

THE LORD'S OWN SALVATION

NO. 2057

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 16, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,**

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 2, 1888.

***“But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah and will save them by the Lord
their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword,
nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen”
Hosea 1:7.***

GOD is very considerate towards the messengers by whom He delivers His Word to men. They are bound to deliver His Word faithfully, whatever the tidings may be. Sometimes the burden of the Lord is very heavy. The Prophets have to denounce woe upon woe, with terrible monotony of threat. And then it is that God hastens to relieve them by giving them a gracious Word, so that they may refresh their hearts and not be altogether crushed beneath their load. We have an instance here of the Lord's care for His heralds. Hosea was bound to say, in the name of the Lord, “I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel. But I will utterly take them away.”

But when he had said that, with heavy heart and tearful eye, he was allowed to add, “But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah.” The Lord will not let our spirit fail beneath a burden which is all of grief. But He will grant us the high privilege of proclaiming Divine Grace, as well as publishing judgment. Dear Brethren in Christ, if you have to preach God's Word, preach it faithfully and abate no syllable of its stern threats. Woe unto him who is afraid to preach the terrors of the Lord! Woe unto the man who refuses to put his hand into the bitter box and take out the wormwood and gall which make such salutary medicine for the souls of men!

We must at times speak lightning and prove ourselves sons of thunder. We must bring on the storm and tempest in the heart of man if fair summer-tide discoursing will not touch them. For the most of men there is no going to Heaven except by the Weeping Cross. And we must drive them that way with God's thundering sentences of judgment. Let us lead them by the path of sorrow to the Man of Sorrows, sorrowing ourselves because it is so hard to bring them to a godly sorrow. It is at our soul's peril that we allow a warning to lie silent. “If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish. But their blood will I require at the watchman's hands.”

Let us think of that and give ourselves up to our Master's work, even when it is heaviest, cheered by the fact that we have to speak of such glorious Truths, such precious promises, such a gracious Christ, such a free salvation, such full pardon for the very chief of sinners, such abundant help for those that have no strength, such fatherly compassion to those

that are out of the way. Our themes of joy by far outweigh our topics of grief and we find the Lord's service a happy one.

The connection of our text suggests the thought that there is a limit to the long-suffering of God. He bade Hosea say, "I will no more have mercy upon Israel." He had borne with that guilty people very long and overlooked their daring crimes. But He would do so no longer—He would give them over to the enemy who would carry them far away so that Israel as a distinct monarchy should cease to be. O my Hearers, God is very gracious but His Spirit shall not always strive with you. A little more sin and you may be over the boundary and God may give you up. Stop, I pray you! Do not further provoke. Repent and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart.

Having made that observation, I would make another, namely, that the Lord makes distinctions among guilty men according to the Sovereignty of His Grace. "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah." Had not Judah sinned too? Might not the Lord have given up Judah, also? Indeed He might justly have done so, but He delights in mercy. Many sin and righteously bring upon themselves the punishment due to sin—they believe not in Christ and die in their sins. But God has mercy, according to the greatness of His heart, upon multitudes who could not be saved on any other footing but that of undeserved mercy. Claiming His royal right He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy."

The prerogative of mercy is vested in the Sovereignty of God—that prerogative He exercises. He gives where He pleases and He has a right to do so, since none have any claim upon Him. We are all under His rule and by that rule we are under condemnation. And if He should leave us there, it would be strictly just. But if any are saved it is an act of pure, undeserved Grace for which He is to have all the praise. Note, too, that even in the dark times, when whole nations go astray from Him, He still reserves unto Himself a people. "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah and will save them."

God will have a people even when those who are called His people prove unworthy of the name. There never was a night so dark but that God had a star shining through its blackness. There never was a desert so dreary but God could lead a people through it and make the wilderness rejoice. There never shall be a time in which Christ will not have a remnant according to the election of Divine Grace who will maintain His Truth and the honor of His name. Let us be comforted by this and look for brighter and better times, however dark the days may seem to be just now. God will save His own and by His own will keep His Glory bright among men.

But now the text brings us to consider this fact, that God will save His own people in His own way. He tells us positively how He will save the house of Judah and negatively how He will not save them. "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah and will save them by the Lord their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." God displays His Sovereignty not only in the persons saved but in the *ways* whereby that salvation is worked out.

The point which we shall consider is God's way of saving His people, as instanced in the text. And we remark, first, that oftentimes God puts visible means aside in dealing with His people—"Not by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." Secondly, He has good reasons for doing this—He acts with infinite wisdom. Thirdly, there is a Gospel in this, a Gospel which has special relation to us. Oh, for a blessing from the Spirit of the Lord!

I. First, then, GOD IS PLEASED VERY OFTEN IN WORKING SALVATION, TO PUT MEANS ASIDE. He said of Israel, "I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezebel." He thus struck out of the hands of His people their only defense. They had trusted in their bow and the Lord destroyed it.

First, the Lord does this in the work of salvation by Divine Grace. Salvation is of the Lord alone. Salvation is not of human merit, for there is no such thing. Plenty of demerit you can find anywhere and everywhere but of merit there is none. "When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants: we have done no more than it was our duty to have done." But we have not done all. Alas, on the contrary, we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And we have left undone the things which we ought to have done and there is no health in us. In ourselves we have neither health, help, nor hope. We are not, we cannot be saved by our works. We dismiss the idea with an honest indignation, each one of us for himself.

