treat God’s minister with derision and God’s cause with contumely? I think I hear you say, “Is your servant a dog that he should do this great thing?” No, if you were a dog you would not do it, but, being something worse than a dog, if left to yourself, you *will* do it! If you have not courage to stand fast, now, and say, “I will serve the Lord,” you will drift and drift till you will become an enemy of the cause of Christ. If Jeremiah had died in that dungeon, Zedekiah would have been an accomplice in his murder. So it has happened with young men and young women who were once, apparently, godly and inclined to better things—they have gradually gone aside, through the softness of their character, till they have become foes of Christ—and have dared defy the God whom they once feared.

At last, it gets to this, that men who trifle with their consciences, as Zedekiah did, *are unable to get any good out of God’s Prophets any more*. Zedekiah was well admonished and advised by the Prophet, but nothing came of it. I am sadly fearful that you, dear Friends, who are not converted, who have heard me a long time, will soon be unable to get any blessing out of anything I say. I may even become a savor of death unto death to you! I am told that the good people in the valley of Ohio, whose houses have been swept away by the tornado, had a warning that the storm was coming. The storm drums were out and the newspapers announced that a great depression was coming their way. They did not take any notice of that information—it did not seem very threatening, for they had grown used to paragraphs about the weather.

If it were only *once* in a year that the weather could be fairly predicted, we should be needing to buy the Gazette! But now, as we get it every morning, we do not take any particular or practical notice of it. These poor Ohio friends, therefore, took no warning and were by no means prepared for the tornado. Familiarity breeds neglect. People live close under the big bells of the cathedral and sleep well at night—and people who have houses where the train passes just under the bedroom window seldom trouble themselves about the whistling or the rumble, but sleep right on. You may continue to listen to the earnest warnings which I endeavor to give and after hearing me for years, your hearing will come to nothing if you get to be good, easy people, who say, “Yes, yes, yes,” to everything and there let it end.

I endeavor to be earnest and to give striking calls to repentance, but I fear lest you should grow so used to me that you will take no more notice of me than of a noise in the street. You may look on the sun till you become blind and hear the Gospel till you grow deaf to it. God save you from that and save you at once, on the spot, beyond all fear of such a calamity! Oh, that the Lord would grant me my request and by His mighty Grace bring you at once to His Son Jesus!

**IV.** I will finish with this. I would LABOR TO FREE MEN FROM THIS COMPLAINT. I would labor to free them from it by the Grace of God. First, I would say to you, remember, dear Friend, if you continue in this undecided, yielding condition, you will miss your way altogether. You must grow firm, for *without it you cannot be a Christian*. It is necessary, in order to obey Christ, that you should take up your cross and follow Him. He will never number you among His disciples if you say “yes,” and yet do, “no”—if you call Him Master and Lord—and yet try to please the world. “If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

You must come out on the Lord’s side. The promise is, “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” You cannot be Christians without being decided—without having your minds made up for righteousness and faith in Christ. Therefore hesitate no longer. “How long will you halt between two opinions?” How long will you be in this fluid state, taking no permanent impression? May God Himself in mercy make you to believe in Christ and become His faithful followers! May His Holy Spirit work in you to this end!

*Christ deserves this.* If He died for me, shall not I acknowledge Him as my Savior? If He has bought me with His precious blood, shall I not confess my faith in Him? O dear Hearer, if you have learned to stand at the foot of the Cross and say, “Jesus died for me,” I am sure you will feel that if it cost you a thousand deaths, you must confess your obligations to Him and declare that, living and dying, you will be His! Do not make any mistake about it! Whatever you seem to gain in personal ease by halting and hesitating now, *it will dearly cost you in the end*. If a man takes his stand and says, “I am a Christian,” it is the best thing to do in the great battle of life. If you yield a little you will have to yield more and, having yielded more, you will have to yield altogether.

If ever the Spirit of God should fetch you out to be clear and decided, it will be awfully hard work to escape from the nets and traps which you are creating by your present yielding. To say, “No,” however difficult, is an easier thing than to trifle and hesitate and *almost* comply. You lose even when you seem to gain if you let the Tempter have his way. Do not think, dear Friend, that you are gaining anyone’s esteem by sinful compliances, for you are doing the reverse—you are lowering yourself before the Philistines. Your example is ruined. Your influence is destroyed. You are doing harm and not good. The men that the world thinks most of are the men that stand up, stand straight, stand firm!

I heard one say of a preacher the other day, “I can hear him with pleasure, for he is not an echo, but a voice.” That is to say, he was not a mere copyist, a being made to be dragged like a tin kettle at the tail of a cur—but one who had a mind of his own and dared to express it! He wins respect who, knowing his mind and having his mind fixed on Christ and Divine Truth, becomes a voice for Christ and speaks plainly and boldly! Men despise you otherwise. If you have no manliness, how can you have any godliness?

And oh, *what will it be in the hour of death* to lie dying, racked with pain and then to have conscience whispering, “You were a coward. You were afraid to come out for Christ. You hid your light under a bushel. You chose to comply with the temptations of the world”? In that dread hour, when the death sweat is on your brow, you will have enough to think of without having remorse to sting you—the remorse of a false and cowardly heart! Oh, if you can then say, not boastingly, but truly, “I did follow my Lord. I trusted in Him alone and I did not blush to confess it”—this, with God’s Grace, will make dying to be easy work!

*In the next world* what must be the doom of the man who was ashamed of Christ, when the Lord Himself will say, “I am ashamed of him! I am ashamed of him!” The Lord Jesus is not ashamed of the penitent drunkard—for He cleanses him. He is not ashamed of the repenting harlot, but permits her to wash His feet with her tears. But in that day He will be ashamed of all those who have been ashamed of Him! He cannot claim us if we deny Him. May God bless this word of mine! I have not so much preached the Gospel as shown you your need of the Grace of God to make you decide for Jesus. May that Grace be sought and found at once, for His dear sake! I have worn out all my strength in pleading with you. May the Lord Himself take you in hand! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 38:1-23.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—674, 671, 678.**

**LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:**

DEAR FRIENDS—Thanks for your prayers and to the Lord, who hears them. Your preacher is free from pain and hopes now to rest and recover strength. This sermon will, I trust, be suitable for giving to those who are hesitating between two opinions—and if well salted with prayer, may prove salutary to the fickle ones who abound around us. Is not this an occasion for seeking out persons of your acquaintance and aiming at their good by putting this discourse in their way? If one preaches and another gives the sermon currency, the workers may yet rejoice together! Forgive any egotism which appears in this suggestion—what is worth preaching is worth scattering.

Mentone, December 12, 1890.

Yours, for Jesus’ sake,

**C. H. SPURGEON.**

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

# TWO ARGUMENTS AGAINST SIN NO. 2684

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, JULY 22, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 29, 1881.

*“However I sent unto you all My servants the Prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!”  
Jeremiah 44:4.*

THIS verse portrays what a minister should be and the picture is a burden upon my heart and conscience, for it shows that the true preacher, or Prophet, or man of God, should be one whom God sends early to do His work. It is, as it were, as though his Master were up early in the morning, bidding him make haste to go to His service and not let the grass grow under his feet, for men are sinning—and to suffer them to continue in sin unrebuked, even for an hour, is truly dreadful. It is as though one were to leave a house burning without giving an alarm and calling the firemen, or to see a person in imminent peril in the street without immediately attempting to do something for his rescue. Notice that in this verse God represents Himself as rising early, to show how He realized the greatness of man's danger and the importance of his being speedily delivered from it. The Lord said that He rose early in order that He might send His Prophets—of course that *they* might go early, that they might go at once and waste no time—but be instant in season and out of season to warn men not to do the abominable thing which God hated! A minister, then, is one who should be diligent in his Master's business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord by endeavoring to warn men of the terrible nature and consequences of sin.

He is also to be one who speaks as God's representative. Not only speaking God's Truth, but, as it were, speaking it with God's mouth, for these Prophets were not to say, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that God hates,” but they were to *personify* God, to put themselves into His place and to say as though He said it, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that *I* hate!” What a responsible and privileged position is this for any man to occupy, to have to speak for God in this fashion! Paul referred to it when he wrote to the Corinthians, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God.” It is a high honor but a tremendous responsibility to have to do Christ's pleading, to be intercessors for the Intercessor, and to stand up and speak God's thoughts as though He had set us to be His spokesmen for a time—to plead with the sons of men on

His behalf. As I have realized this responsibility, I have sometimes dreaded my office with an unutterable dread, though I would not change it to become ruler of all the empires of earth, or even to be an archangel in Heaven, for I reckon that to be even first among the angels is nothing compared with being an instrument, in the hand of God, of saving the souls of men! Yet how awful and how solemn a thing it is for any man to be called to stand and speak as though God did speak by him and say, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!"

There is another lesson to be learned from this picture—not only that the minister should rise up early to meet an early God, and should speak in God's name, but he is also to speak in God's *style*—that is, pleadingly and pathetically. I count it an easy thing to proclaim the Truth of God as one might do it from the desk of a classroom, or to be oratorical and to wax eloquent over the great themes we have to make known. But it is quite another matter to plead with men, to be pathetic and to speak as God does here, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" This is the work and this is the difficulty which often burdens our spirits. You remember that the disciples said to Christ, on one occasion, "Lord, teach us to pray," for they felt as if the strong desires that burned within His heart might well burn in theirs, and that they had even greater necessities than He had. But when they heard Him preach, they felt at once that He outsoared them all. When they saw the tears of pity stream from His eyes and listened to His lament over the doomed city of Jerusalem, then they realized that He overmatched them and they felt, if they did not say it, "Never man spoke like this Man!" And they did not cry, "Lord, teach us to preach as You do!"

They could not hope to rise to that great height and we feel just as they did. Oh, that these lips could use language borrowed from the lips of the Well-Beloved! Oh, that these eyes could run with tears like those that welled up from the great heart of the loving Savior of sinners! His sermons show us what true preaching is—it should be the highest form of persuading, it should be really, only in a better sense than that in which the term is generally used, *special* pleading—a pleading with men, by weighty arguments, that they would leave their sins and turn to God! Christ's sermons show us a pleading in which God the Holy Spirit exercises His own supreme office and works upon the minds of the hearers through the utterances of Him who speaks to them. As this is what a minister ought to be, may God help us poor creatures to attain to this high standard! You who are His people can also help us by your prayers, which we greatly need.

Now, turning from my text as it especially related to the Jews in Jeremiah's day, I want to apply it to you, dear Friends, who are still unconverted. In this verse God tells certain people that He had risen early and sent unto them His servants, the Prophets, one after another, to plead with them on His behalf. Will you, if you can, kindly recollect when your consciences were first touched? Can you remember when that happened? It is highly probable that the sweet tones of your mother's voice were associated with your first religious thoughts, or, perhaps, there was a godly man—your father—since passed into the skies, who pleaded with

you, his son, in Christ's name. These were your Prophets sent from God—could there be any better messengers from Him than a gracious mother or grandmother, or a godly father?

Why, some of you were plied with the Gospel almost before you knew anything else! Before you had committed any overt act of sin, you heard of Jesus' wondrous Grace and dying love! And, since then, you have not been without messengers from Heaven who have brought you loving entreaties and invitations. How have you treated them? If you are still unconverted, I am sure that you have not dealt with them as they ought to have been received—you have turned a deaf ear to the voice of love and mercy, or else you would not now be without God, without Christ and without hope! So I come once more, in my Master's name, as His messenger—will you slight me and reject my message? If you do, I must sorrowfully endure it and cry, with others of my Master's servants, "Who has believed our report?" Yet I pray you, do not do it, for, though I speak but feebly, no man more sincerely or more heartily desires the good of his hearers than I do. And I ask you who do know the Lord to join me in pleading that God, the Holy Spirit, will bless the message I am about to deliver in Christ's name.

In our text there are two arguments against sin. What God has to say to unconverted men is here put in very few words—"Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." This short sentence contains the two arguments against sin upon which I am going to speak. The first is, *from the nature of sin itself*—"this abominable thing." and the second is, *from the feeling of God towards sin*—"this abominable thing that I hate."

**I.** The first argument in our text against sin is DERIVED FROM THE NATURE OF SIN ITSELF—"this abominable thing."

The particular sin of which the Prophet was speaking was that of *idolatry*. Those Jewish people would make idol gods in some form or other and they would bow down before them and neglect the worship of the one invisible Jehovah. And God calls their idolatry "this abominable thing." It is rightly so called, for *it is abominable ingratitude*. That a man should not worship his Maker, that he should refuse obedience to his Creator, that he should say to Him who made the heavens and the earth, and who also made him and keeps him in being, "I will not worship You! I refuse to bow down before You. I choose to adore another god—Baal, Ashtaroth, Venus, Bacchus, anything but the one true God—and I will not worship You, O Jehovah, the Creator of all worlds!" This, I say again, is shameful ingratitude!

It is also an abominable thing because *it is so degrading and debasing*. Everybody ought to be able to see that for a man with intellect and mind to bow himself down before a carved image is most degrading. That he should worship that which is made of wood, or stone, or metal is practically to make himself inferior to the dead thing which he worships! I know of no act in which a man seems to bring himself lower than when he prostrates himself before a material object and says, "This is my god," or, "This is what I worship." So God truly calls idolatry an "abominable thing." And it will appear to you all the more so when you recollect the kind of gods that these people's images represented. They did, in effect,

say to Jehovah, the Maker of Heaven and earth, the good and gracious God, “We will not worship You, but we will worship that golden calf, or those images that have eyes but see not, and hands but feel not, and ears but hear not. We would sooner bow down to these dull dead blocks of wood than worship You.” Oh, this is abominable! I know no more appropriate word than that which God has here used—“this abominable thing.” An immortal being prostrating himself before a piece of wood! A man, created by Jehovah, bowing down before an image which he has, himself, made! This is indeed loathsome! It is insulting to God and provokes Him to the highest degree.

“We are all agreed about that,” you say. I am glad to hear you say so, yet you may be idolaters, for all that. Have you never heard of those concerning whom Paul wrote to the Philippians, “whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things”? Did you ever hear of “the self-made man who worships his creator”? I have heard of him and seen him, too! And I confess that I have more respect for a man who worships a god shaped out of the filth of the kennels than for the one who worships himself because, to worship one’s own self seems to me to be the nethermost depth of degradation! For the Israelites to say of the golden calf, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt,” was degrading—horribly so! But for a man to say to himself, practically, if not in so many words, “I am my own god”—surely this sinks him still lower!

There are some who worship strong drink and who offer themselves as a sacrifice at its shrine. There are many who immolate upon the altar of Bacchus, wife, children, home, character and life itself—and they go down to their dishonored graves, not burnt in the arms of Moloch, but drowned in their own cups. When you talk of idolaters and abominable things, is there any worse form of idolatry than this? Then look at the various forms of covetousness which the Apostle Paul says, “is idolatry.” Think of the guilt of the men who grind the faces of the poor and, perhaps, even pinch themselves so that they may amass more gold and have it written concerning them at the last, “He died worth so much,” when he was really utterly worthless! He who worships the little round images of the Queen is as gross an idolater as the man who bows down before Juggernaut or Baal! The sin of idolatry is still abundant everywhere and it is always, in its nature and essence, a degrading thing to man and an insult to God and, therefore, He continues to say to all idolaters, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”

There are many other sins, besides idolatry, which are abominable in the sight of God. And there is one point about them that hampers a preacher very much. That is, he cannot bear witness against them, because even to speak of some sins is to help to spread them. It is dangerous work to handle gunpowder and, even when we need to move it from the magazine, we feel that we must do it with great fear and trembling. Alas! Alas, there are abominable sins that are terribly common in this awfully guilty London—sins of unchastity that defile the body and pollute the mind. I fancy that I can see God standing by some young man who is about to go into this kind of sin and I seem to hear Him say, “Oh, do not



this abominable thing!" I think I also hear God crying out to some woman who has turned aside from the paths of purity—"Oh, do not this abominable thing!" It may not appear at the time, when the mind is under the spell of the serpent's fascination, to be so abominable as it really is, but, soberly thought of, what a curse it is to this city and what a curse it is to each individual who is contaminated by it! Young man, keep far away from the house of the strange woman—yes, I must say it plainly—God would have me say it, for He, Himself, says, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!"

There are other abominable sins besides these fleshly lusts which war against the soul, such as the tempting of others to sin. It is an awful fact that there are some people who seem to set themselves deliberately to instruct others in vice and transgression. They will defile the imagination and the heart of children and of growing young men and women—this is a dreadful thing. If any of you are in the habit of singing low songs, or of talking ill-savored language, I would have you hear my God say to you through my lips, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate," for it is a horrible evil for you to be spoiling these fair flowers while yet they are in the bud! Then there is the habit of using profane and filthy language which is so common in this city—I think more prevalent than ever it was. It is a most senseless as well as wicked practice. There is nothing to gain in it. George Herbert quaintly and wisely wrote—

**"Take not His name, who made your mouth, in vain—  
It gets you nothing, and has no excuse.  
Lust and wine plead a pleasure, avarice gain—  
But the cheap swearer, through his open sluice,  
Lets his soul run for naught, as little fearing.  
Were I an Epicure, I could bate swearing."**

There are many who sin greatly by slandering others. They lie against their neighbors' characters and they are never better pleased than when they can, by exaggeration, make some little flaw into a grave fault. God says to all who slander, and lie and speak not the truth, "Do not this abominable thing that I hate!" Then there is hypocrisy which is always far too rife—the making of a profession when there is nothing at the back of it—the pretending to be gracious when there is no Grace in the heart, and to be faithful when there is no faith in the soul. O Sirs, if you will be lost, I pray you, do not be lost as hypocrites! If you are determined to perish, choose some other way of perishing than that which Judas took when he joined himself to the Apostles and yet sold his Master for 30 pieces of silver. God says to you, with a special emphasis, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!"

Another aspect of the abominable character of sin will be apparent if I remind you that *there are some persons in whom sin—any sin—is peculiarly abominable*. If you were privileged, as I was, to be born into a Christian family, having had a grandfather and a great-grandfather and other ancestors all walking in the ways of God, and having a father and a mother whose first and chief desire was to train you in the fear of God, you know that for you to do wrong under such circumstances is, indeed, an abominable thing! Poor gutter children and persons who dwell in the worst dens and slums of London—and who have never been taught as

you and I were—cannot sin to the same extent as we can who have so long known better and who have been trained aright from our earliest days. O you children of godly parents, I pray you look well to your walk and hear the Lord say especially to you, “Do not this abominable thing that I hate!”

There are also some persons who are gifted by Nature, or by that Grace which God sometimes intertwines with Nature, with a tender conscience. Some seem, from the very first, to be more callous and hardened than others, but there are some of us who, from our very childhood, remember how we could not sleep unless we had said our prayers, or, if we had told a lie, we could not rest till we had confessed it. And if we had disobeyed our parents, we were tormented with remorse even though they did not know what we had done! Chastening was not needed to bring us to repentance, for we chastened ourselves. It is a great mercy to have a tender conscience—but to sin against it is a peculiarly abominable thing.

Mind, my young Friend, you who are sorely tempted just now, I charge you not to do violence to your conscience! Whatever you do, be sure to keep it tender, for it is one of your best friends and it will, by God’s Grace, be the means of guiding you to Heaven! Do not trifle with its warnings. Do not sear it with the hot iron of even an occasional transgression, but, at once, obey the Savior’s call and trust to Him for the salvation only He can give! It is an abominable thing for any man to sin, but it is a hundred times worse in some than it is in others because they have clearer light and a plainer perception of what sin really is.

And, sometimes, sin becomes an especially abominable thing to a man who has previously committed it and smarted from it, and who has escaped as by the skin of his teeth—and yet goes back to indulge in it again. Have you ever tried to save a poor moth, on a summer’s evening, when you have been sitting at work or reading by the light of the gas or a candle? It comes dashing towards the light and singes its wings—and there it lies, helpless, on the table. You have taken it up very tenderly and put it away from the light in the hope that it might, perhaps, escape. But the very first thing it has done, when it has recovered even the partial use of its wings, has been to fly back into the flame again! You have said, “There is no saving you, poor silly thing, for you are determined to die by your own folly. You will not let me rescue you.” And it is just so with some sinners whom we try to rescue—they will go back to the very thing that has already burnt them!

Perhaps I am addressing one who, but a little while ago, was on a bed of sickness and, as you were lying there looking into eternity, you cried, “Lord, save me. If You will but spare me, I will turn from sin and I will seek the Savior until I find Him.” Yet you are not doing anything of the kind though the Lord did spare you! Peter’s solemn words might be repeated to you, “You have not lied unto men, but unto God.” Remember what happened to Ananias and Sapphira when they sinned thus. I pray God not to visit you in judgment, but, in His great mercy, to lay all your sin as a heavy burden upon your conscience that you may feel the evil of having broken your vows and your promises, for this is, indeed, an

abominable thing in the sight of God—and also an abominable thing in the judgment of all honest, right-thinking men!

Thus might I continue to point out various circumstances which increase the guilt of sinners, but I will only say one more thing and then I shall have finished the consideration of this first part of our subject. The observation I wish to make is this. There are some of us to whom sin has become such an abominable thing that we can honestly say we would sooner suffer every pain of which the body is capable than we would willfully commit sin. There are various things in this world which are loathsome to all our tastes, but we would be willing to have them all around us, however distasteful they might be, rather than be in the presence of moral evil. It grates upon our ears, it galls our mind, it frets our heart, it aggravates all our spiritual senses to be brought into contact with sin! Sin is to us more horrible than death, more diabolical than the devil, more hellish than Hell, itself, for the pains of Hell would lose their sharpness if it were not that sin is the undying worm that causes them. Sin, transgression, iniquity, evil in all its forms, untruth, every violation of God's Law—all this is an abominable thing which every right-minded man is bound to hate, to loathe, to detest with all the energy of his being! One great reason why we implore men to forsake sin, and pray the Holy Spirit to enable them to do so, is because it is an abominable thing.

“Oh,” someone says, “sin is a *sweet* thing!” No, no, it is an abominable thing! “It is a delightful thing,” says another. No, it is an abominable thing! “Oh, but it is a fashionable thing—you can see it in courts of kings and princes—and the great men of the earth love it.” Even though they do, it is an abominable thing! Though it should crawl up to a monarch's throne and spread its slime over crown jewels, it would still be an abominable thing. It once entered Heaven, itself, and befouled and defiled a mighty angel and all who followed him—and you can see what an abominable thing it is when you realize how it degraded them and cast them down from their high estate to be, “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

**II.** Now, for a little while, I will speak to you upon the second reason why sin should be repented of and forsaken. That is because of THE FEELING WHICH GOD HAS TOWARDS IT. Note how strongly He puts it. “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”

God hates all evil, all injustice, all wrong-doing, all immorality, all sin of every kind. He hates it! He is not indifferent to it, nor tolerant of it, but His whole soul goes out in righteous indignation against it. And He hates it, first, *because He is infinitely pure*. If He were not, Himself, perfectly pure, He might tolerate or excuse sin, but the delicate, matchless purity of His Nature causes His holy anger to burn with a fierce flame against everything that is unrighteous. A pure and holy God *must* hate sin.

He hates it, too, *because it is such an injury to you, His creatures*, and, therefore, He says to you, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!” He hates it because it so grievously mars what He made perfect. Sin has spoiled all the beauty of God's highly-favored creature, man. I cannot tell what a perfectly lovely being Adam was before he fell, but I am sure that both Adam and Eve, in their unfallen state, must have had about them a

matchless grace to which their loveliest sons or most beautiful daughters cannot now attain. And this also I know, that if you have a face most exquisitely fashioned and well proportioned, yet when evil passions rage behind it, it looks positively diabolical! On the other hand, a man who is truly converted to God and living to bless his fellow men, even though he has only ordinary features, has real beauty about him which we can all perceive. I have seen a very plain woman who has been full of love to Christ and who has consecrated herself to His service, look quite lovely when the Grace of Christ has shone through her face and illuminated her whole life.

But God hates sin because it spoils men and women, not only in face, but especially in *heart*. Men and women, as God sees them, are rendered ugly through sin. Any beauty that the sinner may possess is marred in the sight of the Most High and He cannot look upon it except with abhorrence. Besides, where does the sweat on our brow come but from our sin? Where do these aches and pains come but from our sin? Where do the thorns and thistles come, which we must dig up with hard toil, but from our sin? Where do yon hillocks in the churchyard come, those graves that cause so many hearts to break, but from our sin? And because sin works such havoc upon the creatures He has made, God hates it.

God hates it, too, *because it drives Him to do what He dislikes doing*. Isaiah tells us that judgment is, "His strange work," a work at which He is not so much at home as in His works of mercy and Grace. and His own words confirm the Prophet's testimony—"As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Though He must smite the guilty, it is, as it were, with His left hand that He smites, for He would far rather that they turned to Him and lived. Yet God must be just, for He would cease to be God if He were not just—and if He did not punish sin. But, in effect, it is sin that has put the sword into God's hand and made the chains that men must wear forever, and lit the eternal fires that never can be quenched. O Souls, God hates sin for your sakes and He cries to you, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!"

To me, the most touching thing in my text is God's pleading with men—"Oh, do not do it; do not do it. Do not live any longer in sin. 'Do not this abominable thing that I hate!'" It is such wondrous condescension on God's part to thus plead with sinners. It is the act of a king to command, but here it is more like a father who persuades, expostulates, implores, entreats. "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" It is God solemnly dealing with men in earnest—a Suppliant to them, as it were, saying to them, "Oh, do not this abominable thing!" This kind of language is suitable for us to use towards God. We may well cry, "Oh, do not smite me! Do not condemn me!" But, here, God takes the Suppliant's place and cries to us, "Oh, do not destroy yourselves! Do not force Me to punish you! Do not reject My love! Do not despise My Son! Do not refuse My mercy! Do not neglect My call! Do not continue in sin—'this abominable thing that I hate!'"

It is as though God had such sympathy with men that He stood and pleaded with them, as a man's own mother or father might with him.

Have you ever heard a mother or a father, when a child has seemed to be determined to follow an evil course, saying, "Do not so, my child! I pray you, do not so"? Will such wrong-doing hurt the father? Not personally. Will it injure the mother? No, not in her own person, but, somehow, parents so identify themselves with their children that they suffer when their children sin—and they say to them, "Do not so! Oh, I beg you, do not so, lest, in injuring yourselves, you also bring my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." It is amazing that God, whose thunders shake the heavens, should say to His fallen, rebellious creatures, "Do not so." I wish I knew how to repeat these words, but my tongue may not even *attempt* the impossible task, for I cannot speak as God did when He said, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" I hate it for your sake. I hate it for its own sake. Do not grieve Me. Do not vex Me. I grieve because it injures you and I am vexed because of the misery and woe it will surely bring upon you unless you repent."

The greatest wonder of it all is—and with this I must close—that God not only pleaded thus with men, *once*, but He did it *many times*, for He sent Prophet after Prophet and this was always the message He gave to each of them, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" I can conceive of a prince, in very great pity to an erring subject, saying to him, "Do not so! Do not so!" But I cannot conceive of a great potentate again, and again, and again, and again, and again, with tears, coming to a subject and saying, "Oh, do not break my law! Do not this abominable thing!"

But hear it, O you heavens, and be astonished, O earth, as this strange story is told to you! God has pleaded with some here for 20 years—twenty years of patience—twenty years of rejected love! Twenty years, did I say? With many of you it is thirty, or even 40 years! You know it is so. Forty years was the Lord tried by the children of Israel in the wilderness and 40 years has He been tried by many who are still alive! Would you have had patience with anybody who had vexed you for 40 *days*? Some of you cannot keep your tempers for 40 seconds! Certainly you boil over in less than 40 hours! Yet God has had patience with you for 40 years! Yes, and all that while some of you have been hearers of the Gospel or, if you have not regularly gone to hear it, you might have done so, for it has been preached quite close to you. The most of you have been living in a city that is well provided with the means of Grace. I said 40 years, but in some cases it is 50 years—and there is one, over yonder, with whom it is now 60 years of slighted love and Divine compassion. Is there one with whom it is 70 years? Seventy-five years? Eighty years? Perhaps it is even so and yet you are still despising your God and neglecting your own soul!

How I wish that I knew how to say to you, in God's name, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" Come, Friend, give up your sin! Renounce your folly! Trust in Christ—ask God to receive you. Say, "I will arise and go to my Father and will say to Him, Father, I have sinned." If you go to Him with that confession, you may be sure that He will receive you! Otherwise He would never have sent you tonight's pleading message. He would not have spared you to be here if He had not meant to

accept you when you seek His face! Remember, the way of salvation is by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. You trust Him and then, by His Grace, He helps you to overcome sin! He gives you a new nature and you become saved. Trust Him now! The service is almost over and the clock has struck the hour for closing, but Mercy's hour has not yet struck. God still waits to be gracious! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Trust Him now. May He enable you to do so by His infinite mercy! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 1.**

**Verses 1-3.** *The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.* Jeremiah was a young man when he was called to the prophetic office and he was sent of God, as a young Prophet, to help the young king, Josiah. His public life, therefore, opened somewhat happily. But, after the death of Josiah, wicked kings sat upon the throne and it was the painful lot and yet, in some respects, the choice privilege, of this weeping Prophet to be sent upon his Master's errand, time after time, to a disobedient and gainsaying people who repaid him only evil while he sought their good. The Holy Spirit, you see, is careful to note important dates in the history of God's servants—and you and I should also keep a record of the times when God sets us to work and when He gives us special Grace for the service to which He has called us.

**4-6.** *Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a Prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.* He was but young and, when young men are called to be ambassadors for God, it behooves them to feel the weight of the responsibility that rests upon them—and to be conscious of their lack of experience and of their need of fitness for the work. In that consciousness of unfitness, there often lies the evidence of their fitness for the task entrusted to them! Perhaps out of weakness they shall be made strong, but if they do not feel their weakness, they are not likely to cry to God for help, or to receive it from Him. "Ah, Lord God!" said young Jeremiah, "behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child."

**7.** *But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.* Now, even a child can often speak anything that has been said to him. To repeat what he is told to say is not beyond his capacity and, after all, this is a Christian minister's principal work! Somebody says, "We need *thinkers*." Yes, so we do, but we need men whose thoughts shall be subordinate to the thoughts of God—ministers who do not come to utter their own thoughts, but to deliver their Master's message—to tell to us what

He has told them. Is that sermon merely what you think, Sir? Then, what do I care what *you* think? What is that to me anymore than what *I think* may be to you? If, however, you can come to me and say, “Thus says the Lord,” I will give diligent heed to your message and I am bound to receive it—but woe be to that minister whose word shall be other than this!

**8.** *Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.* When a king sends an ambassador to a foreign court, he cannot usually go with him, but God’s ambassador always has his King with him. Oh, what courage he ought to have with such a Companion!

**9.** *Then the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth.* For you young Brothers who are to be preachers of the Gospel, I cannot wish anything better than that the Lord may touch your mouth in this way. In the old times that some of us remember, godly men used to pray that the Holy Spirit would be “mouth, matter and wisdom” to the preachers of the Word. It was not at all a bad prayer, for it was a petition that He would give to His servants the right subject, the right spirit and the right utterance—that He would teach them *how* to speak, *what* to speak and in what spirit to *speak* it.

**9.** *And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.* That is a true picture of a Spirit-sent preacher of the Gospel—a man who has God’s words in his mouth. I said before that the minister must not utter his own thoughts, but here we see that he must not even utter his own words! God’s thoughts are best delivered in God’s words—and the more of Scripture there is in our teaching, the more true, the more Divine and the more powerful will it be.

**10.** *See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.* What a mysterious power rested on this God-sent messenger! Poor Jeremiah was often in prison, frequently at death’s door, yet he was the master of nations and kingdoms and the Lord gave him authority to root them up or to plant them, to throw them down or to build them up! What wondrous power God gives to those who faithfully preach His Word! Well might Mary, Queen of Scots, say that she was more afraid of John Knox’s preaching than of all the armies that came against her!

**11-14.** *Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? And I said, I see a branch of an almond tree. Then said the LORD unto me, You have seen well: for I will hasten My word to perform it. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What do you see? And I said, I see a boiling pot; and the face thereof is toward the north. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. The Chaldeans and the Babylonians were like a great cauldron, boiling and seething, sending forth smoke and steam over the nations and ready to scald Jerusalem to its destruction!*

**15, 16.** *For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, says the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set, everyone, his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter My*

*judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.* God tells Jeremiah that He was about to destroy Jerusalem because of the people's sin. Jeremiah was not merely to foretell their doom, but he was also to tell the reason of it—that it was the result of their sin and especially of the sin of idolatry, to which mankind is always exceedingly prone. It is most difficult to keep men to pure spiritual worship—the worship of the unseen God in spirit and in truth. They will get away, if they can, to some outward form or another. They will take the very bread of communion and worship it! Or the image of the bleeding Savior and make an idol of that. Somehow or other, they will have something visible, or tangible, as the object of their adoration. Men will fall into idolatry of one kind or another even to this day—and this is a God-provoking offense from which may the Lord, in His mercy, graciously preserve all of us perfectly clear!

**17.** *You, therefore, gird up your loins.* “You have a hard task before you, Jeremiah, a stern life's work cut out for you—‘therefore gird up your loins.’”

**17.** *And arise.* “There must be no waiting, no idleness—‘Arise.’”

**17.** *And speak unto them all that I command you.* “Do not trim it at all, or pare it down, or omit distasteful portions, but, ‘speak unto them all that I command you.’”

**17.** *Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound you before them.* We ought to be so afraid of God that we are afraid of nobody else—

**“Fear Him, you saints, and you will then  
Have nothing else to fear.”**

Send all your fears to Heaven and there let them stay there!

**18, 19.** *For, behold, I have made you this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you.*

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

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



# THE TENDER ENQUIRY OF A FRIEND

## NO. 2025

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

*“How long will you cut yourself?”*  
*Jeremiah 47:5.*

TRAVELERS in the East tell us that among the most melancholy scenes they witness is the following: Men inflict upon themselves very grievous voluntary wounds and then exhibit themselves in public. They even disfigure themselves with gashes and cuts in the presence of excited throngs. I am speaking of what has occurred even within the last few years among the Muslims. When some great Prophet or emir is coming that way, a certain number of fanatical Muslims take swords, spears and other sharp instruments and gash themselves terribly, cutting their breasts, their faces, their heads and all parts of their bodies.

Frequently they have taken care to dress themselves in white sheets so that as the blood flows copiously from their bodies, it may be the more clearly seen, that they may become the more ghastly spectacles of misery, or more fully display the religious excitement under which they labor. As everything in the East remains forever the same, this Muslim superstition carries us back to the olden times whereof we read in the Old Testament when the priests of Baal, having cried in vain to their idol, cut themselves with lances and with knives. Our translators were probably afraid to write the harsher words and so they translated the passage “knives and lances,” but they might have written swords and spears—sharp instruments of a desperate character.

Thus they displayed their inward zeal and thus, perhaps, they hoped to move the pity of their god. Eastern fanaticism surpasses belief—you would suppose that the raving creatures were about to commit suicide and yet there is a method in their madness. You could hardly think that men possessed of reason would torture themselves and disfigure themselves as they do. But they know what they are doing and are only carrying out their plans. The Lord expressly forbade His people, the Jews, to perpetrate such folly. They were not even to shave the corners of their beards, or to hack their hair, as the Orientals do in the hour of their grief.

And then they were further prohibited from injuring their bodies by the command, “You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:28.) Men in Eastern lands, not only in connection with fanaticism but in reference to domestic affairs, will cut themselves to express their grief and anguish—or to make other people believe that they are feeling such grief and anguish. We may congratulate ourselves that we are free from at least one foolish custom.

The Prophet here speaks to the Philistines who were about to endure the tremendous judgments of God and, indeed, to be crushed as a nation

by the Egyptians and the Chaldeans. And he says to Philistia, “How long will you cut yourself?” Gaza was to be made bald by the smiting of Pharaoh. Ashkelon was to be shorn away. And the whole nation was to feel the sword of the Lord, which would not rest in its scabbard. How long would they continue to bring upon themselves such terrible judgments?

The expression is used, first, almost in despair. The question is asked with little hope—as if the self-torturer would never have done but would go on to mutilate himself without end. I intend to use it at this time, in the second place, as a question asked instructively and hopefully, in the hope that some, who have practically been cutting themselves, will cease from this self-torture and find rest and peace where it is to be had and to be had at once and forever. May the good Spirit grant our desire!

I. First, dear Friends, I SHALL ASK THIS QUESTION VERY DESPAIRINGLY—“How long will you cut yourself?”—for many are cutting themselves very terribly and will have to feel their wounds for a long, long time—neither can we induce them to cease.

I allude, first, to some professors of religion who have been Church members for ten, twenty, or more years and yet have practically done nothing at all for the Savior. If they were really to awaken to a sense of their neglect, I do not know how long they would be in anguish, or how deep would be their distress. For if Titus mourned that he had lost a day when he had done no good action for twenty-four hours—and he but a heathen—what would happen to a Christian if he were really to see his responsibility before God and to feel that he has not only lost a day but a year—perhaps many years?

Have not some of you well-near lost a whole lifetime? What hosts of opportunities you have thrown away! What multiplied responsibilities you have incurred! Favored as you have been and so ungrateful! Comforted as you have been and yet keeping the comfort to yourself and never seeking out other lonely hearts to share with them the heavenly balm. Instructed as you have been and yet instructing none in return! With Divine light shining upon you and yet never giving that light to others!—

***“Can we, whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high,  
Can we, to men benighted,  
The lamp of life deny?”***

The good Bishop’s hymn asks the question as if it were impossible. But, Sirs, it is not impossible. It is sadly true. And alas, commonly true! Our Churches are made up largely of barren members and of cumber-ground trees that bring forth no fruit. Oh, if I am addressing such—and honestly in the sight of God I fear I am—then how long will you chasten yourselves for your neglect? It must be long before you can forgive yourselves for such wicked indolence. How long will you afflict yourselves to think that you should have suffered time which you can never recall and opportunities which you will never enjoy again, to go by you wasted?