Neither are we saved by any good dispositions which lie dormant and latent within us, for there are no such things. There is none good, no not one. The heart is, in every case, deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one. If our salvation depended upon our hearts going after God of themselves and the motions of our nature ascending towards the Most High of themselves, it would be a hopeless case. But Divine Grace waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

"You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." The first movement is from God *to* us, not *from* us to God. As soon expect the darkness to create the day as expect the sinner to turn his own heart to the Lord. We are saved by the Lord's Grace, not by our works. Nor by our feelings, nor by our desires, nor even by our sense of need. I believe it is one object of God's infinite wisdom in each individual case to make this doctrine clear to the understanding and the heart. Certainly it is one object of every faithful ministry. We preach down the creature and preach up the Savior. Yet, preach as we may, self-righteousness is so natural to man, self-trust is so congenial to our proud imbecility, that we cannot get it out of men till the Holy Spirit comes.

Every man his own Savior is the kind of doctrine which is popular. But to set aside our own doings is to offend many. I see before me a picture which was once before the mind of Isaiah. Our nature seems like a rainbow-colored field of grass in the early days of summer. The golden king-cups are intermingled with flowers of every hue. What a luxuriant garden!

Wait a moment! A wind comes—a hot sirocco burns its deadly way. “The grass withers, the flower fades: because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people are grass.” So have we seen men glorious in their own self-righteousness, boastful of their moral purity and we have half thought, surely there is something in all this!

We walk over the same field after the withering work of the Holy Spirit has been there and men have been convicted of sin and we see nothing but disappointment and hear nothing but confession of failure. We see no flowers but dead, withered grass. How soon has the glory departed! The comeliness of the field is passed away as in the twinkling of an eye! You cannot have forgotten, some of you, when this terrible self-withering happened to you. When God's rebukes corrected you, your beauty passed away as the moth. Before I was instructed as to myself, I thought myself as good a fellow as could be found within fifty miles. But when the Spirit of God had revealed me to myself, I thought myself the basest creature within five hundred miles. Or, for that matter, even outside or inside of Hell itself.

You may, perhaps, have seen a picture drawn by a cunning artist. It represents a lady, very fair and beautiful to look upon. But the picture is so contrived that you discover underneath it the form of death. That which appeared outwardly so lovely is only a veiled skeleton. Just that kind of change the Spirit of God makes upon our moral beauty—He turns it into corruption by making us see what we really are. The bones of the skeleton of depraved nature stand out through the proud flesh of our self-righteous pride. Then we cry to God for mercy. Then we give up all idea of saving ourselves. Neither bow, nor sword, nor horse, nor horsemen are any longer our confidence. The weapons of our self-help are looked upon by us as weapons of rebellion—and they really are so.

And by God's Grace we throw them away and will have nothing further to do with them. The man upon whom there is found a bad coin is very earnest in declaring that it is none of his—somebody must have slipped it into his pocket. He will not own it. A little while ago he thought to himself, “What a splendid imitation it is! How well I have cheated the Queen!” Self-righteousness is nothing but a piece of counterfeit coin. And when all goes well with us, we say, “How well I have done it! How splendid is my righteousness!” But when the Spirit of God arrests us, then we are anxious to get rid of the very thing wherein we gloried. What was our righteousness we reckon to be as filthy rags—and we reckon according to the Truth of God.

Thus God saves us, not by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen but by His Grace, which comes to us freely when Jesus is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

It is so in the actual salvation of men and it is often so in their calling to this salvation. Was any man ever converted in the way in which he expected to be? I hardly think so. I know what you thought would happen—at least I know what many expect. They look for an interesting incident. They suppose, perhaps, that they will have a very wonderful dream. Or

that, going to hear a minister, there will be something very striking in the sermon which will alarm or depress them, so that they will be tempted to commit suicide, or do some other outrageous thing. Possibly, on the other hand, they half expect that there will happen a sudden death in the family, or sickness upon many and that so they will be impressed. Or, possibly, like Martin Luther with his friend Alexis, they may be walking out in a thunderstorm and Alexis will be killed and they will be aroused in that way.

I, myself, always looked for something very remarkable but it did not come to me. And yet something happened which was more remarkable than the most remarkable thing would have been—I simply heard the Gospel command, “Look unto Me and be you saved.” I looked and I lived! And that is all the story I have to tell you. Dear Hearer, that is all the story, very likely, you will ever have to tell. You have come in here tonight and perhaps you have even desired that something very wonderful may take place. Nothing of the sort may happen and yet the infinite mercy of God may visit your heart and sweetly melt it. Before you are even aware, you may say to yourself—

***“I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me”***

and on a sudden, that change will come over you of which you have so often heard—by no means the physical change which you have looked for, the extravagant delirium of sorrow struggling with delight.

You will simply drop into the arms of Christ and rest in His great sacrifice and find peace. That will be all. You will not be saved by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen but by a simple trust in the Lord alone. What more do you want? What more can you hope to receive? I feel very grateful to God whenever a person attributes his conversion to me. I feel both honored and humbled. But if you are brought to the Lord Jesus and no word of mine shall be used but only that still small voice which speaks in solemn silence to the heart, I shall be equally pleased, so long as you are saved.

If hungry souls receive the bread of Heaven, I will not fret because they took it from some other hand than mine, Oh, that even now the Lord Himself might come like the dew which falls in its own special way and may He refresh your hearts unto eternal life and fulfill this word—“I will save them by the Lord their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.”