The miller puts his wheel hard by the stream and uses its constant flow to grind his corn. But you have a stream of opportunity and power flowing by you which you have turned to no practical service. Your tears might well be as plentiful as the drops of the wasted stream of life. Some of you

stand by and listen to the hum of the wheel and admire the liquid music of the falling waters. But nothing practical comes of it. Your taste is gratified and your conscience is eased by attending religious services but there is nothing done for Christ—nothing done for the souls of men.

Like little children with their toy windmills you are amused with that which, if you were true men, you would turn to good account. Are you not ashamed to have been playing, while God and Heaven and even Satan and Hell are all so terribly in earnest? You have come to years of discretion, when “life is real, life is earnest,” and you have still trifled. Can you ever be sorry enough for this? How long will you cut yourself? Ah, me! I think I should eternally regret it if up till now I had never preached the Gospel of the Grace of God. Ah, me! If it had not been God’s good pleasure to let me break out as a soul-winner while yet a boy, I could lay me down upon my bed and wish that I had never been born.

If I had reached the very center of life and yet had done nothing to reclaim and restore the sons of men and glorify the Lord my Redeemer, I should tear my hair. Do I address any who have come to the noon of life and have not yet done a hand’s turn in my Lord’s vineyard? The dew of the morning is gone and the best hours of the day have glided away—why do you stand here all the day, idle? Do I make you feel uncomfortable? I shall thank God if I do. And I shall be happy, indeed, if, instead of cutting yourselves with vain regrets, you lacerate yourselves with my sharp remarks as with spears and knives and then gird up your loins and say, “God helping me, there shall never be another wasted year, no, nor another wasted day!”

Then I shall be rejoiced, indeed. Oh, how I wish each one of you would pray—

***“Let every flying hour confess  
I bring Your Gospel fresh renown,  
And when my life and labors cease  
May I possess the promised crown!”***

But, lazy Professors, when will you have done with your regretting if your conscience is once aroused? If you are once moved to see what cause you have for shame, surely you will never leave off cutting yourselves with regrets? But what will be the use of your lamentations unless they lead you to amendments and from sluggards you become laborers? Let us hope it will be so. But I am not very hopeful, for it is hard to make long habits of indolence yield to diligence.

The same may be applied and applied very solemnly, too, to those who backslide—who, in addition to being useless, are injurious because their example tends to hinder others from coming to Christ. Oh, if any of you that name the name of Jesus and have been happy in His service and have enjoyed high days and holy days in His presence, turn aside, I shall use this lamentation over you! You will do yourselves terrible injury and I shall shudder as I see the edged tools of sin in your reckless hands. Every sin is a gash in the soul. The Lord will bring you back and save you, as I believe. But oh, how long will you cut yourselves? You will feel in after life how grievously you have injured your souls.

David's great sin was put away so that he did not die but he was never the same David as before. The Lord's people seem to have shunned him for a time while the adversary found occasion to blaspheme. He offers a remarkable prayer in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm when he says, "Let those that fear You turn unto me" (v. 79). I think they had, in a measure, turned away from him in horror at his great sin. They began to stand in doubt of him. They had loved him as their champion in his earlier days, when he led the van of the armies of the Lord of Hosts and when as a youth he returned from the battle bringing the head of Goliath.

They had looked up to him when he was in the wilderness because of his integrity. Though hunted like a partridge by the ungodly party, yet he was the hope of Israel and the joy of all the saints. With what delight did they gather round him at Hebron and Jerusalem when he was crowned their king! They felt that God had blessed His people in giving them such a leader. But when it was whispered that he had defiled his neighbor's wife, then the godly shuddered. They knew what blasphemy and rebuke would come of it and they kept out of his way. They must have been deeply grateful when they found him truly penitent. When he was crying to God for mercy, probably some of them would know it and perhaps step in to cheer him.

But still David was scarcely David again, either to the people of God or to himself. The Lord, out of very love to him, chastened him sorely and pursued him with plague upon plague. His family became his dishonor and his sorrow. He went with broken bones to the grave—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. How grievously he had injured himself! How long he had to cut himself with anguish for that one sin! His life, surely, from the time when he fell with Bathsheba, was penitential sorrow rather than confident delight. And though the Lord left him not but brought him to much maturity of Divine Grace out of his brokenness of heart, still, as often as he went to his couch, the memory of his great transgression would cut and wound his heart.

What is true of David applies also to others who have in any great measure turned aside. Solomon, in a high degree, hurt himself by his terrible follies. In the New Testament Peter is a conspicuous example. It is a tradition that whenever Peter heard the cock crow he used to weep. And I do not wonder at it. Alas, If you and I should ever be suffered to fall into grievous sin, it may be all done in ten minutes but it cannot be gotten rid of in fifty years. We shall bear the scars of that ten minutes' sin until the Lord shall take us home and permit us to wake up, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," in the full likeness of our perfect Lord.

Oh, my Brethren, watch anxiously lest you have to mourn for years over the sin of an instant! God grant that all His servants may be kept both from the sin of omission, of which I spoke at first, which leads to neglect of duty—and also from the sin of commission which leads to actual backsliding and practical departing from the living God.

There is one thing which comes after these and comes in connection with them. If you and I should know that souls have been lost—lost as far as we are concerned—through our neglect, how long shall we cut our-

selves on that account? A dear soul said to me yesterday, "My husband died. He had been a sad drunkard but in his last illness, through the blessing of God upon those who visited him, I trust he found peace. He said that he believed in the Lord Jesus and there is my comfort. But oh, if he had died without finding Christ, I should have been indeed a widow! I know not what could have comforted me."

I am grateful that our Sister called in her Christian friends and that, by their efforts and her prayers, she was spared the keenest edge of sorrow. "Surely the bitterness of death is past." But suppose you were to lose your son and that your son should die in sin which he learned from you? Or in sin which you saw in him and never rebuked? Suppose, I ask, your son should die in his iniquity? What if he should have been your favorite child and you should have tolerated much evil in him which you would not have suffered in another? What if you pampered and indulged him and gave him liberty to make himself vile?

Shall I tell you how you will behave yourself when the news comes to you that he is dead? You will get by yourself alone and cry like David, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" You can lay your children down upon the bed all stark and cold and follow them to the tomb and even sing as you commit their mortal remains to the grave, when you know that they die in hope. But if they perish in their sin, guilty, red-handed, unforgiven, what will you say to yourselves?

Fathers, if you have never sought to bring your children to repentance, how will you excuse yourselves? If you have never prayed with them, or wept with them—if you have never even instructed them in the things of God, what flattering unction will you lay to your guilty consciences? What will you say, Mother, if your daughter passes into eternity unforgiven and you have never tried to lead her to Jesus? What shall I say of you, my congregation, if I waste your Sabbaths with fine shows of oratory but do not seek your souls? When next the knell is heard and there is another gone who constantly listened to my voice, if I have not been faithful with you and persuaded you to lay hold on Christ, how long must I tear my hair and cut myself for very anguish because my garments will be spotted crimson with your blood?

These are solemn things but there are deep Truth of Gods in them and they ought to be considered by all of you who profess to be Christians. I knew one who used to have a man calling upon him in the way of business and bringing certain articles which he bought across the counter. This tradesman said one day to himself, "I have dealt with that man for nine or ten years and we have scarcely passed the time of day. He has brought in his work and I have paid him across the counter but I have never tried to do him any good. Surely this cannot be right. Providence has put him in my way and I ought at least to have asked him whether he is saved in Christ."

Well, the next time the man came, our good Brother's spirit failed him and he did not like to begin a religious conversation. The man never came again but a boy brought in the next lot of goods. "How is this?" said the

shopkeeper. "Father is dead," said the boy. My friend, the shopkeeper, said to me, "I could never forgive myself. I could not stay in the shop that day. I felt that I was guilty of that man's blood. But I had not thought of it before. How can I ever clear myself from the guilty fact that, when I did think of it, my ungracious timidity prevented me from opening my mouth?"

My dear Friends, do not bring upon yourselves such cutting regrets! Avoid them by daily watching to save men from the second death. Will you let them die? Will you let them die? If so, when you wake up to the sense that you have suffered them to perish, then this dreadful question may well be put to you, "How long will you cut yourself?" How long will you feel remorse and regret that your hopeful opportunity was allowed to pass by unimproved?

One other most solemn use may be made of this question—God grant that it may never be so but if anyone of you should die in his sins, how long will you regret it? It looks dreadfully possible that some of you will perish forever since you have so often been entreated to come to Christ and have never come. For the moment, suppose that there is no Hell but if you are only shut out of Heaven, how long will that be a subject of grief? If you should only hear the King say, "Depart, you cursed!" and should only have to depart and keep on departing, oh, the wringing of hands and the anguish! O you who have lost eternal life, how long will you cut yourself?

If you should miss Christ and miss mercy and miss Heaven and miss eternal glory—if there were nothing else—how long will you bemoan yourself? With what depth of anguish will you smart to have lost all this—to have, in fact, lost all which makes up life and joy! What if, after all, I come short of the kingdom, I that had my Sabbaths but never found rest in Christ? I that heard the Gospel but never took Christ to be my Savior? I that was almost persuaded and yet never yielded my heart to Divine Grace? I that was almost in the ark and yet, not being altogether in it, was left to drown? I that had so much about me that was hopeful? I that would, as I said, in a short time, concern myself about Divine things—I—I am cast out, left with the tares, not gathered with the wheat?

What if I find myself on the left hand, condemned and cast away? What regrets will such a calamity cost me if it is so! O souls, how long—how long will you grieve and mourn when it shall come to this? According to my reading of this Book—and I would gladly read it otherwise if I did not feel that truth and honesty forbid me to do so—your loss, your anguish will be *forever*. Forever you will cut yourselves. Forever will you lament that when the opportunity was so near you, you put it away from you and when Christ was ready to receive you, you would not be received but chose your own delusions and committed eternal suicide.

O Friends, do not trifle with that which is and must be eternal! Make not a dreadful choice which can never be altered. Be solemn, be intense when you are dealing with matters which for good or bad will be past changing when death comes to you.

**II.** I leave this very painful use of the text now, to try and use it at greater length in a happier sort, by way of consolation and hopeful com-

fort, to those who will, we trust, be soon brought to receive the Lord Jesus. "How long will you cut yourself?" I SHALL ASK THIS QUESTION HOPEFULLY, trusting that in many their sorrow is nearing its end.

This text may be very profitably and prudently applied to those who have been bereaved and who, being bereaved, sorrow and sorrow to excess. I hope that I am not about to say a harsh word. But I would deal faithfully with rebellious repining. "Jesus wept." And he that does not weep when he loses a dear one must be something less than a man and unworthy to be called a Christian. But there is such a thing as carrying to an extreme our sorrow for those we lose till it becomes rebellion against God.

You remember the Quaker saying to the lady who was wearing very deep double mourning attire years after one of her children had died, "Madam, have you not forgiven God yet?" And there is a truth about that remark. Some do not forgive God for what He has done. Their sorrow amounts to this—that they have a quarrel with God over His dispensations. "How can He be good and have taken away my mother?" said one to me. "How can God be good and have taken away my child?" cried another. There is a want of faith, a want of reverence, a want of love, a want of many sweet and placid graces in such mourning as that.

And, without dwelling long upon it, I beg to put that question to any mourner here who is mourning with the ungodly sorrowing of the heathen—as if there were no hope. "How long will you cut yourself?" Is not your child in Jesus' bosom? Has not your friend gone among the angels, to join the sweet singers of God? Is it not a gain to the departed, though it is a loss to you, that they are translated to the place of everlasting bliss? Would you have them back again? Dare you wish such a thing even for a moment? If they are supremely blessed, is there no blessedness to you in their blessedness? Are you so selfish that you would tear a star from Heaven that you might have the light of it all to yourself?

Come, be reconciled, not only to your grief but to your God who sent it! It has come to be now like a fretting canker within you—will you not end it? As the moth eats the garment, so does this grief eat you up. Therefore arise and shake yourself from it. Know you not that their Redeemer lives and your Redeemer, too? And will you not now yield up to Christ what is infinitely more His than yours and cheerfully say, "Let Him have those whom He has purchased with His blood and for whom He prayed, 'Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am' "? "How long will you cut yourself?" Put away your disputing and murmuring and either, like Aaron, hold your peace, or better still, like Job, bless the name of the Lord and rejoice in your God.

But now, turning to quite another character, I would use the same expression for another purpose. There are some persons with whom God is dealing in great love and yet they are very rebellious. They persevere in known sin although the evil way has become exceedingly hard on them. They seem as if they would walk over red-hot plowshares to Hell. I have known some who have found the pleasures which once delighted them to

become a nuisance, a trouble, a pain, a disgust and a weariness. And yet they continue in their unprofitable course.

You remember Saul of Tarsus, to whom the Lord said, “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks”—he was acting as though with a naked foot he kicked against iron nails, or like the bullock when it is struck with the ox-goad and kicks back, driving the goad much deeper into itself than otherwise it would have gone. Certain men are doing just that—how I wish they could see that it is so! They are following a wild course of life and they are losing money at it and they are likely to lose much more. They are plunging down. What are they thinking of? “How long will you cut yourself?” Already they have met with great disasters and misfortunes—they will meet with many more. When the dogs are out hunting, they run in packs. The plagues of Egypt are ten, at least, and everyone who plays the Pharaoh may expect the full number.

O you to whom the Lord is sternly kind—by terrible things in righteousness He will chasten you to your right mind! If the Lord means to have you at His feet, He will bring you there. By hook or by crook He will bring you there, depend upon it. And if you will not come by gentle means, you shall come by some other means. But He will break you down in due time. I know that already certain of you have had stroke upon stroke. From wealth you have descended to poverty, from health you have come down to sickness, from honor you have fallen to obscurity. Is not this enough to humble you before God?

You will come down lower yet. As surely as you live, you will be made to feel that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God. My heart’s desire is that it may be so—that by this painful method you may be saved. I spoke some time ago with the son of a very godly man. He seemed to be an infidel outright and had taken to horseracing and the like. My inmost soul was grieved concerning him—I could have wept. As he talked very largely, and mild words were lost on him, I said to him, “Keep as many racehorses as you can and go in for gambling most heartily, for thus the sooner you will lose all your money. Some prodigals never come back to the Father’s house until they sink as low as the pig’s trough and that is probably the way for you. When you get a hungry belly, I trust you will come home.”

He knows what my warning meant and I fear he intends to make it true. The way of transgressors is hard. And it is a mercy when it becomes so hard that they are resolved to quit it for another and a better way. Is this happening to anybody here? Have you spent your money riotously? Are you getting into trouble? I half congratulate you. I congratulate the angels who watch your course—I hope that the probabilities are that you will soon say, “How many hired servants of my Father’s have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my Father.” But do not make the process too long, I charge you. “How long will you cut yourself?”

Have you not had enough of the consequences of your folly? Will you not turn at the Lord’s rebuke? Will you not yield under the strokes you have already felt? “Turn you; turn you; why will you die, O house of Is-



rael?" Why should you be stricken any more? Have you not played the fool long enough? "How long will you cut yourself?"

I might use this expression even to the Jewish nation itself. Ah, my God, through what seas of trouble have they had to swim since the day when they said, "His blood be on us and on our children"? Alas, the story of Israel is enough to make one's blood turn to ice within his veins! And will they not come back? Will they not come back? Must they be hunted in Germany and hounded in Russia? Shame on the countries that dare do such things! But must it be so? God grant that they may no longer provoke their Holy One to indignation against them! How long will they cut themselves? For still these great evils happen to them according to the eternal counsels of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, because of their unbelief.

When they turn to the Messiah, their glory shall return, also, and the crown God crowned His people shall again be set upon their head and their ancient city shall again be "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." Assuredly the Lord gave the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed forever—how long will they shut themselves out of it?

But, now, all this has rather kept me from my main design which is to speak to those dear Friends of ours who are afflicting their souls with needless fears. No good can possibly come by a continuance in their unhappy moods—they are cutting themselves quite needlessly. They might at once have peace and rest and joy if they were willing to accept the Lord's gracious way of salvation. You who are burdened with sin and are trying to get rid of it but will not come to Christ for deliverance—I want to ask each one of you, "How long will you cut yourself?"

Why, there are some persons who think that before they can believe in Christ they must undergo a world of torture! From where do they derive the notion and what Scripture do they twist to support it? My commission runs thus, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." I do not find that I am to look out for those who have undergone a long probation and then tell them to believe in Christ. But every creature is to hear the good news that whosoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life and shall never come into condemnation. So far the Gospel message gives no hint of a sort of purgatory in this life. It deals with every creature as it finds him.

Now, you think, "Well, I must not—I really must not lay hold upon this salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus. I dare not be so greatly blessed. I must first of all be tortured with conviction and afflicted with despair." Alas, that you should thus choose to be miserable and refuse to be made happy! I am forced, again, to put to you the question, "How long will you cut yourself?" Find me, if you can, any place where the Lord requires this at your hand—that you should be dragged about by the devil—that you should be despairing, that you should be tempted to blaspheme and all that. I know that some who have come to Christ have endured such misery but I defy you to prove that it is any part of the Gospel and that we are to preach such an experience as a necessary preface to believing in Christ. The case is far otherwise.

Hear me, I beseech you, and be not obstinately wedded to your wretchedness. You are a sinner—you cannot question that fact. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. If you trust Him you are saved. This, in brief, is the glad tidings of salvation. This is the Gospel way. Who has required at your hands that you should despond? That you should despair? That you should deny the promises of God? That you should put from you the invitation of mercy? That you should remain outside the Gospel feast, and say, “I dare not enter, for I am not hungry enough, nor poor enough, nor ragged enough, nor filthy enough”? Oh, that you were wise and would cut yourself no more with these absurd objections to infinite Grace!

How can this cutting of yourself, this tearing of yourself with anguish, bring you any benefit? Do you think that God delights in it? Is He a God who delights in the misery of His creatures? Will it not be joy to Him that you should believe in His Son and find peace? He wills not the death of any but that they should turn unto Him and live. “Oh,” said one to me, “I cannot think that the way can be so plain, for my grandfather was so miserable for years that they had to put him into a lunatic asylum before he found the Savior.” You smile but the good woman who told me this was in terrible earnest. I cannot help quoting what she said, for it was the natural and outspoken form of an error which lurks in thousands of minds.

I believe that many think they must be driven near to madness or they will not be able to come to Christ. But what benefit could this despair possibly be to you? If the Gospel were, “Doubt and be saved,” I would bid you doubt. And if it were, “Despair and be saved,” I would preach despair to you with all my might, though it might go a little against the grain. But it is not so written. The Scripture is, “Believe—trust—confide—rely. Trust in Jesus—and you are saved.” Despairing and desponding are not commanded in the Gospel but they are forbidden by it. Do not cultivate these gross follies, these deadly sins. Do not multiply these poisonous weeds—this hemlock and this rye grass—as if they were fair flowers of Paradise.

How long do you mean to continue in this wretched condition? Have you set yourself a certain point of anguish up to which you will go and then you will trust Christ? The sooner you reach that point the better. But suppose that, in reaching that point, you should grow hardened in sin and perish? Suppose that in striving to be more tender, the very skin of your soul should turn hard, so that you no longer feel anything? I have known that to occur. I have known persons attend places of worship many years and always say, “I do not feel tender enough and penitent enough,” and all the time they have been growing invulnerable to the shafts of God’s Word till they have perished in an unfeeling, indifferent, immovable condition.

They have hugged a sort of self-righteousness of feeling and would not give it up to believe in Christ and that self-righteousness has been their destruction. Beware lest you lose all feeling because you idolize feeling. Beware lest your heart turn to an adamant stone because you prefer your own feelings to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

Why, my Friends, if you are allowed to follow up this despairing policy much further, some of you will go out of your senses! Those who love to take up a reproach against the Lord Jesus frequently declare that religion has deprived many people of their reason. But the fact is that many lose their senses because they refuse true religion and then take to sullenness and morbid feeling. Why blame Jesus for the fact that men refuse Him and so find no rest? I do fear that many have fought against believing in Christ till their uneasiness has weighed them down and so they have lost their reason. They have been indulging their pride. And, not yielding themselves up to Jesus has cost them dearly. I am afraid that some of you, who now feel God's hand heavy upon you, will come to utter hopelessness unless you yield to the Lord Jesus very soon. Therefore, I pray you, make haste about it and may the blessed Spirit lead you to obey the Gospel—believe in Jesus and enter into rest!

Besides all this, remember that you may die while you are, as you think, getting ready for the Savior. The Savior never told you to get ready for Him. Have we not preached to you continually that you are to come as you are? Alas, you will not come just as you are but will try to mend and improve. And I have a dreadful fear upon me that you will die in the process of mending and improving. If it should be so, where will you be? Why, you will be guilty of having set up your mending and improving in the place of Christ and that is a serious insult to the great God and His dear Son! You will have taken more notice of your own efforts to save yourself than of Christ's atoning death. Will not this seal your condemnation?

Jesus will save you, if you will have Him, just as you are, whoever you may be. But if you reply, "Not just as I am. I must be somewhat better before I can trust Him." Then, if you perish while you are getting somewhat better, who shall be to blame? A sick man is dying and the physician says, "Here is medicine that will restore you. Will you take it?" The dying man answers, "Sir, I believe in your medicine but I will not take it till I feel better." If that man dies, who murders him? Shall the physician be blamed? Surely not. On his own head his death must lie. And recollect that it will be as certainly your ruin to refuse Christ because you want to be better, as it will be to refuse Him from any other reason. Any reason which leads you to reject the Lord Jesus is a bad one.

One man refuses Christ because he hates Him and he blasphemes Him. Another refuses Him because he thinks that he must be a little better. There may be a difference in the motive but the result will amount to the same thing. Take heed, I pray you, lest through your pride in refusing to receive the Gospel just now and just as you are, you should put it away from you till you get where there will be no Gospel preaching and no invitations to Christ and you are cast away forever.

Now let me ask you this question—what good have you got by all this up till now? O you, good Sir, who always mean to have Christ by-and-by—how much farther have you got after all your good intentions and painful waiting? You used to sit in that pew twelve, fifteen, twenty years ago. And even then you had hopeful resolves. Are you any nearer Christ now than

you were then? Say, does the preaching affect you any more than it did in those bygone days? “No,” you say, “not half so much.”

This is a dangerous symptom—what does it mean? Has the preacher changed? I will take my share of the blame. I grow older, I know. Perhaps I get more stupid, too. But still, when I sat yesterday to see the converts coming to join the Church, I saw them till I had not physical power to see any more, for God had brought so many to come and tell me that I had led them to the Savior. Therefore I think that there cannot be much difference in my preaching. It must be I that is getting hard! I fear you are getting chilled into indifference and I pray that the deadly process may go no further.

Therefore I pray God that you may end this mischief, this death, this ruin to your soul. And may you be driven or drawn—whichever God pleases—to say at once, “I will immediately cast myself on Jesus. If I perish, I will perish clinging to His Cross. If there is power in trusting Christ to give a man peace, liberty, salvation, holiness, then I will have it. And if there is not this power, I will at least know by personal trial that it is not so and that Free Grace is not for me.”

Would to God that you, my dear Hearers, would leave all else and just come and cast yourselves on Jesus! If you will not, I must again persecute each one of you with this enquiry, “How long will you cut yourself?” How long must you go on with your piteous prayers and get no answer? Must you have more tears, more groans, more cries, more despairs, more regrets, more broken vows? How long will you cut yourselves with these vain attempts to be your own Savior? How long must you shut Heaven’s door against yourself by a horrible resolve to disbelieve? How long will you be so diligent to pull down an avalanche of wrath upon your own head?

How long will you refuse the bread of Heaven, and determine to perish with famine, while all the plenty of God’s Grace is round about you? How long? How long? God end it ere you cross the portal of this House of Prayer and go down those stone steps, which will again conduct you to the level of a careless world! Stop here till you have yielded yourself to Jesus. I beseech you not to go home a stranger to eternal life. The Lord grant that you may now throw yourself into the arms of Jesus, for His dear name’s sake!

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# THE SHRILL TRUMPET OF ADMONITION NO. 761

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 21, 1867,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. ‘Therefore, behold, the days come,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles.’”  
Jeremiah 48:11, 12.*

FOR a considerable season the country of Moab had been free from the inroads of war and the terrors of pestilence. The nation had, therefore, become so conceitedly secure, that the Lord said, “We have heard the pride of Moab (he is exceedingly proud), his loftiness, and his arrogance, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.” The people became vain, dominating, boastful, and mocked at their afflicted neighbors the Israelites, manifesting ungenerous joy in their sorrows. “For was not Israel a derision unto you? Was he found among thieves? For since you spoke of him, you skipped for joy.”

From this pride sprang luxury and all those other vices which find a convenient lair in the repose of unbroken prosperity. The warriors of Moab said, “We are mighty and strong men of war.” As vainglorious sinners they defied all law and power. Trusting in Chemosh, they despised Jehovah, and magnified themselves against the Lord. The Prophet compares that country to wine, which has been allowed to stand unstirred and unmoved—it settles on its lees, grows strong, retains its aroma, and gathers daily fresh body and spirit. “But,” he says, “the day shall come when God shall shake this undisturbed liquor, when He shall send wandering bands of Chaldeans that shall waste the country so that the bottles shall be broken and the vessels shall be emptied and the proud prosperity of Moab shall end in utter desolation.”

The unusual repose of Moab had been the envy of the people of Israel, but they might well cease to envy when they understood how suddenly a fire should come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon and devour the corner of Moab—and how soon the howling should be heard, “Woe be unto you, O Moab! The people of Chemosh perish: for your sons are taken captive, and your daughters captives.” The fact that continued prosperity breeds carnal security is not only proved by the instance of Moab, but is lamentably confirmed in the history of others.

In the first place, this is the common mischief of ungodly men. In the second place, this is the frequent danger of the most godly.

**I.** I shall first speak to THE UNCONVERTED, THE GODLESS, THE PRAYERLESS, THE CHRISTLESS. Many of you, though not all, become like Moab. At ease from your youth you are not emptied from vessel to vessel but settled upon your lees, and therefore you grow careless and

heedless. This is so common a mischief among the ungodly that the whole world was in this condition immediately before the great deluge which destroyed the ancient race.

We read that “they married and were given in marriage.” They did eat and did drink, and were drunk even until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the floods came and swept them all away. The preacher of righteousness for 120 years warned them that their sins had become intolerable to Heaven, and that vengeance would surely be taken upon their devices, but they laughed the Prophet to scorn. They made “the old Fool,” as they doubtless called him, the butt of their ridicule. The wits quoted him as the chief of fools, and the drunkards in their songs spoke against him.

The disobedient worldlings of those olden times went upon their way as though their jollity would last forever and their sin would go unpunished. How changed their notes when the rains descended with pitiless continuance—not in drops of mercy, fertilizing the thirsty earth, but in cataracts of vengeance, sweeping away every living thing! How deep their despair when the Lord drew up the sluices of the great “deep which lies under,” and bade the long imprisoned floods leap up from their dens and ravage the earth!

Then, as the despisers saw the Prophet’s ark, alone, secure, and the Prophet’s family, alone, delivered, they beheld and wondered—and *perished* as their long prosperity and carnal ease gave place to utter desolation. The world, however, is so little changed today that if the Lord Jesus Christ should now come, as come He will “in such an hour as you think not,” He would find the mass of men still in the same condition. Even at this day the enquiry is made, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were.” Whenever our Lord shall come men will be unprepared for His advent, for “as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man.”

They shall still be given to their vanities and indulging themselves in their sins till He shall come in the clouds of Heaven to take vengeance upon the multitude who know not God. This is the abiding state of the world which lies in the Wicked One—settled on its lees, it is not emptied from vessel to vessel—and therefore it dreams itself into presumptuous peace. When pestilence or war do not stir the nations they soon grow bold in sin and provoke the Lord to jealousy.

But, my dear Friends, it is generally very useless to talk about the world at large! Generalities have little effect upon our minds—we must come to *particulars*. We will draw one or two pictures which will represent some who are present here this morning. Perhaps there may be but very few of the first sort—the bold offenders who are at ease in open sin. They began life with iniquity and they have made terrible progress in it. They have taken their degrees in the college of Beelzebub. They have become Masters in the Art of Wickedness, Doctors in Belial, able to teach others also—corrupt and corrupting.

These men are not disturbed in their sins. Their conscience has been seared as with a hot iron. Things which others would tremble at are to them a jest. They make a mockery of sin. They play with burning coals of lust and carry fire in their bosom and boast that they are not burned.

They go from iniquity to iniquity, as the vulture from carcass to carcass. They labor in the way of evil, as men dig for hidden treasure.

“And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?” “And if He does know,” they say, “what do *we* care? Who is Jehovah, that *we* should obey Him? Who is the Almighty, that we should tremble at His word?” Throughout this wicked city there are hundreds and thousands who, having enjoyed until now an immunity in their sins, suppose that their transgressions are as light a thing with God as with themselves. These are they of whom David said, “They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain. Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than heart could wish...Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.”

Yet, O you haughty ones, take heed, for Pharaoh, who was your prototype in the olden days, found the way of pride to be hard at the end. That haughty prince was like a great dragon with a neck of iron but the Lord tamed him at the Red Sea. When the wheels were taken off his chariots and they dragged heavily while the floods eagerly leaped upon him as their prey—then he knew that none exalts himself against Jehovah to prosper, for He breaks in pieces the mighty in His wrath and destroys them in His hot displeasure.

O you haughty ones, remember the king Belshazzar! He was another of your tribe, and how he grew great with the spoils of the nations. Remember that night of feasting when he drank out of the vessels of God in his daring blasphemy and stained the holy things of Jehovah with his drunkenness. Read yonder handwriting on the wall. Even now, O Despiser, I can see it for you, though you see it not, and this is the interpretation: “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting. Your joy shall soon be taken from you, and your life also, and what shall you do in the day when the Lord requires your soul?”

If there are any here this morning who have lived in sin and grown wanton and have altogether broken loose from Divine control, having taken out of their mouths the bit which restrains other men, let them be ashamed and abased this day, for as the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, if they will not tremble *now*, they shall tremble *forever*! If the voice of God’s ambassador shall not bring you to seek peace and forgiveness, the Lord shall send another herald, not of peace but of *judgment* who shall come with another voice than mine, a voice which shall make cold sweat stand on your brow and your pulse to wax faint and few, while the still small voice sounds terribly in your ear, “This night your soul is required of you.”

A far more common form of that carelessness which is so destructive is that of men who give themselves wholly up to the world’s business. Such men, for instance, as one whom Christ called, “Fool.” You know the story—his fields brought forth plenteously, for he was a skillful farmer. He had bought the newest implements. He had tilled his ground after the most scientific fashion. He had doubled the crops, and increased his riches! This was the one object for which he lived. He was a grower of grain and a hoarder of gold, and nothing more. He said within himself that he must build a temple for his god—his god was *himself*—and his temple was his barn.

“I will pull down my barns and build greater—there will I bestow my goods.” This man’s case is so common that if you were to purchase his likeness many of you might think it was your own photograph, for do you not, even those of you who come to our places of worship, live unto yourselves? This is the end and object of the most of mankind—to live “respectably,” to collect a “competence”—to provide, as they say, for their families, which is the Pharisaic cant phrase for *selfishness*. Do not the mass of men worship their belly and bow down before no other shrine than self? Is not the life of millions clear, transparent selfishness?

“What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?” This is the grand object of human research. The religion of the multitude is, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.” *Gain* is the world’s *summum bonum*, the chief of all mortal good, the main chance, the prime object, the barometer of success in life, the one thing needful, the heart’s delight! And yet, O Worldlings, you who succeed in getting gain and are esteemed to be shrewd and prudent—Jesus Christ calls you *fools*—and He is no thrower about of hard terms where they are not deserved!

“You Fool,” He said, and why? Because the man’s *soul* would be required of him—and then whose would those things be which he had gathered together? Ah, you who have been prosperous all your days, and made money, and risen in the world, and gathered a competence, and lived to gather wealth—if this is the one thing you care about, tremble and expect your doom! O you careless ones, do you dream that you were made to live for *yourselves*? Was *this* the object of your Maker that you should live to gather gold for yourselves and for your children?

Did He send you into this world merely that you might scrape together yellow clay? Has your Maker no claim upon you? The Lord who preserves you in being—has He no demands upon you? And if you do not recognize His rights will He not enquire for them in the day when He makes visitation? I would read the text over to all of you unconverted prosperous people—“Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. ‘Therefore, behold, the days come,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles.’”

Hear you yet again the word of the Lord by His servant Isaiah; “Rise up, you women that are at ease. Hear my voice you careless daughters. Give ear unto My speech. Many days and years shall you be troubled, you careless women, for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. Tremble, you women that are at ease. Be troubled, you careless ones.”

A third case is more common, still—the man who forgets God and lives in slothful ease. There are many in the world who do not succeed in making money—who do not, indeed, make money their main object. They are content with what they have and go through the world with much satisfaction to themselves. They are well known for their easiness of temper and harmlessness of disposition, and therefore they think themselves better than others. Yet my text, if read correctly, is a dreadful warning for them!

Have you never read of the master who committed to his servants their various talents, giving to one five, and to another two, and to another one?



Now the man with the five talents, and he with the two, went both into the market and doubled their master's money, putting it out at interest. And when their Lord returned they presented him with their gains.

But the servant with the one talent was one who loved great ease of mind and did not wish to agitate himself with business. So he took his shovel, and having taken the talent and wrapped it in a clean napkin (for he would treat it with respect, and hide it decorously), he deposited the napkin and the talent in the earth. And having covered it up so that no one should see traces of the burial, he went his way, and was perfectly at ease—a fair picture, indeed, of many who *ought* to be serving God—but they think they have little ability and therefore do not strive even to do what they can.

They are not *openly* sinful. They are not at all objectionable in temper or disposition—they are quiet, easy-going, good-tempered souls—but the talent, where is it? Buried! Alas, it will have a resurrection, and when it rises, all rusty from that rotting napkin, what a witness will it bear and how will the Master say, “You wicked and slothful servant!” Some of you do not reflect enough upon that word—the Master did not say, “You wicked spendthrift!” or, “You base robber!” but, “You wicked and slothful *servant*.” May not that name apply to *you*?

The charge of sloth was quite enough. His doom was swift and terrible. The great sentence which our Lord will pronounce upon men at the last is not for doing *wrong*, but for *not* doing *right*. “I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink. I was a stranger, and you took Me not in. Naked, and you clothed Me not. Sick, and in prison, and you visited Me not.” “Lord,” they might have said, “we were not immoral or dishonest!” That is not the question. You did no *service* to your Lord. It is not enough to abstain from outward sin and so to be *negatively* moral! Unless you bring forth fruits unto righteousness you have not the life of God in you! And however much you may be at ease, there shall come a rough awakening to your slumbers and the shrill sound of the archangel's trumpet shall be to you no other than the blast of the trumpet of condemnation because you took your ease when you should have *served your God*.

A still more sorrowful thought burns its way across my mind. There are many in the professing Christian Church who are in the same state as Moab. They called to see the Church officers and asked if they could be accepted into the Church. No objection was made. The pastor conversed with them. They talked very fairly and they deceived him. They have been baptized. So often as the table of communion is spread they sit with God's people and partake of the emblems of the Savior's crucified body. But though their profession is a very comely one and their outward conduct exceedingly honorable, yet they lack inward Divine Grace.

They have the virgin's lamp but they have no oil in the vessel with their lamps. And yet so comfortable are these professors that they slumber and sleep! I have known many a true Believer much troubled for fear he should be a hypocrite—while many a hypocrite has never asked a question! Thousands who have gone safely to Heaven, have, on the road, stopped many times and put their fingers to their brow and said, “Am I a true Believer? What strange perplexities arise! Have I really passed from death to life, or is it a fancy and a dream?”

And yet I say to you that the hypocrite has gone singing on his way, secure, as he thought, of passing through the gate of pearl—until he found himself at last dragged hack to the hole in the side of the hill—which is the secret gate of Hell! Many, who were fair to look upon have been rotten at the core—such fruit as the King could not accept at His table. O you who never ask whether you are Christians, begin to question yourselves! Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith! Let not presumption hold you in its deadly embrace! Remember, you may think yourself a Believer and everybody else may think so, too, and you may fail to find out your error until it is too late to rectify it! You may persevere for years in “the way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Be you not, O you professors, like Moab, that had settled upon his lees!

Equally true is this of the mass of moral men who are destitute of faith in Jesus. They hear of the convictions and troubles of an awakened conscience, and they inwardly sneer at such fanaticism and boast that they never stooped to such feelings. “Here is a man that snivels out,” as they call it, “a confession of his guilt. I never was so guilty as he,” cries the moralist! “I have no doubt but what it will be all right with me at last. I pay my neighbors their own. I give a guinea to a hospital when they ask me for it. I am a first-rate tradesman. Of course I have sown a few wild oats, and I still indulge a little, but who doesn’t? Who dares deny that I am a good-hearted fellow?”

Plainly this gentleman has not been into *spiritual* captivity. He has never felt the burden of sin, never known what the weight of guilt is. Do you envy him? You may sooner envy the *dead* in their graves because they suffer no pain. You may better envy the man who has fallen into insensibility, or the wretch whose limbs are mortified—how can he feel when death has marked him for its own? Those pangs and throes and bitter regrets, and tossing to and fro of a wounded conscience are signs of the dawn of *spiritual life*!

It is by such things as these that we are led to put our trust in Jesus—and those who have never felt them may well lament before the Lord and pray that they *may* experience them—that they *may* be brought soundly and safely out of their self-righteousness and led to rest upon the finished work of the dear Redeemer! Ah, my dear Hearer, if you, this morning, have been troubled in your soul, be *thankful* for it! If your circumstances are full of anxiety, if you are not reconciled to God you may be thankful for adversity, and ask that it may drive you to Jesus!

If sin has become nauseous to you. If the pleasures which once satisfied your spirit have now lost their savor. If you cannot enjoy yourself with the world as you did once, I am glad of it! God loves you too well to let you build your nest here. He means to flog you out of your sins if you will not be drawn out of them by the gentler cords of His love. He is putting thorns into the nest that the bird may mount up to Heaven! Fly to your heavenly Father as the prodigal of old when he could not fill his belly with the husks which the swine did eat! Better to suffer a present disturbance which will end in *life*, than enjoy the ease which is, itself, a protracted *death*. God give you to be saved through Jesus Christ!

**II.** We shall pause a minute and then speak to THE BELIEVER. It is one of the most common and most dangerous of all evils that can happen to a Christian, to fall into a state of carnal security in which he grows self-

confident, insensible, careless, inactive, and worldly. Beloved in the Lord. My fellow Christians, I speak to you this morning very earnestly—the more so because *I* have experienced and *I* fear at the present moment I am suffering from the disease of which I am about to speak to you.

John Bunyan tells us that on many occasions he preached as a man in chains preaching to men in chains—that is to say—the evil which he warned them of he felt in his own soul. It is much so this morning with me. But before I plunge into the subject, let me utter one note by way of caution. These lips shall never say a word against the full assurance of faith and against the holy confidence which the Holy Spirit gives to the people of God!

You can not be too confident in God. You can not be too sure of your salvation if you base that salvation upon the work of Christ. Therefore I will not speak a *syllable* against holy quietness and assurance forever, which are the special privileges of the elect. The danger I am to warn you of I will now endeavor to describe. A Christian man finds himself for a long time without any remarkable trouble. His children are spared to him. His home is happy, his business extremely prosperous—he has, in fact, all that heart can wish. When he looks round about him he can say with David, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage.”

Now, the danger is that he should think too highly of these *secondary* things, and should say to himself, “My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved.” Some of God’s children are tossed to and fro, and vexed every morning. But if we are not, the flesh will whisper, “There must be something *better* in me than in them. Perhaps they are chastened on account of sins which I have not fallen into. I am a special favorite.”

And then, though the man would never dare to put it in words, yet an indistinct feeling creeps over him that there is no need for him to be so watchful as other people—he would be sure not to fall if he were tempted. In fact he wonders how some of his Brethren can live as they do live—he is sure he could not do so. He feels that he could fight with any temptation and come back more than a conqueror. He has grown so strong that he feels himself a Samson! He knows much more now than he used to, and thinks himself too old a bird to be caught with chaff, as he might have been some years ago. “Ah,” he thinks, “I am a model Christian.”

He does not say as much, but that lurks in his mind. His heart is much hampered with earthly things, and his mind much bloated with self-conceit. He has not been poured from vessel to vessel. He has not been sternly tried by Providence, or sorely tempted by the devil. He has not been led to question his own conversion. He has fallen into a profound calm, a deep, dead, peace—a horrible lethargy—and his inmost heart has lost all spiritual energy. The great disease of England is consumption, but I suppose it would be difficult to describe the causes and workings of consumption and decline.

The same kind of disease is common among Christians. It is not that many Christians fall into outward sin and so on, but throughout our Churches we have scores who are in a spiritual consumption—their powers are all feeble and decaying. They have an unusually bright eye—they can see other people’s faults exceedingly well—and sometimes they have a flush on their cheeks which looks very much like burning zeal and

eminent spiritual life, but it is occasional and superficial. Vital energy is at a low ebb—they do not work for God like genuinely healthy workmen.

They do not run in the race of His commandments like athletic racers, determined to win the prize. The heart does not beat with a throb moving the entire man as a huge engine sends the throbbing of its force throughout the whole of the machinery. They go slumbering on, in the right road, it is true, but loitering in it. They serve God, but it is by the day, as we say, and not by the piece. They do not labor to bring forth much fruit—they are content with here and there a little shriveled cluster upon the topmost bough.

That is the state of mind I want to describe, and it is produced in 99 out of every 100 Believers by a long course of prosperity and absence of spiritual trouble. The rapid results of this consumption are just these—a man in such a state soon gives up communion with God. It is not quite gone at first, but it is suspended. His walk with God is broken and occasional. His prayers very soon suffer. He does not forget his morning and evening devotions—perhaps if he did conscience would prick him—but he keeps up that form. However, he has lost the *soul* of prayer and only retains the shell. There is no *wrestling* prayer now.

He used to rise in the night to plead with God and he would wrestle till the tears fell fast, but it is not so now. He *does* pray, but not with that Divine energy which made Jacob a victor at Jabbok's brook. By degrees his conversation is not what it used to be. He was once very earnest for Christ and would introduce religious topics in all companies. He has become discreet now, and holds his tongue. He is quite ready to gossip about the price of wheat and how the markets are, and the state of politics, and whether you have been to see the Sultan—but he has no words for Jesus Christ, the King in His beauty.

Spiritual topics have departed from his general conversation. And now, strange to say, "the minister does not preach as he used to do." At least, the backslider says so. The reason why I think he is mistaken, is that the Word of God itself is not so sweet to him as it once was and surely the Bible cannot have altered! He used to read it and feast on the promises. He used to carry a pocket Testament with him wherever he went, and take it out that he might have a sip by the way. Where is his Testament now?

As for going to hear the Word of God, now it is dull work. He does come, he would not like to be away—if David's seat were empty, he would begin to be pricked in his conscience—he is there, but he is there in vain. There is little savor about the Word to him. Hymns which used to be delightful for their melody now pall upon his ears, and he is now noticing the tune or whether somebody else sings correctly. The prayers in which he used to join with so much fervency are very flat to him now. He is poring over his ledger even in the House of God.

These are the gray hairs which come upon a man, and sometimes, for want of self-examination, multiply rapidly, and the man knows it not till spiritual senility has come upon him. After awhile the professor slackens a good deal in his liberality. He does not think the cause of God is worth the expense that he used to spend upon it. And as to his own personal efforts to win souls, he does not give up his Sunday school class, nor his street preaching, nor distributing of tracts, perhaps, but he does all mechanically—it is mere routine. He might just as well be a robot and be wound up, only the fault is that he is *not* wound up and he does not do

his work as he should. Or, if he does it outwardly, there is none of the life of God in what he does.

Do you know such a man? He who speaks to you knows him and has wept over him. That man has sometimes been himself! I do not think I am less earnest than the most of my fellow Christians, and indeed, I could not bear to be like some of them. But still, I am very far from being content with myself. I pray God that I may never sink down to the dishonorable depths of indolence which some Christians live in. Sooner may my right hand forget her cunning and my tongue speak no more my Master's Word—I were utterly unworthy to be His minister if such were the case.

But oh, I pray to be baptized in fire and live in it as in my element, and breathe the immortal flame of zealous love to Jesus! But I cannot as I would. This heavy heart, this sluggish clay still make me move heavily when I would gladly fly as a seraph in my Master's service. Brethren, do you ever feel the same? I know some of you do, for I can see the traces of it. Very much of this sluggishness is brought on by long-continued respite from trouble—

***“More the treacherous calm I dread  
Than tempests rolling overhead.”***

It were better to be in perpetual storms and to be driven to-and-fro in the whirlwind, and to cling to God than to flounder at sea in the most peaceful and calm days. I would sooner be blown to pieces in battling with the devil and his crew than be put out of commission and left to rot, plank by plank, and timber by timber, in inglorious ease.

Dear Friends, the great secret danger coming out of all this is that when a man reaches the state of carnal security he is ready for *any* evil! What heart-breaking news is sometimes brought to us who are set over the Christian Church. Such-and-such a man, whom we knew as a high professor and who has sat with us at the table of fellowship and seemed to be greatly advanced in spiritual things, has fallen into some act of vice which is positively disgusting—from which the soul revolts! And this is the very man with whom we took sweet counsel and went up to the House of God in company!

If the history of these great offenders could be traced, it would be very much like this—they began well, but they slackened by degrees—till at last they were ripe for foul sin. We have heard of two Negroes who were accustomed to go into the bush to pray and each of them had worn a little path in the grass. Presently one of them grew cold and was soon found in open sin. His Brother warned him that he knew it would come to that because the grass grew on the path that led to their place of prayer.

Ah, we do not know to what we may descend when we begin to go downhill! Down, down, down, is easy and pleasant to the flesh, but if we knew where it would end we should pray God that we might sooner die than live to plunge into the terrors of that descent! Who would think that David, the man after God's own heart, should come to be the murderer of his friend Uriah, to rob him of his wife? O David, are you so near to Heaven and yet so near to Hell?

There is a David in every one of our hearts, and if we begin to backslide from God we do not know to what extent we may slip! Just as in certain constitutions there is a readiness for cholera and other pestilential disorders through their bad state of health, so there is a state of mind in which a professor is most likely to be betrayed into foul sin. When the seed of temptation is floating in the air, the backslider is the man who will

receive it and nurture it in his soul till it brings forth evil fruit. God save us from this by His Holy Spirit!

I must pass on to observe God's cure for this malady. His usual way is by pouring our settled wine from vessel to vessel. If we cannot bear prosperity, the Lord will not continue it to us. We may pamper our children and spoil them, but the Divine Father will not. If we cannot bear the sweets He will give us the bitter. When the Lord takes down His rod—earthly parents may play at chastening their children, but God does not—He is in earnest and I warrant you we smart when God lays on the rod! But we make the rod ourselves! We force our Father to smite us because we cannot be obedient and humble without it.

Staying for awhile in the valley of Aosta in Northern Italy, we found the air to be heavy, close, and humid with pestilential exhalations. We were oppressed and feverish—one's life did not seem worth a pin. We could not breathe freely. Our lungs had a sense of having a hundred atmospheres piled upon them. Presently, at midday, there came a thunderclap, attended by big drops of rain, and a stiff gale of wind which grew into a perfect tornado, tearing down the trees. Then followed what the poet calls "sonorous hail," and then again the lightning flashes and the thunder, peal on peal, echoing along the Alps.

But how delightful was the effect! How we all went out upon the veranda to look at the lightning and enjoy the music of the thunder! How cool the air and bracing! How delightful to walk out in the cool evening after the storm! Then you could *breathe* and feel a *joy* in life!

Full often it is thus with the Christian after trouble. He has grown to be careless, lethargic, feverish, heavy and ready to die—and just then he has been assailed by trouble—thundering threats have rolled from God's mouth. Flashes of lightning have darted from Providence! The property vanished, the wife died, the children were buried, trouble followed trouble—and then the man has turned to God—and though his face was wet with tears of repentance, yet he has felt his spirit to be remarkably restored!

When he goes up to the House of God it is far more sweet to hear the Word than before. He could not pray before but now he leans his head on Jesus' bosom and pours out his soul in fellowship! Eternity now exerts its heavenly attractions and the man is saved from himself! Have you ever dreamed that you were trying to walk and could not? You felt as though you could not move a foot and someone was about to overtake you who would do you serious mischief—and you longed to run and could not stir an inch!

That is the state of mind in which we get when we would, but cannot pray. When we would, but cannot repent. When we want to believe and cannot. When we would give a world for one single tear, would almost pawn our souls to obtain a quiver of spiritual feeling, but are insensible, still—

***"If nothing is felt, 'tis only pain  
To find 'I cannot feel.'"***

Do you ever sink into that petrified condition? It is horrible! Horrible indeed! Horrible! If you can be its victim and yet be happy, I tremble for you! If you see your danger and betake yourself to earnest prayer, you shall come off more than a conqueror—but it will need more than *man* to do this—it will need *God within us* to keep us from such a tremendous peril.

What ought we to do if we are prospering? We should remember that *prevention* is better than cure and if God is prospering us, the way to prevent lethargy is to be very grateful for the prosperity which you are enjoying. Do not pray for trouble—you will have it quickly enough without asking for it. Be *grateful* for your prosperity, but make use of it. Do all you possibly can for God while He prospers you in business. Try to live very closely to Him. It ought not to be so difficult for us to cling close to Jesus when Providence is favorable to us.

Some saints have dwelt at ease year after year and have been all the better for it. They have had few troubles and yet lived near to God and why not you? If you will take care that your wealth is laid out for God, that your prosperity is spent in His service, you may have a succession of bright days. Watch the very first symptoms of declining, and fly to Christ, the Great Physician! He will give you the balm of Gilead which will prevent the mischief and you may bear the heat of prosperity as safely as the chill blasts of adversity.

But if you have fallen into such a state, I should say to you, since you cannot use a preventative, now take to the cure—and the *one* cure is the Holy Spirit. Go to the Cross of Christ again, Christian, if you have fallen from your first estate. Go as you hope you went at first. Go with your deadness, and sloth, and lethargy—and put your trust in the precious blood and ask the Lord Jesus to fill you with the Spirit once again—that you may be renewed. Try to get a due estimate of your indebtedness to God's Divine Grace. Try to see the danger of your lethargy. Think more of eternity and less of time.

Tear yourself away a little from your worldly engagements, if possible. If you can, get a day of fasting and of prayer, certainly of prayer, but the fasting will help you to school your body as well as your soul. Fetch the proud flesh down somehow—make a desperate effort! It were better for you to do this now than for *God* to do it by sharp affliction. Trouble *yourself* that He may not trouble you. Humble *yourself* that He may not humble you. Put away your fancied security, and by strong crying and tears turn again to your former state of nearness to the living God. May the Lord help you, dear Friends, in this.

I have thought that our text describes the state of our country just now, for we are getting into a perfect whirl of excitement. Gaiety and frivolity are leading to sad sin in high places and this is much due to our prosperity. I hope God may never send us war or pestilence, but religion never prospers more than in troublous times. There was never an age when England was so religious as during our Civil War. Perhaps no time when more people were in Church in the City of London since London was London, than during the Plague—for then they all crowded to hear the Gospel—and they would, again, if such a thing should come.

We are growing nationally rich and nationally luxurious. I fear that prophets of evil will soon be sent to us to utter bitter threats. May God have mercy upon us, pardon the horrible crimes done in the name of trade unions, and at the same time teach our princes to reign in righteousness and our great men to care less for vice and vanity and more for the cause of the poor! I am always afraid lest this should become the state of our Church, too. We have had 13 years of such prosperity that we have all wondered at it. And there is one remark that our dear friend,

Jonathan George, made when this place was being built which I have never forgotten, and which often comes up in my mind.

He reminded us of this text, "You shall fear and tremble for all the good that God shall make to pass before you." We have had so much good, so many conversions, so much brotherly love, so much zeal for God that I am always afraid lest we should fall from our present happy state. And the sure way of doing so is by ceasing to *labor* for God—ceasing from zeal and industry. By the way, there are many of you who do not come to the Prayer Meeting as you ought to do. Some of you are getting very lax at week-night services and I know what will come when that is the case.

When week-night services are badly attended, farewell to the life of godliness! If you have good excuses, I need not remind you of them, you will remember them yourselves. But many of you have no justifiable excuses—you are becoming cold and indifferent. We are very much, in our position as a Church, as Esther was to the Jews. If she did not do her part, Mordecai told her, God would do it by somebody else and put her away. And so it is with us—if we lag and loiter in work for Christ, He will put us away as a Christian Church—depend upon it! Not from His eternal love, for that He never will do, but from our position of honor and usefulness.

May it please Him to remove me, His unworthy servant, and give me rest from my labors, before such a catastrophe as that should overwhelm us. My Brothers and Sisters, may we never be settled on our lees. May God always call us to fresh labor and inspire us with new zeal! Or, if He does not do that, may He send clap after clap of thundering affliction. Better that the Church should lose its leaders than lose its life! Better that the pastor's coffin should be there before you. Better that many should fall into poverty than that this Church should become like so many other Churches—a mere sleeping place for those who need comfort, and a place for Sunday repose.

Eternal God, You who know what our heart feels, keep us from this evil and never suffer us, as a Church, to become like lukewarm Laodicea which You did spit out of Your mouth! Owing You so much, O Jesus, may we love You much in return and be found faithful when You shall come to reward Your people and to be glorified in Your saints. God bless us, dear Friends, according to this, our desire, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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# DWELL DEEP, O DEDAN!

## NO. 1085

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

***“Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan.”  
Jeremiah 49:8.***

WE do not quite know who these inhabitants of Dedan were, but in all probability they were some Arabian tribe or tribes. Perhaps they were descendants of Keturah. This Arabian tribe probably dwelt in the rock city of Petra and were mingled with the Edomites. The Prophet warned them that God was about to destroy the Edomites—“For I have sworn by Myself, says the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.”

And the text intends one of two things—either to inform these inhabitants of Dedan that, however deep in the cavernous rocks they should hide themselves, they would certainly be destroyed, or else it was a gracious warning to remove themselves from Edom, strike their tents, retreat into the depths of the wilderness and so escape from the invaders. I find the marginal reference of my Comprehensive Bible says, “This is an allusion to the custom of the Arabs who, when attacked by a powerful foe, withdrew into the wilderness. Always on their guard against tyranny, on the least discontent that is given them they pack up their tents, load their camels with them, ravage the country and, laden with plunder, they retire into the burning sands where none can pursue them, and so “dwell deep.”

We will take our text in the two senses I have indicated. “Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan.” This may be understood sarcastically and instructively—let us pray that to us, in both senses, it may be instructive. From ancient warnings let us gather present benefit.

**I.** Let us take it **SARCASTICALLY**. It is as though the Prophet said to these Edomites and those that dwelt with them—“You think you never can be destroyed for your city is situated in a rocky region where a handful of men can hold the pass. You suppose that the mightiest armies will fail to conquer you and therefore you are very proud. But your pride is vain.” “Your terribleness has deceived you and the pride of your heart, O you that dwell in the clefts of the rock, that hold the height of the hill: though you should make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there, says the Lord.”

That Word has been terribly fulfilled, for the ancient rock city stands as a wonder to all travelers and when they ride through it, which is not often, for it is with great difficulty that you reach the place at all, they find the city standing, but the houses desolate and without inhabitants. Edom is a perpetual desolation because of her sins. Though they carved their houses into solid rock and their city seemed out of the spoiler’s reach, God has laid His hands upon it and its life, as well as its beauty, is gone forever.

Thus said the Lord and so it has come to pass, “also Edom shall be a desolation: everyone that goes by it shall be astonished and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, says the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.” From the text I hear a cry, like the stern voice of Elijah, to every profane sinner who thinks that he will ultimately escape the wrath of God! You may dwell deep, O Transgressor, but God shall find you out. You say, “How shall He reach me?” The hand of Death has only to be stretched out and you are his captive at once!

And a little thing will do it—the wind has but to pass over you and you are gone. A drop of blood may go the wrong way, a valve may refuse to open, a vessel may burst, a band may snap and there you lie, beneath God’s avenging hands like a stag struck by the hunter. You are dust and a breath will scatter you to the four winds. Your *spirit* will be equally unable to escape from God. When it leaves this body, where will it fly? It finds itself naked—disembodied and straight before it is the Throne of God and the seat made ready for judgment!

Devils shall drag the guilty spirit down to Hell and bind it with links of infinite despair. And when the Day of Judgment shall have fully come and the *body* shall have risen and the entire man shall stand before God, there will be no escape for the sinner! The eyes of Christ will look into the face of every man of woman born that shall stand upon the earth and upon the sea in the dread day of wrath—and that will ensure the eternal condemnation of all the unbelieving. No one will be in so far off a country that the Judge will not see him, nor will he be able to find a cavern or deep mine where he shall be able to conceal himself from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne.

Then will the ungodly bitterly desire to dwell deep—they will call to the rocks to hide them and to the hills to fall upon them, but all in vain, for thus says the Lord—“Though they climb up to Heaven, there will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out from there. And though they are hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I command the serpent and he shall bite them.” Darkness will not be able to conceal you! The glance of the Judge’s eyes shall shrivel up the vesture of night and lay all things bare. O, guilty, Christless Soul, there is no escape from God! Though you dwell deep as Hell—even there would He find you!

In the days of the old Roman empire the whole world was so completely under the Imperial sway that if a man once transgressed against Caesar he was imprisoned already, for all the nations were but one great Roman prison. If a man fled to the uttermost ends of the earth he would still find the Roman legionary to arrest and the Roman lictor to punish him. Behold the universe is thus surrounded by Jehovah’s Imperial forces! Earth, Hell and Heaven are the Lord’s! To where, then, can you flee? Do what you will, you are always before His eyes and always within reach of His hands. “Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan,” but in vain shall be all your craft and cunning concealments, for God will assuredly find you out.

The same solemn warning may be applied to those who are self-righteous and who think that they are forming a hiding place for themselves. I would turn to them and say, "You think that you will save yourselves by your works. Ah, labor mightily, for hard must be your toil if you think to finish a righteousness of your own! In the very fire must you labor. You would make a dwelling for yourself as secure as the Rock of Ages? You had need build anxiously. I do not wonder that you are ill at ease. I wonder you have any peace, for the labors which you propose are more stupendous than those of Hercules! You would work miracles without the God of miracles! Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! Like Babel's tower, self-righteous efforts will end in failure and abide only as a monument of folly."

I could gladly, if I were in that humor, speak to the self-righteous with bitter irony, as did Elijah to the false prophets when he said of Baal, "Cry aloud, for he is a god!" If, indeed, there is salvation by works, wear your fingers to the bone and your bodies to skeletons! Weep out your eyes with penances and furrow your backs with chastisements! You plow the desert sand and sow the salt sea. Plow on, sow on you fools and dotards! Rest in your sacraments and your priests! Be born-again in sprinkling! Be confirmed by Episcopal hands and then eat your bread god! Get up at the daily tinkling of your bell to adore the flour and water which you both worship and swallow!

Get on your knees and repeat your Paternosters and your Ave Marias—and count your beads! Fast not only on Fridays, but on all days of the week and put on your hair shirts and wear a girdle of spikes. You had need do many such things, for no little matters will quiet conscience and give the soul peace. To fill a bottomless tub with water is nothing to the labor of self-salvation! To build a house with bubbles, twist a rope of sand or weld an anchor of spray were easier, by far. Fools! Can sinners keep a perfect Law? Can finite effort satisfy Infinite Justice? Can a bankrupt, without a penny, put his creditor under obligations? Can a vile worm deserve anything at the hands of the thrice Holy God?

But, ah, 'tis folly altogether! "By the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified." "By the Law is the knowledge of sin," and nothing more. All the efforts that a man can make to earn Heaven must end in disappointment and despair. "You must be born-again." You must believe in Christ Jesus! You must be saved through His great salvation. There is no hope for you, O you who are dwelling deep in your own works! It is a sorry, sorry dwelling. I will not use the text to you sarcastically, as I might, but I will rather say, flee from your good works as you would flee from your sins! Have no more confidence in your goodness than in your badness, for if you rely on what you do that is good, you will be as surely lost as if you had depended upon your sins. Whether the sand is white or red is small consequence—in either case it is a bad foundation. You need a better basis, even that which was laid of old by God in the Covenant of Grace, even Christ Jesus, the Rock of our salvation!

The same text, in the same way, might be applied to those who are hypocrites and are practicing secret sins while they yet wear the name of

Christ and are numbered among His people. They maintain a creditable position in the Church and yet indulge privately in evil habits. This class is the great trial of the ministry and in every Church there are some of them. They profess to love the Lord Jesus but they are traitors in the camp. They are fair apples, but rotten at the core! Gilded cheats, painted shams, counterfeits, impostors! O, it is a horrible thing to find a man coming to the communion table who worships the bottle and goes to bed intoxicated. He talks about the love of Christ and yet he is a drunk! He partakes of the cup of the Lord and dotes upon the cup of devils!

And there is another who is, perhaps, temperate in diet and liberal to the Church but, at the same time he is dishonest in his transactions abroad. He can never be trusted—he pays no one except by compulsion. He has no sense of honor and yet he has an uppermost seat in the synagogue. Nor is this all, for, alas, we have known some who could talk very loudly about what they knew of personal religion and Divine Grace, who at the same time were raking in the very lowest kennels of vice. How can I bear to think of such beings! O, Paul! I do not wonder at you, when I hear you say, “I now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ.”

Such base deceivers are the enemies of the Cross of Christ above all others! The Trojans were safe inside and the legions of the Greeks could do them but little harm so long as they were outside the walls. But when the wooden horse was brought in with the Greeks concealed inside, the city was taken. The enemies inside the Church do her the most serious damage—she suffers most from those fearfully presumptuous sinners who are not satisfied with sinning in the King’s kingdom but must sin in the King’s palace—who dare to bring their filthinesses even to His own table and pollute it. If any of you who are hypocrites hope to escape, you need dwell deep, indeed!

Where are the deep places which can afford refuge for religious pretenders? Where shall liars conceal themselves? O, Hypocrite! It may be you have planned your sin so cleverly that the wife of your bosom does not know it—your scheme is so admirably cunning that you carry two faces and yet no Christian sees other than that Christian mask of yours. Ah, Sir, you are a greater fool than I take you for if you think you can deceive your *God*! Your own conscience must be very uneasy. Hypocrites are the devil’s martyrs—they endure a life-long martyrdom of constraint and fear.

I have seen, when I was a boy, a juggler in the street throw up half-a-dozen balls, or knives and plates and continue catching and throwing them, and to me it seemed marvelous. But the religious juggler beats all others hands down! He has to keep up Christianity and worldliness at the same time and catch two sets of balls at once! To be a freeman of Christ and a slave of the world at the same time must need fine acting. One of these days you, Sir Juggler, will make a slip with one of the balls and your game will be over. A man cannot always keep it up and play the game so cleverly at all hours—sooner or later he fails and then he is made a hissing and a by-word and becomes ashamed, if any shame is left in him.

O, “dwell deep, you inhabitants of Dedan” if you think to escape from God’s eyes and from the revealing power of His Providence. Better were it for you to come right out and throw away your cloaks and be deceivers no longer. Cast off your double-mindedness. “Cease to do evil, learn to do well,” for it is time to seek the Lord and may God grant you His effectual Grace that you may do so at once—before He condemns you to the lowest Hell.

**II.** But now we will use the text INSTRUCTIVELY, in which view the first and natural sense would be that the Prophet warns the tribe of Dedan, who had come to live among the Edomites, to go away from them and dwell in the depths of the wilderness so that when the destroyer came they might not participate in Edom’s doom. It was the warning voice of mercy, separating its chosen from among the multitude of the condemned.

Now this suggests to me one observation—The people of God, like the tribes of Dedan, to some extent dwell in Edom. Your business, your duty, is to come out from among them. “Be you separate and touch not the unclean thing.” I often marvel how some who really love the Lord and believe His Truth, can put up with the errors of the Churches with which they are connected. There are Churches which preach doctrine that is far other than the Gospel of Christ—such, for instance, as the doctrine that unconscious infants are made members of Christ and children of God by the sprinkling of a little water!

God will plague such a Church as surely as He is God! Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her plagues! I love the saints in the Church of England but I marvel at their abiding in such company! It is our duty to flee as far from error as possible and enter into no confederacy with falsehood. There are Nonconformist Churches where the Gospel is not preached and *intellect* is put in the place of *faith*. I charge you, separate yourselves from such! What fellowship has light with darkness? How can you love the Lord and be in league with those who despise His Word? While some cry out for *unity*, I would say a word for the Truth of God. Unity, indeed! What have we to do with that while Ritualism and Rationalism with their abominations defile the land? I dare no more be a member of a Church which does not hold the pure Truth of God in the love of it, than I dare join a band of pirates!

Our Lord entered into no covenant with Scribe and Pharisee, Sadducee or Herodian, but remained “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.” Better go to Heaven alone than to Hell in company! Better be true to God, with Abdiel, “faithful among the faithless found,” than win the applause of the crowd by great liberality and equal inconsistency. More important still, however, is the separation of every Christian from worldly habits, customs and ways. Wherever you are, dear Friend, though you must be *in* the world, take care that you are not *of* it. “Come you out from among them: be you separate, says the Lord, touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

It is only in the lonely path of the true disciple of Christ who follows the Lamb where ever He goes, that you can realize your adoption and cry, "Abba, Father." Come out from the world—confess yourself to be on the Lord's side and then your fellowship with God shall be sweet beyond degree! Range yourself under the Divine banner and by God's Grace remain a separatist from the world until life's latest hour. So shall you, like Abraham, be a sojourner with God. "Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan." Get away from the world's customs and sins and above all from its selfish spirit and groveling aims! Dwell deep in the solitudes where Jesus dwelt—in the lonely holiness which was fostered on the cold mountain's side and then shone resplendent amid temptation and persecution!

Commit yourself unto no *man*! Call no man master! Lean on no arm of flesh! Walk before the Lord in the land of the living and so dwell deep, as did your Lord. But I do not wish to enlarge upon that point. The practical matter I am aiming at lies in another direction. My earnest desire is that every saved soul among you may dwell deep, that is to say, that none of you may be superficial Christians but that you may be deep Believers, well rooted plants of Grace, thorough, downright, out-and-out Christians—that you may not only dwell in the Rock of Ages, but dwell deep in it. To this let me call your attention.

It is highly important, Beloved, that every one of us should have a deep sense of sin and a profound horror of it. Those who have but slight convictions, if those convictions bring them to the Savior, are safe, but such persons should pray the Lord to deepen in them their sense of the evil of sin. Slight thoughts of sin lead to slight thoughts of Grace! And what can be worse? Nothing is more to be dreaded than a flimsy religion, frail as the spider's web, unsubstantial as the air. Lord, give me deep repentance! Teach me to know my sin and all the evils which lurk in it. Make me to shudder at it and dread it as a burnt child dreads the fire.

Do not, dear Friends, be like those people who jauntily confess, "yes, we are sinners," but who merely intend thereby to chime in with a general form of speech. Such false speeches are a mockery of God. Thank God if you have been laid low under the Law. Bless God for deep subsoil plowing and trenching. I desire to feel, every day, that sin is an exceedingly bitter thing, a deadly evil, a moral poison—the essence of Hell! O, to loathe iniquity and see with self-aborrence its heinous character—for so shall we prize the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love which thought it, the blood which bought it—and the Grace which worked it out!

Should your convictions of sin be already deep, then seek to dwell deep as to your faith in Jesus Christ. Much of the faith which passes current in the world is not faith—it is mere talk. We say we believe, but do we believe? We say "Yes, I trust," but do we trust? Is it a *real* trust? Is it such a trust as will stand the test of the dying hour? Are we really divorced from our self-confidences and in very deed married to our Lord Jesus Christ as our only confidence? O, to have solid faith—the faith which will survive the removal of all things and outlive the general fire! O, Brothers and Sisters, ask the Lord to deepen your faith, to confirm, establish and perfect it!

And you who are now coming forward to confess your faith in Jesus—if you have only a grain of mustard seed of faith, it will save you, blessed be God! But I exhort you to seek for larger degrees of it. O you who in these regions profess to abide in the Lord, may you dwell deep in Christ! When you get *upon* the Rock of Christ Jesus you are safe, but when you get *into* the Rock then you are happy! A man *on* the Rock will be subject to the wind and to the rain, to the damp of dews and to the heat of the sun. But, O, a man *in* the Rock—it does not matter to him what weather it is—whether it blows or shines, he is sheltered! O, to get fully into Christ—to have a deep experience of our union with Him and a solemn conviction deepening into a full assurance of our exaltation in Him!

Beloved, this is, indeed, to dwell in the Goshen of Christianity! This is to drink the choice wines of the kingdom. The nearer to Jesus the more perfect our peace. The innermost place of the sanctuary is the most Divine. So would I have you, beloved Friends, dwell deep in the matter of Christian study. He who knows himself a sinner and Christ a Savior, is certainly justified, but we desire to be something *more* than saved. The babe in Grace is the Lord's child, but we do not wish to be always *infants*—there is a time when we should be children no more. Christ's babes should grow up to be *men* in Christ Jesus and my earnest entreaty to all professors, both young and old, is, "Let us seek deeply to study the Word of God that by feeding upon it we may grow."

An instructed Christian is a more useful vessel of honor for the Master than an ignorant Believer. I do not say that instruction is all—far from it. There is much in zeal and, with but slender knowledge, a man full of zeal may do a great deal. But if the zealous man has *knowledge* in proportion, how much more will he achieve? Dig deep in your research into the Scriptures, beloved Friends! I am always afraid lest any of you should take your doctrinal views from me and believe doctrines merely because I have taught you to do so. I charge you, if I preach anything that is not according to the Lord's Word, away with it!—and though we, or an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, away with it!—do not regard our persons for a moment in comparison with Divine authority!

Study the Character of Christ. Do not merely know that He is Christ, but *who* He is—whose Son He is and what He is and what He did and what was meant by what He did. Know what He is doing and what He will do and all the glorious hopes which cluster around His first and His second advent—all the precious Truths of the Covenant of Grace and the glorious attribute of eternal love. Do not be afraid of what are called the "deep things of God." I do not mean that you young beginners are to give your thoughts to them to the exclusion of the simplicities of the Gospel—but at the same time, when you know the Lord savingly, go on to know yet more and more!

Comprehend with all saints what are the depths and heights. Entrench yourselves in the precious Truths of God's Word—no bulwarks are so strong. Above all things and beyond all things would I earnestly impress upon my beloved friends the need of deep living unto God. There is such a

thing as flimsy living in which you pray and pray—yes, but it is a superficial, routine exercise. O, how I bless God when I can pray deep dwelling prayers—when my heart groans unto God and pours out her very self into His bosom! And how delightful it is to sing one of the deep songs when the innermost heart praises and magnifies God! And how delightful to get into deep fellowship with Jesus Christ till the Lord, Himself, is revealed in you and you eat His flesh, drink His blood and have His life in you!

Dwell deep, Beloved! Those who dwell upon the preacher do not dwell deep—but those who feed upon the Master, Himself, are strong and joyous. Those who live only upon outward ordinances and do not practice private devotion and are not abundantly with God in secret communion—those do not dwell deep. Get to the roots of things. The gold mines of Scripture are not in the top soil—you must open a shaft—the precious diamonds of experience are not picked up in the roadway, their secret places are far down. Get down into the vitality, the solidity, the veracity, the Divinity of the Word of God and seek to possess with it all the inward work of the blessed Spirit. It is of small use to learn a doctrine unless, in the most emphatic sense, you learn it by heart.

John Bunyan intended this when he said that the Truths of God which he learned were *burnt* into him. No man in very deed knows a Truth of God till it has forced its way into him and permanently impressed its image upon him. You may have a doctrine hammered into your head by argument till you are quite convinced and yet no practical result will follow. But, O, if it is stamped into your *heart* with *Divine energy* the consequences will be very different. I am not a Calvinist by choice but because I cannot help it! The Truths of God I preach are in me, part and parcel of myself! I do not carry my creed, but my creed carries me! It should be so with us as to all we know of Divine Truth. This deep knowing, deep feeling, deep living—this it is that makes sound work and lasting work for eternity!

In one word, as the Lord is bringing in many recruits into this Church—and we are glad to receive the rawest among you—my anxious desire is that they may be trained to be good soldiers of Christ, able to endure hardness in years to come. We need you new plants to have a good foothold so that you may grow up into Christ in later years and bring forth fruit to His name. We are anxious that you should make a sound beginning, for, if a man is about to build a house, if he is unused to building he may think he is doing well if he sets to work upon the ground as it is and runs up several courses of bricks. But every man who is an experienced builder knows that instead of doing well he is wasting his time, since every brick must come down again.

If there is no foundation, all he builds will be worthless and the higher he goes the greater his loss. O, for a good foundation!—to be emptied right out by repentance and dug deep by conviction and the rubbish of self thrown out of you—this is a great blessing, for the deeper the foundation the higher the tower can be carried and the deeper our sense of sinfulness and nothingness the greater is the possibility of our being built up into the fullness, strength and perfection of Jesus Christ our Lord!



If any enquire what are our reasons for bringing forward at this time such an exhortation as this, I will briefly answer them. Brethren, it is well for us to dwell deep, because trials will surely come. Do you presume, O young Beginner, that your warfare is finished now that you have enlisted? Ah, simple Child, “let not him that puts on his armor boast as though he put it off.” You have come up to the starting point and you already think the prize is your own! O Beloved, you have but commenced running and your *life* is the length of the race! You will have to run and run till you shall lay down your race with your body—you will never have finished till then.

“What? But when I am saved, surely I shall have no more fights.” Hearken! The moment you are saved the battles will *begin*. “But shall I feel an evil heart after I am born-again?” Yes, and more than ever, for the new life that is in you will hate the old nature and the old Adam will hate the new Adam. There will be a conflict in your soul such as you never knew before and it will be perpetual! Do not think that Christ has come to send peace into your soul of the sort you look for—He makes no peace with evil, but draws the sword! There will be fights and wars within your spirit until you die!

Now, you must have deep work or else these inward trials will offend you. You remember John Bunyan’s wise picture, in “Pilgrim’s Progress,” of Christian and Pliable? Christian read his Bible and told Pliable of a beautiful city to which he was going where there were streets of gold and harps of the richest music. “And,” said Pliable, “I will go with you: I would gladly be there.” When he told him all about how Evangelist had instructed him and when he read to him the roll, “Oh,” said Pliable, “this is very pleasant. The hearing of this is enough to ravish one’s heart. Come on, let us mend our pace.”

But, as they went on, the road became very muddy and by-and-by their feet began to slip and after awhile they were both up to their necks in a slough. “Oh,” says Pliable, “is this that happiness you have told me of? If we have such ill speed at our first setting out, what may we expect between this and our journey’s end? May I get out again with my life, you shall possess the brave country alone for me!” And with that he gave a desperate struggle or two and got out of the mire on that side of the slough which was next to his own house and Christian saw him no more. O, if it is not a work of Grace when you get a little soul trouble you will say, “Ah, I will have none of this. I thought it was going to be all ‘hallelujahs’ and ‘bless the Lord!’ I did not look for depressions and bewilderments.”

Now, when I hold up my Master’s colors and invite recruits, I am by no means eager to enlist cowards! I need those who for God’s sake and by His Spirit will go through the Slough of Despond resolved to escape from the City of Destruction. You must “dwell deep,” then, or inward trials will send you back to the world again. There will be outward trials, too—for when a man puts on the name of Christ the world soon raises a hue and cry against him and they say, “Here is another of your Methodists,” or, “another of your Presbyterians,” and they straightway bring forth some of

their old stock epithets, hoping that to give a dog an ill name may go a long way towards hanging him.