In the next place, the same thing is true with regard to the progress of religion and the work of revivals. Let every man work as he feels called to do, provided he follows the rules of his Lord. But we have seen revivals of which it was said at the first, “We will get up a revival.” Revivals can be got up but are they worth the trouble? What has been the end of them all? A few years after, the result, where is it? I hear an echo say, “Where is it?” I cannot tell you what has become of it. In many cases I fear that the disappointed Church has become more hard to stir than it was before.

Brethren, I hopefully believe that there will soon come a deep, widespread, lasting revival of religion and it may be it will come just as it used

to in Apostolic times. How did they act in Jerusalem? What did they do throughout Asia Minor? What was the Apostles' plan? I cannot find, for the life of me, that they did anything else but preach the Gospel, while at the same time they went from house to house and held meetings for prayer—and thus the kingdom of Christ came. They did not work up a revival but they prayed it down. They simply waited upon the Lord in supplication and service. They might have tried other plans had they been so unwise as to think of them.

They would never have tolerated the dodges of the present period, the adaptations of the Gospel and the degrading of it by secular lectures, entertainments and so forth. They never dreamed of keeping abreast of the times with liberal philosophical teaching. But I recollect that Paul was so resolutely ignorant as to say, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Standing all together the chosen preachers of the first days could say—"We preach Christ crucified." They could all say that and say it emphatically. All the men of the College of the Apostles stuck to that theme. And see the effect!—

***"Nations, the learned and the rude,
Were by these heavenly arms subdued,
While Satan raging at his loss,
Abhorred the doctrine of the Cross."***

I wish all the Churches would try this old way again, for it seems to me that the world will never be subdued to Christ by the wooden sword of reason, but only by the true Jerusalem blade of a Gospel revealed from Heaven. Until we take up such methods as our Lord has ordained and make our sole confidence to be in the Lord our God, who "will not save by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen," we shall never see great results. Grand preaching, fine preaching, eloquent preaching! Yes—but the Apostle was afraid of it, lest the faith of his converts should stand in the wisdom of men. Though he could have spoken with the tongue of an orator, he did not use the wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be of no effect.

"But, surely," cries one, "we must have some advancement in theology. We ought to know more than our old fathers did." This is the pride of our hearts. Would you advance beyond the Apostles? Into what can you advance but into the ditch of error? They did not crave for an advance in the Apostolic times. But they were satisfied to speak over again, "all the Words of this life." They remained true to the "faith once and for all delivered to the saints," and they found salvation in this primitive Revelation. Why should we go gadding elsewhere? Depend upon it—God will not save men by advanced thought, nor by eloquent discourses, nor by literary beauties—He "will save them by the Lord their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."

I believe that the same great Truth will be made apparent as to the establishment of the Truth of God in this land. How my soul has been burdened with the many that have turned aside and the few that remain faithful to the Covenant God of Israel! These last are not so very few as some would make them out to be but yet they are sadly scant in number. God has reserved unto Himself seven thousand that have not bowed their

knee to Baal. Oh, that there were a thousand times as many! But we have striven with all our might to bear our outspoken testimony for the old faith and we have hopefully thought that many would rally to the cry.

But it is not so, nor, perhaps, is it God's mind that it should be. Men of eminence have held their tongues and Brethren once ardent for the Gospel have practically gone over to the enemy. I am sure that the Lord will confound the adversary and bring forth His Truth as the noonday. But it may not be as we would suggest. He has His own way. Let us watch for Him to make bare His arm. Perhaps those who are faithful must stand alone, must bear their witness in solitary places and be the objects of general derision. Perhaps for many a year the heavenly fire will only smolder amidst the ashes. But it is all right—Truth shall hold the crown of the causeway, yet, and Christ's own Word shall lift its head from the waves that have washed over it and be the fairer for the washing.

The Truth has God's might with it and it must prevail. He "will save them by the Lord their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." We must be content to subside. To be nothing. To be never heard of. To die. So be it, if the Truth shall live. This will be better than if we formed a numerous band and carried everything by majorities and set up a strong party and won the day—for then man might be great and God be forgotten—but now He shall be All in All. When you have seen how I fail and those that are with me and how plans and efforts are futile, you will all the more clearly see what the Lord can do.

Dear Friends, I would make one other application of these words and I trust it may be profitable to you. The text has a voice to God's people in the day of trouble. I may be addressing godly people who are in most terrible distress. You have faith in God that He will bring you out of your affliction. Maintain that faith. And if for a long time no deliverance should come, still maintain it. Perhaps you have hopes from a certain quarter. Those hopes may come to nothing—that cistern will leak. You have another friend to whom you can apply. Yes, you can apply. That is all that will happen, for that tank also holds no water. When you have tried all the cisterns, be wise enough to recollect the Fountain.

It may be that there will come a day when every door will be fast closed and you will see no way of relief whatever. But you will then think that there will remain the one Way, which you should have followed at the first. In such an hour let my text speak with you—"He will save them by the Lord their God and He will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." What a glorious vision is that of Jehovah alone with His own right hand getting to Himself the victory! When Israel came out of Egypt, what armies vanquished Pharaoh? Who fought on Israel's side to bring them out of Egypt? Nobody.

Then there was no human victor to extol, no human warrior to praise. But clear and plain the hymn rang out—"Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." If there had been an ally with God the glory might have been divided. But as it was, the Lord, alone, was exalted in that day.

When Israel fought with Amole it is evident that the battle never depended upon their fighting, for—

***“While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when through weariness they failed,
That moment Amole prevailed!”***

So that the real fighting was done by those uplifted hands that brought down the Divine success and made Joshua mighty in the battle.

When Israel crossed the Jordan and came into the promised land to fight the Canaanites, the very first conquest was that of Jericho. Did they bring battering-rams to the walls? Did they gradually throw down the structure with their axes and picks? Oh, no! They compassed the city seven days and God made the walls to fall when the people gave a shout. In the memorable deliverances of God's people, God has said to the second cause, “Stand back. Let My glory come to the front.” The bow, the sword, the battle, the horses and the horsemen—He has sent them all about their business. And then the Lord their God has led the van and His enemies have been scattered like the dust of the threshing floor.

When He takes up the quarrel of His Covenant He makes short work of it, for “the Lord is a man of war; Jehovah is His name.” And when He lays bare His arm to defend the cause of His people, He wants no helpers. Now can you lean on the Lord? Can you grasp the Invisible? Can you lean alone on God and forego all helpers? Can you grasp His bared arm and let all other things go? O man of God, if you can, you shall glorify God and you shall surely be delivered! If you must have your bow and your sword, or else give up hope, then the battle rests with yourself. How can you plead the promise of God?

But when you put the bow aside and the sword is hung on the wall, then can you go to Him who is better to you than bow and sword and rest in Him and He will work gloriously, so that His own name shall be magnified and you shall be blessed. I pray the Holy Spirit to apply that Truth to any heart here that is heavy by reason of sore conflict at this time. Oh, for Divine Grace to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, for in His own time and way He will work and none shall hinder Him.

So much upon our first point, that oftentimes God puts the means aside in dealing with His people.

II. But now, secondly, God has GOOD REASONS FOR THIS. I shall very briefly touch upon this theme. The Lord is full of wisdom and His doings are ever prudent. He always has good reasons for everything but one of the things we should never do is to ask why. It is an unreasonable thing to ask God to give reasons for what He does. His answer to arrogant questioners is—“May I not do as I will with My own?” Oh for Divine Grace to be silent where God is silent! Is He not God and we worms of the dust? Who shall presume to ask Him why or what He does? Better far to say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems Him good.” If He never gave us a reason for what He did, we ought to be well content to leave all with Him, knowing that He must do that which is best and wisest.

But, so far as in humility we may dare to look, we have looked and we believe that the Lord's ways are intended, first, to prevent all boasting.

How prone we are to self-esteem! How wickedly we rob God to honor ourselves! If God uses us—if God uses any sort of means—yet there is no credit to the means which He uses but to Himself only. I read the other day of a certain writer who says, “I wrote the four hundred pages of this book with one pen.” Where is that pen? Does anybody want it? If it were advertised as an exhibition, I should not go to see it. I care a deal more for the hand that wrote and for what was written, than for the pen with which it was written.

A common goose-quill it was in the case referred to and no more. Ah, how plainly can we see where the quill came from! God uses men for a certain purpose, as we use a hammer, or a saw, or an awl. Suppose that when we had done with such tools and put them back into the box, they all began to cry, “See what we have done! What a sharp saw I was! What a heavy hammer I was! Did I not hit the nail on the head?” Such boastings would be foolishness. Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews? We do not judge that the instrument ought to take credit to itself. But it does so in our case whenever it can and this is a great injury to us.

Some of us might have enjoyed a much larger blessing if we had not grown top-heavy with the blessing we already enjoyed. God saved a soul or two by you, my dear Friend, and you began to rub your hands and think that you were something better than an angel. You were running away with God's glory and thus ending your own influence. Often this is the cause of the drying up of hopeful usefulness. The instrument began to exalt itself and so the Lord put up the bow, the sword, the horses and the horsemen and then all men saw what powerless things these were. Oh, that the Lord may never feel compelled to leave you and me to ourselves! Oh, that He may deign to honor us by using us to His Glory. I had far rather die than stand a withered tree in the vineyard of the Lord and yet, what better should I be if He withdrew the dew of His Grace from me?

Next, He does this to take us off from all reliance upon second causes and outward means. You people of God—the process of weaning is, with you, often a long and tedious one. But if ever it is accomplished, your faith will rejoice, even as Abraham made a great feast at Isaac's weaning. My dear Hearers, some of you are not saved yet and I will tell you what happens with many of you. You come here on Sabbaths, and to Monday Prayer Meetings, and Thursday services and I am glad to see you. You also read your Bibles. I am glad of that. You say a thing you call a prayer—I do not know whether I am glad about that. But I will tell you what you are doing. You are making yourselves quite comfortable, as if, by some singular process, salvation would insensibly penetrate you by your being found in good company, hearing the Word, and so on.

Let me remind you that these things were never prescribed as the way of salvation. I do not want you to run away from hearing the Word, or from the use of the means. But I do want to assure you that, if you trust in these means, you will be disappointed in the result. These are mere pitchers but they will not quench your thirst if there is no water in them. *Look to God, not to your minister.* Get to Jesus Himself rather than to the sacred Book. Remember how the Savior puts it—for this is not a wrested

reading—"You search the Scriptures. For in them you think you have eternal life: but you will not come to Me that you might have life." Pass beyond the Scriptures to the Christ whom the Scriptures reveal. Do not stay in the porch of the Word but enter the house of the Truth itself, which is Christ Jesus.