They have a fine name for some of you who belong to this Church and they daub you over with it as plentifully as Noah pitched his ark. If the work of Grace is not deep in the heart of a ridiculed professor, he will say, "I don't see why I should be laughed at. I wish to be respectable and cannot afford to be lowered for religion's sake." Ah, yours is a poor religion if a set of grinning sinners can laugh you out of it! Only a plant in stony soil will be dried up by the heat of persecution—if you are grounded and settled, no trials of cruel mocking or any other assaults of the enemy will overturn you!

Again, there is a necessity that you should dwell deep, Beloved, for in these days many errors have gone abroad in the world—and many teachers of heresy and infidelity—and if you do not dwell deep they will shake you terribly. When a soul is once established in Christ and has eaten bread with Him and seen the things of the kingdom as they are revealed in Him, why, if all the infidels in the world were to come to such a person and object and object, and object—their efforts would not be worth a farthing—for they would not turn him the breadth of a hair!

Even though such a man may be in other respects ignorant and weak, yet, if he has been with Jesus, he will be wise and strong! Communion with Christ braces up the spirit! He who has been plunged into the sea of Divine fellowship is invulnerable. A certain skeptic had often troubled an aged Christian woman about many things and upon many points he had ridiculed her. At last she ended the fight by a declaration of faith which cleared all the ground at once. He said to her, "Why, you are not such a fool as to believe that a great fish swallowed Jonah! You cannot believe such a monstrous fable."

"Man," she said, "God's Word says it and if the Lord had said that Jonah swallowed the *whale*, I would have believed Him." Her faith in the veracity of God explained all difficulties and as she was forever settled upon that matter—there was no use in arguing against her. Men call this blind faith but I call it faith with her eyes open looking alone to God! When faith dwells thus deep, the heaviest shells that our foes can hurl from the Krupp guns of their logic are no more injurious to the fortifications of our comfort than so many paper pellets thrown by a schoolboy! No—

***"Should all the forms that men devise  
Assail my soul with treacherous art,  
I'll call them vanity and lies,  
And bind the Gospel to my heart."***

But you must dwell deep to be able to do that, otherwise arguments with skeptics and papists will be your terror and your danger—and difficulties will arise which will greatly mar your peace. May you have Grace to dwell so near to God that it shall be impossible for evil insinuations to enter into your spirit! Dwell deep, dear Friends, for there are seasons coming when all your Grace will be needed. I have never heard of a man coming to mischief through having too much Grace. I never heard, yet, of any person falling into danger through living too near to God. Nor do I think most

men suffer through being too careful in self-examination or too anxious to be right.

Presumption brings a thousand evils, but holy carefulness brings very few, if any. You will have to die, Beloved, soon. And though you may rejoice in the prospect of being with Christ, death, after all, is no child's play. He who would die triumphantly will need God's arm to bear him up. The river is in itself a deep and chilling river and if the Lord, who is Immortality and Life, is not with us it will be a *drowning* river. But if we have solid faith we shall pass over safely. But, mark you, no sham faith will help you, then.

What do those poor souls do who have dreamed of Heaven and discover when they are dying that their hope is a mere dream? O, what will false Church members do? What will the hypocritical deacon do? Above all, what will the unfaithful minister do, who, when he comes to die, finds that he has preached to others and has no part nor lot in this matter himself? What will he do when it is too late to take to another ship—to have all shipwrecked forever? What horror this must be! God grant it may not be so with any of you, and, therefore, Beloved, in fair weather look to your vessel.

It was a shameful thing, say what anyone will, to send the ship to sea we have been reading of lately, that was all worm-eaten and her iron, even her *iron*, quite rusted through. It would have been infinitely better to have had her well examined and not to have sent an unworthy ship out at all. But you see they ran on a beach and happily saved all the crew. But if you go to sea *spiritually* in a leaky ship like that there is no saving you—you are lost and lost forever!

O, if you have got into this professional boat which is rotten, get out of her though you lose all your comfort and see all your experience go down! Let it go down if it is a lie! It is better that a man be a beggar and be free than be a prince and be a liar. What care I for the gewgaw tinsel crown that men put on who strut upon the boards of a theater? Shall I esteem the mimic sovereigns and bow down to them as if they were true kings and princes? No! The poorest man who is himself is better than the grandest man who is a sham! God grant that we may stand the test of dying.

But there is a still more terrible test than dying, for some sleep quietly through death, but, oh, the *judgment!* I see two ponderous scales huge as hemispheres of this great globe and there I see the weights—the standard weights of Eternal Justice. Into yonder scales every one of us must go and what if there should be heard the dreadful sound, “Mene, mene, Tekel”? “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting!” There will be no hope, then, of making up the short weight or of coming up to the standard. Lost then, we shall be cast away forever! O, if you only get an inch towards Heaven, let it be a *safe* inch—for a safe *inch* is better than a counterfeit yard, and one drachma of Grace is better than a million tons of profession! One genuine tear is better than a sea full of washing your hands in outward ceremonies! Let your religion be real, dear Friends. “Dwell deep.”

And I will give this other reason—dwell deep because those who live near to God and are substantial in godliness, are the happiest of people. The top of the cup of religion may be bitter, but it grows sweeter the deeper down you drink. The cup at Satan's banquet is sweet upon the brim where the bubbles glow like rainbows, but, ah, the horrid dregs of it! The cup that Christ gives has no dregs—it has at its bottom the sweetness of the wines on the lees, well refined. And, O, the inexpressible sweetness when you get to the bottom of all—where there is no bottom indeed—when you get a drink of eternal joys and never-ending blessings!

While deep living gives a man more happiness, it also endows him with more strength. Some single Christians of my acquaintance are worth 20 ordinary ones because they enter into the very marrow of religion and then impress others with the reality of it. I know at this moment Christian women who are worth 50 ordinary professing women. I would not say the others are not very good, too, in their way, but they are superficial compared with these deep-taught daughters of Zion. O God, if the Church is to be strong it must be through those that dwell deep! And so, Beloved, let me close by saying, dwell deep, for you will glorify God the most. The nearer you get to the sun, the brighter you will be. The nearer you live to Christ, the more like He you will be.

Dwell deep, Beloved! Beware of levity in godliness! Beware of superficiality! Beware of skimming! Seek to enjoy the deep, the blessed, the true reality! The Lord grant it to you for His name's sake. But still, let me say to any who have not begun the Divine life, this is not for you just now. I talked to you last night and the night before and you know I bade you come to Christ just as you were. And so I do now, for saving work is coming and touching even the hem of the Redeemer's garment. If you have touched the hem of His garment, do not be satisfied with that! Go on to know Him more and long, like Simeon, to take Him up in your arms, and say, "This Christ is *mine*—the blessed Christ—*mine* forever and forever!" God bless you, beloved Friends!

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# **MOURNERS, INQUIRERS, COVENANTERS**

## **NO. 1752**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 25, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“In those days and in that time, says the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go and seek the LORD their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.”***  
**Jeremiah 50:4.**

THE previous part of this chapter declares the overthrow of Israel's cruel oppressor—“Babylon is taken, Bel is ashamed, Merodach is broken in pieces.” The Assyrian and Babylonian power had been the great tyrant of the ages and the Lord had employed it for the chastening of His people, until, at last, Israel and Judah had been carried away captive to the banks of the Euphrates and the land of their fathers knew them no more. This was the mournful song of the exiles, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion.” What a turn would come! In the day when God would reckon with Babylon and punish the haughty people for their cruelties and oppressions, then should Israel and Judah come to their own again.

“In those days, and in that time,” there would be hope for the down-trodden—the Lord would keep His appointments of Grace to the hour and, at the determined time, Israel would be free. “Surely the least of the flock would draw out the enemy” and escape from his power. God devises means for bringing back His banished ones and among those ways we usually see the overthrow of their conquerors. When, therefore, the Lord deals with Babylon in a way of vengeance it is that He may deliver His own people. See how the two things are joined together in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> verses— “Therefore thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. And I will bring Israel again to his habitation and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead.”

When Pharaoh is drowned, Israel is saved! When Sihon and Og are slain, the Lord's mercy to His people is seen to endure forever! The destruction of Amalek is the salvation of Jacob and the overthrow of Babylon is the restoration of Jerusalem! It was a very amazing thing that a nation so crushed and scattered as the Jews were, should come back from captivity—it was a very marvelous instance of Divine power and faithfulness, as it is written—“For Israel has not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of Hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.”

I will not talk much with you concerning the Chaldeans and the Jews, but I would speak concerning ourselves. We, too, by nature are in banishment, far off from our God and the abode of His Glory. We are not what we ought to have been, for the Lord did not make us to be sinners, but to be His happy and obedient creatures. Our present lost estate is not our true state. We are banished through coming under the power of our great adversary. Sin has carried us into captivity and we are in the far country, away from the great Father's house. It is a great blessing when the times come—and they have come—when there is an opportunity and an invitation to return. Today the power of the adversary is broken and we may flee out of the Babylon of sin. A greater than Cyrus has opened the two-leaved gates, broken the bars of iron in sunder and proclaimed liberty to the captives! We may now return to our God and freely enjoy the holy and happy associations which belong to the City of our God.

At such times, when the Lord is leading men to seek His face, questions arise, anxieties abound and difficulties multiply. The lost tribes could not come back from Babylon by merely *thinking* of it—the way was long and dangerous, the paths were unknown and difficult—and they who came back to Zion found the journey to be no promenade of pleasure or parade of pomp. It is so with the Lord's banished when He gives them a heart and a will to return to Him—they are not, therefore, restored to the Father's house at once—they may have to persevere through months of weary pilgrimage before they come to their desired abode. As I have said, returning times are anxious times. Men wander thoughtlessly, but they do not return without grave thought and serious consideration. I earnestly desire to be the means in the hand of God of answering questions, removing fears and clearing the way for those who have begun to seek the Lord. They mourn and I wish to comfort them. They ask the way and I would gladly direct them. They long to join themselves unto the Lord and I would, by His Grace, help them.

Last Lord's-Day morning was given to the fathers of the Church. Let this be given to the beginners in the Divine Life. May the Holy Spirit give us thoughts and words which may lead the seeker into the way of peace. Everyone who is really seeking the Lord desires to be sure that he is seeking aright. He is not willing to take anything for granted, since his soul is of too much value to be left in danger. He does not even believe in his own judgment of himself, but when he thinks his face is towards Zion, he still asks the way. He inquires, "Are my feelings like those of the truly penitent? Am I believing as those do who are justified by faith? Am I seeking the Lord in a manner which will be pleasing to Him?" They have so long been as lost sheep, going from mountain to hill, that they have forgotten their resting places and, therefore, in their confusion they are afraid of going wrong again—and so they inquire with eager anxiety.

Perhaps we may show them from this Scripture how others sought and how others found—and this may be a guide and a comfort to them—for although there *are* differences of operation and all do not come to Christ with equal terrors, or with equal joys—yet there is a likeness in all the pilgrims to the Holy City. "As in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man." The experience of God's people in its root principles is al-

ways the same. All coming sinners endure similar griefs and pass through similar struggles—the same desires, the same fears, the same hopes and, by-and-by, the same realizations are to be found in all those who seek the Lord their God.

Looking carefully at the text, we perceive that those who came back to Zion by God's gracious leadership were first, mourners; secondly, inquirers and thirdly, covenanters, for they ended by joining themselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant.

I. To begin at the beginning, the Lord's restored ones, during the processes of Grace, were first of all MOURNERS—"In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God." Oh, my Hearer, after all your sins, I will not believe that you are truly coming to God if there is not about you a great sorrow for sin and a lamenting after the Lord! Some seekers are made to drink of this bitter cup very deeply; the wine of astonishment is long kept to their lips; their sense of sin is terrible—even to anguish and agony!

I know that there are others who do not taste this bitterness to the same degree. It is in their cup, but for all that, the sweet love of Christ is revealed to them so soon and so fully that the healthful wormwood of penitence is veiled beneath the exceeding sweetness of gracious pardon. The clear shining in their case so soon follows the rain that they scarcely know that there has been a shower of grief! Surely, in their case the bitterness is passed, but is it truly there even though the other ingredient of intense delight in God's mercy swallows up all its sharpness.

Oh, Friends, you cannot imagine the Jews returning from captivity without bewailing the sins which drove them into the place of their exile! How could they be restored to God if they did not lament their former wicked estrangement? Shall the Lord press to His bosom an impenitent transgressor? How can there be peace to an offender as long as his offenses are not repented of? While the heart feels no compunction concerning its wanderings, no mourning over its guilt, no grief at having grieved the Lord, there can be no acceptance with God! There must be a shower in the day of mercy—not always a long driving rain causing a flood—but the soft drops must fall in every case.

There must be tenderness toward God if we expect reconciliation with God. The heart must cry, "How could I have sinned against so good a Lord! How could I have stood out against His love! How could I have refused my Savior and His abounding Grace! My God, forgive me!" These confessions, if truly made, cannot be spoken without sighs and sorrows. The multitudes of our sins cannot be thought of without a moving of the soul and a measure of heartbreak. Is it not written, "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him, and be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn"? A look at Christ gives life, but it also produces the tokens of that life, among which we find godly sorrow which works true and sincere repentance. Even a sense of pardon does not exclude this holy mourning—on the contrary, it increases it. The more certain we are that we are forgiven, the more do we loathe the sin which caused the Savior to bleed and die. The more sure we are of the Di-

vine favor, the more intensely do we regret the fact of our having been enemies to the infinitely gracious God. Of all the ransomed it is written, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them."

Observe that this mourning in the case of Israel and Judah was so strong that it mastered other feelings. Between Judah and Israel there was an old feud. They were brethren and it ought not to have been so, but they had become bitter adversaries of each other. Yet now that they return to the Lord, we read, "The children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together." O happy union in a common search for God! One of the first results of holy sorrow for sin is to cast out of our heart all forms of enmity and strife with our fellow men. When we are reconciled to God we are reconciled to men! I have seen those who had been fired with mutual hatred, loving each other when they have been alike under the power of the Spirit of God and bowed down with contrition! I am sure if you were to go forward as a sincere inquirer to ask the way to Heaven, if you met your worst enemy at the door and he said to you, "I am seeking mercy of God for my transgressions," you would grasp each other's hands and weep together.

If a man, professing to be a penitent, drew back at the sight of another who also came penitently to Christ, and said, "I can have nothing to do with *him*," I should unhesitatingly declare him to be a hypocrite! And even if he were sincere, I should have to tell him that to a certainty the Lord could not and would not accept his repentance or grant him peace. If you will not forgive your brother, how shall God forgive you? Do you pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," if you cannot forgive your brother his trespasses? A penitent sense of our own provocations of God will prevent our being provoked with men. As Aaron's rod swallowed up all other rods, so a sincere sorrow for sin will remove all readiness to take offense against our fellow sinners. In the secret chambers of their souls the truly penitent say, "Everything that I have against any man is gone, now, for I remember nothing but that I have offended against my *God*. If the Lord will forgive *my* wrong, everything I have had to bear from others shall be as the small dust of the balance, not worthy to be considered or thought of in the day of Infinite Grace."

I am trying to preach that I may help you who are seeking the Lord to discover whether you are coming in the right way. This shall be one simple test to you—you cannot be coming home to your Father unless there is some degree of mourning for sin, some smiting upon the breast, some bemoaning of yourself because of your iniquities. And again, for certain, you cannot be coming to the Lord aright unless there is a blotting out altogether from your heart of every offense that every man may have committed against you in past times. Judah and Israel, when the Lord has mercy on them, forget their enmity and recognize the brotherhood which they ought never to have forgotten! If I am speaking to any who are seeking the Lord, but seem to make small progress to His Light, I entreat them to inquire whether sins of enmity and wrath may not be lying at the door and blocking the way of Grace. Hasten to forgive freely, fully, heartily—and then pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." A family disagreement may seem to be a little thing, but



it may be holding many in the deadly bonds of the Evil One. Be reconciled to your brother, or you cannot be reconciled to your God!

Keeping close to the text, we notice, again, that the exiles on their return were mourning while marching. Observe the words—"going and weeping." We might have thought, perhaps, that when they began to go to their God, so much Light of God would break in upon them that they would cease to weep—but no, it is, "going and weeping." A true heart that is coming to God takes the road by Weeping-Cross—it feels its sin, its guilt, its unworthiness and it, therefore, mourns. The closet is sought out and prayer is offered, but in the supplication there is a dove's note, a moaning as of one sorrowing for love. When the prayer is over, there is dissatisfaction with the prayer, a smiting on the breast, as much as to say, "I pray but coldly compared with the way in which I ought to pray. I look not to Christ as I ought, but look half askance, I fear, at something else besides the Cross."

An honestly believing soul is fearful lest it should be mistaken in its faith. A truly praying heart is jealous of its own prayer, lest it should ask amiss. Probably no prayer is more sincere than that which is followed by deep regret that it is not more fervent—in the fact that the pleader is dissatisfied with his cry lies a proof that the Lord is satisfied with it! Our humility is the watermark which proves our prayer to be genuine. If we think well of our prayers and imagine that we have almost a *right* to be heard, we shall make a fruitless visit to the Mercy Seat. We may not claim of God as a matter of justice those gifts which are pure gifts of mercy. The Lord had no respect unto Cain and his sacrifice because there was no reference to sin, no type of atonement, no confession of guilt in that which he presented. Publicans confessing sin are justified rather than self-satisfied Pharisees. When a sense of sin leads to prayer, the prayer itself appears to be another cause for repentance because of the sin which mingles with it.

He who feels a humbling sorrow while he seeks his God is coming aright. Now the seeker opens his Bible and sits down to read the promise. And as he reads, he thinks what great mercy there is in it, but he adds, "Alas, how evil has been my life, since I have grieved the Lord of Love." Then the tears flow like the water which gushed from the smitten Rock, for as the Believer sees that pardon is real and that it is meant for *him*, he is all the more melted down with penitential sorrow. This is his song—

***"Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,  
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart.  
Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground  
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."***

Having grasped the promise and having looked to Christ and seen himself forgiven, the sincere soul continues to draw nearer and nearer to his God—and yet all the while he is filled with self-accusations and humility on account of sin. While he cries, "Blessed be the God of my salvation who has delivered me from my iniquities," he also mourns within himself, exclaiming, "Alas, that I should have so transgressed and grieved His Holy Spirit! I am ashamed at having rejected such wondrous love!" Thus, "Going and mourning" depict a gracious blending of activity and repentance.

Turning the text around, we read not only of “going and weeping,” but also of weeping and going. The holy grief here intended does not lead to sitting still, for it is added, “they shall go.” That word, “weeping,” is sandwiched in between two goings—“going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord.” To sit down and say, “I will sorrow for my sin, but never seek a Savior,” is an impenitent pretense of repentance—a barren sorrow which brings forth no cleansing of the life and no diligent search after the Lord. Such a sorrow is the first dropping of that dread shower of remorse which will fall upon the soul forever. Remorse is the never-dying worm and the unquenchable fire. No doubt, all that are now lost lament that they have brought themselves into such a ruin, but that lamentation is no evidence of reconciliation with God—many have a kind of repentance for having brought themselves into a condemned condition—but this is *not* genuine repentance if it stands alone.

When the prodigal cries, “I will arise and go to my Father,” *then* a work of Grace is certainly begun, but not till then. It is not enough to say, “I perish with hunger”—but when there follows upon it, “I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned,” then we have reached the true turning point—salvation has come to our house! True mourning for sin leads the sinner to the Cross. When you talk about repentance, if your repentance is with your back to the Cross, away with your repentance! If you are trusting to your tears, sorrows and grief—and not trusting to the blood of Jesus Christ—you are trusting in vain! Vanity of vanities! Your tears shall scald you if you trust in them and your groans shall be the echoes of your death sentence if you rely on them! That repentance in which a guilty man dares to fix his confidence shall be swept away as a thing that lacks the salt which would make it acceptable with God.

The way to repent is with your eyes upon the Sacrifice, viewing the flowing of the sin-atonement blood, marking every precious drop, gazing into the Redeemer’s wounds and believing in the love which, in death, opened up its unsearchable depths. All the while we must be saying, “My God, my God, I groan within myself that such a Sacrifice should have been required by my atrocious transgressions against You.” This is the holy mixture which is needed—going and weeping—but still going and seeking the Lord! We must not pass over that last word, “They shall go and seek the Lord their God.” This, dear Hearer, shall be a guide to you as to whether your present state of feeling is leading you aright. What is it you are seeking? “I am seeking,” says one, “I am seeking peace.” May you soon obtain it and may it be real peace, but I am not sure of you.

“I am seeking,” says another, “the pardon of sin.” Again, I pray that you may find it, but I am not sure of you, either. If another shall reply, “I am seeking the Lord; for I desire above all things to have Him for a Friend, though to Him I have been an enemy”—then I have good hope of him! I rejoice over the heart which is crying, “I want to see my Father’s face, and hear Him say, ‘I have blotted out your sins.’ I want to dwell with God, to serve Him, to obey Him, to grow like He. There has been a quarrel between Him and me—and other lords have had dominion over me—but now I desire that He shall be my Lord and King, and myself His loyal humble ser-

vant and beloved child. I hunger and thirst after God!” You see, Brothers and Sisters, we require a great many things in order to be saved, and yet only one thing is necessary.

I would represent it in this form—Here is a little child, picked up from the gutter, diseased and filthy, unclad, unfed. And if you ask me to make out a catalog of what the child needs you must give me a large sheet of paper to write it all down! And then I fear I shall leave out many things. I will tell you in one word what that poor infant requires—it needs its mother. If it gets its mother, it has all it needs. So to tell what a poor sinner needs might be a long task, but when you say that he needs his heavenly Father, you have said it all! This was what the prodigal needed, was it not? He needed his Father—and when he went to his Father, all his necessities were supplied.

Oh Souls, you are seeking aright if you are seeking your God! Nothing short of this will suffice. This may greatly aid you to judge whether you are in the right way or not. And so you see, first of all, the returning exiles were mourners.

**II.** Secondly, these mourners became INQUIRERS. We read in the second verse of our text, “They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.” They knew something, that is clear, for they turned their faces in the right direction, but having been born and nurtured in Babylon, the road to Jerusalem had never been trod by them—the route was strange and new. They knew within a little the quarter in which Zion lay and they looked that way, but they did not know all about the road—how could they? The saving point about them was that they were not ashamed to confess their ignorance. Minds that the Lord has touched are never boastful of their wisdom. There are many persons in the world who would be converted if they could but consent to be taught by God’s Word and Spirit—but they are such wise people—they know too much to enter the school of Grace. Jesus tells such, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

A sense of ignorance is the doorstep of wisdom! He shall never know, who is not willing to confess that he does not know. These exiles confessed their ignorance. They knew a little, but they felt that they had much more to learn before they could stand in the temple of God in happy fellowship with Him. It is clear from their asking the way that these inquirers were teachable. They not only yielded to be instructed, but they were eager to be taught and, therefore, they asked for information. It is a hopeful sign when children ask questions. If we can get them to desire knowledge, the desire will be more valuable than the knowledge, itself. The way, nowadays, is to cram the memory, but if our youths could be brought to *hunger* for knowledge and to ask questions, their minds would be much more effectually benefited.

It is a great mercy for a poor seeking sinner to have a teachable spirit, so as to pray, “Lord Jesus, write Your Gospel on my heart. Here it is, ready to be written on. Only tell me what You would have me do. I make no reservation—I am willing, by Your help, to do it. Or if there is nothing to be done but to sit at Your feet, tell me that, and I will do it as Your Grace enables me.” This teachable spirit is a great benefit to any man—it

is, in fact, a precious fruit of the Spirit. "They shall ask the way to Zion." They shall, therefore, be conscious of ignorance and they shall be willing to be taught! These are good characteristics, such as God accepts.

More than this, they will be anxious although they are right—"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it"—they are traveling in the right direction and yet they ask the way! They have looked westward from Babylon, towards Jerusalem. They have taken up the westward position which, in their case, had a hopeful meaning in it. They are setting out for the land of Canaan as their first father did when he left Chaldea. And as they have no map of the road, they ask for the way which leads from banishment to the city of their God! They are right, for their faces are Zionward and one proof of it is that they are anxious to keep right, or to be set right. You who are certain that you are right are very liable to be wrong! But those who make every inquiry of the Word of God, of the servants of God and of their fellow travelers are, in all probability, pursuing the right road. He that has never raised a question about his condition before God had better raise it at once.

The fullest assurance of faith we can ever attain will never excuse us from the duty of self-examination. When a man is most surely prospering in business, it will be wise for him to keep his accounts with care. If he does not attend to the state of his affairs, we shall suspect that his prosperity is a pleasing delusion which he dares not disturb. He who is most sure that he is right before God is most willing to look within—and he that will not search his own heart, but takes it for granted he is safe, may take my word for it that he is in a perilous condition! It is a strange thing that when men set their faces in the right way, they become careful and serious and deeply concerned, for they feel that their eternal destiny is not a thing to trifle with.

At the same time, note concerning those who are coming to the Lord and His people, that they are questioning, but they are still resolved. They ask their way to Zion, but they have set their faces like flints in that direction! They ask how they can be right with God, not as a matter of curiosity, but because they mean to be at peace with Him—by God's Grace, nothing shall turn them aside from their God and His temple—and, therefore, their anxiety to be right. They do not raise questions by way of quibbling that they may have an excuse for sitting still, but they question because they are in downright earnest. True penitents will have Christ or die! Therefore with solemn resolve, lest, perhaps, they should be misled, they ask their way, determined to walk therein.

Though they ask the way, we may remark, further, that they know where they are going. They ask their way to *Zion*. They wish to know how they can become fellow citizens with the people of God; how they can behold the great Sacrifice; how they can eat the true Passover; how they can be accepted worshippers of Jehovah and how they can enjoy fellowship with Him. They ask their way with understanding, for they know what their heart is seeking. They ask their way, not to somewhere or other, but to *Zion*—not to some imaginary blissful shore that may be or may not be—they seek God's own dwelling place, God's own palace, God's own Sacrifice! They ask boldly too, for they are not ashamed to be found inquiring!

And when they are informed, their faces are already that way and, therefore, they have nothing to do but to go straight on. May God grant us myriads of such inquirers!

Observe the right order—first they sought the Lord and then they asked their way to Zion. First God and *then* God's people! First the Master of the house and *then* the house of the Master! First that you may become His child, *secondly* that you may be put among the children. We pray the Holy Spirit to teach you this order well—first give yourself to the Lord and afterwards to us by the Word of God.

**III.** Now we come to the last matter—these inquirers become COVENANTERS, for they said to one another, “Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.” Oh, that word, “covenant.” I can never pronounce it without joy in my heart! It is to me a mine of comfort, a mint of delight, a mass of joy. Time was when theology was full of Covenant Truth. Nowadays these grand old doctrines are laid aside by our wise men as too commonplace for their enlightened minds! I do not believe that some modern preachers can *say*, “covenant.” They could not frame their mouths to pronounce it right. The doctrine of the “Covenant” is a kind of Shibboleth by which we may know the man of God from the false prophet.

Let the people of God take no delight in the man who does not delight in the Covenant of Grace. I rejoice in those old Scot books about the Covenant—Covenant Truth was so inwrought into the Scot heart that Scot peasants, as well as divines, perpetually talked about it. You remember the good old cottager's blessing over her porridge? I cannot repeat it in pure Doric, but it ran like this— “Lord, I thank you for the porridge, I thank you for an appetite for the porridge, but I thank you most of all that I have a Covenant right to the porridge.” Only think of that! A Covenant right to the porridge! Does not the promise say, “Your bread shall be given you and your waters shall be sure?” God has given to His children a Covenant right to be fed in this life with daily bread—otherwise we might not pray for it!

In the day in which the Lord put us into the Covenant by personal experience, He said, “No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly” and, consequently, He *promised* the porridge and any other provision which He judged to be “food convenient for us.” If we are in poverty, it sweetens everything if we can feel that our food and raiment *must* come to us, for the Lord has covenanted to supply all our needs! We pray the Lord, “Give us this day our daily bread.” How came it to be ours? Why, because it was *guaranteed* us in the Covenant—Covenant provision has made it ours and, therefore, we may ask for it as ours.

Have I any right to ask God for what is not mine in Christ Jesus? As sinners we ask for mercy and grace for the sake of Grace, but when we come to be children, we can also appeal to other attributes—and especially to faithfulness which is a great Covenant security. We can now say, “My Father, since I am Your child I am an heir of God, joint-heir with Jesus Christ—therefore give me of the fullness which You have treasured up in Him on my behalf.” The upper springs are ours and the nether springs shall not be withheld—

**“He who has made my Heaven secure**

**Will here all good provide.  
Since Christ is rich, can I be poor?  
What can I need beside?"**

Returning to the text, from which I have swerved a little, these inquirers become covenanters, for we read that they seek to be joined unto the Lord—"Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord." The mischief of our fallen state arose from our trying to be distinct and independent of our God. The younger son said, "Give me the portion of goods that falls to me." See, he has received his share in ready money and off he goes to the far country. What does he do when he penitently returns? Why he joins himself to his father! Nothing in the house is his—he has had his portion of goods long ago—but he lives at home because he is one with his father and cannot be shut out from the house. He is in communion with his father and so he is a partaker of all his father's goods. O that word, "joint-heirs"! What security and sweetness dwell in it! It is a grand thing to be an heir of God, but it makes it so much surer to be "joint-heirs with Christ." We have such fellowship with Jesus that we share all that Jesus has—our title to all good things lies in Jesus and in our being one with Him. "Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord."

Now dear Hearts, are you willing to be one with Christ and so to be one with the Father? Is not this the one thing you long for, that you may be so at peace with God through Jesus Christ that you may be joined with Him? You are a right-hearted seeker! In fact, you have already found the Lord, or else you would not find it in your heart to use such an expression as seeking to be joined unto the Lord! Next, notice for how long a time this Covenant is to be made—"Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a *perpetual* covenant." In our English army of late they have enlisted "short time" men. A good brother came to join the Church last week who is in the Reserves and I said to him, "You are not coming to unite with us for two sixes, the first six with the colors and the other six as a reserve man—you have come, I hope, to fight under the colors as long as life lasts."

"Yes, Sir," he said, "I give myself up to the Lord forever." No salvation is possible except that which saves the soul forever! It must be an everlasting salvation or no salvation! And yet some professors try to be off and on with God—they are wonderfully good on the Sabbath—but they slip their regimentals off on Sunday night and there is no accounting for them during the week. I do not know where these double-faced people are to be found on Monday night, but I fear they are up to no good! These chameleons change their color according to the light they are in. Their religion is a sort of acting—a kind of masquerade. Beware of a religion which you can put on and off! In the Capitol at Rome I saw one of the Roman Emperors and I remembered well His Majesty's brutal countenance! Soon after I saw the gentleman looking very different—I would not have recognized His Imperial Highness at all if it had not been for the name—the fact is, they had put another wig on him! Oddly enough, certain of their *statues* are so carved that a series of stone headdresses can be put upon them—and this makes a mighty difference in their appearance.

I am afraid that to some professors their religion is a wig, which so wonderfully changes them when they put it on or take it off, that you would not think they were the same people! A real man of God has his re-

ligion interwoven into the warp and woof of his being—he could not be other than he is, whatever his circumstances might be. Said one, “I hate such a man; he shall not come to my house; for I hear he is never ten minutes in a room but he begins to talk about religion.” Such a man the world may hate—but such a man the Lord loves! Oh, that our godliness may be as our eyes, our mouth, our countenance, our heart, our life—never to be parted with, but forever essential to ourselves! May we now join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant! The Covenant of Life requires a lifelong covenant! We do not take Grace upon a terminable lease—it is an entailed inheritance, an immortal, eternal possession!

Note, further, that this joining to God these covenanters intended to carry t out in a most solemn way—“Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual”—agreement? Promise? No! “Covenant” is the word! It is a profitable thing for the soul to covenant with God. Dr. Doddridge gives a form of personal covenant in his, “Rise and Progress,” and I have been told that some persons have written it out and even signed it with their blood. I believe that such a formal transaction may lead a soul into bondage—this covenanting is not to be performed quite so literally—but I believe that it should really be done.

That a man should give himself to the Lord in set and solemn form at some time in his life I believe to be a great help to his later perseverance. And if he will renew his covenant every now and then it may greatly help to his keeping it. In the ordinance of Baptism we have the best visible setting forth of that Covenant. Circumcision set forth the taking away of the filth of the flesh, but Baptism sets forth the death and burial of the flesh, itself—we see in it the emblem of our death and burial with our Lord. The Believer, thereby, says, “Now I am come to an end of my old life, for I am dead and buried.” And he becomes from that time on as one who has risen with Christ, to walk in newness of life. By that solemn act the Believer has covenanted that Christ shall be his life and that his old self, being dead and buried, shall no more rule and reign.

I have known some Believers, and I think they did wisely, take a part of a day for the special objective of giving themselves anew to the Lord. They have said, “Lord, I do this day, as a poor sinner, solemnly put my trust in Your Word, in Your Son and in His atoning Sacrifice. And, doing this, I feel that I am not my own, for I am bought with a price. And I now ask for Grace that from this day forward I may be wholly Yours. Not only I, but my wife, my children and my substance—all that I have I give to You, my Lord, admitting that nothing which I have was ever mine, but always Yours. I pray that You will be my God forever and ever, and be my Guide even unto death—and that after death You will receive me to Glory.” Such a covenant as this will bear to be looked back upon and repeated. You can gladly say—

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

You are coming to the Lord rightly, my dear Friend, if you are yielding body, soul and spirit unto Him to be His forever. There is no fear about your safety when you join yourself unto the Lord by a perpetual covenant.

One word more remains to be spoken. Those who came mourning and inquiring, when they became covenanters, felt that they had a nature very apt to forgetfulness of good things and, so, a part of what they desired in their covenanting with God was “a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.” God will never forget, yet may you pray, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” The fear is lest *you* should forget. What is your view of that possibility? Would it not be terrible? Think it over and say, “If I should ever forget the Lord Jesus. If I should ever forget my obligations for His great salvation and for the good hope of eternal life which He has given me, it would be infamous! God grant I may die sooner than deny my Lord!”

Where could we go for comfort if we had forgotten our God? What would remain for us but everlasting despair? Let us, therefore, pray the Lord that it may be a perpetual covenant that shall never, never, not even for an hour, be forgotten! Ask the Lord to write this covenant upon the fleshy tablets of your heart, that it may be there forever! O Zion, if I forget You, let my right hand forget her cunning! Sooner than I should forget You, O my God, suffer me speedily to die! Let me not live to become so false, so wicked as under stress of infirmity or temptation, even for a moment, to turn aside from You!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, take hold on Christ this morning with a renewed grip and say, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You! Suffer me not to forsake You. Hold me up and I shall be safe. I would be Yours living. Yours dying and Yours forever and ever.” Thus desiring and pleading, all will be well with you. May the God of the Everlasting Covenant bless you. Amen.

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# **“GOING AND WEEPING”**

## **NO. 3049**

**A SERMON  
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**“Going and weeping.”  
Jeremiah 50:4.**

POSSIBLY someone says, on hearing my text, “I like better to be going and singing.” Yes, my Friend, and I do not blame you for making such a choice. As long as you can go and sing in the name of the Lord, let nothing stop you from doing so. It is meet that we who have been redeemed by Christ from destruction and are heirs of Heaven, should make merry and be glad. We should “rejoice in the Lord always,” yet we must not despise others if they should seem to give more prominence to another phase of spiritual experience, namely, “going and weeping,” for there are sons of sorrow on earth who will undoubtedly be sons of joy in Heaven. Among the sweetest flowers that bloom in the Savior’s garden are those that, like the snowdrops and the lilies of the valley, hang down their heads.

It is also possible to be going and singing and yet, at the same time, to be going and weeping, for the mind may be in such a complex condition that while it has abundant cause for joy, it has a sweet well of happy grief within itself. There is such a thing as a bitter sweet—the worldling has that. But there is also such a thing as a sweet bitter—and the Christian often has that—so that while he is weeping, he can also be singing. While his soul is cast down within him, yet does he lift up his horn on high and rejoice in the God of his salvation! It is quite possible to blend these two experiences and the life of God’s people thus becomes like a rainbow, consisting partly of the sunshine of Heaven and partly of the raindrops of earth. They sing because of their present and future joy—and they weep because of the sad past and the relics of the Fall that are still about them—and the sins of the age that still surround them. I will not say that “Going and Weeping” is a better motto than “Going and Singing,” but sometimes it is the only one we can use. And often it may be joined with the other. I hope I shall be able to show you that “going and weeping” is a very choice way of living.

We see in our text, first, *a blessed combination*. When we have spoken of that, we will mention *when and where this combination should be conspicuous*. And lastly we will give *reasons why this combination should be manifest in our lives*.

I. First, here is A BLESSED COMBINATION—“going and weeping.” The two things certify each other, supplement each other and stimulate each other.

First, *they certify each other*. I mean that when a man is going away from his past sins, away from his old habits, away from self-righteousness, if that reformation is a work of Divine Grace, it will have a watermark upon it—there will be “weeping” with the “going.” If the prodigal had only said, “I will arise and go to my father,” we might have doubted the reality of his repentance. But when he added, “and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son,” then the tears of penitence, which must have accompanied such a confession, verified the reformation. Beware, Beloved, of all dry-eyed reformations! Certain preachers disparage and run down repentance—they say that it is simply “a change of mind.” That is true in a sense, but what a change of mind it is—not such a change of mind as a man makes when, instead of buying one hat, he buys another or, instead of spending a shilling, he saves nine pence out of it! I have heard preachers refer to repentance as if it were a trifling, insignificant alteration of opinion—but if that is all the repentance we have had, it is a repentance of which we need to repent! The old-fashioned repentance is the only one that will bring you to Heaven! If you do not leave—

**“The sins you loved before,  
And show that you in earnest grieve,  
By doing so no more”—**

you will come short of the repentance which the Holy Spirit works in the souls of the Lord’s own chosen people! There must be, as John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees, “fruits meet for repentance.” Or, as the marginal reading puts it, “answerable to amendment of life.” There must be true godly sorrow over your past evil conduct. There must be a loathing of yourself in the sight of God. And all the “going” that is not attended by “weeping” will be a bad going after all.

Now I will turn this Truth of God around the other way by reminding you that there are some persons who profess to be very repentant concerning the past—if they could live their lives over again they would not live at all as they have done—so they say and their tears flow copiously. I am not always pleased to see copious tears. When seeing inquirers, I have noticed that when men weep very much, they are either men of a tender spirit who are easily moved to tears, or else they have been so accustomed to drink that they have got into a maudlin state and cannot help crying. I would rather have tears falling inside a penitent than outside. Never condemn a man because he does not weep as others do—it may be that his heart is too full for tears. Nor condemn those who cry outwardly, for tears are often genuine evidences of repentance. I merely remark that a briny tear, in itself, is not a sufficient proof of that godly sorrow for sin of which the tear is only the index. And when I warned you against dry-eyed reformations, I meant those so-called reformations which do not include real sorrow for sin. External weeping

is quite a secondary matter, but inward weeping there must be in all true converts. Some people cry a great deal and talk a great deal—they say that their heart is adamant and that they are dead as a stone. Of course they are dead! They never were spiritually alive and the natural, stony heart has never been taken out of their flesh! There is a great deal of truth in what they say, but they have not learned it from the Spirit of God. They have caught certain phrases from the lips of gracious people and merely say what they hear others say—just as parrots do when they are taught to repeat what their owners say.

How am I to know whether this profession of repentance is genuine or not? Why, as I know the value of the “going” by the “weeping,” so I know the value of the “weeping” by the “going!” Is the weeping man’s life changed? Has God the Holy Spirit enabled him to lay the axe to the roots of those old habits of which he says he repents? Does he go on drinking and yet say that he mourns that he was a drunkard? Does he go on swearing and yet say that he laments his profanity? Is his temper constantly boiling over, yet he says that he repents of it? My dear Friends, there must be something more than that, for God cannot look upon our expressions of regret for the past as having any sincerity in them unless they are attended by a Grace-assisted effort to put an end to such sins for the future! There must be the “going” to prove the “weeping” to be true, as well as the “weeping” to prove that the “going” is in the right road.

In the next place, *these two things supplement each other*. That is to say, what is deficient in the “going” is supplied in the “weeping.” And what is not in the “weeping” will be found in the “going.” For instance, the “going” concerns the present. When a man is, by the Grace of God, renewed in the spirit of his mind, he is a different man from what he used to be—there is faith instead of unbelief, love to God instead of enmity against Him and holiness instead of sin. In fact, he is “a new creature” in Christ Jesus! And this “going” applies to the future as well as to the present, for the man will “go from strength to strength.” Led on by the Divine Spirit, he will “grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” He will tread the path of holiness till he enters the Celestial City, to go no more out forever. But when the black and dreary past of his sinful life again comes before his mind, he cannot help weeping. Yet even then he pleads the merit of the precious blood of Jesus and prays with penitent king David, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” When that black past is blotted out like a cloud blown away by the wind, the “weeping” and the “going” are not separated—tears have still to be shed because of the turning aside, the faltering, the halting even in going along the road which God has marked out for us. When we see men reclaimed from outward sin. When we mark the manifest change in their character we may call that “going” in the right road! But unless there is some “weeping” through intense heart-emotion, some manifestation of sincere

sorrow over that in which they once delighted and of regret that they have not attained to the high and holy things which ought to be the portion of all true Christians, there is something lacking.

Now turn the thought the other way and notice how the “going” supplements the “weeping.” The “weeping” is an evidence that we have learned our need. The “going” to Christ in faith supplies that need. The “weeping” is the acknowledgment of the disease. The “going” is the application to the Great Physician. The “weeping” mourns over our nakedness. The “going” takes us to the King’s wardrobe to put on Christ’s spotless robe of righteousness. The “weeping” is because of our emptiness. The “going” links us on to His fullness. It would be wretched “weeping” if we did not know the blessed way of “going” to Him of whom Paul wrote, “My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

I also said that *these two things stimulate each other*—and the truth of this statement is readily perceptible. Our “going” leads to our “weeping,” and our “weeping” excites us to “going.” The poor prodigal felt the pangs of hunger within his body and he felt in his spirit that he had sinned against his father. Therefore he said, “I will arise and go.” And I expect that as he went, his hunger quickened his pace—and that every pang of his emptiness, and every sight of his filthiness—and every consequent tear would make him speed with greater energy towards his father’s house. A deep sense of sin is often a blessedly impelling power to drive us to the Savior. I desire never, in this world, to be free from a deep sense of the bitterness and guiltiness of sin. Even though freed from the guilt of sin by the precious blood of Jesus, I still desire to feel what an abominable thing sin is, that I may go, eagerly and passionately, to my dear Lord’s wounds and get the one only effectual remedy for all my soul diseases. Light thoughts of sin breed light thoughts of the Savior. When our “weeping” over our transgressions ceases, our “going” to Him who “was wounded for our transgressions” is apt to also cease. Repentance and faith are like the Siamese twins. If one is sick, the other cannot be well, for they live but one life. If ever you are asked which comes first, repentance or faith, you may answer, by another question, “Which spoke of a wheel moves first when the wheel begins to revolve?” You know that they are all set in motion at the same time. So, when the hand of God sets our soul “going” in the right road, it also sets our soul and often our eyes “weeping.” And I believe that when our soul is really “going” towards God, it is with a deepened repentance over the past and a sincere “weeping” over the imperfections which it still has to lament.

So that the “weeping” stimulates the “going” and I am sure that the “going” stimulates the “weeping.” If the Lord helps you to grow in Grace and you get much joy and peace in believing, you will be sure to say, “What a fool I was to have been all those years a slave to sin and an enemy to such a blessed Savior!” And when you get very near to God and “walk in the light, as He is in the light,” you will see your imperfections more than you ever did before. When I meet with a Brother who tells me that he is nearly perfect, I know that he is living in the dark, for, if he

lived in the light, he would see how far short he came of the Glory of God. You think your white linen looks very white, do you not? But when the snow falls and you place your linen upon it, it no longer looks white. So, until you come near to God, you do not know what “perfection” is—but when you get even a dim perception of what His holiness is, you say, with the Patriarch Job, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Oh, that the Lord would enable us to have more true “going” in the way of holiness—growing in communion with the Holy Spirit, advancing in our likeness to Christ and becoming more humble, more prayerful and more fervent in spirit and more diligent in service, for then I am certain that the blessed art of holy “weeping” would be more practiced by us every day of our life! So, the “weeping” helps our “going” in the right road and our poor “going” leads to more “weeping” because we do not go better.

**II.** Now I leave the explanation of this strange combination of “going and weeping” to point out WHEN AND WHERE IT SHOULD BE MOST CONSPICUOUS.

And here, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *I begin with myself and with my Brothers engaged in the same holy office.* Scripture teaches us that with the sower of the Good Seed of the Kingdom, there should always be a “going” and a “weeping.” Here is a passage to prove my assertion to be true, “He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” We have a Christ-like task if our “going” is what it should be—to “preach the Word,” to “make full proof of our ministry,” to “keep back nothing that is profitable unto you,” to bring forth, as scribes instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, “things new and old” out of the Divine Treasury—to go after the outlying masses and “compel them to come in,” that our Master’s great House may be filled for the great Gospel feast to care for the sick, the sad and the dying—all this is included in the “going” of “a good minister of Jesus Christ.” But it will be a poor “going” if there is no “weeping” with it! Think of the Prince of Preachers—what a wonderful “going” was His! Ah, and what wonderful “weeping” was His—at the grave of Lazarus and over the Jerusalem sinners! How deeply He loved even those who rejected Him! Oh, that we who profess to be His servants had more tender hearts! Then we would say with the weeping Prophet Jeremiah, “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!” Paul was indeed a “going” preacher—“in journeying often” and, “in labors more abundant.” But what a “weeping” preacher he was also! You know how he said to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, in his farewell address at Miletus, “Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.” And to the Church at Philippi he wrote, “For many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ.” So these two things, “going and weeping,” ought to be

characteristic of every true preacher of the Word—and of all teachers and other servants of the Lord Jesus Christ whose office is of the like kind. I often feel that I can adopt Doddridge’s language and say—

**“Arise, my most tender thoughts, arise!  
To torrents melt my streaming eyes  
And you, my heart, with anguish feel  
Those evils which you cannot heal!  
See human nature sunk in shame.  
See scandals poured on Jesus’ name!  
The Father wounded through the Son—  
The world abused and souls undone.  
See the short course of vain delight  
Closing in everlasting night—  
In flames that no abatement know  
Though briny tears forever flow.  
My God, I feel the mournful scene.  
My heart yearns over dying men  
And gladly my pity would reclaim  
And snatch the firebrands from the flame!  
But feeble my compassion proves,  
And can but weep where most it loves!  
Your own all-saving arms employ,  
And turn these drops of grief to joy.”**

This combination, “going and weeping,” should be conspicuous, not only in those who plead with men for God, but *also in those who plead with God for men*. The best praying consists in “going” “boldly unto the Throne of Grace” and pleading there—yet they who win most from God are those whose hearts are most deeply affected—those in whom there is the “weeping” as well as the “going.” Such was the prayer of Jacob in that great night of wrestling concerning which the Prophet Hosea says, “He had power over the Angel and prevailed. He wept and made supplication unto Him.” Weeping is a wondrous help to those who would find their way to the heart of God! So, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, pour out your hearts before Him—pour them out like water before the Lord and when your heart is breaking for the longing that it has, even if you shed no outward tears, you have learned the sacred art of praying and you shall receive what you have asked in so far as it is according to the will of God!

Beloved, it is a sad thing to have to say, yet it is true, that *this “going and weeping” ought to be very conspicuous in backsliders*. I am always glad to see backsliders returning to their first love and restored to fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. But there are one or two things that I always like to see about such people—the absence of all arrogance and self-justification and the presence of deep humility both towards God and towards His Church—for their offense has been against God’s people as well as against God, Himself. When a Church member falls into sin, all the members have to suffer in their repute among men and they also have to suffer in their power with God and, therefore, the returning of a backslider should always be accompanied by manifest signs of the deepest contrition. Many speak of David’s sin, but say nothing of David’s penitence. Nathan rebuked him in a fashion that very few kings would

have endured, yet there was no anger in David’s heart against him for the stern way in which he told him of his faults. The 51<sup>st</sup> and other penitential Psalms show how melted by contrition David’s soul was—groans, sobs and sighs escaped from his heart instead of his former joyous music. There was a “going” and a “weeping” on the part of the repenting backslider! If he had known George Herbert’s quaint lines, he might have said—

***“O who will give me tears? Come all you springs,  
Dwell in my head and eyes—come, clouds and rain!  
My grief has need of all the watery things  
That Nature has produced. Let every vein  
Suck up a river to supply my eyes!  
My weary weeping eyes are too dry for me  
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,  
To bear them out and with my state agree.  
What are two shallow fords, two little spouts  
Of a lesser world? The greater is but small—  
A narrow cupboard for my griefs and doubts,  
Which need provision in the midst of all.  
Verses, you are too fine a thing, too wise  
For my rough sorrows—cease, be dumb and mute!  
Give up your feet and running to my eyes,  
And keep your measures for some lover’s lute,  
Whose grief allows him music and a rhyme—  
For mine excludes both measure, tune and time.  
Alas, my God!”***

But, Beloved, *this “going and weeping” should also be seen in Christians who are making progress in the Divine Life.* I believe it always will be seen in those who are diligently and carefully watching and striving against even the *appearance* of evil. That “going” which consists in a sort of feverish excitement, or in a sudden leap into a high condition of soul is to be very seriously suspected. I have found that I have had to fight for every inch of the road that I have ever traveled Heavenward. I do not think I ever gained any spiritual victory easily. If any here find the road to Heaven to be strewn with flowers and one in which they can run without being weary, I can only say that I have not found it so—and that if I did not wait upon the Lord, I should utterly fall. Brothers and Sisters, I pray you to suspect that it is presumption and not the full assurance of faith if you are always “going,” but never “weeping.” I have already explained that this “weeping” does not put aside the rejoicing, for a Christian may “rejoice in the Lord” all the more while he mourns before God on account of his own shortcomings, waywardness and faultiness. I think the most joyful soul among us may willingly sing—

***“Lord, let me weep for naught but sin,  
And after none but Thee  
And then I would, oh, that I might  
A constant weeper be!”***

And *this “going and weeping” should also be conspicuous in every student*—I mean not only students for the ministry, but students for Heaven, and that is what every Christian is. The Apostle John was a student, and he once saw, in the hand of God, “a book...sealed with

seven seals.” And when it was asked, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” and there was no man found worthy, what did John do? He says, “I wept much.” And often that is almost as good as knowing the original languages—indeed, it may be better! If the heart can weep over a Doctrine, it will get that Doctrine opened up before long. There is no chemical so strong as our tears for piercing through the hard shell of the Truth of God. Sincerely cry over the Truth and soon the Truth will enter your soul and you will know its inmost meaning! There is a way of “going” by bending the mind to the Truth of God, but there is also a “weeping” in the passionate longing that we ought always to have towards God’s statutes. “Going and Weeping” is a noble motto for the student.

So it is *for the Christian worker and for the Christian sufferer*. I will put the two together. The Christian worker goes and weeps—the Christian sufferer weeps, yet goes. I desire, while working for God in vigorous health, to maintain a lowly, humble, penitent frame of mind. But if sickly and laid low—and made to weep through bodily pain or relative affliction, I ask that I may have cheerful courage, so that if I cannot do much, I may do *something* for the Lord and still keep on “going.” I have seen and often is my spirit melted at the sight of one whose sufferings seldom abate, yet whose desire to serve God never abates, but rather increases and who would give anything if activity might take the place of patience. Blessed be those weak ones whom the Lord elects to suffer, yet who still seek to serve Him! And blessed are those who actively serve Him, yet sit humbly at His feet and feel that they are less than nothing and who weep tears of joy to think that God should so honor such poor worms as they are as to permit them to do *anything* for His dear name’s sake!

*This “going and weeping” ought to be most conspicuous in those of you who are not yet saved.* If you really want to be saved you will seek the Lord your God by hearing His Word and by much earnest prayer. If His Grace is really working in you, you will seek Him by casting yourselves at His feet and by looking to the great Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross and by trusting in His redeeming blood. But with all that “going” there will be “weeping.” You will loathe yourselves in your own sight—you will bemoan the corruptions of your heart and cry, “The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the soles of the feet even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.” Never cease your “weeping” till Christ has said, “I absolve you.” Sigh and cry until, at His dear Cross you have seen all your transgressions blotted out forever. O Sinner, I pray God to work in you this “going” and this “weeping!” I have already told you that the “weeping” is of no use without the “going” by faith to Christ, but I have also said to you that the supposed going to Christ is not a real “going” to Him unless there is also sincere “weeping” on account of sin. May your “going” be away from your sin and may your “weeping” lead you to look to Christ as you pray—

**“Lord God of my salvation,  
To You, to You, I cry!”**



***Oh let my supplication  
Arrest Your ear on high!  
Distresses round me thicken,  
My life draws near the grave—  
Descend, O Lord, to quicken,  
Descend my soul to save!”***

**III.** Our time is nearly exhausted, but I ask you to have patience with me for two or three minutes more while I mention a very few out of the multitude of REASONS WHY THE “GOING” AND THE “WEEPING” SHOULD BE CONJOINED IN OUR LIVES.

And, first, speaking to the members of this Church, I mention that which is always uppermost with me. We want to see a great enlargement of our Church, a deep and permanent revival of religion. We have had a foretaste of it, but we are sighing and crying for a great deal more. If we are to have it, there must be in the Church a “going” and a “weeping.” Every Brother and every Sister must be doing something for the Lord! You who can preach in the street, go and do it! You who can distribute tracts, go and do it! You who can teach in the Sunday schools, go and do it! You who can serve the Lord in the lodging houses or anywhere else—you who can speak to the ones and the twos—go, *go*, GO, in the Lord’s name, “go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature!” But you will go best where you go “weeping.” Ah, me, what cause we have for weeping! Planted in the midst of the greatest city upon the face of the earth—the greatest for population and, considering its Light of God, the greatest for transgression—what cause we have for weeping! If you knew what some of us have to know, you would know enough to give you heart-ache or heart-break. If you went into some of our streets on the Sabbath, you might ask, “Is there any Sabbath at all with all this marketing and bargaining?” Look at the gin-palaces—those doors of Hell are wide open in almost every street—as though they sold the Bread of Life, men multiply these places where they destroy both body and soul! I dare hardly remind you of the haunts of vice—I will rather speak of the agents of superstition. How busily they ply their deadly trade! Some damn men by open sin but these damn them by a lie which they offer to them as the truth of God! This city is a reeking dunghill and, “except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.” May God, in His mercy, preserve us as salt in the midst of the general putridity!

Some of you have even greater cause than this for weeping for, in your own houses there are those who love not the Lord. Your children are not the Lord’s children. Perhaps your wife or your husband loves not your God. You may well weep as you go! Sympathy and activity, compassion and diligence—with this sweet mixture every saint ought to be anointed. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is better still, for that anointing has among its choicest ingredients the power to give us the sympathy and the diligence that we need.

Now, Beloved Friends, I speak to you who are not converted. If you are seeking the Lord, there ought to be in you the "going" and the "weeping." The "weeping" as you think of Jesus and His great love to sinners like yourself. They despised Him, rejected Him, laughed Him to scorn but He still pursued them with love, as I trust He has pursued you. And I know some for whom He has, by His Grace, continued the pursuit until, at last, with a Divine art known only to Himself, He has made the unwilling, willing in the day of His power! For the love that Christ has to sinners, we ought all to feel our heart "weeping" that we should ever have offended such a Divine Lover. To transgress against His crown is high treason, but to transgress against His Cross is the sin of sins! I know not by what name to call such hardness of heart, such barbarity of spirit, such brutishness of soul. Think, for a moment, (for perhaps this may help you to go and weep), of the Lord, Himself, the King of Glory coming down among men and finding a poor shelter in His birth, little comfort in His life and no solace in His death. Very poor was He who could have worn the sun upon His head and the stars as rings upon His fingers! Very lowly was He before whom the tallest angel shrank into less than nothing in joyful adoration! Think of Him amidst the cold night of Gethsemane sweating great drops of blood! Think of Him scourged, spit upon, mocked and, at last, fastened to the cruel Cross to die the death of a slave—all for love of guilty men! Where are our hearts? Surely adamant is softer than our hearts if we do not weep to think that all this was for undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners! And for no motive but that He was so full of love to them that He must give Himself thus to suffer and to die for them. Let us go to His Cross and look upon Him whom we have pierced and mourn because of Him. And while we rejoice over pardoned guilt, let us mourn that we have pierced the Lord.

If nothing else will make us weep, there is one other reflection that should bring out the sorrow and also the activity of all Believers—and that is the fact that though we were once lost and far from God, we are now saved! There are sitting in this house hundreds, if not thousands of persons who were "heirs of wrath, even as others," "but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"! And now, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." "Oh, what amazing mercy," each saved soul may well say, "and all this for *me!*" Everlasting Love ordained it. Immutable Love has accomplished it. And unchanging Love will perfect it! The chief of sinners, yet chosen before time began! A sinner since conversion, yet loved with a love that will never change—it cannot increase and it never will diminish—loved with a love that will outlast the sun when its bright lamp has burned up all its oil! A love that shall outlast time so that when the angel shall "stand upon the sea and upon the earth," and swear "by Him that lives forever and ever," that there shall be time no longer, it shall not affect the heritage my soul possesses in the Infinite, Eternal Love of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!

Oh, how could I ever offend such a God as this? Shame on my heart! Gladly would I smite you that you could ever be an enemy to One who loved you before the day-star knew its place. And O base spirit that does not now serve God better, more ardently, more passionately, more perfectly, seeing that all this love has been spent on you! Beloved, God grant that we may realize, in all its sweetness, the meaning of our text, "going and weeping," and unto Him shall be glory forever and ever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
EPHESIANS 1:1-14.**

In this chapter we see what Paul, writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has to say about the possessions and privileges of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Verses 1, 2.** *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this is a benediction for you as well as for the saints at Ephesus! It is for all "the faithful in Christ Jesus." May you all have Grace without measure and may you all have "the peace of God, which passes all understanding," to "keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"! Grace and peace are both to be had by believing in Jesus.

**3.** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* It is right that we should bless God as He has so richly blessed us. Blessed be the Heavenly Father who has so abundantly blessed His children. How has He blessed us? "With all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or, things) in Christ."

**4.** *According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world,* That is the commencement of all the blessing, God's electing love. This is the Fountain from which the Living Waters flow. There would have been no stream of blessing to us at all if it had not been for this first primeval choice of us by God, even as Jesus said to His disciples, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you."

**4.** *That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.* Here is the blessing of sanctification—we are chosen that we may be made holy. To what nobler end could we have been elected? Is not this the very highest of our heart's desires—"that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love"?

**5.** *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.* Oh, what a blessing this is, altogether inconceivable in its results!—

**"Behold what wondrous Grace,  
The Father has bestowed  
On sinners of a mortal race,  
To call them sons of God!"**

**6.** *To the praise of the glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.* Here is music for you—“accepted in the Beloved.” Are there grander words in any language than those four? Oh, the joy of being Beloved, adopted, accepted by God the Father because of His beloved Son! Now comes something more.

**7.** *In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace.* Redemption from destruction, the forgiveness of our sins—we have all this through “the riches of His Grace.”

**8-14.** *Wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.* There is no end to the blessing which God gives to His chosen. He is always blessing us with blessings upon blessings, Grace upon Grace, and then there will be Glory to crown it all. Blessed be His holy name forever and ever!

—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 TEST FOR TRUE SEEKERS

## NO. 2566

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 17, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 15, 1883.

*“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.”*  
*Jeremiah 50:5.*

This prophecy of Jeremiah was concerning the destruction of Babylon. Israel and Judah had been carried away into captivity by the domineering power. The captives lived far away in Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion. The Prophet foretells that in the day when God should break the power of Babylon and cast down all their false gods, then should come the time when the captives should return to their own land. That seems a very simple observation, but it is full of comfort when we remember its symbolic meaning. By nature, all are captives under the power of Satan, sin and death. That is the great Babylon that has carried captive even the elect of God! And there are multitudes, redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, who are still in bondage under the powers of darkness. Now, just as Israel found comfort and hope, and had an expectation of getting back to the promised land when the might of Babylon was broken, so there is comfort for every sinner who desires to escape from the power of sin and Satan in this great fact—that Christ has broken the power of the old dragon. They met in deadly combat. All the hosts of Hell were mustered in that dark and dreadful hour when our lone Champion, whom God had anointed that He might fight our battles, met the whole of them and overthrew them! They bruised His heel, for He left His body bleeding on the Cross, but He broke the head of the arch-enemy. As He cried, “It is finished,” He dashed to pieces the powers that were arrayed against Him—and Babylon was then and there overthrown! Here is our hope.

Listen, you who are in the fetters of Satan, you may yet overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, for the Lamb Himself has overcome him and all who trust in His great Sacrifice shall come off more than conquerors! He has led captivity captive! He is the master of the situation and His adversaries He has utterly overthrown. *His* adversaries, I said, but they are also *your* adversaries—therefore let every sinner who desires to escape from the bondage of Satan, take heart of hope from the good news that in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Jehovah has triumphed over our great enemy! He has snapped in two the iron yoke, that His redeemed might go free! Thus, Babylon's destruction is Israel's salvation.

Notice, next, these words in the fourth verse—"In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together"—from which I gather that when men's hearts are set upon seeking the Lord, it is wonderful how neighborly they become! You know that the children of Israel and the children of Judah had separated from one another. They each had a king and they were frequently at war. They envied one another, though they ought to have been brethren. But now, when God begins to deal with them and they start back to seek their God, they become friends with one another! Well may we forget our enmities against men when we begin to repent of our enmities against God! It is time for a man to forgive his brother his trespasses when he, himself, prays to the Lord, "Forgive me my trespasses." And this must be done! It will be a very great hindrance to any seeker if he tries to find the Lord and yet, in his heart, harbors enmity against anyone who has offended him. I believe that there are many persons who long to find peace with God, who never will unless they first make peace with their fellow men. Remember our Lord's words—"If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

Will you go and ask the great King to forgive you the enormous debt that you owe Him when you are about to seize your brother by the throat because of the few pence he owes you? Then, surely you cannot think that God will listen to such a suppliant as you are! No, but when God brings people together to Himself, it is astonishing how close they come to one another! Israel and Judah will then be praying and weeping together—and seeking the same Lord. How often this has happened in times of revival! A man has stood up to be prayed for and he has been astonished to find that there was a Brother with whom he had quarreled, months before, who was pleading for mercy at the same time! Neighbors who have fallen out with one another, have come to the Tabernacle and found the Savior, together—and have been good friends ever since—for the God who reconciles us to Himself is sure to make us friendly with one another! Attend to this hint, then, you who are seeking the Savior! You who are encouraged by the fact that the power of Satan is broken, take care that you make up all quarrels and put an end to all envying and disputes, for thus you will be helped in seeking the Lord.

Notice, next, that the right way for a sinner to return is first to seek the Lord and then to seek Zion—that is, the Church, or Heaven, whichever you understand Zion to be. Verse four says, "They shall go and seek the Lord their God." And then follows our text, "They shall ask the way to Zion." John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* shows the way to Heaven, but we ought always to remember that he was not writing to show *sinner*s the way to *Christ*, but to show the way to *Heaven*. Those are two different things though, in some respects, they are similar, yet there is a difference between them. The way to Christ is this—"Believe and live." The way to Heaven is, *first*, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and then, after that, by His Grace, follow on to know the Lord and go from strength to

strength, from Grace to Grace, till, at last, you are prepared for the eternal happiness. There is a difference between seeking Christ and seeking Christ's people that should always be noticed—you are not to seek Christ's people so as to join with them until you have, first of all, found Christ! No man, no woman, no child, has any right to Gospel ordinances till first of all he has trusted Christ. When you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then Christ is yours and you are saved! *Then* come and join with the Church militant, below, and you shall, in due time, join with the Church triumphant above! But remember that the first business of a sinner is not to seek Heaven, nor to join a church, but to seek the Lord. You have to be reconciled to the God who made you—you have to experience the power of the God who alone can re-create you and make you a new creature in Christ Jesus—you have to seek the Lord.

*“But,”* says one, “God is a consuming fire.” I know He is. Therefore, come to Him that everything in you that can be consumed, may be consumed, and that God may give you an inconsumable life which shall dwell even in the midst of the fire and not be consumed! There is no Heaven apart from God, there is no peace of conscience apart from God, there is no purification from sin apart from God. The Lord still says, “Seek you My face.” But many make a mistake and go trooping off to join some Christian people. No, no! Come back—you cannot go to God that way! First, give yourselves to the Lord and then afterwards, “unto us by the will of God.” You must first be joined to the Head, then to the members! First to Christ, then to His Church. Take all things in the right order—begin and go on as God would have you do. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Let that also be treasured up in your memory, if you are seeking the Lord.

Another remark arising from the context is this, that many who seek the Lord seek him weeping. “The children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping.” Notice that combination, “going and weeping.” Some are weeping, but never going—and some are going, but never weeping. It is a blessed thing when we have the two together—practically drawing near to God and passively feeling deep sorrow for sin. There are two kinds of tears and I think that they who truly seek the Lord shed both of them—the one is a tear of sorrow because of sin, the other is a tear of joy because of pardon. I would like to have my eyes full of both, that with my joy for pardoned sin I might mourn that I pierced the Lord, grieving that I transgressed God's Law, yet rejoicing that I am forgiven! May you, dear Friends, have these tears standing in your eyes! They never blind the eyes—they are like a bright magnifying glass through which we can more clearly see the mercy of God.

Are any of you beginning to turn to the Lord and do you feel more sad than you ever did before? Well, if so, I am not sorry for you—that is the way that many go to Christ —“going and weeping.” The old Puritans used to say that “the way to Heaven is by Weeping-Cross”—by which they meant that repentance is necessary to salvation—and so it is! He who has never sorrowed for sin has never rejoiced in a Savior! And the more you rejoice in Christ, the more you will sorrow for sin. Perhaps the last

repentance of a good man is the deepest that he ever feels. I mean that he will hate sin more when he stands at the gates of Heaven than he did when he first of all saw the way to pardon through the Atoning Sacrifice. Repentance is not a thing to be once manifested and then to be done with forever—repentance and faith go hand in hand all the way to Heaven! Good old Rowland Hill said there was only one thing about Heaven that he regretted and that was that he would not be able to shed the tears of repentance there, for God will wipe all tears from all faces there. But till we get to Heaven, at any rate, let us always be repenting of sin, always lamenting that we ever plunged into it and, at the same time, be always rejoicing that our sins are forgiven!—

***“My sins, my sins, my Savior!  
How sad on You they fall,  
Seen through Your gentle patience,  
I tenfold feel them all.  
I know they are forgiven,  
But still their pain to me  
Is all the grief and anguish  
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.”***

Now, with all this by way of preliminary, though indeed it is part of the sermon, I come to that portion of Scripture which really forms my text—“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.” This passage may be used as a test by which to try true seekers. I will introduce to you four or five sorts of seekers and also some who are not seekers at all.

**I.** First, there are some PERSONS WHO NEITHER ASK THE WAY TO ZION NOR SET THEIR FACES TOWARD IT.

There may be some such persons to whom I am now speaking. *Their relationship to Christ is that of utter indifference.* There are millions around us in this sad condition. They are not active opponents—they do not think enough on the things of Christ even to take that position. They regard eternal things as though they were mere trifles and they look upon temporal things as though these were all-important. They call this, “minding the main chance,” and, “looking after the principal thing.” But as to their souls, God, Heaven and eternity, they are utterly indifferent.

Let us think, just for a minute or two, of *what it is to which they are indifferent.* They are utterly indifferent to God. He made them and yet they never think of what they owe to their Creator. Every minute that they live, the breath in their nostrils is His gift, yet they make Him no return—He is not at all in their thoughts. You know how many there are who live as if there were no God at all. This is a terrible thing because God will require all this at their hands. As surely as they live, if they break His laws, they will be punished. If they neglect His great salvation, He will visit it upon them. He knows all their indifference and He is grieved about it all. Hear how He, Himself, puts it—“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken. I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” It is no slight thing to be utterly indifferent to Christ, to Him who loved mankind so much that He could not abide in Heaven and



let them perish, but, must come here and be a lowly, suffering, despised, crucified Man, that He might redeem men. Yet, after all that He has done, which must have astonished the angels in Heaven and which ravishes the heart of every gracious man on earth, these people do not care—

***“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?  
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?”***

And they are also utterly indifferent with regard to themselves. They expect to have troubles in this life; but as to that which comforts many of us under these troubles, they do not wish to know about it. They see many of God’s people calm and quiet under pain and bereavement and sorrow—and they are sometimes curious to know what the secret is—yet their curiosity is not strong enough to stir them from indifference. Many never cross the threshold of the house where Christ is preached. Some of your neighbors know, by the sound of the bells, that it is the Sabbath, but that is all the Sabbath there is for them. Oh, this is indeed sad! It ought to weigh heavily on every tender heart that there should be multitudes who neither ask their way to Zion nor turn their faces toward it. Alas, that they are indifferent to their own eternal state! They know that they will die—it is very rarely that you meet with a man who will question that—and some of them believe that when they die, there is another state and there will be a final judgment and a giving in of an account before the last tribunal! Yet, for all that, they go on from day to day “like dumb driven cattle.” As the ox goes to the slaughter and as the lamb goes to the shambles, so do these people descend into their graves without anxiety and without thought.

Alas, they will not think of that awakening which is as certain as death itself, of that rising again which is an undoubted fact and of that dread appearing before the burning Throne of God where eyes of fire shall read their hearts and where the tongue of thunder shall proclaim their deeds recorded in God’s Book of Remembrance. Oh, no, they have no care for all this, it is all a trifle to them! And there are many such. Pity them, dear Friends, and pray for them—and do it all the more because “such were some of you.” I saw, yesterday, many working men who, I believe, have really trusted in Christ, and I was charmed by the way in which they were brought to the Savior by their fellow workmen. But some of them, who were at least 40 years of age, told me that they never remembered praying or having a religious thought at all till the Lord met with them. And He that can meet with some can meet with others, too, so let it be our prayer that He will do so to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

Often, when a man is indifferent about Divine things, *it is because he vainly imagines that he is wise.* I do not think that you and I ought to meddle with everything. There are some things we may as well let drift, but this will never do about God and eternity! I may be indifferent to God, but He is not indifferent to me. I may forget Him, but He has not forgotten what I do, think and say. As surely as I live, I shall have to stand before His judgment bar. I may despise Christ, but I shall have to

see Him sitting on the Great White Throne. And if I will not have Him as my Savior, then I must appear before Him as my *Judge*—so that my indifference is vain!

Another thought that ought to come home to many is that *this indifference is so foolish*. When a man is indifferent to his own happiness, then he is a fool! If a man were sick and there were some medicine that would heal him, but he was indifferent to it, you would be very grieved for him, but you would say that he was most foolish. If a man were miserably poor, although he might be rich, but he was indifferent about it, you would think him insane. Now, there is no joy like the joy of salvation in Christ! There is no bliss under Heaven that can parallel the bliss of the man who has committed himself into Christ's hands and is resting calmly in Him! Yet these indifferent people do not care about it. Poor souls, they do not know the value of Christ. Well said the poet—

***“His worth, if all the nations knew,  
Surely the whole world would love Him, too.”***

And if they knew the pleasure of religion, they would want to enjoy it. They say that we are a set of long-faced, miserable, melancholy folk. I do not think we look so! Do we? At any rate, we do not feel so—

***“The men of Grace have found  
Glory begun below.”***

Ours is a singing religion, ours is a joyful faith that helps us to surmount the trials of each passing hour. Oh, that men would not be indifferent to this, but would begin to ask their way to Zion with their faces toward it!

**II.** Now, secondly, there is another set of people who ASK THE WAY TO ZION WITH THEIR FACES TURNED AWAY FROM IT.

We meet them, every now and then—some of them come here—their faces are turned away from God, but they have a pew here and they like to hear about the Gospel. I cannot make some people out—they take the trouble to go out on the Sabbath to hear about the way to Heaven, yet they deliberately walk in the opposite direction! I never dare say again what I did once, that I almost wished that some who had heard the Gospel for a number of years and never accepted it, would stay away if they did not mean to have it—that they might make room for somebody else who would receive it. I have always been sorry that I said that, for there is one who has stayed away ever since—and for whose conversion I have often prayed—but he said there was commonsense in my remark and as he did not intend to have salvation, he would come no more to hear of it. And he never has, so far as I know. I sometimes hope that the very honesty of the man may yet compel him to think—he has a love to this place and to me, though he does not come—and I pray God that even that which seemed so sad a result of what I said may turn out for good in the end. But I will not say it again.

Still, it is a very strange thing that any should say, “Tell us the way to Heaven,” and yet, when we have told them, that they should set off walking the other way! “Go due east,” you say. But they go due west, directly. Now what can be the reason for that? A man is secretly a drunk, or he is unchaste, or a woman is living in secret sin, yet always found listening to the Gospel. Why is this? *Do you wish to increase your own condemnation?*

Do you deliberately intend that the Gospel, which you will not permit to be a savor of life unto life to you, shall be a savor of death unto death to you? Do you really choose that? I cannot think that it is so!

I hope that you do not come *in order that you may hear of things to quarrel with and quibble over*. You do not ask your way to Zion that you may find fault with the way, or pick holes in the reply of him who tries to answer your enquiry—may that be far from you! Yet there have been some, no doubt, who have been guilty of that sin. Still, let me say, even if you come to hear a sermon to ridicule it, come and hear it! I remember one who was, afterwards, an eminent saint, who first went to hear Mr. Whitefield because he was a great mimic. He wanted to hear him so he could later mimic him in a club which they called the “Hell Fire Club.” “Now, my mates,” he said, “I am going to give you a sermon that I heard Mr. Whitefield preach yesterday.” And the man repeated the sermon, but he, himself, was converted while he preached it—and so were several of his mates who had met for blasphemy! So, come even if you come for such an evil purpose as that! Still, it is a sorrowful business that there should be men who ask the way to Zion and turn their faces in the opposite direction. Turn them, O God, and they shall be turned!

**III.** There is a third class of people WHO ASK THE WAY TO ZION, BUT TURN NOT THEIR FACES.

They are not opposed to religion, yet their faces are not turned towards it. I do not understand them—they are always wanting to know how they can be saved and to know all about salvation, but they do not seem to wish to have it—their faces are not set that way.

What is the meaning of their conduct? *Is it an idle curiosity?* Do they want to understand theology as others wish to understand astronomy or botany? That is almost like drinking wine from the sacred vessels, as Belshazzar did—and you know how that night he was slain. When men who have no part nor lot in this matter are discussing this doctrine and that, it is as if those who are not God’s children were playing with the children’s bread, or pulling it in pieces.

Why do such people ask about salvation? *Do they dream that mere knowledge will save them?* Do I address one here who imagines that an orthodox creed will save him? Alas, I suppose that no one is more orthodox than the devil, yet no one is more surely lost than he! You may get a clear head, but if you have not a clean heart, it will not avail you at the last. You may know the Westminster Assembly’s Catechism by heart and you may heartily denounce all who err from that statement of sound doctrine. But unless you are born again, it will not benefit you. Did you say that you believed the 39 Articles? There is one article that is essential—“You must be born again”—and woe to that man who has not passed through that all-important change!

Perhaps, however, some of those who are asking their way to Zion, but have not set their faces that way, are *asking with a view to quiet their consciences*. It makes them feel better to hear a sermon. Oh, you are strange people! There is a man who is very hungry—does it make him feel that his appetite is appeased when he smells the dinner, when he

sees the plates arranged upon the table and hears the clatter of the knives? Do you think that if you are very poor, you will get rich by being allowed to walk through the Bank of England and see the great quantities of bullion there? It is strange that you should imagine this, for it might rather increase, than diminish, your sense of poverty to know that there is so much wealth while you are not a partaker of it.