It is not singing hymns and saying prayers. It is getting to the Lord in praise and really coming to Christ in prayer. I wish you not to stay away from any of the services. I wish you to be where the means may be blessed to you. But the means, themselves, cannot save you. There is nothing in preaching—there is nothing in public service that can mechanically bring salvation to you. And do not expect it. "You must be born again!" You must distinctly go to Christ for yourselves. The Lord saves men by the Lord Jesus Christ and He will not save them by books and Prayer Meetings and sermons any more than He would save Judah by the bow, the sword, the battle, the horses and the horsemen.

The Lord set aside horse and horsemen to bring the people to Himself. And often He lays people up so that they cannot get out to hear the minister, or He drafts them away to some portion of the country where they get no sermon, that then they may go to the God of all true sermons and may find salvation in Jesus Christ Himself.

Again, Beloved, the Lord blesses His people, Himself, that He may endear Himself to them. He reveals Himself to them apart from other things that they may see Him and know what He can do. You do not know to the full what God can do so long as He keeps within the bounds of the ordinary means, or you feel that you are well provided for by ordinary methods. You are apt to forget that God provides for you because your quarterly allowance is received so regularly. Now, suppose that your business fails. Ah, then God must provide for you—then you will see what God is doing. Suppose that, instead of being in one place, you should be kicked about like a football and still the Lord should give you rest in Himself—then you will see what He can do.

When we are in fine feather and everybody is kind to us, we hardly know the loving kindness of the Lord, it is so smothered up by secondary agencies. When we get quite alone and nobody is kind to us and we approach to the Lord in solitary trust and prove His power to comfort us, then we know more of what He is in Himself to His people. The night reveals the stars and sorrow and loneliness manifest the Lord's presence. But, Beloved, God does this to endear Himself to us, that seeing more of Him we may love Him more and may say to ourselves, "What a gracious God He is to take notice of me, to interpose for me, to come, and by His own mighty power, do for me what the ordinary ways and means fail to do!" In this way, also, the Lord often gives a double blessing—a blessing in the gift, and a blessing in the way of giving.

Now look at Hezekiah's case. Supposing Hezekiah had gone out to fight Sennacherib and had defeated him—a certain number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have been killed in the battle. But when the Lord delivered Hezekiah without a battle, then there were no funerals in Jerusalem. Nobody was wounded. Nobody was slain. So frequently God not only

blesses us by the favor given but by the way in which the gift is sent—He saves us from pains which any other method would have involved. The Lord often spares us the humiliation of being dependent upon a person who would have made his patronage bitter to us.

If we had received the blessing through some great one, he might have crowed over us all the rest of his life. I like that bit in Abraham's life when the king of Sodom offered him the property which he had captured. Abraham had a right to it, for he had taken it in war. But he said, "I will not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich." No, no. The servant of the Lord would not have a king talk as if he had been the maker of the Lord's own servant. God Himself will so help you, so bless you, so carry you through, that you shall not have to take off your hat to any king of Sodom. Neither shall he be able to go up and down the city and say, "I have made Abram rich." God will put the king of Sodom away with the horses and the horsemen and double the mercy to you by handing it out with His own hand after His own way.

I think that the Lord does this also to encourage you in all future troubles—He has rescued you in a way beyond means, without means and even against means! Therefore you cannot be in a condition from which He will be unable to rescue you. If you should come to be more friendless and more feeble than you now are—what then? Are your resources within yourself or dependent upon friends? If so, you are in an evil case. But if all your supplies are in the Lord, you are no worse off than you used to be. When the Lord strips you bare of your own garments then you can go to His wardrobe and put on the raiment which He has provided. You cannot wear God's clothes while you glory that you are wearing your own. When want has swept your table, then all the bread on it will come from your God.

When the Lord has brought you down to the bare rock, then you can go no lower and there is a chance to build a house which will stand against flood and wind. Be reliant upon Him who can work by means but can equally well work without means whenever it seems good in His sight! In such confidence you will find security against all ill weathers. The Lord changes not, and therefore you shall not be consumed.

III. My time is done, or else I was going to say, thirdly, **THERE IS A GOSPEL IN THIS TEXT** for those here present. I can only hint at this in a few words.

The first Gospel is that salvation is possible in every case. Notice, "I will save them." What can stand against a Divine "I will"? With God nothing is impossible. If there is nothing to help Him, what does it matter? He does not need help. He expressly abjures the aid of a creature when He says, "I will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." My dear Hearer, whoever you may be, there is hope in your case—if God saves, then you can be saved. If you had to save yourself, you would not be saved. But as there is nothing wanted of you—God works salvation with His own right hand—your case is hopeful. How clear is this! And how bright with comfort!

Next, salvation is to be sought of God alone. Do not go wandering about to the second cause. Go straight to the Lord, Himself, and go at once. Straightforward is the best running in the world. Go straightforward to your God, your Savior. Let there be no waiting for tears, feelings, repentance, sanctification, or anything else. But arise at once and go to your God, and for Christ's sake, plead with Him to have mercy upon you at this moment. As salvation does not necessarily come through the outward means, if I address any here who have neglected the outward means, let them come away to God at once, though they have neglected His courts, profaned His day and despised His ministers.