*Is it that you are trying to store up some little knowledge to use, by-and-by?* Are you asking the way to Zion that you may run in it when it becomes convenient to you? Ah, Sir, are you making a convenience of God? Do you intend to make Him stand by while you attend to more important things? What is it that is to come before God? I knew a man who was religiously inclined in many respects, but there was a harlot who stood before God. I knew another who had many serious thoughts about God, but in his case it was the wine cup and the companionship of certain friends that stood before God. Ah, how many things there are that are earthly, sensual, devilish—yet men say that God must wait till they have served their turn with these things! Sirs, He will not turn lackey to you! And it may come to this as it did with Felix—that you will never have a convenient time for God—and God will never find a convenient time for you! Oh, let it not be so! If you ask the way to Heaven, let it be with your faces toward it.

**IV.** There is a fourth set of people WHO HAVE THEIR FACES TOWARD IT, BUT THEY DO NOT ASK THE WAY.

There are not so many, perhaps, in this class as in those I have been describing, but there are some of them. They are resolved to be saved. They are anxious to find Christ. They are willing to join the Church. They are, above all, longing to get to Heaven—but they do not ask the way. *Do they fancy that there are many ways?* How many roads are there to Heaven? This Book declares that there is only one! It says, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” And Jesus Himself says, “I am the way.” Not, “I am one of the ways,” but, “I am *THE* way.” I quoted to you, just now, one of His last sayings—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Well, suppose that he does not believe, what then? “He that believes not shall be damned.” Thus, you see, the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ is intolerant of all compromise! It will not admit that there may be other ways to Heaven and other methods of salvation. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” There are some people who, if they happen to be born of parents who believe the Gospel, will follow their father and mother in the good way. But if they happen to be born of ungodly parents, they imitate them. If my father were blind, I do not see any reason why I should put my eyes out. And if any of you happen to have an extremely poor father, do you, therefore, say, “Well, I shall never try to rise above his condition. I shall be just as poor as he was and feel a pleasure in being so”? Surely you do not talk like that! Then why should you follow your parents in sinning against God? If the father is wrong,

there is the more reason why the child should be earnest to be right! There have been enough in your family who have been lost—why should not you be the first to be saved, if there have been no others? Think about this important matter. Enquire the way to Zion.

Do you ask, “Where are we to enquire?” Well, first of all, *enquire of the Book*—

**“This is the judge that ends the strife,  
Where wit and reason fail,  
Our guide to everlasting life  
Through all this gloomy vale.”**

When you have enquired of the Book, then go on your knees and *enquire of the blessed Spirit* who inspired the Book! If you cannot understand the Bible, ask the Author of it to explain it to you. He gives wisdom, therefore ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Ask the *Lord Jesus Christ* to manifest Himself unto you as He does not unto the world, and to lead you in His way. I may also say, but quite secondarily, *enquire of His servants*. Go and hear the Gospel! Do not go where there is fine preaching and clever preaching—unless it is true Gospel preaching. The people of this land have had to get Acts of Parliament passed to prevent the sale of adulterated goods—and in London people try to buy milk that has at least *some* milk in it—yet they will go into a place of worship and say, “There is a clever preacher here.” Yes, but is it the Gospel that he preaches? “Oh, they have a very fine organ!” But is the Gospel fully proclaimed there? “You can see all the colors of the rainbow on the backs of the fellows who perform at the altar.” Yes, but is the Gospel preached there? That is the one point on which everything depends—all the rest is of little account. They may try to sell us what they like, but if it is not the genuine article, we will not buy it—if it is not the Gospel, what do we want with it? We want that which will really save us in time and through eternity, so we ask for it of those who preach *the Gospel*, and who preach *nothing but the Gospel*.

And I may also add that you will do well to *ask about the way from many of God’s people*. Although they do not preach, they will be glad to tell you what they know, and many godly men and women can explain to you just what you need to know. I like to see men, when they are in earnest, seeking out some Christian friend and saying, “Tell me, now, how did you find Christ?” It is good for a young woman to go to the teacher of her class, or to some matronly Christian, and say to her, “Let me tell you of my doubts, dear Sister. You have gone a good way on the heavenly road—tell me how I can get into it.” It is a good thing, thus, to enquire of those who are in the road. You may often get your mistakes rectified in this way and, before you have wandered very far, you may be guided into the right road.

**V.** Now to close. Those are the best enquirers WHO TURN THEIR FACES TOWARD ZION AND YET ARE WILLING TO ASK THE WAY.

Is that *your* condition, dear Friend? Have you set your face towards Christ, towards holiness and towards Heaven, and are you asking the way? Well, then, let me say two or three things for your encouragement.

the first is, *Thank God that your face is toward it and that you are asking the way—*

***“My seeking His face  
Is all of His Grace,”***

said one. And so it is. Thank God for the Grace that has made you feel uneasy in sinning, for the Grace that has made you wish for Grace, for the Grace that has made you long to be a Christian! Set a high value on this little Grace, for it is no small thing, after all, and, as you think of it, bless God for it!

Remember, next, that *you must act as far as you know how to act*. If the Lord has shown you the right pathway, go in that pathway. Perhaps you say, “There are many difficulties there.” Never mind the difficulties—cross each bridge as you come to it. “Oh, but there are some things that I do not understand!” No doubt there are! And there are many things that I do not understand. And there are some things that I do not particularly want to understand! If I understand what really concerns my eternal welfare and the good of my fellow men, and the glory of God, it is enough for me. As far as I have gone at present, I can say, with Jack the huckster—

***“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All in All.”***

That map of the road has lasted me so far and I would advise you to keep to it, at least for the present. “But I want to know all about the Doctrine of Election and so on.” Do you? Well, you shall know, one of these days, but just now, you need not think so much of that glorious Truth of God as the Doctrine that God has sent His Son into the world that men might live through Him! You keep to that line of Truth at present. You have your face turned toward Zion, then go straight on! You have asked the way and you have learned enough to know that Christ is the way—then let Him be the way for you. And if there is anything else to be learned—and there is—God shall reveal even this to you.

Of some of the grand Doctrines of the Gospel our Lord might say to you as He said to His disciples, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.” You shall bear them, by-and-by. When your little boy gets his first spelling book, does he begin to whimper and say, “I can’t learn A B C, Mother, because my brother Harry learns Greek, and I must learn Greek first”? You say, “My dear John, learn your A B C now, and you shall get to Greek by-and-by if it is necessary.” So, dear Friend, you just keep to such texts as these—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” If you are now asking the way to Zion with your face toward it, remember that the Lord has made the way very plain. He knew that limping feet would travel over it, so He gathered out the stones. He knew what dim eyes some of the travelers in it would have, so He lit it up with many a bright lamp and He, Himself, is still the Light of it!

He knew what a heavy burden you would bear until you began to tread that narrow way, so He had an open sepulcher set close by the Cross, that everyone who looks to Him on that Cross might feel his burden roll off his back, to be buried in that sepulcher never to be found again! O dear Friend, run in that road that Christ has made so plain!

Trust, *trust*, TRUST, TRUST! That is the way—TRUST! Trust God as your Father! Trust Christ as your Redeemer! Trust the Holy Spirit as your Renewer. Have done with yourself! Have done with everything but your God, your Savior, your Comforter. Trust in Jesus and you have found the way! You are saved, your sins are forgiven you, you are, “accepted in the Beloved.” You are not yet in Heaven, but you shall be, in God’s good time. You have not yet joined Christ’s visible Church, but you are welcome to do so—do not postpone it. You have not yet joined the Church triumphant, but you shall do so one of these days. Therefore, be of good cheer, and the Lord bless you! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 31:18-26.**

**Verse 18.** *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.* It is God who is speaking here. There is never a moan, or a sob, or a cry, or a sigh, but God hears it. The Lord is very quick of hearing for the sorrows of penitent sinners. There is no mistake about this matter, for He says, “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.”

**18.** *You have chastised me, and I was chastised.* “No good came of it. I smarted, but I was not benefited—You have chastised me, and I was chastised.”

**18.** *As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn me, and I shall be turned, for You are the LORD, my God.* There was never a heart that spoke thus, unless Grace had been secretly at work with it. And depend upon it, if God has brought us to this point, we are ready to declare Him to be our God and are anxious to be the subjects of His converting Grace. It is because God has looked upon us in His wondrous love. If you desire to be turned towards God, you are already, in a measure, turned towards Him. The desire to feel is a kind of feeling! The longing to believe has some measure of faith in it! Be comforted by this thought, yet be not content to rest where you are, but go on till you have all the blessing that the Lord is waiting and willing to bestow upon you! Happy is the man who is saying to God at this moment, “Turn me, and I shall be turned, for You are the Lord, my God.”

**19.** *Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* When a man has “sown his wild oats” and God, in mercy, helps him to come back from such a dreadful field as that, he recollects what he has been and he is ashamed of himself. Sometimes he is more than half ashamed to mingle with God’s people, for he is afraid that they will have nothing to do with such a wretch as he has been. But he is, most of all, ashamed to come near to his God because of the sins of his youth. Yet listen to the Lord’s gracious words concerning him.

**20.** *Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.* Here we

seem to look into the very heart of God and He is represented to us as though He had contending passions within Him. He speaks angrily one day, but He earnestly remembers mercy the next. God changes not, yet His dealings with men must change because their state varies so much. He sometimes speaks in great wrath while they hold to their sin, but love lies even at the bottom of that wrath—and soon He changes His tone and speaks comfortably—and puts away the sinner's sin when He sees that His anger has worked the due result and the sinner quits his sin to come to his God. Some of you understand this treatment, for you have experienced it. But you cannot comprehend the fullness of mercy and love that is in the heart of God towards the repenting sinner.

**21, 22.** *Set up signposts, make high heaps: set your heart toward the highway, even the way which you went: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these, your cities. How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter? How long will you be seeking comfort where you cannot find it and pleasure where nothing but misery can come?*

**22, 23.** *For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man. 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. Jerusalem was cursed because of sin, but God declared that in His great mercy He would make it to be a place of blessing, and men should speak of it as the, "habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness."*

**24-26.** *And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, farmers and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me. He that can sleep and dream as Jeremiah did, may well say that his sleep was sweet to him. May God grant to us, whether we sleep or wake, to be always with Him! Then our time shall be indeed sweet unto us!*

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—27, 609, 514.**

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



# ENQUIRING THE WAY TO ZION

## NO. 3035

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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*“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.”*  
*Jeremiah 50:5.*

I am going to take these words out of their context and use them as I believe they may very properly be used—as a description of those whom God is about to save. This is one of the signs and tokens of a coming salvation, “They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.”

You remember that Zion of old was *the place, above all others, where God manifested Himself*. To ask the way to Zion means, therefore, *to seek after God*, to desire to be reconciled to God, to long to be pardoned and accepted by God.

Zion was also the only place *where the offering of sacrifices was permitted*. Though the disobedient and idolatrous Jews offered sacrifices on the high places which they had profaned by their abominations, they did so contrary to God's commands. The only place where the sacrificial victims could be acceptably offered was in the Temple on Mount Zion. To come to Zion, today, means *to come to the one Sacrifice which God has provided for the sin of man*, namely, to Jesus Christ, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who is the one Propitiation for human sin and who has, by His death upon the Cross, made a full Atonement for the guilt of all who believe in Him.

Zion was also, in the olden time, *the appointed place of public worship* where the tribes went up on their solemn feast days, to join in the joyous Psalms that arose with thundering acclaim from ten thousand voices. There the multitude bowed in solemn prayer and there they heard the Word of the Lord. In a somewhat different form from that which we now observe, yet in a similar spirit to that in which we now meet, they worshipped God. So to ask the way to Zion means *to desire to worship the Most High*, to seek to become true and acceptable servants of the ever living God.

Zion of old was also *the place of delightful fellowship*. There friends met friends from the farthest ends of the land. He that dwelt at Dan gave the right hand of fellowship to him that dwelt at Beersheba when they came to their great general gatherings at Jerusalem. To ask the way to Zion, then, means *to seek to come to Christian fellowship*, to desire to be united in Christian bonds with Brothers and Sisters who love each other because they love one common Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, their blessed Savior!

Zion was, besides, *a place of rest*. It was looked upon as the abode of peace. Those who dwelt there were under the special protection of Heaven. To desire, therefore, to find the way to Zion is *to desire to find peace*, lasting peace, conscious peace with God, even “the peace of God which passes all understanding.”

Zion, too, has been regarded *as a picture of Heaven*. To desire to know the way to Zion is, therefore, *to desire to know the way to Heaven*. To say, “Tell us the way to Zion,” is the same thing as to say, “Tell us how we may reach that blessed state of salvation which shall secure for us a joyful entrance into everlasting bliss.” There are two things stated in our text concerning the enquirers as to the way to Zion. First, *we have their enquiry* and, secondly, *we are told the direction in which their faces were turned*—“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.”

**I.** First, then, we HAVE THEIR ENQUIRY—“They shall ask the way to Zion.”

Who will do this? We will try to find out who they are who ask the way to Zion and, first, they are evidently *those who are weary of other ways*. They have been treading the way that leads to Hell. They have known and walked in the ways of pleasure and folly. They are familiar with the way of worldliness. Many of them have tramped along the miry way of self-righteousness and they have all run in the road of willful wickedness. Yet they are willing to leave all these ways, for a man cannot go in two opposite directions at the same time! He must go only in one or the other of them and, in asking the way to Zion, it is taken for granted that the truthful enquirer is weary of all other ways. Is it so with you, my Hearer? You are not yet saved, but are you discontent with all that you have ever known as yet? It is a blessed thing when God makes a man discontented with all but HIMSELF—when the way of sin is no longer so smooth and pleasant as it once was and the enjoyments of the world are no longer so delicious and alluring as they used to be. Surely, if this is your case, my Hearer, you are being weaned from the breasts of your vain delights that you may come to your Father who can make you truly blest!

I can only praise God from the depths of my heart if any of you who are not yet in the way to Zion, have had your way hedged up of late, for it may be that the thorns which have scratched and torn you, have only kept you from going yet further astray from the right road. I hope that even the wretchedness which arises through treading the paths of sin may drive many to find relief from it in the Savior who is, Himself, the way to God! Am I addressing any who are in such a condition at this moment? Surely there must be someone here who is saying, “I need to find something real, for I have tried the sham and found it useless. I want to get peace of conscience if I can, for I am distracted by the thought of my guilt. Wealth cannot satisfy me. I have abundance of this world’s goods, yet I am not happy. Worldly ambition cannot satisfy my soul. I have gained the position for which I strove, but I am not content. My mind is driven to and fro as by a whirlwind. I am like a cockle-shell boat at the mercy of the stormy waves, or like the chaff from the

threshing floor that is driven before the wind. I have no rest, no peace, no satisfaction.” Well, my dear Hearer, if you are in that state of mind and heart, I earnestly recommend you to ask the way to Zion—for that is the place of rest and contentment—and if you are sincerely asking the way, I am quite sure that it is because you are weary of all other ways.

Those who ask the way to Zion also thereby confess that *they are not yet saved*. It is a great work, a Divine work, to bring His people to confess that they are not yet saved, for the most of mankind have the notion that, somehow or other, all is well with them in the sight of God. This is especially the case with those who have been brought up religiously. If you have, from your childhood, been regular attendants at a place of worship. If you have been kept strictly moral and outwardly religious, it is exceedingly probable that you will slide into the idea which perhaps you would *not* express in so many words, but, still the idea is there—that you have, after all, very fair prospects with regard to the world to come. In Jeremiah’s day there were some to whom the Lord said, “Trust you not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are these.” And today the children of godly parents, the people who attend places of worship regularly and live an outwardly moral life, are very apt to say, “The people of the Lord, the people of the lord, the people of the Lord are we.”

Perhaps some of you fancy that because you have been baptized, although you never were converted, or because you have dared to profane the Lord’s Table by your presence, although you are quite unfit to be there, you are therefore saved. If that is the case with you, it will be a happy thing for you if you are led to enquire the way to Christ because you feel that you have not yet accepted Christ as your Savior. It will be a mercy for you if you are led to see that your natural condition, instead of making you a citizen of Zion, makes you a citizen of Sodom or of Babylon! Certainly you cannot become a child of God by birth, by blood, by Baptism, or by any ceremonial process—but only by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit! If you are not yet saved, I pray that you may be made to know that you are not. It is only God’s gracious Spirit who can convict a man who thought all was well with him, that he is lost. Only the Holy Spirit can prove to him that he is not a Christian, though he thinks he is one! And when he is made to realize this, he will probably soon be transformed into that which he now fancies he is—a true child of the living God!

So those who ask the way to Zion are those who are weary of other ways and who feel that they are not yet in the way of salvation, the way of holiness.

Further, to ask the way to Zion proves that *the enquirer is not presumptuous*—that he does not think that he shall get to Zion, blunder on as he may. I believe that many men cherish the erroneous notion that if they are really sincere, and distinctly and decidedly moral, they will, somehow or other, by hook or by crook, get through the gate of pearl into Heaven. They say, “If we do not, who will? If it will not be well with us, then it must be far worse with a great many others who are worse than

we are.” That is the kind of talk in which many indulge, but it is sheer presumption! O Sirs, believe me that being saved is not child’s play! It is not a matter to be dreamed over. No man ever hit this mark by chance! No man’s soul was ever saved by mere chance. Many a soul has gone to Hell through neglect, but never has even one soul gone to Heaven in that way! Remember that solemn unanswered question of the Apostle Peter, “If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” If it is only after stern fighting and struggling—and often a long and wearisome pilgrimage—that the Christian gets into Heaven and if even he is sometimes “saved, yet so as by fire,” how shall they escape who neglect this great salvation? If they who serve God most diligently have nothing to glory in, what will be the portion of those who rebel against the Lord, or who simply “neglect” His great salvation? O Sirs, if the best of saints sometimes fear that they will be castaways at last, though that fear is needless if they are the Lord’s—what will become of godless Sabbath-breakers, or of you who never read the Bible and never bow your knees in prayer, but who live as if there were no God, or as if it mattered not whether you served your Maker or abhorred Him? This fatal presumption will never do—and I hope there are some of you who have now done with it forever, who are no longer hoping to stumble into eternal life, but who are asking the way to Zion, knowing that there is but one way—and sincerely desiring to find it!

This enquiry, if it is honestly made, also proves that *those who make it are not conceited*. They ask the way to Zion for they do not think they know everything and they are willing to learn what they do not know. If a child should offer to tell them the way to Heaven, they would be glad to hear it. Or though the person who might deliver to them the message of salvation should be clothed in the garb of poverty, and although his language might be incorrect and ungrammatical, yet if he should tell them plainly what they must do to be saved, they would be willing to take the treasure even out of an earthen vessel and to find the priceless jewel in the mire! But when men boastfully say, “We know all that we need to know, so we have no need of any teacher. As for the Bible, we look upon it as an antiquated, worn-out old book and we, men of thought and intelligence, can do without it. Can we not study the rocks or the starry heavens, or the wide fields of Nature? What need have we of a voice from God to guide us?”—we can only reply, “Ah, Sirs, your boasting is that of fools! You must excuse the harshness of the word, but it is true, for wise men know their ignorance—and only fools boast as you have been doing. May you be emptied of all your pride—turned upside down as a man turns a dish bottom upwards and pours out all its contents. And when you find that there is nothing in you, go and ask the way to Zion with true humility! You will never be truly wise till you find out that you are not wise. And you will never really know till you are willing to admit that you know nothing except what God teaches you by His Word, His Spirit, or His servants.

There is another thing about this asking the way to Zion—*it shows anxiety on the part of the enquirers*. Sometimes when one wants to find a

certain spot in the intricate streets of London, one stops and asks a policeman, or someone else, which is the way to such-and-such a place. And an answer is given, with more or less clearness. But having gone in the direction indicated and not having found the place, one naturally asks again and, perhaps again! If you are afraid of missing the spot you want to find, there is seldom anything lost by asking—and it is always better to spend one minute in asking the way than to waste ten minutes in going wrong! He who is the most anxious to find the right way is the man who will ask the most often—and I trust there are some here who are willing to ask of the Word of God and to ask of God's servants—"Tell me, is this the road to Heaven, or am I mistaken? Is this the plan of salvation by which alone sinners can be delivered from the wrath to come? O Sirs, I cannot afford to be mistaken here, for my soul's eternal welfare depends upon it! A mistake here would involve everlasting misery! So, as before the living God, tell me the truth, even though it should hurt my feelings and make me angry, yet be faithful with me, O men of God! I ask you again and yet again, the way to Zion."

I think, too, dear Friends, we may say with regard to this enquiry, that *the man who makes it is not a skeptic*. He would not ask the way to Zion if he did not believe that there is such a place. There are some people who are continually trying to amuse themselves by pretending to be doubters. I speak what I really feel about this matter, for I do not believe in the honesty of nine out of ten of the doubts of which I hear, or of the new ideas that are constantly being brought forth concerning one Truth of God or another. I am sometimes asked why I do not preach more often against these heresies. What? Am I to tell everybody what any fool likes to say against God? Not I! If anybody else wants to propagate infidelity in that way, let him do it. I shall not blow a trumpet to call attention to the lies that men keep on inventing. If I answered everything that they have said up till now, they would say something else that was false next week. I have better employment than that of shining the devil's boots in this way! And besides that, I have the satisfaction of knowing that the most of you are not troubled by these heresies. You know, in your inmost souls, that His Book is true, that there is a God and that, before long, you will have to stand before Him to give an account of the deeds done in the body. If any of you do not believe the Bible, that does not affect the fact that it is true. And what I have to say to you is to charge you, as you love your never-dying souls, to escape from Hell and flee to Heaven—to point out to you which is the right road and to beseech you not to miss the overwhelming Glory of eternal life for the sake of indulging your foolish and fatal pride. There is a heavenly Zion—ask the way to it, press forward and find it!

I will make only one other remark upon this part of my subject. Those who sincerely ask the way to Zion *are evidently not asking out of mere curiosity*, for if they were, they would ask where Zion is and what sort of a place it is. And they would probably ask some very foolish questions concerning it. Instead of doing so, they simply say, "Show us the way." That is practical—they ask the way to Zion. I often fear that the

questions which are asked by many people concerning various mysterious or difficult Doctrines in the Bible are only asked in order to try to lull their consciences to sleep while they are living in rebellion against God. A man says to me, "Can you explain the seven trumpets of the Revelation?" No, but I can blow one in your ear and warn you to escape from the wrath to come! Another says, "Can you tell me when the end of the world will come?" No, but I can tell you how to be so prepared for it that you need not be afraid if it were to come tonight! I can urge you to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, so that, let the end of the world come when it may, you can await it with holy joy and enter into eternal bliss! We want more, especially among sinners, of practical questions and not mere captious and curious enquiries. There will be time enough for you to ask all proper and right questions and to have them answered—when you have sought and found the Savior. But meanwhile, my dear Hearer, your immortal soul is in jeopardy, so attend to that first of all. A man who is sinking in the sea is mad if he says, "I won't lay hold of that rope until I understand all about astronomy." A man in a burning house need not trouble his head about geology—his first business is to get to the fire escape—he can leave his study of geology till tomorrow. So you unconverted ones should "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," and all other things you need shall be added unto you.

This must suffice concerning the sincere enquirers who ask the way to Zion.

**II.** Now we will consider the direction in which these enquirer's faces are turned—"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it."

If a man should ask you the way to a certain part of the town which lies toward the North, and his face should be turned toward the South, you would say, "Sir, that place is in the very direction from which you have come. You must turn your face the other way if you mean to get there." But suppose that he kept on walking in the same way in which he was going before he spoke to you? And suppose that he still asked the way, yet persisted in doing the very opposite to what he should do? You would at once know that he was merely mocking you and you would very likely pass on and say to yourself, "I will answer the civil enquiry of anyone who really needs directions, but I will not continue to answer the enquiry of a man who asks the way and when he is told, deliberately turns his face in the opposite direction!"

I hope I am addressing many who are saying, "We do want to be saved. We are in real earnest about it. We would do anything in our power to be true Christians and to have our sins forgiven." Shall I tell you how we can know whether your faces are turned in the right direction? *A man who has his face towards Zion is earnest about Divine things.* He used to trifle concerning eternal realities, or to assume the appearance of earnestness on certain occasions. When he heard an earnest preacher deliver an impressive discourse, he felt his spirit somewhat stirred, but he soon cooled down and was as careless as before. A man who has his face Zionward is constantly in earnest. He feels that the chief business of

his life is to get salvation and I believe that a man in real earnest about eternal life, sooner or later obtains it. I do not think there will be one lost sinner in Hell who will be able to say, "I honestly and earnestly sought the Savior, but I sought Him in vain." A man may be in earnest and yet, through lack of knowledge, he may miss the mark for a while. But I believe that sooner or later, the Light of God, by God's Grace, will come to him. If God continues to cherish the earnest desire within his heart, it will be a sign that He means to ultimately open the prison door and set the bound spirit at liberty! So earnestness is a good sign of the face being set Zionward.

Another sign that a man's face is towards Zion is seen when *he hears the Word attentively*. There is great hope for the man who constantly attends the preaching of the Gospel—that is to say if it is really the Gospel that he hears, and if it is honestly and earnestly preached—and if, while attending the House of Prayer, the man does not merely come in and go out, as a mere formal worshipper, but anxiously listens and watches to hear whether there is a message that is especially suitable for him. I know that I have some hearers who seem to go fishing in my sermons to see if there is something in it suited to their case that they can catch and appropriate to themselves. Like the little boy who used to listen so attentively that his mother asked him why he did so. He replied, "I heard a minister say once that if there was a word in the sermon that might be blessed to us, Satan would be pretty sure to try to distract your attention so that we might not hear it. So I want to hear it all and see if there is something that may be useful to me." I am satisfied that your face is set Zionward when you can honestly say, "I come to the House of Prayer and sit there not merely because it is the Lord's-Day and we must go somewhere to worship Him—not because I like to see the crowded congregation and to join in the joyous songs of praise, but because I hope that one of these days the minister will be guided by the Holy Spirit to let fall a handful on purpose for me—and that even I may know what it means to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."

Perhaps a better sign is when a man not only continually hears the Gospel preached, but frequently and as often as he can, *reads the Word of God with a view of finding something that may meet his case*. In some respects the preached Word has a very powerful influence over those who hear it because it comes with a living power from living lips—and God has ordained that by the preaching of His Word men shall believe and be saved. But in other respects, this Divinely-Inspired Word is far superior to anything that we can ever say, for it is the Infallible Word of God which lives and endures forever! Here is God's own Truth in God's own words—and when I find that any of you get up a quarter of an hour earlier in the morning so that you may be able to read a chapter before you go to work, or when I hear that you carry your little pocket Testament with you, so that in your dinner hour you may read a few verses with the prayer—"O God, save my soul while I read this, Your Holy Word!"—I feel that if you have not already found Christ, you soon will do so! At any rate, I am satisfied that you are enquiring the way to Zion and

that your face is turned towards Heaven! And I do not believe, my dear Friend, that you will long be in the habit of attentively reading the Word without finding some precious promise that shall come home to your spirit and bring you into the light!

There is still one better sign and that is this—I am so glad to know that some *of you have begun to really pray*. I expect that most of you used to pray, after a fashion, even when you were children. Your mother taught you to say a little prayer at her knee before she put you to bed. And many of you did not give up that habit until you went away from home. Perhaps you were apprenticed and possibly there was another apprentice in the room where you slept—and you had not the moral courage to kneel down while he was there. Well, I am sorry if it was so, yet I fear that where you *did* observe that form, you did not really pray! But now you do truly pray and from your heart you do really speak to God. It may be that there are others of you who have always used a printed or written form of prayer, yet till lately you never prayed in the true sense of that word. You used to read or recite the words just as the followers of Mohammed repeat their stereotyped form, but your heart was not in them and you were often half asleep even while you were uttering those meaningless words. But now you cannot help praying—you groan out poor broken sentences to God that you would not like to see in print. I recollect the time when I used to pray after this fashion, “O God, save me! I hear the Gospel preached whenever I can, but it does not bring peace to my heart. I am still without God, without Christ and without hope in the world! O Lord, do save me! Save, me, I beseech You. And save me now!” If that is the spirit in which you have prayed, never mind what your words may have been—if this has been your desire, your face is set Heavenward and I do not believe that the Lord will long let you cry thus unto Him without sending you a distinct answer of peace! You remember that the Lord said to Ananias, concerning Saul of Tarsus, as one of the evidences of the great change that had been worked in him, “Behold, he prays.” And if that can also be said of you, there is good reason to hope concerning you! Surely the Holy Spirit has already been at work within you if you have begun to pray continually and to pour out your heart’s supplication in secret before the living God!

Another good sign of sincerity is *when a man begins to forsake his old companions and shows that he likes the people of God far better*. In my early ministry in London, there was a certain friend—if he is not here tonight, he is usefully engaged elsewhere—who came to the service one Lord’s-Day evening with no objective beyond a vain curiosity. But that night the Word of the Lord stung him to the quick and made him very angry. He wrote me a letter, the next morning, to tell me that I had insulted him—and I do not know what he was *not* going to do! He came again to see if I would do the same as before and the Word of the Lord cut him up far worse! But it was a very different letter that he wrote to me the next morning. He said that he had been in the habit of meeting, on Sunday nights, with half a dozen friends—most of whom are now members of this Church—and they used to, on Saturday, draw at the top



of a sheet of notepaper a little sketch signifying, "Drop in on Sunday night—pipes and tobacco at seven." Then the man went on to tell me that if these former friends of his would not come with him to the House of Prayer, they would be friends of his no longer, for that old mode of spending the Lord's-Day evening would never suit him again! That is one of the sure signs of the working of God's Grace, when a man says to his old companions, "Now, Sirs, I cannot be your friend if you are not God's friends. As far as worldly matters are concerned, I will help you when I can. I will not break my friendship with you in that respect. But as to spending my leisure hours in the places of sin where you find your delights, I cannot do it. I fear I am not yet converted. I am afraid I am not a Christian, but this much I know—I cannot find my pleasure any longer where I used to find it."

Ah, my Friend! When you talk like that, you have your face set Heavenward! Even if you are not actually on the road there, you are certainly in a hopeful condition and I trust that, before long, there will be something better even than that to be said concerning you! You will go to the houses where the name of Christ is like ointment poured forth and though you may sit still and hold your tongue, you will be thinking, "I wish I had a share in these precious things, and I do delight to hear these people talk about them." I know some learned men who have been delighted to listen to a very poor woman as she was talking of the joy of the Lord only a little while before she passed into the spirit-land. It is usually a sure sign that we are in love with the Master when we are in love with His servants and when we find delight in the company of His people. It is surely because there is a secret drawing of our hearts towards Him. It indicates to me, my Friend, that your face is set Zionward when you begin to hate the company of the loose, the frivolous, the wicked—and to choose the company of the earnest, the truthful, the godly, the prayerful, the lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ!

I shall only detain you while I mention the best sign of all—a sign, dear Friends, which I believe is present in many of you—namely, that *you are beginning to repent of sin and beginning, though you hardly dare to think that you are, to believe in Jesus!* Only a few days ago you did really think that you had believed in Jesus, though you are afraid to think so tonight, and you would not like to be deceived about so important a matter. Yet at times there is a most blessed brokenness of heart about you. You cannot look back on your past history without feeling that your tears must flow as you mourn that you should ever have lived as you have lived—that you should have had so many privileges and should have slighted them—that you should have had so many warnings and should have despised them. You do not imagine that this feeling is true repentance, but I believe that a truly repentant soul scarcely ever thinks that it does repent as it ought to do. When a man is most tender in heart he generally says, "I grieve that I feel so hardened and that I am not as tender as I ought to be." Remember this—there never was a saint who repented as much as he should have, for

repentance should be perfect and no Christian has ever attained to that height.

As for believing in Jesus, I know that there are some of you who—when you have just been reading the very sweet promise in the Scriptures and your heart has been enabled to rest upon it—have had thoughts like these, “I cannot say that I really do believe in Jesus, but I do desire to believe in Him. And one thing I know, if He is not yet mine, I will never be fully at rest with anyone but Himself—

**“Other refuge have I none.”**

“If I cannot nestle under His blessed wings, I will never try to hide under any others.” You sometimes hope that you really have trusted in Jesus—and I think that you have done so, although your faith is very feeble. Remember, however, that even a feeble faith is a saving faith! Though your faith is no bigger than a mustard seed, so that you can hardly see it, it will bring salvation to you! Even if you cannot see it, God can. If you do but touch the hem of Christ’s garment, virtue will flow out of Him to the saving of your soul!

There are some who go to Heaven rejoicing all the way. I hope you may be of that happy number. But there are others, like those who are mentioned in the fourth verse of this very chapter, who go “weeping.” There are tears at every step—“going and weeping.” Yet, when they get to Heaven, they will not be asked whether they came weeping or laughing. It is better to go weeping to Heaven than to go laughing to Hell! There are some who go weeping to Heaven—they seem every day as if they must surely perish on the road, yet they get there at last—and, dear Friend, if your face is set Zionward—if you can truly say, “There is none but Jesus for me. He is all my hope and all my trust,” you may rest content that you also will get to Heaven at last! If you are really trusting in Christ, you are sure of Heaven, even if you have but one single grain of living faith in the Crucified Savior—

**“The feeblest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and Hell obstruct the way!”**

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 32.**

In this Psalm we have the Gospel of the peace of God as David knew it for himself and wrote it for the benefit of others.

**Verse 1.** *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* Hear this Inspired declaration, you who have transgressed the Law of your God! You who cannot plead a righteousness of your own, you who are conscious that you are sinners in the sight of God—here is a door of hope for you! Here is a possibility of blessing even for those whose lives have been full of sin and transgression! This is not a blessing of the Law, but a blessing of the Gospel—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

**2.** *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity.* Even God does not keep it recorded against him. The man has committed iniquity, but it is no longer laid to his charge, even by Him whose all-

seeing eyes have witnessed it! “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.”

**2.** *And in whose spirit there is no guile.* No shuffling, no deceit. He deals honestly with God and with himself—and with his fellows—and God deals righteously with him, and yet covers his sin, forgives his transgression and imputes not to him his iniquity!

**3, 4.** *When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* While under a sense of sin, David could not pray. Or his prayer, if he did offer one at all, turned into a kind of roaring, like the cry of a wounded beast. He was so heavy in heart, his whole being was so scorched and parched by the fire of God’s righteous anger because of his sin, that the very ducts of his tears refused to supply him with any further streams and he had to cry, “My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” Oh, what a burden sin always brings with it! And what a dreadful thing it is to be crushed under the almighty hand of God when He convinces us of our guilt by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit! When David was in that condition, what did he do in order to get peace with God and to find rest for his soul? Listen—

**5.** *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* He made to the Lord a full, childlike confession of his sin, iniquity and transgressions—evidently putting his heart’s trust in the mercy of God. And soon all the burden that oppressed him was removed and the fierce burnings of Divine Vengeance within his spirit were quenched—and his storm-tossed heart was at rest in his God! “You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”

**6, 7.** *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place.* See where a sinner can find a safe shelter—only in his God. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is the appointed Judge of all mankind, yet it is to Him that we fly for refuge, crying—

**“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee!”**

It is strange that He from whose lips the storm of wrath against sin comes, is the hiding place of His people! He draws the sword of Infinite and Infallible Justice against all iniquity and then He furnishes, in His own great heart of love, the sheath into which that sword of justice is plunged! So today the Believer says to Him in a fuller sense even than David understood the term, “You are my hiding place.”

**7.** *You shall preserve me from trouble: You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* The once heavy heart shall dance for joy! The spirit that was so grievously burdened shall take up the note of glad thanksgiving when the Lord’s free Sovereign mercy brings forgiveness to His repenting children.

**8.** *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* A good servant frequently does not need even a word from her mistress to guide her as to some duty to be performed, or some fault to be avoided—a look is all that is necessary, just a glance of the eyes gives the necessary guidance. So the Lord says to His watchful servant, “I will guide you with My eyes.” But, like the attentive servant, we must be keenly on the watch for this indication of our Lord’s guiding eyes.

**9.** *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* If you will be like a horse or a mule, do not be surprised when you are made to feel the bit and bridle which are appropriate for such creatures! And if a whip and spur are added, remember that you brought such treatment upon yourself! No, do not be so foolish, but give heed to the Divine Injunction—“Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.”

**10.** *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* The backsliding child of God will smart under the strokes of his Father’s chastising rod, but still sterner treatment will fall to the lot of “the wicked.” On another occasion, David wrote, “The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

**10.** *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* What a number of blessed fences there are around a Believer! Just now David wrote, “You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” And now he says of himself or his fellow Believer, “He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.” What more can he need?

**11.** *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* The Psalm began with blessedness and it ends with holy gladness! It was necessary to go down into the Valley of Humiliation for a while, but the Lord brought the Psalmist up to the mountaintop again, so that he felt that he must have others join him in his gladsome song—“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.” May all of us be fitted, by God’s Grace, to join that singing and shouting company, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

—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 SORE GRIEVANCE

## NO. 3426

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1914.

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

*“They have forgotten their resting place.”*  
*Jeremiah 50:6.*

THE people of Israel had been so hunted about that they forgot the place where once they rested. The same remark may be made of some congregations. There are Christian people who have the great misfortune of an unchristly pastor. The preaching is eloquent—they are constantly exhorted to do one thing and another. It may be the preaching is intellectual—they are encouraged to speculate upon this and that Doctrine, or it may happen that the preaching is rhetorical, the people are covered with flowers—the preacher seems to be constantly scattering from himself a display of fireworks, an explosion of dazzling words! But there is no manifestation of Christ—no opening up of the completeness of the atoning Sacrifice—no uplifting of Jesus in His love to His people, in His union with them, in the Covenant which He has made on their behalf. Oftentimes have we met with good people who fretted because the ministry failed to supply for their souls. They could have done without the eloquence. They would have been happy without the new theories, however intellectual. They could have survived if there had been less exhortation—what they wanted was a little food to strengthen them, a little repose to invigorate them, a little faith to encourage them in resting upon the finished work of Jesus Christ! Oh, what an account will *they* have to give who, instead of being shepherds of God’s sending to feed His flock with discretion and make them lie down in green pastures, come to them as legal taskmasters wielding the rod, but never using the pastoral staff to guide the flocks by still waters! However, I fear there are some who, though no less worried, nevertheless forget their resting place. Let us talk familiarly with one another on this theme.