You came in here with no idea of worshipping God but only just to see the place and what the preacher is like. Never mind, look to the Lord Jesus Christ straight away! With those eyes that are so blinded, look! If you cannot see, it may be that in your obedient attempt to look, the Lord will give you sight. He does not command you *to see* but He does command you *to look* to Him and be saved—so that, if you turn your eyes towards Jesus, though they be sightless eyeballs—He will make them see. If you will trust in Christ you may cast your guilty soul on Him at this moment. Why should you not do so? Then for you the rain will be over and gone and you will see the bright light in the clouds. Instead of the dark and dismal winter of doubt, you shall have a summertime of hope and comfort. These dreary weeks of cold despair shall give place to a season in which Heaven and earth shall blend in your experience in a joy unspeakable. The Lord grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—I am still somewhat like Mephibosheth, who “did eat continually at the king's table and was lame on both his feet.” But the fine summer weather of this place and the complete rest are rapidly restoring me. I ask prayer that strength may return in such a way as to remain with me, that I may, for a long period afterwards, abide in my work. As also that the Divine blessing may rest on the preaching of the Word.

I have great cause for gratitude because of the continual items of news which I receive concerning the influence of the sermons. This is a rare restorative. May my readers still find in these simple discourses food for their souls and comfort for their hearts. When they distribute them among the unsaved, may the Spirit of God make them to minister life to the spiritually dead.

I am most happy in being remembered in the prayers of many saints—and I would beg for more intercession—not for myself only, but for all who truly preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Yours ever heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON

Mentone, Dec. 8th, 1888

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

STRANGE WAYS OF LOVE

NO. 2564

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 3, 1898.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 8, 1883.**

*“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness,
and speak comfortably unto her.”
Hosea 2:14.*

The first part of this chapter is very dark, but the second part is clear daylight. As we read the first verses, we tremble, for we seem to stand at the foot of Sinai when it is altogether on a smoke. But when we reach the second half of the chapter, we can say that, “we have come unto Mount Zion.” We hear no sound of trumpet, but the voice of that blood “which speaks better things than that of Abel.” The reason for this is not that God has changed, nor that the person who is here spoken of has changed—up to this point there is no change indicated in the person—it is the same unchaste, unholy, obstinate, rebellious, ungrateful creature. Yet there is a wonderful change in the words spoken and the reason is because there is a change of dispensation—the sinner is brought from under Law to come under Grace! God no longer convinces of sin by the terrors of the Law, but He comes to deal with the poor guilty soul on terms of love and mercy! This is the great wonder of wonders that ever it should be truly said that, “in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” and that he is saved who believes on Him that justifies the ungodly! Christ died for us, not as saints, not as godly persons, but as the ungodly! Our subject is all about the dealings of Divine Love with guilty sinners, by which God brings them unto Himself. I shall speak of four things.

I. The first is that in our text, FOR GOD'S DEEDS OF LOVE, THERE IS A REASON BEYOND ALL REASON.

The text begins with, “therefore.” God is very fond of that word, for He never acts illogically. There is always a good reason for all that He does. But His ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts and, sometimes, our logic is altogether baffled and our reasoning faculties seem as if they could not in any way follow the working of the mind of God, if such an expression may be used concerning His wondrous thoughts.

Here, then, is a, “therefore,” but what is the argument of which this is the conclusion? Two of the most eminent writers on Hosea who wrote in Latin in the olden time—and were both Romanists—think that the word, “therefore,” ought to be expunged, for they cannot see any reason for its being here. Neither, according to Romanist teaching, is there any reason

for it. It is a Scripture nut which is too hard to be cracked if salvation is by human merit and by human works. "Therefore" is a manifest *non sequitur* in such a place as this if that is the theory. But he who understands that salvation is *not* of works, nor in any degree of human merit, but entirely an act of the free and Sovereign Grace of God—that it is not of man, nor by man—he has spied out a method of reasoning, here, which the workaholic will never be able to discover! There is a reason, though it is beyond all reason.

Note, then, first, that when God is about to save a man, *He finds a reason for Grace where there is none*. Where there is no reason in the man, God, nevertheless, finds one. There never can be any reason in a man's sin why God should pardon it—at least we cannot see how it can be so—yet David did when he prayed, "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great," as if the very greatness of it was turned into a reason why it should be forgiven! This is a singular argument. When a man has rebelled against the Lord, is that a reason why God should publish an act of amnesty and oblivion? When man refuses to accept forgiveness, is that any reason why the Lord should go out of His way to change that sinner's obstinacy so as not to let him destroy his own soul? I fail to see any reason for it, but God finds a reason, "for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

We think it always wise to enquire whether a person who applies for alms is a worthy person, for we like to give to deserving people. But God likes to give to the unworthy and undeserving—and He has a reason for it, for how could Mercy be so honored as in the forgiveness of the guilty—and how could Divine Grace get to itself so complete a victory as in reclaiming those who are utterly lost? God finds a reason where to us, at any rate, there seems to be none whatever. If, dear Friend, you are self-condemned and can see no reason why the Lord should have mercy upon you, yet He spies a reason in the very fact of your being unable to see any! He finds, in that very brokenness, misery and helplessness of yours, a reason why His own sweet love and mercy should come and deal with you, even with *you*.

Further, God not only finds a reason where we cannot see any, but *He makes a reason which overrides all other reasons*. There was a reason why He should have put Israel away altogether. She had been, as it were, espoused to Him—that is the parallel that is given to us—and if it seems, in your judgment, wrong that I should use the parallel, I cannot help it—it is in the Bible and I am going to follow it. God compares Israel to a wife who has left her husband, broken her marriage vow and become unchaste, filthy and polluted. In such a case as that, there are a thousand reasons why a man says, "I cannot have her as my wife any longer. How can I dishonor myself by receiving her, again, to my house and to my heart?" Yes, just so. But God finds a reason for receiving His banished and guilty ones over and above all reasons why He should put them away. He looks over the head of the argument for their destruction and finds grounds for their salvation! These people had given themselves up to the worship of that abominable idol-god called Baal, whose very wor-

ship was full of filthiness—and you can conceive the grief of the holy God when He saw them bowing down before such an obscene deity as this! That was a reason why He should put them away and have no more to do with them. But He had in His heart a reason that was stronger than any reason in their guilt and in their crime! He had also chastened them. He had brought them very low with famine and fever, yet they had gone on in sin worse than ever! And if they seemed to return for a little while, they were soon off, again, on their wanderings. These provocations of theirs cried aloud, “Put them away! Destroy them! Have no mercy upon them!” Yet God, whose mercy endures forever, still found a reason for looking favorably on poor Israel. And He said, “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.” In like manner, though you, poor conscience-stricken Sinner, may see ten thousand reasons why you should be lost, God sees a reason which is stronger than all those and which, with a louder voice, cries over their heads, “Let them live! Let them find mercy at Your hands, O God!” Thus He finds a reason that overrides every other reason.

Yes, and I go further and say that God *turns reasons against us into reasons for us*. Every sin is a reason why a sinner should perish. Every willful transgression is a reason why a man should be given over to continue in his stubbornness, but God does not reason so. In His infinite mercy, He treats our sin as though it were a necessity rather than a crime! You know how you deal with persons who are in great need. Did you ever hear a beggar who came to your door say, “Sir, I am not very badly off. I have a nice little income, but I need some relief.” How much will he get out of you? He goes the wrong way to work! But here comes a man in a most dilapidated state. His garments are all in rags, his feet are on the ground, his body is emaciated, he tells you that he has not tasted food for the last two days, that he has to walk the streets at night and has nowhere to lay his head. And the worse his story is, the more he prevails with you. Now, the Lord, in His infinite mercy, taking that tender view of sinning, as if it had bred a necessity in men, loves to hear them speak with Him—not thus, “God, I thank You I am not as other men are.” You know the rest of it, but the man who said *that* was *not* accepted of God! But the Lord loves to hear a man say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” That cry touches His heart. It is the greatness of men’s sin which He interprets to be the greatness of their necessity and, therefore, He deals with them in mercy.

He also does this when He treats sin as if it were a disease. If a man were taken into a hospital, or if he were picked up on a battlefield and carried to the surgeon who has a large number of patients to wait upon, does the man who is suffering say, “Oh, it is a very slight affair, just a mere grazing of the skin, that is all”? He knows that if he talked so, the surgeon would pass him by to attend to the man whose wound will prove mortal if it is not stanching within a few minutes. The man who has the attention of the humane surgeon is the one who can truly say, “Sir, there is not a more severely wounded person in all this throng. My voice is failing, I am almost choked, I shall die if you do not relieve me at once.” The surgeon says to the other patients, “My good fellows, you must all wait

awhile. I must see to that poor man.” Now, God looks at your sin as if it were a deadly disease working in you—and the greatness of your malady becomes a plea with Him. Oh, how strange it is that the very thing which, as a matter of justice, is really against us, turns out to be for us when it comes to be a matter of pure Grace!

I want you all to put it upon that footing. You know what the woman said to the great Napoleon when she wanted him to save the life of her father. Napoleon said to her, “Woman, I have pardoned this man two or three times before.” But she said, “Sir, I pray you pardon him again.” The emperor answered, “I see no reason in justice why I should do so.” “No, Sir,” she replied, “and there is not any. But I am appealing to your mercy. It is a fine opportunity for you to show mercy, for he does not deserve it.” The great man said, “That is well put. Let him live.” And God will let you live when you plead on the ground of pure mercy! If you talk of justice, you are doomed, for there is nothing in the justice of God but a sharp, two-edged sword, the very touch of which will slay you! God’s Throne of Justice is a place of fiery wrath which shoots devouring flames! But if you approach it by the door that is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ, and cry to God for mercy, you shall be received with the kiss of forgiveness! Go, then, to that mercy of God which, in the very sins of men, spells out arguments for displaying itself! God does not want your fullness—He wants your emptiness—that He may fill it with His fullness. He does not want your good works, you poor sinners—He wants your bad works—that He may wash them all away. Paul says that Christ “gave Himself for our sins,” and Luther’s comment on that is, “He never gave Himself for our righteousness. That would not have been worth His having, but He gave himself for our sins.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.” This is the footing on which we must go to God!

They tell us that this preaching of mercy to sinners is against morality. Well, morality can take care of itself, God will take care of it. But we know that there is nothing which promotes morality like this wonderful pardoning love of God. Those who never will be reached by being told what they ought to do, for they *cannot* do it, and *will not* do it, are reached by being told what God will do for them and what Christ has *done* for them! And when they come and believe *that*, then they set about doing what is right—and good works are produced to the glory of God! But on the other theory, no man living under Heaven will ever come.

II. Now turn to the second point. In our text, notice that there is A METHOD OF POWER BEYOND ALL POWER—“I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness.”