What is our resting place, Beloved? We have only one answer, I am sure—“We who have believed have entered into rest,” but our rest is in Jesus Christ, Himself. We believed on Him, He took away our burden and we found rest. We bowed our neck to His yoke, became His disciples and we found yet fuller rest unto our souls. Not a particle of rest do we get from ourselves, neither does the world contribute to it, for, “in the world you shall have tribulation.” All our rest is found in Him, for He is our peace, who has said, “It is finished,” and in that finished work we confidently repose. It is possible for us to forget, however, to enjoy the rest which faith has made it our privilege to possess. And if we do, it is not only a loss to our comfort, but it is a very serious loss to us in all re-

spects. If sheep, under the charge of any, should lose their rest, besides the cruelty to the creatures and the suffering it would involve them, it would be a serious loss to their owner. A sheep does, after it has been fed, lie down—it must naturally chew the cud. The food it has gathered, it must digest in peace, or else it cannot grow fat. It cannot, in fact, be in health at all. Fancy a field of sheep in which some worrying dog constantly amused himself by hunting them from end to end! They would become lean and valueless. They would ultimately die. We must have rest! It is important, therefore, not partly and in measure, but to the uttermost degree, that when Christ has become our rest, we should continue to enjoy Him and to rest in Him! The sense of such need urges me, at this time, to endeavor to lead you, as God shall help me, to Christ Jesus our rest, by reminding you of some who forget their resting place. If it should happen to come home to your own souls, may you have Grace to escape from the calamity which the text describes!

Three things—here is the first—*a sin of which to be convinced*. Secondly, *the cause of it to be sought out*. And thirdly, *the cure of it to be brought about*. “They have forgotten their resting place.”

#### I. THIS IS TO BE ACCOUNTED A SIN FOR MANY REASONS.

Let us recollect how dearly *our resting place was purchased for us*. To give your soul rest, my Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ gave up His rest and more—His Heaven, His Throne, His honor, His life. No rest could there ever have been for you, a wandering sheep, if the Shepherd had not given up Himself as a ransom for the flock. Did it cost Him Gethsemane’s bloody sweat? Did it cost Him Calvary’s wounds and death? And did you receive it and yet forget it? Have not you often thought that whatever else might have passed away from your mind, never could the thought of that dying love depart? Yet it has faded on the tablet of your heart, for you have forgotten the priceless gift which that dying love has procured for you! Oh, chide yourself, that Immanuel’s purchase should be lightly esteemed, that He, your rest, should ever slip away from your thoughts!

Remember, too, *how graciously that rest was given to you*. My own remembrances may help yours. I remember well—and did I live to twice the age of Methuselah—I could never forget the time of my wearisome bondage under the Law and under the slavery of sin! Oh, what I would have given, then, to have had rest, to have had my sins pardoned. I dare to say, I think a thousand deaths would have been cheaply endured by me if I might have escaped the wrath to come! My burdened soul chose strangling rather than life because my life had become weariness and even like unto wormwood and gall had the cup of life been embittered. But as in a moment, rest came to my soul by a glance at that Crucified Savior! An act of simple faith exercised upon Christ’s Atonement brought me perfect rest! And shall I forget my resting place? I am sure if some prophetic spirit of the future could have whispered in my ear at the time of my conversion, “You will forget your resting place,” I would quickly have answered, with Hazeel, to the Prophet, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” And I might have said, “Is your servant a devil, that he should ever think of doing such a thing?” “Love so amazing, so

Divine”—shall this be cast behind my back? A gift so precious, brought to me when I deserved it not and just when I most required it—shall it ever be lightly esteemed or carelessly neglected? Oh, memory, let fall what you may, but retain as with an iron grasp, the recollection of that blessed day in which my soul found her resting place!

Beloved, there are other reasons to make this forgetfulness of ours greatly sinful. *Remember how sweetly we have enjoyed that rest since then!* It was not one day a honeymoon and then ever afterwards Christ and our souls, strangers—oh, no, I speak to some of you who have had many high days and holidays since the time of your conversion! You have feasted upon dying love! That banqueting house of Solomon’s Song is a place well known to you—the banner of love that waved over the spouse of old—its silken folds have also waved over you! ‘Twas but the other night when some of us were together in prayer and communion with Christ, and we could not help singing—

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

Could we have such enjoyments and yet forget them? Such rest in the resting place and yet make light of it? Such peace of God that passes all understanding, and yet be listless about it? Wretch that I am to wander thus in search of vain delights, to leave the flowing fountain for the broken cisterns, which, if they had been whole, had been but stagnant reservoirs, unworthy to be compared to the clear living stream that bursts from the fountain of fellowship with Christ! Let every sweet season of past spiritual enjoyment gently rebuke you, Beloved, if you do at all forget your resting place!

Further, does it not seem strange and marvelous that any of us should forget our resting place when *we so greatly need it?* Oh, I think I speak for the most of you when I say it is a weary world after all the mercy that God has made to pass before us—it is a weary, weary world! Solomon, with all his wealth, with all the accessories of pleasure, with all the tastes to enjoy them, deliberately said, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.” And I am sure it is easy amidst pains and toils, blunders and disappointments, for many of us to utter the same lament. When afflicted in body, distressed with severe labor, or reduced to poverty, we might as well try to find rest on the sea, or on a bed of thorns, or on a bed of flames, as find rest in the things of this world! What weariness of the flesh, what vexation of spirit we endure! Oh, then, why is it we forget our resting place? Men, jaded and faint with the drudgery of labor, are glad to throw themselves upon the bed and fall asleep, and you that have much toil and travail under the sun, will you forget that couch that Christ has brought you, upon which your spirits may take delicious repose? With such need for rest, and such a rest so sweetly proven to be restful in the past, ‘tis strange, ‘tis passing strange, ‘tis amazing that we should ever forget our resting place!

Since *our resting place is so suitable to us*, it becomes the more strange that we should forget it. Suitable for a sinner is a finished salvation. Suitable for a warrior is the great shield that covers his head in the day of battle. Suitable for a fugitive is that castle and high tower of our defense which is found in Christ, the Lord's Anointed! "The coney goes to her place in the rocks and the stork has her nest among the fir trees." Oh, you children of God, you have a resting place suitable to your nature—how is it you can forget it? Touch upon the things of nature, how they chide you! Bring to your remembrance the birds of the air, the beasts of the forest, the dumb driven cattle accustomed to the yoke, and let them chide you, for they forget not their resting place! Carried away to the city the other day, the dove was taken from its cage, and they let it loose, fastening to it a message. It mounted aloft, it whirled round a while that it might see where it was. It was far, far away from the dovecot—it was found hundreds of miles away, but where did it fly? Swift as an arrow from the bow, it sought its resting place with infallibility of affection! It found its nearest way to the cot where it had been reared and brought its message safely there. Will you let the pigeon outstrip you in affection for your resting place? Look at the swift-winged dove and be ashamed! And even the dog, which you despise, taken away from its master, carried many miles away, in darkness, too, so that it might not know its way, has been known to swim rivers, cross by-ways it could not have known, and there it is found barking for admission at its master's door—oh, so happy when it heard its master's voice again! It could not rest elsewhere. Oh, my Heart, are you more doggish than a dog? Do you forget your Lord when dogs remember well their masters? Let us learn even from these creatures, I say, and henceforth let us not forget our resting place. As all ingratitude is base, this sin cannot be light or venial. Now, let us ask—

**II. WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THE FORGETFULNESS** which we sometimes have of Jesus Christ—our heart's dear rest?

How frequently it arises from *neglect of thought*, a culpable remissness! So busy, up in the morning and at it—the whirl, the noise and clatter of business in the ears—always in the ears, every nerve on the strain, right on till one falls asleep through sheer exhaustion! Oh, our times are hard for deep piety! They are hard and trying times for souls that would walk near to Christ. I know more Grace can match the evil of the times, but still, our Puritan forefathers with their quiet lives, calm and undistracted, with the time they could have for studying the Word of God, and for private prayer—no wonder they outstripped us! I am afraid some Christians neglect the reading of the Word of God—almost as a rule forget it! You don't get your daily text. You don't get your meditation. Ah, Souls, if a thing never comes across the mind, it is not remarkable that you should forget it! If any of you are going on a journey, you don't forget your wives! No, they come often across your thoughts. You may forget some stranger whom you saw but once—you may never think of him again. Were the mind more occupied with Christ, there would be less likelihood of our forgetting Him! You know, when the photographer takes a



picture, if he does it rapidly, it may be that, by-and-by, it will fade. If they want to take a picture that shall be definite, fixed and permanent, they let the sensitive plate continue long exposed to the view, that there may be a good, thoroughly well-fixed impression. I would that my soul had many opportunities of being like a sensitive plate fixed right in front of Jesus to take His portrait thoroughly—to have it so upon my soul that it could never fade away! Oh, to have much more communion with Christ, to contemplate Him with a steady gaze and undistracted attention is the way to overcome our present forgetfulness! This is a flimsy age—a superficial age. It has its waves of religious excitement, but they are all on the surface. We have not many of those great ground-swell waves where the ocean of manhood seems to heave up from the very bottom. These are the waves that work wonders for men and glorify God. May we have many such in our own souls!

Another reason why we forget our Savior is *our tendency to self-sufficiency*. A poor man who has nothing of his own and who lives day-by-day a pensioner upon some rich man's bounty, cannot forget the man who helps him! But if he should forget him this morning, he will be sure to remember him tomorrow morning when he needs bread! And he who receives his money weekly, might forget his friend on the Tuesday, but he will remember him again on the Saturday, when he must go to him again! If we were always sensible as we should be of our absolute dependence on Christ for everything, and going to Him for all, there would be no fear of our memories failing us! But we very soon set up a little independency of our own—poor worms as we are—as a Brother said in prayer the other night, “Dust heaps!” That is all we are, the very best of us—poor “dust heaps.” We imagine we are kingdoms and we talk such great things, and think such big things about our experience and our wisdom! Oh, away with it all! We might well not see the sun when we eclipse him with our self-sufficiency! You poor beggarly worm, naked, poor, and miserable, I counsel you to buy of Christ, gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich! And white raiment that you may be clothed! And go to Him again, leaving your self-sufficiency behind you!

*With others it is worldliness* that keeps them from remembering their dear Savior. They forget their resting place because they are so worldly, grasping after so much. Enough is not enough to them—they must have more. The early rising and the sitting up late are right enough for industry, but wrong enough for avarice—these are the things that keep the soul from Christ—the getting money rightly if you can, but, anyway, the getting of money. A man cannot live for money and yet abide in Christ! When the heart gets the world into it, it eats as does a canker. If you will have the world, you shall have it—but you shall not have Christ! Oh, can you make an exchange of Christ for such poor stuff, for such heavy clay? Keep all the world outside your heart! If you keep all the sea outside the ship, it cannot sink. Is the world inside your heart—a little water there will prove a leak that will sink your vessel—beware of worldliness! Those of you can be worldly that are poor, as well as those that are rich. You may have cares that worry and devour—and keep you from your Savior.

Strive against these! Be not cankered with this canker! Love not the world, or you cannot walk with Jesus! Lay your cares on Him who cares for you—and you will come back to your resting place!

I fear that some Christians forget their resting place *through idolatry*. “Idolatry?” you ask, “We are not idolaters! We are not, even as the Romanists are, who will worship their crucifixes or their relics.” No idolatry? Was not that idolatry this afternoon with that boy of yours? Ah, what a boy! Your heart all but adores him and if he were taken from you, you would feel you could not forgive God! No idolatry? The other day, when you looked upon your fair estate and all the comforts of life with which God had surrounded you, did not you feel your heart go after these things? No idolatry? “Little children, keep yourselves from idols,” was once an exhortation of John, and it is also my exhortation to you this evening. We so soon make idols. I am afraid if an idol breaking were to take place tonight, many of you would go home broken-hearted! Or if your idols are at home, you would go home to see them broken, and yourself be ready to despair. There is much idolatry—and if you love son or daughter more than Christ, you are not worthy of Him! If you love husband or wife more than Christ, you are not worthy of Him. Oh, be it so, that they take low seats and Christ sits on the Throne! Go down, Beloved, go down! I love you there as I may and should, but come up, my Savior, take the highest place, for there You must sit King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Once more, I think some genuine Christians forget their resting place for a while *through despondency of spirit*. It is sometimes hard to remember our sweet rest in Jesus when we get oppressed. I can speak very feelingly here. There are some of us that carry about with us a constitution which elevates us, at times, up to the very heavens of delight—and sinks us down at other periods very, very low. Those who have high tides must expect to have very dry ebbs. If you mount high, you sometimes will fall low and then, when the liver won't act, when the spirits won't move, when the whole heart hangs its harp upon the willows, it is difficult, then, to come and rest in Jesus. And some feel grinding trouble, or a perpetual affliction of body, till at last they get into a chronic state of sadness. Dear Brother, dear Sister, before you get there, make a rally, if you can, to get away from it! It is to be escaped from. After all, Christ died for sinners such as you are. Hang on Him! Cling to Him! Come and wash again in the fountain which is filled with His blood! He loves you! He gives Himself for you! He can never forget you, or cast you away! Come and rejoice in Him, yet again, and lift up your heart once more by simple, confident faith in Him, for, “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” Don't let Satan triumph! Don't let the world laugh because a Christian is in despair! “Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” Be gone, you fears! Let the winds take them away. “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him. His mercy is not clean gone forever. He will be mindful of His Covenant. He will not cast away His people whom He did foreknow.”

These are the things that will sometimes bring us into the dilemma of forgetting our resting place. And now to close—

### III. WHAT IS THE CURE FOR IT ALL?

I do not know what Charles the First meant when he gave his watch to Bishop Judson and said, “Remember.” I do not care what he meant. But let the same be my word to you tonight, “Remember! Remember!” That is the cure for this distemper of the mind, this dereliction of the heart. “Remember what?” you ask. *Remember first the past—*

***“His love in time past forbids me to think  
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink.  
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,  
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”***

Remember the days of old, the Everlasting Covenant. Remember the sealing of the Covenant with blood upon the accursed tree. Remember the day of your sin, and the day of salvation—your sore bondage and your great deliverance when He brought you out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm—remember this and you will no more forget your resting place!

*Remember again the future.* You ask, “Can we remember that which has not happened yet?” Let your faith substantiate the promise and see it as though fulfilled, and remember it tonight. You will, before long, be where Jesus is. Your soul, white-robed, shall appear before Him, and your poor body—vile body as it is—shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body, and you shall shine with the mighty host who day without night magnify the name of Him that is, and was, and is to come! Remember this, and you shall not forget your resting place. “All this comes to you through Him. He has procured it for you and is preparing it for you at this hour.”

*Remember, also, something about the present.* What is there that you have, tonight, of all your possessions that can afford you rest? Have the roots of your spirit begun to twist about the earth? Pray to have them unbound, for, otherwise a painful time will come to you. What have you that you could rest upon in the time of death? A Roman Catholic once said that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith was a blessed *supper* Doctrine—would do to end the day with! But he thought it was a bad *breakfast* Doctrine to begin the day with. At least there is truth in the first observation—it is a blessed supper Doctrine and Christ makes a blessed supper for us in life’s end. There is no supper in life’s end—no supper that the soul can eat—but Jesus Christ, who shall give her satisfaction and contentment as she goes forth on her long journey! Well, as you have nothing that can satisfy you in dying, why do you try to satisfy yourself with it now? Have you been making an idol? Have you? Let it go! Forget not your resting place, I pray you. Look at your friend’s house and read, “mortal” written there! Look in your child’s face and know that before long your last act of kindness for that child will be to find a narrow home in the silent grave. What? Are you immortal and seeking to live upon mortal food? You, eternal as God’s life, and yet seeking to satisfy yourself with the worm’s meat that springs out of earth, and goes back again to it!

Shame on you! When Christ gives you rest, and is All-in-All to you, turn not away from the everything to try and fill yourself with the nothing!

Lastly remember, and this last remembrance will be a blessed cure—*remember Christ Himself*. For this purpose come to His Table. Though you have, for a while, forgotten your resting place, He says, “This do you in remembrance of Me.” Come and remember Him again—

**“Gethsemane can I forget?  
Or there Your conflict see?  
Your agony and bloody sweat,  
And not remember Thee?  
When to the Cross I turn my eyes,  
And rest on Calvary,  
O Lamb of God, my Sacrifice,  
I must, I must remember Thee.”**

So may it be with you now!

There may be, however, in this congregation—no, I know there are some who have never yet enjoyed rest. They are going about to find it. Dear Hearer, there is only one resting place—don’t look for another! Your works will never provide you rest. Sacraments can never rest you. Tears and groans, and prayers can never rest you. “None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.” “Believe in Him and live!” Trust in Him and you shall find rest unto your soul forever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JEREMIAH 3:6-25; 4:1-29.**

Let us read part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of Jeremiah where God brings a solemn accusation against the two nations of Israel and Judah because they forsook the living God and went after idols—neglected His pure and holy worship—and followed after the abominable rites of the heathen.

**Verse 6, 7.** *The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot. Yet I said, after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me. Depth of mercy that God should bid such a polluted one return to Him! “Yet I said, after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me.”*

**7, 8.** *But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. Some cannot be kept back from sin by the punishment of others, but they run into the fire in which others have been burnt, and so they aggravate their sin.*

**9.** *And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with wood. That is to say, she gave her heart to false gods and worshipped stones and wood. And how it must anger the living God to see men turn away from Him to worship blocks of wood and stone, instead of Him, and especially a people who have been instructed concerning the living God, and so*

commit the grossest act of disloyalty to Him, and are rebellious to the last degree.

**10, 11.** *And for this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly says the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah.* The one sinned openly and persevered in it. The other pretended to repent and did not, and that pretended repentance was more hateful in the sight of God than even the daring and open sin of Israel. What next?

**12.** *Go and proclaim these words towards the north and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the LORD. And I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the LORD, and I will not stay angry forever.* The offense was foul. It is such a one as stabs at the heart of man's honor. It is an offense which a man will scarcely ever forgive. But God bids His wandering Israel come back! And He proclaims mercy—free mercy—even to such gross transgressors!

**13.** *Only acknowledge your iniquity.* It is all He asks you to do. Confess that you have done wrong. "Only acknowledge your iniquity."

**13.** *That you have transgressed against the Lord, your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the LORD.* It was under the trees that they set up their altars to worship their false gods, so that they turned the graves, which should be full of beauty and sweet with song, into the places of idolatry, whereby God was provoked. But He says, "Only confess it. Come and lament it. Acknowledge that you have been guilty, and I will put away the sin."

**14-16.** *Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD: for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you pastors according to My heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, neither shall it come to mind neither shall they remember it. Neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done anymore.* Evangelical repentance, when it brings pardon with it, usually puts a slight upon mere legal ceremonies. We need not the symbol when we get the substance! We need no Ark of the Covenant nor holy place at Jerusalem when once the Lord appears in plenteous Grace to put away our sin!

**17, 18.** *At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk anymore after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel.* Nothing unites people like the Grace of God. Two men that have been pardoned by the same Savior ought to love one another, and they will!

**18, 19.** *And they shall come together out of the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said—*After all this mercy, He seems to come to a pause, "But I said"—

**19.** *How shall I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant and a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? Is it possible? Can it be done? These harlot nations that have defiled and polluted themselves with unutterable filthiness—can they be put among the children—the children of God?*

**19-22.** *And I said, You shall call Me, my Father, and shall not turn away from Me. Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the LORD. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God. Return you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Do you hear it? Do you hear God's promise? Do you hear His command? "Return, you backsliding children. I will heal your backslidings." Now for the answer. God grant that it may well up in your hearts.*

**22, 23.** *Behold, we come unto You, for You are the LORD our God. Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains. We leave all false confidences. We forsake our earthly joys.*

**23, 24.** *Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. For shame has devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. They have not profited by worshiping idols. They have suffered through it.*

**25.** *We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth, even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God. There you see the repentance which the Lord commanded at His people's hands, and wherever there is such a repentance as that, there are sure to be acceptance and salvation! God grant us that repentance and save us for His mercy's sake!*

### **JEREMIAH 4:1-29.**

**Verses 1, 2.** *If you will return, O Israel, says the LORD, return unto Me, and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then shall you not be moved. And you shall swear, The LORD lives, in truth, in judgment and in righteousness. And the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory. So he sets before them life and death. First, He begins with these words of encouragement. He begs them to come, for God is willing to receive them, notwithstanding all.*

**3, 4.** *For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. They had the outward religion, but the Lord's servant bids them know that they must have heart religion. The heart must be purged—the inward must be cleansed. This they had no mind to. They would multiply their sacrifices and their outward performances, but as to cleanliness of heart, this they cared not for.*

**5-7.** *Declare you in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem and say, Blow you the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves and let us go into the fortified cities. Set up the standard towards Zion, retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north and a great destruction. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way: he is gone forth from his place to make your land desolate; and your cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.* This was a terrible prophecy. The Chaldeans, who had broken to pieces so many other kingdoms and powers, were on their way! The enraged lion had leaped from his thicket and was about to tear, and rend, and do universal havoc! And if they did not turn to God, their whole land would be laid waste. One would think that such a heavy blow would have awakened them to a sense of their danger and their sin, but, alas, it was not so!

**8, 9.** *For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us. And it shall come to pass at that day, says the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the Prophets shall wonder.* Universal fear would take hold upon them. If they would not rightly fear the Lord and turn to Him, the time would come when, without exception, the greatest and the wisest of them should be taken with a sudden panic!

**10.** *Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, You shall have peace; whereas the sword reaches unto the soul.* God promised them peace, but it was upon a condition which they did not fulfill. There was peace while they gave up their sin, but, "There is no peace with God unto the wicked." And so they missed it.

**11, 12.** *At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of My people, not to fan, nor to cleanse. Even a full wind from those places shall come unto Me: now also will I give sentence against them.* What an awful line that is. "Now also will I give sentence against them." They had been on their trial. They are found guilty. They will not repent. "Now will I proceed to pronounce their doom and give sentence against them."

**13.** *Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! For we are spoiled.* They began to cry out when they began to smart. And the Prophet comes in, again.

**14.** *O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved.* There is always that silver bell of mercy ringing out the note of invitation! "O Jerusalem, your sorrows, your destruction may yet be averted if you will turn from your darkness! Wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved."

**14-18.** *How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you? For a voice declares from Dan, and publishes affliction from Mount Ephraim. Make you mention to the nations: behold, publish against Jerusalem that watchers come from a far country and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. As keepers of a field, are they against her round about because she*

*has been rebellious against Me, says the LORD. Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you. This is your wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reaches unto your heart.* When “great judgments are abroad,” it is always on account of great sin. It was so in the case of Israel. “Your doings have procured these things unto you.” Oh, when the ungodly man begins to reap the result of his life—when, in his own body and in his own home, he begins to see what sin will often bring the drunkard, let him hear these words—“This is your wickedness. Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you.”

Now follows the lament of Jeremiah—one of the most amazing pieces of sorrowful writing that will ever be read in your hearing!

**19-21.** *O my soul, my soul! I am pained at my very heart; my heart makes a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace because you have heard, O, my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war! Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard and hear the sound of the trumpet?* The dreadful blast of war, the blood-red flag of murder flying through the land while the Chaldeans slew right and left, young and old—we need to put ourselves into Jeremiah’s position to be able to realize the horror of this case.

**22, 23.** *For My people are foolish, they have not known Me. They are silly children, and they have no understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void: and the heavens, and they had no light.* As if they had gone back to chaos—to the primeval darkness—to the first disorder before God began to create.

**24-29.** *I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness and all the cities thereof were broken down at the Presence of the LORD, and by His fierce anger. For thus has the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black, because I have spoken it, I have purposed it and I will not repent, neither will I turn back from it. The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen. They shall go into thickets and climb up upon the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.* Now all this did happen. It all came to pass. Palestine, the glorious Garden of God, was made as dreary as a wilderness! It is not much better now. It has scarcely recovered. God will re-gather them to the land one day, but oh, what a sight it was when God at last had ended His patience—poured out the vials of His wrath upon His once favored land!

—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.**



# PERFECT JUSTIFICATION AND PERFECT PARDON NO. 2789

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 27, 1902.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,  
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE SUMMER OF 1860.

*“In those days, and in that time, says the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I preserve.”*  
*Jeremiah 50:20.*

I do not profess to have attained sufficient proficiency in interpreting the prophetic parts of Holy Scripture to be able to enter, as some can, into the minutes of the future and to tell when any particular promise will have its actual, literal fulfillment and, indeed, if I could do so, it would not serve my purpose at this time, for I wish to take my text—perhaps you may think by way of accommodation—as describing what shall be the case with all God's people when, having crossed the Jordan of death, they shall stand before the Great White Throne—and, indeed, what is now the case with all those “who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

I shall use my text thus—first, I shall say something about *the great iniquities and sins mentioned in the text*. And then, secondly, I shall speak, at greater length, upon *the great forgiveness by which these sins have been put away*. May God grant that many of us may feel that we have a sweet and undoubted participation in the complete pardon and deliverance which are here spoken of!

**I.** So, first, let us meditate for a little while upon THE GREAT INIQUITIES AND SINS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT.

*Those sins were of no common order.* Israel was a nation, chosen out of the world, to be the peculiar people of the Lord. They were chosen, not because of anything especially good in them, for they were always a stiff-necked and rebellious race, but because of God's Sovereign Grace. Because of this special privilege, even if they had been only ordinary sinners, their sin would have assumed a most serious aspect, for never does sin seem to be so black as when it is committed in spite of great love, special peace, high privileges and other Divine blessings.

The Israelites were not an ignorant people. They did not sin, as the Philistines did, in the dark. They were not left in the dim twilight of nature, but they had the fullest Revelation of God's mind and will that was

afforded to any people in those days. They were not taught the Truth of God by a system that was too high for them to understand, for the types and symbols of the ancient sanctuary were exactly adapted to the infant state of the Jewish commonwealth and to the immature condition of the Israelites' spiritual life. Well might the Lord say concerning them, "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" He had brought the goodly vine up out of Egypt. He had planted it in the richest soil in the whole earth. He had built a wall around it by making His chosen people to be separate from all the other nations in the world and He had dug a winepress for the gathering in of the fruits of the vineyard. And so He might well ask, "Why, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

Therefore, I repeat what I said just now—If the children of Israel had only sinned as other nations did, yet their sins would have been of the most heinous character because of the greatness of their privileges and the peculiar and special love that had been lavished upon them. But they were sinners of an unusual kind—they were positively unmatched in guilt by any nation under Heaven! What other nation forsook the gods whom they worshipped, even though they were only idols? Did not the idolaters cleave to Baal and hold fast to Ashtaroth? Do we find that even when the heathen nations were smitten, they forsook the god they professed to worship? Did they not still blindly and foolishly cling to their worthless idols and bow before them?

Yet the children of Israel cast away their God—they who had worshipped Jehovah turned aside from Him and bowed down before Baal and, oftentimes did they grieve the Lord and provoke Him to anger because they went after other gods and worshipped idols that were not gods. This was a new evil under Heaven—a thing unheard of and unknown. The heathen would sooner have lost their nationality than they would have forsaken the idols that they adored, but Israel had played the harlot with many lovers. She, who ought to have been the most chaste of spouses, was unfaithful to her Lord and went gadding abroad among those whom He abhorred!

Besides, my Brethren, I would have you remember that the children of Israel provoked God, perhaps, more than any other nation that has ever been upon the face of the earth by reason of the fact that *the provocations of other nations were speedily punished and not permitted to continue as long as those of Israel*. God commanded that the Canaanites should be exterminated because of their abominable sins, yet they were not greater sinners than some, at least, of the Israelites were! Some of the incidents recorded in the Old Testament evince a state of morality in the commonwealth of Israel as low, as sensual, as degraded as even the criminality of Sodom itself! As a nation, they had sinned as foully as others and, in some respects, still more foully because, when they were often smitten and chastened for their sin, they returned to it, like the dog to his vomit, "and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Think of the provocation that Israel gave to the Lord in the wilderness! Remember that time when Jehovah said to Moses, "I have seen this

people and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: let Me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under Heaven: and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.” Though the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger, yet His anger was fierce and terrible against the rebellious people.

Think, too, of their continual revolts under the Judges—to omit, for the while, the possibly better state they were in under Joshua’s leadership. They were first in bondage to one power and then to another, for the simple reason that there was hardly one false god that they had not worshipped, nor was there any form of lust or crime which Israel had not learned. Then remember the abominable iniquities of the house of Israel during the days of the kings who followed Solomon—how they offered incense to false gods in all their high places, and bowed down to idols in all their groves and under almost every green tree. They adopted the very worst forms of idolatry—they made their children pass through the fire—they offered up their little ones as a sacrifice to Moloch! The murder of infants was common among them. They were not content to imitate the better part of the heathen idolatries, but they must take the whole and drain the black cup to its dregs—and they even seem to have exceeded the wickedness of those whom they imitated! The provocations of Rome have been many. The iniquities of the great Grecian empire were intolerable. The pride of Babylon was more than God could endure. The crying sins of Nineveh reached unto Heaven. The guilt of Sodom and Gomorrah was very great. But the children of Israel, in the race for the prize of evil, distanced all these who were, apparently, greater sinners than themselves!

I feel that we must give the pre-eminence to them, especially when we consider their transgressions in the light of the love and favor which the Lord God had displayed towards them. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, our text is true. Let us read it again, remembering what I have been saying about Israel’s iniquity. “In those days, and at that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I preserve.” Their provocations, their idolatries, their lusts were all to be swept away and to be forgotten! Crimes which had accumulated upon crimes were all to be covered in the depths of the sea! Surely, this should give hope to the very chief of sinners! If any of you are sorely depressed because of your great guiltiness, this passage should afford you much encouragement for, if God took so completely away, not the sins of those who had lightly offended against Him, but the crimes of the very blackest of criminals, why may He not wash away yours, also? And why may not you hope and even be confidently assured that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses you from all sin?

**II.** Now I turn, in the second place, to look, for a little while, at THE COMPLETE PARDON SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT. Let us first consider the words and then the sense of them—“The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.”

First, look *at the words of the text*. This is a metaphorical form of speech—"The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." You remember that Rachel hid the image under the seat on which she sat, so that when her father searched for it, he could not find it—yet it was there all the while. But it is not to be so with our sins! They are to be searched for, but there shall be none. They are to be sought for, but so effectually shall they have been put away that they shall not be found. Not only shall they not be discovered, but there shall not be *any to be discovered*. They shall be so completely removed, so absolutely annihilated, that they shall have ceased to exist! Come, let me draw a picture for you. Are there any who will ever search for the sins of God's people? There are many who would do so if they could—and there are some who must do so.

There is, first of all, *an awakened conscience*. One of the first things which an awakened conscience does is to search for sin. It will never rest content in the house where there is sin—it will go through every chamber of the heart and track sin to its most secret recesses. A blind, dead, sensual conscience may lie in the same bed with sin and not be disturbed, but an awakened conscience can detect it afar off and will have nothing to do with it. The lie, or any other form of iniquity, cannot tarry within sight of a conscience, the eyes of which have been spiritually opened. But, Believer, you are so fully pardoned that, though your tender conscience may search for sin, it shall not be found! Even when your conscience shall be illuminated with the sunlight of Heaven and all its obliquity and dimness of vision shall be taken away—if it should in *Heaven* look for sin, "there shall be none." It is not difficult to realize that a blind man cannot see sin and a man with a blind conscience cannot see sin in himself, but I say that the man with the keenest spiritual sight, the man with the enlightened, the intelligent, the instructed, the perfect conscience may search the forgiven soul through and through, but there shall not, upon that soul, be found even the shadow of a spot! So thorough shall the washing be that the eyes, which now run with tears day and night because of the consciousness of sin, shall then be free from tears, for it shall see no sin to weep over—it shall behold no iniquity over which it has to grieve and no crime for which it has to mourn. Oh, glorious cleansing is this, when even an awakened conscience shall search and find no sin!

But more than this, there is within us another eye which is even quicker in seeing sin than is our conscience, and that is the eye of *our unbelief*. It is amazing, my Brothers and Sisters, how soon our unbelief finds a ground for fear lest we should be lost. It seems to find such a reason, often, when there is none. It will catch at any little circumstance in our daily life to make us imagine that God has forgotten us. Unbelief is blind to good and to God, but it is very quick of sight to everything that is fearful and terrifying. I have known some Christians so full of unbelief that it was very difficult to give them any comfort—they were most dexterous in finding out the worst parts of their character and history—and very crafty in, as it were, seeking to neutralize the force of God's promis-

es by mentioning some evil thing in their own experience which seemed as if it deprived them of their right to receive the promised gift. But God so fully pardons His people that even their doubts, their fears, or their searching unbelief shall not be able to find a flaw in it!

If it were possible for me to be smitten with unbelief even in Heaven, so that I should begin to mistrust my standing in Christ, or to try to find a reason why I should mistrust, I should not be able to do so. However much I might seek to find any speck or spot of sin, I would be obliged to say at the last, "Great God, I am clean through Jesus' blood, I am clean every whit." And even now, Beloved, and even here, though your unbelief thinks it sees a dozen sins, yet remember that those sins, at least as far as the guilt of them is concerned, are not really there. They are forever put away! Christ has drowned them in the Red Sea of His precious blood! There may seem to you to still be guiltiness upon you, but there is none if God has pardoned you, for "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You may think that there is, but there is not—God now sees no sin in Judah, nor iniquity in Israel. He may see it to reprove it, or to chastise it, but judicially to avenge it, He sees none. Our Lord has made us so perfectly white that there is no spot to be found in us. He has so completely covered us with the robe of His matchless righteousness that no imperfection shall be seen in us even when we come to the perfect world where we are to dwell with Him forever! What a precious thought is this! Lord, give us Grace to believe it and to dwell in Christ—and enjoy to the fullest all our privileges in Him!

But, further, there are other eyes, besides our own, which are always searching for our sins and, among them, there is the *quick eye of the envious world*. There are some of us who have good reason to be dead to the world, for the world has never spoken a good word concerning us, but has always been ready to magnify our faults when it could find any, or to lie against us where there was no fault at all. I, of all men, have no reason to respect public rumor! I do not respect it and I cannot, for, of all lying things, public rumor seems almost to exceed Satan, himself, in the lies which it will invent! Thus men who are to stand pre-eminent as God's ministers must make up their minds, when they commence their ministry, that they will probably be accused of every crime in the calendar! I should not be greatly surprised if you were to be told that I had committed the grossest iniquity that ever was perpetrated and, my Brothers and Sisters, should you hear such a thing, it will not so much distress my spirit as it might have done in years gone by, now that I know that the world's tongue is always ready to speak the worst word it can against the man who does it the most harm. If I am to fight the Lord's battles, I may leave Him to fight mine! If I defend His Character, He will defend mine! I shall not defend my own—that I know—it is always a bad thing for a man to be his own defender!

You must, all of you, have noticed in your more private capacity, how quick the men of the world are to find fault with you. You just stumble and they say that you have had a serious fall. There is one spot upon your cheek and they declare that your face is covered with mire. You

stooped to pick up a pin and they affirm that you stole a ton of gold. That is the style in which they usually magnify our faults—and if they cannot find any, then they tell lies and invent them! It is a grand testimony to a man's uprightness when worldlings cannot say anything against him without lying, for it shows that there is nothing of which they can truthfully accuse him! It is a noble thing for a man to be in such a position and then he can say, "Now have I come where I desire to be—there is no love lost between the world and me. The world is dead to me and I am dead to the world." If we say hard things of the world—as we are bound to do if we are faithful—of course it will say hard things of us. If we say that it is a flaunting harlot, that its beauty is only painted and its joys are a sham, we must not be surprised if it says the same concerning us. Have you never noticed how, if two men are driving in the street, and one of them is on the wrong side, he is generally the one to call out to the other, "What are you doing?" So is it usually with the Church and the world—the world, because it is on the wrong side, will be sure to cry out to the Church, "What are you doing there?"

Well, Christian, there is a joyous thought for all who have been slandered and abused! The day is coming when "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found"—when, *before the eyes of an assembled universe*, God's despised servants shall be fully vindicated and against them not a dog shall move his tongue, even as it was in the day when Israel came up out of Egypt. Oh, glorious shall be that resurrection of buried reputations when there shall come up from the grave, not only God's people, but also their characters, and they who have served the Lord faithfully shall shine as the stars in the firmament of Heaven forever and ever! It is to me a joyous thought that sinners who hate the Word of God, and hate God's people, shall search for their sins, but shall not be able to find them!

Yet again, Brothers and Sisters, there is one whose eye is even quicker than that of the world! One who is always searching for our faults—and that is our *infernal enemy*, Satan—Apollyon, the destroyer! Oh, how he watches us to do us harm! Never did a lion, crouching ready to spring upon its prey, watch the harmless deer feeding upon the plain, or drinking at the spring, more keenly and more fiercely than Satan watches us. He is always seeking to find faults in God's people, that he may accuse them, sometimes through their own conscience and, at other times, by himself bringing the accusation against them up to the very Throne of the King! Happy, happy shall be the day when even Satan shall not be able to find fault with us! For then, in the Pit, he may bite at his iron bonds and may in secret hate and long to slander us, but his malice will all be in vain! The old serpent shall be unable to spit his venom upon the people of God. It will be a glorious triumph for you, poor devil-tried child of God, when you shall put your foot upon the old dragon's neck and he shall be powerless to harm you!

But there is One, whose eyes are quicker than those of the world, and whose sight is keener than that of Satan—it is HE, the all-seeing One, our Father and our God. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes

of Him with whom we have to do.” If there were the faintest trail of sin upon us, He would discover it, for does He not search the heart and try the reins of the children of men? Can we hide ourselves anywhere from His Presence? Would the top of Carmel be too high for Him, or the depths of the sea too deep? If we seek to mount above the clouds to escape Him, or fly beyond the western sea to get beyond His sight, He is still there—everywhere, above, beneath, around—all eyes, all ears, seeing all things, hearing all things, knowing—even before they are our own—the unformed thoughts that are within our inmost soul. But what a joy it is for us to know that even He will not be able to find a sin in any one of His blood-washed children! Up from the blessed bath we come and even Omniscience, itself, can see no spot remaining upon us. In the full blaze of the awful glory of the Day of Judgment, when God’s eyes shall read the most secret thoughts of the ungodly, and when His voice shall wake the echoes of every conscience, His eyes shall see no sin in those for whom Christ died! And His voice shall awaken in them no accusing thought, but only cause them unsullied joy because He perceives in them not even the shadow of a fault, for they are “accepted in the Beloved.”

This is a sweet Truth of God and it is easy to utter, but how difficult it sometimes seems to grasp and hold it firmly! Yet, if we are believers in Jesus, we are complete in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus, for He has put away all our iniquities and cast all our sins behind His back into the depths of the sea. His own declaration to each of His redeemed ones, is, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” Fly, Gabriel, to all the countless hosts of Christ’s elect! Look upon each one as they now gather before the eternal Throne of God and say, you bright discerning angel, have you found a fault in any one of them? There is Mary Magdalene and there the penitent thief and yonder are Saul of Tarsus and Manasseh, and many more who were great sinners while here below—but can you see any sin in them now? There, too, stand the glorious hosts of those who, in these later days, have crossed the stream and entered their eternal rest. I charge you, O you watchers, you holy ones, tell me, can you find a fault in any one of them? The answer of all of them is, “No, the fact that they are here proves that they are without sin, for of this city it is written, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles.” Yes, when the Last Great Day shall come, and the whole family of the redeemed shall be safely housed in their Father’s home above, if each one should, individually, be put into the scales of the sanctuary, there is not one of whom it would be said, “Tekel: you are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting.” If they were all to be cast into the crucible, not one grain of dross would be found in the whole of them! Though many of them were, once, among the very chief of sinners, yet if they were all to be examined—as they will be—by the eyes of Infinite Justice, yet, in them all, no trace or shadow of sin shall be discovered!

Now, in closing, I want you to take *the sense of the words*, which I understand to be that when God pardons His people, He pardons all their sins at once—not half, but all! Their blasphemy, their lust, their theft,

their pride, their lying, or whatever their sin may have been—this is God’s receipt in full for all their indebtedness to Him—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin.” If you believe in Jesus now, my Hearer, there is not one sin recorded against you in God’s Book of Remembrance, nor a tithe of a sin, nor a shadow of iniquity!

Not only does God pardon all the sins of His people, but He pardons in all senses of the term. You know that, sometimes, a man pardons his son for his wrongdoing, yet he cannot fully reinstate him in his confidence. He will not trust him with his money as he does his son who never wandered away from home. But God pardons completely. He harbors no ill thought of you, but loves you no less than He would have done if you had never sinned. If you had been as Adam was once—perfect and pure, without spot—God could not love you more than He does now, nor could He give you greater privileges, or higher honors. He has given you the promise of a crown and a share in His Son’s Throne and Glory! He has made you joint-heir with Christ of all that He has—what more could He have done for you had you been an absolutely perfect being?

But, further, when God pardons a sinner, He puts away all his sin forever. The cloud may return after the rain, but the cloud of my sin comes back no more. When the winter is gone and the springtime and the summer have made their presence felt, yet we know that winter will come again and the leaves will fall from the trees. But the winter of my spirit’s sin will never return. The great sea, when it rolls up in its might, must go out again at the ebbing of the tide. But that ocean of the love of God, which covers up my sins, will never roll back, but shall abide at the full forever and ever! The sun of God’s mercy never sets when it has once risen. The stream of Divine Love never dries up when it has once begun to flow. It is no brook like Cherith, at the side of which a Prophet might sit down for a little while and then its waters fail—but it is an ever-flowing river, as perpetual as the eternal Fountain in the heart of God Himself!

I know not where my brethren who think that pardoned sin may come back again, ever get any comfort. O Beloved, this Bible would be to me like a casket emptied of its jewels if you could ever take from me the firm belief that once forgiven, sin is no more imputed! Once washed away, the filthiness never returns! That was a magnificent argument of the Apostle Paul—“If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Do you see the pith of the argument? If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled—the harder work—how much more, being *friends*, we shall be saved! And if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by His death, how much more, being *friends*, shall we be saved by His life!

If we are washed in Jesus’ blood, verily we are clean, so clean that—

**“Not the shadow of a spot  
Shall on our soul be found.”**

Come death when it may, we shall meet it with joy, and not with sorrow, for—

**“With our Savior’s garments on”**

we shall be—

**“Holy as the Holy One!”**



Sinner, if you have never known what it is to be pardoned, let it not seem like a dream to you. If you ask, “May I be forgiven?” I answer—Yes, certainly you may! Listen to what God Himself has said—“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.” Sinner, if you believe in Christ, be your sins ever so many, they shall be blotted out, for—

**“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in His crucified God,  
His pardon at once He receives,  
Redemption in full through His blood.”**

So, without delay, just as you are, come and trust in Christ! and your sins, which are many, shall be forgiven you, and you shall go on your way rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, even as you are rejoicing in the assurance of the love of God. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 18:1-35.**

**Verse 1.** *I will love You, O LORD, my strength.* What a blessed “I will”—“I will love You”! He does love the Lord, and he declares that he will continue to do so. He feels that he must do so, for the Lord has been his strength. There are many aspects under which the love of our heart is most justly and fitly given to God and this is one of them. If the Lord has been the strength of our heart, then let our heart love Him.

**2.** *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my selection, and my high tower.* How David heaps up the epithets! When the Believer once begins to praise the Lord, there is no end to it. He can never even satisfy himself, much less can he hope to rise to the height of this great argument! Notice how many of those little pronouns there are. Luther used to say that the very marrow of divinity lies in the pronouns. Certainly the sweetness—the honey of it lies here. Let me read the verse again, putting the emphasis on the pronouns—“The Lord is *my* rock, and *my* fortress, and *my* deliverer; *my* God, *my* strength, in whom *I* will trust; *my* buckler, and the horn of *my* salvation, and *my* high tower.”

**3.** *I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies.* Calling upon Him in prayer, and rendering praise to Him, “so shall I be saved from my enemies.” You remember how the army of Jehoshaphat marched forth into the valley of Berachah, singing and praising the Lord? They had no need to strike a blow, for the Lord gave them a glorious victory when they began to sing and to praise! And we might have more victories if we had more praise and more prayer. Now David goes on to tell us what had happened to him and what happened to the children of Israel when they came up out of the land of Egypt and went into the wilderness.

**4, 5.** *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.* That is, “went before me,” “lay in my pathway.”

Did you ever have a window opened in your heart so that you could see all the ruin of your nature—all the possibilities of evil that lay asleep within your soul? Did you ever feel, as you gazed upon that sight, as if you were looking over the edge of the bottomless Pit? Ah, then, you have been in the condition which the Psalmist here describes—“The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death lay in my pathway.”

**6.** *In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God; He heard my voice out of His Temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears.* That is a wonderful expression, “My cry came before Him, even into His ears.” That is, of course, speaking after the manner of men—and we cannot speak in any other manner. God appeared to hear David’s cry as you and I hear a thing when we say, “It seemed to ring in my ears, I could not get rid of the sound of it.” What happened then?

**7.** *Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was angry.* The Lord was angry with those who had made His child cry, as a father is angry with one who injures a beloved child of his, or as a mother is angry with one who puts her babe to pain. The Lord made the earth to tremble because He was angry at the oppressors of His servant.

**8.** *There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.* That is David’s graphic and striking representation of the indignation of God on his behalf.

**9.** *He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet.* This is a wonderful description of the interposition of God on behalf of His people. The scene referred to by David is probably the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, and the deliverance of the children of Israel from their cruel enemies.

**10.** *And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.* So swift is prayer to reach the heart of God—and so swift is God to come to the help of His people!

**11, 12.** *He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before Him, His thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.* For all the dread artillery of Heaven shall be used for the defense of the faithful. God will hold nothing in reserve when His people are in danger.

**13.** *The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire.* What made God speak in those terrible tones? It was the faint and feeble cry of His poor servant down below. Can you and I make thunder? Yes, we can. If we can thunder at the gates of Heaven by prayer, God will thunder in the heavens in His Omnipotence! He will quickly respond to His children’s cries. The first Christians who were employed in the Roman armies were called the thundering legion, because, it was said, once upon a time when they prayed, God sent a thunderstorm to destroy their enemies and, truly, a living Church of God that is full of prayer, may be called a thundering legion!

**14.** *Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning, and discomfited them.* What a wonderful picture this is—as if

the Eternal had taken down His bow and aimed His shafts of lightning against the foes of His people!

**15.** *Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.* At the Red Sea, Moses sang, “You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.” But here, David does not represent God as sending forth a great wind, but as if, in His eagerness to help His servant, His very nostrils gave forth such a mighty blast as made the sea to divide, so that “the channels of the waters were seen.” It is one of the most vivid pieces of poetry that ever fell from the pen of Inspired or uninspired man!

**16, 17.** *He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them who hated me: for they were too strong for me.* When a child of God is in such a condition that he cannot help himself and he cries to his Heavenly Father, then the Lord always helps him. Our proverb says, “God helps those that help themselves.” That is true, but there is something better than that. God helps those who *cannot* help themselves. That proves the greatness of His mercy, which endures forever. David said of his foes, “They were too strong for me,” but they were not too strong for the Lord to overthrow!

**18.** *They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.* “I leaned on Him. I rested on Him. I relied on Him and so I was made peaceful, calm, quiet, confident in Him—‘The Lord was my stay.’”

**19.** *He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me.* What do you say to that, Believer? That God delights in you—that He finds something in you, which He has put there by His Grace, which is the object of His benevolence? Is it not your likeness to His dear Son, whom He loves so much, that wherever He sees His image, there His love flows forth?

**20.** *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me.* For when God gives a man holiness, He will give him happiness! Holiness and happiness usually go together and if, for a while, they seem to be divided, they shall soon be united again.

**21-24.** *For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore has the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight.* The godly never see any merit in their own works, they never have any trust in them for salvation, yet they cannot help observing, with pleasure, that when God enables them to walk uprightly, He sooner or later delivers them. If you come into any trouble because you fear God and serve Him, you will come out of it again. Yes, and come out of it like the three holy children came out of the furnace—with not so much as the smell of fire remaining upon you.

**25, 26.** *With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with an upright man You will show Yourself upright; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate.* If a man walks in an obstinate way, and opposes God, he will soon find that God treats him in a similar fashion. Sinners shall surely smart for their sin. Rebels shall yet sing another tune, however loudly they may boast today and scoff at God and His people.

**27.** *For You will save the afflicted people.* There is comfort there for any of you who are His people, and who are under His afflicting hand.

**27.** *But will bring down high looks.* Pride enflames the indignation of Jehovah—it is to the humble that He has regard.

**28.** *For You will light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.* Plead that promise if you are in the dark at this moment. If you are God's child, He will bring you out into the light before long.

**29.** *For by You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.* God's warriors have to fight in various ways and in all they must show themselves like men, and ascribe all their triumphs to their Lord.

**30.** *As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him.* No armor of proof or shield of brass so well secures the warrior as the Covenant God of Israel protects His warring people. He is Himself the buckler of trustful ones.

**31.** *For who is God save the LORD? Or who is a rock save our God?* Where can lasting hopes be fixed? Where can the soul find rest? Where is stability to be found? Where is strength to be discovered? Surely, in the Lord Jehovah alone can we find rest and refuge!

**32- 36.** *It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like hinds' feet, and sets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms. You have also given me the shield of Your salvation: and Your right hand has held me up, and Your gentleness has made me great.* I think you will see that David has given us, in this Psalm, the reasons why he began by saying, "I will love You, O Lord, my strength."

—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.**

# **SACRED MEMORIES**

## **NO. 2648**

**A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1899.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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***“Let Jerusalem come into Your mind.”  
Jeremiah 51:50.***

This message from the Lord was written by the Prophet Jeremiah to the Jews who were carried away to Babylon or even to more distant places. They were entreated not to forget the holy city where they had worshipped Jehovah in His Temple. Among all their thoughts, they were bidden to take care that the thought of Jerusalem should often come into their minds. This would keep them from settling down in the places to which they had been carried as captives. They were always far too ready to mingle with other nations and to forget that God had separated them to be a people unto Himself forever. So Jeremiah begged them to keep the holy city in their minds, that they might not judge themselves as having become Persians or Babylonians, but might still remember that they were Israelites and that Jerusalem was their mother city and home.

Besides, this kind of meditation would raise in their hearts ardent longings to get back. “Let Jerusalem come into your mind,” that is, “Sigh for it. Earnestly desire to come back to it and as you cut the various ties which bind you to the distant land, let the links which unite you to Jerusalem become stronger every day.” We know, from the 137<sup>th</sup> Psalm, that this is just what the captives did—“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” This was a proof that they regarded the country where they dwelt—and where many of them prospered and became great—as a place of banishment. Their pathetic lament proved that they never could be truly happy till they were back at the place of Israel's solemn assemblies, the spot which was specially dedicated to the worship of the Most High.

This feeling that they were aliens in a strange land and their longing desire to return to their native country would make them quick to observe everything that might work for the good of Jerusalem. If any of them came to be the king's cupbearer, as Nehemiah was, or occupied any

position at court, as Mordecai and Esther did, they would be on the lookout for opportunities of working for the good of their beloved city and they would avail themselves of every occasion for protecting and benefiting the race to which they belonged. This was the Prophet's desire and it was also the Lord's purpose, that they might find no permanent satisfaction in Babylon, but always sigh for the city of their solemnities, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth"—that they might *never* sing the praises of Shushan, but might reserve all their admiration for Zion, where God revealed Himself to His people as He never did to the other nations of the earth.

It is somewhat in the same sense that I beg you, who are the Lord's people, to remember the *spiritual* Jerusalem and, for similar reasons, that you may feel that this world is not your rest, that your citizenship is not upon earth, but is in Heaven, that you may sing, from your very heart—

***“Jerusalem, my happy home!  
My soul still pants for you.”***

I shall use the text in two ways and show you, first, that *there is a Jerusalem here below which should come into our minds. And, secondly, that there is a Jerusalem above which should come into our minds.*

**I.** First, we will use the text with reference to THE JERUSALEM HERE BELOW WHICH SHOULD COME INTO OUR MINDS, that is, the Church of God on earth. The Church is all one, whether in Heaven or on earth. I may call the heavenly Jerusalem the Upper City where stands the tower of David, built for an armory, and the Temple in all its glory. While here below is the Lower City—but one wall runs around all. There is but one Church of the living God—

***“For all the servants of our King,  
In earth and Heaven are one.”***

Still, at present, the division stands good because it is so to our experience. And we still have to say, concerning the “one army of the living God”—

***“Part of His host have crossed the flood,  
And part are crossing now.”***

So, taking our text as referring to the Church of God on earth, I say to you, first, that if you are a true Believer, let it come into your mind so *that you may unite yourself with its citizens.* Some of you who love the Lord have attended to almost everything except the one thing which you ought to have done as soon as you trusted in Christ, namely, cast in your lot with the people of God on earth. You have made your will, you have kept your business affairs straight and right. You have set your family matters in order. All of that is as it should be, but still, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.” And there are some of you who are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who, if you *did* think of this matter, would have to say, “I am not an avowed member of Christ's Church. I trust that I belong to Jesus, but I have not said as much as that by my public profession. I hope that I follow Him, but I am afraid that it is only afar off and that I wear a mask which hides my Christianity. I have not come out boldly and said, ‘I am on the Lord's side.’ There sits the man of whom

Bunyan writes, ‘with a book and his inkhorn before him,’ but I have never said to him, ‘Set down my name, Sir. I, also, belong to Jesus of Nazareth, and I will be numbered with His people.’ They may not be all I would like them to be, but I am afraid they are far better than I am—and if I might but have the lowest place among them, I would be glad. ‘I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.’”

I am not now talking about what is essential to salvation. I have no doubt that there are many true-hearted pilgrims to Zion who steal away to Heaven alone. They do not go on pilgrimage with their fellows and they are not to be commended for this, for they miss many privileges in neglecting Christian fellowship and, besides, they are not so serviceable to their Lord and Master. Let these lone saints seriously think over this question. If all the children of God were to go to Heaven in that fashion, each one, alone, where would there be any visible Church of God on earth at all? How would Gospel ordinances be maintained? How would the war for King Jesus be carried on? But, if one may do it, all may do it—and it is always an evil thing for any child of God to be doing what he would not have the rest of his Brothers and Sisters doing!

I remember that, one night, while preaching here, I told you that some Christians are like rats behind the wall. On the following Wednesday, when I sat to see enquirers, I had several who said that they would not be rats any longer. They could not bear to have such a title as that, so they resolved that they would come out and confess Christ! I was very glad to have barked so loudly as to frighten them out of their holes and I would like to do the same thing again! If you belong to Christ, say so in His own appointed way! In party politics, men are not generally ashamed to show on which side they are. And people of various nationalities, wherever they wander, are not ashamed to be called Britons, or Americans, or whatever they are. Then why should we, who are followers of the Savior, be ashamed to acknowledge His blessed name! Let it not be so, but rather, cry, “If there is a cross to be carried, here is a shoulder, ready to bear it!” Say you not so, my dear Friends? If there is any shame to be borne for Christ, will you stand back there, snug and comfortable, and let others bear it all alone? No. I think I hear you say, “If there is any mud to be thrown at Christ’s followers, let it be thrown at me. If there is any enmity to be shown to the chosen people of God, let me participate in it, for, as I hope to share their glory, so would I willingly bear a portion of their shame.”

Come now, you who have forgotten all about this matter! I beg to repeat my text especially to you—“Let Jerusalem come into your mind.” Let this message be to you like the still small voice of Jehovah was to Elijah. And go and put your name down among Christ’s disciples and let it not be merely a nominal thing, but give your person and your purse, your time and your talents to Christ and to His Church—and may the blessing of the Master rest upon you in doing it!

Taking it for granted that you have done this, I would next say to you, “Let Jerusalem come into your mind” *by praying for its prosperity*. “Pray

for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love you.” I think that in all our prayers, there should always be a petition for the one great Church of Jesus Christ. You know that in David’s penitent cry, in the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm, when he bemoaned his sin and sought the pardoning mercy of God, he could not close his supplication without saying, “Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem.” So, when your sin and your repentance for it seem as if they must engross your prayer, and you must, with many sighs and tears, seek mercy for yourself, yet, even then, be not selfish, but pray for all who are in a same case with yourself. And pray for that happier band who have found mercy through the bleeding Lamb and are numbered with the people of God. There should be no private prayer—there should be no family prayer—there certainly should be no *public* prayer, without petitions for the prosperity of the Church of God in every place. Take care that you do not forget that important matter—in this sense, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

And when this has been done, what are we to do next? Why, then, *let us labor for the advancement of the good cause*. If there is any object in the world worth living for, it is the Glory of the Lord Jesus and the salvation and the sanctification of those whom He has purchased with His precious blood. Now, to this end—that the Church of Christ may be made perfect in Him—there is much to be done in the ingathering of sinners and the helping and comforting and perfecting of saints. And you and I ought to take our fair share of this blessed work! There are some who have no time for any holy duties—from the moment they wake in the morning till they go to bed at night, they voluntarily give up all their energies to making money. I would like to whisper in their ear very softly, “Let Jerusalem come into your mind.” Does not God deserve at least *some* part of their time? And His Church some little effort for her extension? There are some people who are busy, here and there, and rightly so, in all sorts of philanthropic movements, but they seem to forget that the greatest philanthropic organization on the face of the earth is the Church of the living God! And that there is nothing which can so bless the world as Christ in the midst of His own people.

I would like to step up to these friends and say to them, “Let Jerusalem come into your mind.’ Give the Lord Jesus some of your help. Consecrate to His cause some of your thought—some of your most tender affection.” It is a great pity when we cannot do anything for Christ—are there any Christians who are in that sad condition? Are they without hands—without feet—without eyes—without tongues—without hearts? Well, then, I do not think they can do much if that is the case. But until they can prove that they have lost all these parts of their body, I shall say that they *can* do something for Jerusalem, even if they only *remember* it! If you cannot preach, you can pray! If you cannot pray aloud, you can plead with God in secret! There are many who cannot preach, but who can *give*—and there are others who cannot give, who, nevertheless, can speak a word here and there for the Lord Jesus Christ! There are plenty of weapons waiting for you if you have a mind to wield them. You know



what the Israelites took with them when they went out to fight the Philistines. They had only axes, plowshares and suchlike rough implements, but they seized everything that they were accustomed to use on the farm and employed it as a weapon of warfare! It is well to know how to use all the implements of our service in the house, shop and trade in fighting the Philistines and winning victories for the Lord God of Hosts and for His people! So, while you are diligent and energetic in your various philanthropic and other efforts, I would again whisper in your ear, "Let Jerusalem come into your mind."

Jerusalem should also come into our minds so that we should *prefer its privileges to earthly gain*. Whenever we are about to make a settlement in any place and have the choice of residence left to ourselves, the first matter we ought to consider is the *religious* advantages or disadvantages. I admire the action of that Jew who, when he was about to select a city in which he could pursue his business, asked his friend, the Rabbi, "Is there a synagogue in such-and-such a place?" The Rabbi replied, "No," so the Jew said, "Then I will not go to live there, for I will not settle in any place where there is no synagogue, for I must gather with my brethren for the worship of God." I wish Christian people always thought and acted in a similar way yet, often, for the sake of a trifling gain, they fix their abode where they are altogether deprived of the means of Grace! Now, if you should be *obliged* to go live in such a spiritual desert, that is another matter. And you should feel that you are sent there on purpose to turn the wilderness into a fruitful garden by setting up a synagogue, establishing a House of Prayer and so becoming a light in a dark place! But, wantonly, and without any objective except that of financial gain, to select a residence where there will be no spiritual meat for you looks as if you had but slight regard for Christ, or for His Church. At such a time, "let Jerusalem come into your mind," and say to yourself, "I must go where my soul will be fed, or where I can be the means of feeding the souls of others. This must be one of the chief considerations in my choice of a place to live—"Can I be of service, there, to the Church of God? If not, it is better for me to be useful in poverty than to be useless in wealth—better for me to win souls and have a struggle for bread, than to rise into the highest position of opulence and never have an opportunity of bringing a sinner to Christ." Will you kindly think carefully and prayerfully on that matter and, in all your settlements in life, "let Jerusalem come into your mind"?

Once more upon this theme, if you are a member of a Christian Church—if you are working for the Church—if you are praying for the Church, "let Jerusalem come into your mind" in this way, *always act consistently with your relationship to the Church*. I am glad that I was, while only a lad, baptized into the name of the Sacred Trinity. Well do I remember that May morning when I walked into the river at Isleham Ferry and thus declared publicly that I belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ! By that act of immersion, I felt that I had crossed the Rubicon and there was no possibility of ever going back. I had burned the boats behind me so that I could not retreat, nor have I ever wanted to do so! It

did not matter to me how many spectators looked on me that day, nor whether they were angels, men, or devils—I wanted them all to witness that, from that day on, I was Christ’s servant—that I bore in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus, the watermark which could never be taken out—that I was dead to the world and risen with my Lord, to serve Him forever and ever! And I have often felt, when a temptation has assailed me, that it has been a very blessed check upon me to remember that, perhaps of all men in the world, I am the most known as having declared myself on the Lord’s side.

I do not want to be less known, in that respect, but I feel that I must be doubly careful. I must mind how I act, for I have declared, before Heaven and earth and Hell, that I am the Lord’s! When I hear a young person say, “I am afraid to be baptized and to join the Church, for I fear that it will be such a bond to me,” I ask, “Do you not want to have such a bond as that?” Who wants to be free to sin? I do not, I am sure! No, blessed Master, if You have another chain, fling it round Your servant, for there is no freedom like the liberty of serving God and being bound to do so! You remember how sweetly David wrote upon this matter—“O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds”—as if he only felt sure of his *freedom* when the bonds of the Lord were round about him! And then all other bonds were gone.

If you are apt to be very quick-tempered, the next time you are going to boil over, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.” Be calm and remember that you profess to be a Christian—that is, one who is like Christ. Then if, in trade, there seems at any time an opportunity of making a dishonest penny, stop, stop, stop! “Let Jerusalem come into your mind.” What will men say about the Church to which you belong if they see that you can act as dishonestly as mere worldlings do? This thought ought to hold many a man back from doing what he would have done—“The vows of God are upon me. I am a Red Cross knight. I have enlisted in the army of Christ and it would be shameful for a man who is reckoned to be a Christian—called by that most wonderful of all names that comes from the Divine anointing of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God—it would be shameful for such a man to act as the ungodly would do in the same circumstances.” No, no, my Brothers and Sisters, wait a while—pull up till you have thoroughly considered the whole question. Look at it from all points of view and say, with Joseph, “How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Oh, that the text and our meditation upon it may be a protection to us whenever we are tempted to sin! “Let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

**II.** I have saved a good portion of our time for the second part of my discourse which is to be concerning THE JERUSALEM ABOVE WHICH SHOULD COME INTO OUR MIND.

First, *let it come into the mind of the Believer.* We do not think one hundredth as much about Heaven as we ought to. Most people seem to imagine we cannot know anything about it and they quote half a text, which is almost as bad as telling a lie—“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." There they stop! But that is not where the Scripture ends, for the Apostle went on to say, "But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." They quote the first half of the passage to prove that we do not know anything about Heaven, whereas the second part tells us that we *do* know a great deal about it! And if we would but turn our thoughts that way, we might become almost as familiar with the inside of the gates of pearl as we are with the streets of this clouded, foggy city! We may learn much about Heaven, even while we are here, if we are but willing to be taught of God.

Why should the Christian let Jerusalem come into his mind? I think, first, because Jesus is there. A little child, who was dying, expressed his intense delight because he knew that he was going to Heaven. And one who stood by said, "But, my dear, what makes you wish to be there?" His prompt answer was, with flashing eyes, "Because Jesus is there." The friend then said to him, "But suppose that Jesus should go out of Heaven?" "Then I will go with Him," replied the child, "for He has prayed that those whom His Father has given Him may be with Him where He is." That is just what we feel! Jesus is the Husband of our hearts—should we not think much of the place where He dwells? If a wife were banished from her home for a while, I know that she would like to look at the portrait of her beloved and at a view of the house where she hoped to dwell with him again. And in like manner should your thoughts go out to your Well-Beloved while you are, for a time, barred from enjoying His company and you should think much of the place which He has gone to prepare for you, as He told His disciples, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." Shall Jesus talk like that and yet shall not Jerusalem come into your mind? Oh, surely, it shall, for His dear sake! Because He is there, our heart instinctively turns that way. We watch for His appearing, with our window open towards that Jerusalem, looking for and hastening unto the day when He shall come to us! And meanwhile, the heavenly Jerusalem comes often into our mind because Christ is there.

Further, the child of God should have Jerusalem upon his mind in all his earthly enjoyments. Sometimes God permits His own dear children to have many comforts on earth. They are not always in great tribulation and then the danger is lest they should begin to love this world and the things that are in it. Are any of you, dear Friends, growing rich? Are you in good health and strength? Has God surrounded you with children? Are you blessed with every joy in this life? Then remember that these are the things that make it hard to die unless you have some counter-attraction to put side by side with them. "Let Jerusalem come into your mind" for, when a man once thinks aright of Heaven, the highest joys of earth become very secondary!

I have heard of a nobleman who lay at the gates of death and his king sent him a new title and fresh honors. He was to be a knight of some noble order. The nobleman looked at the insignia of knighthood and said, "These are fine things for you who are here below and, therefore, I heartily thank His Majesty for sending them to me. But I am going to another country where distinctions like this have no value whatever." So you may say, if you have the comforts of this life, "These are fine things, here, and I heartily thank God who gave me all of them in His kindness. But I am going to a country where these things are nothing at all and, therefore, I will have little or no regard for them. My heart is in Heaven—my heart is not here. My treasure is up yonder and it has drawn my heart away up to itself and there it abides." Oh, yes! In the times of your greatest happiness, still cling to your Lord! In the days of joy as well as in the nights of sorrow, let Him be your All-in-All! When God's light fills your sky with sunshine, still love Him as much as when you are in the darkness and, according to the judgment of the flesh, everything is going ill with you.

But, Brothers and Sisters, let us equally allow the heavenly Jerusalem to come into our mind in poverty and persecution. Ah, then is the time, when it is bleak below, to think how blessed are they who are with Jesus above! Renwick, the great Scotch divine and martyr for the Truth of God, when he was hunted over the mosses and the mountains of the land, said to certain faithful friends who gathered around him, "I have lain two nights on the bleak hillside and they have been wild and stormy nights, and I have had nothing to cover me except the curtains of Heaven. And I have experienced the most intense delight when, between the times of tempest, I have seen the stars shining in Glory—and I have thought how every saint above shall shine yet more brightly forever and ever. And when I have thought of the bliss of those who are before the Throne of God, I have laughed to think how little men can do to hurt any child of God." The good man was right and you may say the same as he did if you are hunted by cruel persecutors. If you can but maintain fellowship with Jesus, you need not fear them! They can but kill the body and afterwards there is nothing more that they can do. But, when the glorified spirit walks the streets of gold and beholds the magnificence of his everlasting inheritance, he looks down on his persecutors and says, "What can you do to me now? I am immortal and you cannot harm me! My heritage is up here and you cannot take it from me." O you who suffer poverty and persecution, "let Jerusalem come into your mind," for this will help you to bear up under the greatest trials!

So, too, should Jerusalem come into our mind whenever we are heavy and downcast. Some of the best of God's saints get into that condition. I know plenty of Christian people who are not good enough to be despondent—I mean that they do not think enough, for, if they really did think and meditate, they would soon be partakers of that heaviness of which Peter speaks when he says, "Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold trials." I believe that most of God's children sometimes get down in the dumps. There is a coal cellar to God's house as well as a banqueting hall and, although I should like to

always live in the banqueting hall, I have many a time been down in the coal cellar—and I have learned more, there, than I have learned upstairs! Well, dear Friends, whenever you get down there in the very basement of God's great house, begin to think of the upper stories—of those windows of agate and gates of carbuncle that are up yonder! Think of how you will lean out of the windows of Heaven to look down upon this poor dusky earth. Think of how you will walk up there among cherubim and seraphim, familiar with their joyous sonnets—and then all the sorrows of your mortal life shall seem to have been but as a pin-prick, or “as a dream, when one awakes.” Oh, the bliss of being able, even when you are despondent, to mount up to Heaven by faith and walk with God! Thus, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

Further, it is well to let Jerusalem come into our mind in the time of bereavement. Who has not lost a friend, a child, a wife, a husband, a beloved one of some sort? Well, when you take out your handkerchief because the tears flow fast, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.” That eminent man, Mr. Halyburton, when he was dying so triumphantly—and perhaps there was never a death more triumphant than was his—said, “I have 10 brothers and sisters, and a father and mother in Heaven, and I shall make the 11<sup>th</sup> of their children when I get there. And this is part of the joy that I have in departing, that I shall see my kindred before the Throne of God.” Yes, your dear infant children—you shall see them again! Refrain from weeping, Rachel—you are the mother of immortals! True, their little coffins are beneath the ground, but their *spirits* are not there. Every day they behold the face of our Father who is in Heaven! And some of us have parents or grandparents who have been called up above. Well, we are following them and we shall be there, too, in God's good time! I would that we might be unbroken families before the Throne of God—our children and our children's children, all gathered there and not one left out! When you linger at the side of the silent grave, weep not too much, but “let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

I also think it a suitable time to remember this Jerusalem when you are growing very old—when the threescore years and ten are over—when you have taken out a fresh lease for another ten or a dozen years and have almost run that out. Now you are living by the day and are liable to have notice to leave at any moment. Well, certainly, now is the time to “let Jerusalem come into your mind.” There are no furrows on the brows of the glorified, no limping limbs, or failing eyes, or closing ears! The gray old man shall be as young as a child there! “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” You may well say, “What joy is this to think of Jerusalem!”

There was a nobleman, who invited good Mr. Foxe, the man who wrote *The Book of Martyrs*, to come and spend a merry Christmas with him, “for,” he said, “Mr. Foxe, next Christmas I hope to have such entertainment for my friends as you will approve.” Mr. Foxe said, “I do believe that it will be a high day for me next Christmas, for I shall be where they keep

holiday forever! What do you think of the state of immortals when they quit their bodies?" His lordship was all at sea when Mr. Foxe talked to him like that—but so it proved, for Foxe had, by that time, gone up to Heaven to see the martyrs whose lives he had written about and I know that he did spend his Christmas far more merrily than they did in the mansion below! What better thing can happen to you, dear old saints, than to get Home to your Father's House? Here you are, as it were, left out in the cold for a while, but the great Door will soon open and the angel will come to beckon you in. Some who have gone before have been watching for you at the gate and you will have a joyous welcome! Therefore, when your aches and pains are upon you, and all the ensigns of old age are flying, "let Jerusalem come into your mind."

Do the same in times of sickness. And if your sickness should be unto death, then all the more, "let Jerusalem come into your mind." I was thinking of the little son of a Duke of Hamilton, a long way back, when there was graciousness in that family. This lad would, in a short time, at his father's decease, have become a duke. He was a very gracious child and he was taken away very early. When he was near his end, he called his next brother to him and he said to him, "Douglas, in a little while you will be a duke, but I shall be a king!" Oh, that is blessed for you when you are sure of such glory as that! You might well give up a dukedom and go to Heaven in any boat that God might choose to send! I would not have any choice about that matter. Some people are always dreading sudden death, but, for a Christian, what can be better than to die all of a sudden and to go Home when all is right and ready? But, anyway, whichever way we go, whether in the swift gondolas of sudden death, or in the slower barges of lingering sickness, we shall get to port all right—and that is the chief matter, to sail into the Fair Havens where we shall abide forever! So, in times of sickness, "let Jerusalem come into your mind."

Now I have to conclude with *a word to those who have, at present, no part or lot in the New Jerusalem*. I should like to be the medium through which the still small voice should reach some of you who do not yet know the Lord.

Listen. What if you should never enter the New Jerusalem? Then, say, "Farewell," to all the saints, for you will be divided from them forever! Say, "Farewell," in your heart to all those blessed ones you loved on earth and who, in their death, exhorted you to follow them. Take leave of them, for you shall never sit down with them, or see them again unless it is from such a distance that there will be no communion between you and them, for between them and you there will be a great gulf! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, must I never see your pearly gates and ruby walls, and never see the King except to hear Him say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire"? "Let Jerusalem come into your mind." Do not be any longer halting between two opinions! If you do not enter the New Jerusalem, where else can you go? There is but one other place, though even some so-called Protestants, nowadays, seem to be seeking to revive a belief in "purgatory"—yet there is no such place!

I heard of one, the other day, who said to the preacher, after he had been preaching according to Christ's Word, the doctrine of everlasting punishment, "Sir, I believe that I shall go to Hell for a season, but afterwards get round to Heaven." "Man," said the preacher, "even if what you say is true, when there is a straightforward road to Heaven, what a fool you must be to want to go round by way of Hell!" Yet there are still some such foolish folk—they think that they must go round about when there is set before them an open door on which is inscribed, "Believe and live." There are some who will have no Hell whatever and, as I think of them, I am reminded of a story that I heard of a little boy, whose uncle had imbibed this false doctrine. The uncle had been telling the child the story about the babes in the woods. "Uncle," said the boy, "where did the little babies go to after the robins had covered their bodies with leaves?" "They went to Heaven, Johnny." "And where did their wicked uncle go to?" "Oh, to Heaven, Johnny!" Johnny's looked in utter disbelief. "Why, Uncle!" he said, "then he will kill the babies again!" Just so, if their natures are not renewed, wicked men would do in Heaven the same as they did here! And that cannot be. Do you see the folly of such teaching? Christ's message is, "You must be born again." You must be renewed in nature. You must come to Christ and put your trust in Him, or else, into the New Jerusalem it is not possible for you to enter!

Now, in closing, I want each one of you to ask these two or three questions of yourself. "How is my life today in reference to Heaven? Am I living so that it would be safe to let me into Heaven? Am I so living that it would be possible for God to be righteous and to let me be perfectly happy?" Listen to that question and honestly answer it, for God will do no unrighteous thing! Neither will He ever marry Heaven and sin together. There is an eternal division between those two! Mark the next question—"What objection can I possibly have to being saved tonight? What reason can there be against my believing in Jesus Christ while He bids me do so? It will not make me miserable to have my soul saved—it cannot make me unhappy to be made holy! The right way must be the best way and the best way must be the happiest way. Christ will not refuse me if I go to Him tonight. I have no reason to think that He will, but I have every reason to know that He will not, for He has said, 'Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.'" So may it be! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
REVELATION 21:9-27.**

**Verses 9-22.** *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written*

*thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it. The less there is of true religion, the more there usually is of outward ritualism. When true religion shall fill every heart and God shall be the supreme joy of His people, they will need no temple.*

**23.** *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Outward means are abolished when their mission is accomplished.*

**24.** *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. The Church shall be the metropolis of the world. It shall be honored and esteemed among the nations of mankind. When men are godly, then will they reverence the abode of God, namely, the living Church, built up of living stones, upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ!*

**25.** *And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. There will be no need to shut out enemies at night, for the day shall last right on. The Church's most intimate communion with God, her constant commerce with the skies, will have then begun.*

**26, 27.** *And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Into this holy city, the graceless, the Christless, the faithless shall never come. Here we have a mixture of light and darkness, but, in those better days, it shall be all light and the darkness shall have fled far away forever.*

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

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