This is a singular kind of power. “I will allure her.” Not, “I will drive her.” Not even, “I will draw her.” Or, “I will drag her.” Or, “I will force her.” No—“I will allure her.” It is a very remarkable word and it teaches us that *the allurements of love surpasses in power all other forces*. That is how the devil ruins us—he tempts us with honeyed words, sweet utterances, with the baits of pleasure and the like. And the Lord in mercy determines that in all truthfulness, He will outbid the devil and He will win us to Himself by fascinations, enticements and allurements which shall

be stronger than any force of resistance we may offer! This is a wonderfully precious word—"I will *allure* her." I hardly know how to explain it except by reminding you of how bird catchers entice the feathered creatures with the allurements of decoys that sing them into the net, or how a mother allures her little child who is just beginning to walk. You have seen her hold out an orange, or an apple, or a sweet, that the little one may leave the chair against which it is leaning and come to her arms. That is the meaning of the word, "I will *allure* her." God is trying this plan with guilty men and so tries it as to succeed, for there is in it a power beyond all other power!

Other forms of power had been tried upon Israel. She had been afflicted—God declared that He would strip her even to nakedness! And He had done so, yet she did not turn to Him. He said to her, "I will hedge up your way with thorns," but she went on right over the thorns. Then He said, "I will make a wall, that she shall not find her paths." But she broke through the wall. Affliction of itself cannot bring a man to Christ—you may flog him till he gets more wicked. He may be chastened, as Ahaz was, and yet, like he, go further astray, the more he is afflicted, No dear Friends, the power of God's Grace—the power of His infinite allurements—will be found to be much stronger than the power of affliction!

Moreover, the Lord had tried upon Israel the effect of instruction. He says, "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil." So He told her, but instruction did not help her. She sinned in the Light of God as badly as she had done in the darkness! Then He tried what could be done by exposure. He said—and it is a strong word—"I will declare her lewdness in the sight of her lovers." There are some people who are made to be thoroughly ashamed—they are caught in some secret sin. They are convicted of something which, even in the eyes of sinners like themselves, is mean and dirty—and they cannot deny it—yet they do not turn from sin. They still cling to it.

In addition to all this, the Lord had tried the power of sorrow upon sorrow, for it is written, "I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, her Sabbaths and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees." Though she found no mirth in sin and the way of her transgression was hard, yet Israel would not turn to God! But the sweet allurements of tenderness would succeed where all else had failed.

This was a power which was greater than those other forms of power because *the allurements of love overcome the will to resist*. Israel could resist everything else, but she could not resist the allurements of God's Grace—they won her where nothing else could. If Christ does but touch the blind man's eyes, so that out of the corners of them he only gets one glimpse of the Savior's beauty, he must infallibly be so enamored of the Christ that he will love Him beyond all others! There are amazing beauties about the Person of Jesus, yet, by their own unaided power, men cannot see them. But if once Christ enables them to see Him as He is and they realize the power of His eternal love, then their hearts are captured and they no longer resist Him. In fetters of Grace they are led as willing captives to Christ!

Let me tell you one or two things about the Savior that I think one can never resist. There is, first, His self-denying love—that He loved His enemies—that He loved such poor creatures as we are, who could do Him no good. He was infinitely glorious and we were insignificant and, what was worse, we were opposed to Him! Yet each Believer can *say*, “He loved me and gave Himself for *me*.” Out of pure, disinterested affection, He came to earth to dwell in a stable, to hang upon a woman’s breast, a babe as feeble as any other babe, and then, marvel of marvels, His life on earth ended on the Cross—the cruel gallows of utmost scorn! There the Faultless One bears all our fault and because of our transgression, He is nailed to the tree, His back having first been scourged, His hands and feet pierced. Yes, and God Himself forsakes Him—not for any evil that He has done, but because He has been guilty of excess of love and has dared to put Himself in the poor sinner’s place to bear the wrath of Heaven! Look at Him—can you help loving Him with His face disdained with spit and His back all gory from the cruel lash? Is He not more lovely, there, than even up yonder amidst eternal thrones? O Love, bleeding Love, dying Love! If this does not allure men, what will? But that is how God allures the sinner to Himself. He says, “I did all this for you. I lived for you. I died for you.” And this wins the sinner’s affections, even though he feels himself the guiltiest of the guilty.

Then our blessed Master, having risen from the dead, now charms us by the fact that amidst all His glories He is faithful to His first love. He has not forgotten you and me, though cherubim and seraphim have been singing His praises all these years, day without night. See what He is doing. He makes intercession for the transgressors and he bears upon His breastplate the names of guilty ones for whom His cry goes up that they may be forgiven and find mercy through His wondrous merit! I will not say that you *ought to* love Him, for love does not act that way. But I will say this—if you truly know Him, you cannot help loving Him—you must love Him. Thus does He allure men to Himself by His own personal charms.

The Lord draws men to Himself in different ways. I was allured to Christ very much by the hope of eternal safety. I was but a lad and I saw young men, a little older than myself, who had been very promising youths, go off into drunkenness and into vice of different kinds. And I thought that I might do the same. But when I read those words of the Apostle, “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,” I was charmed with Christ as a sort of Preserver of character—an Insurer of my soul unto eternal bliss! And I came to Him for that reason. I have known others who have seen the happiness of Christians—their peace in the midst of turmoil, their joy in times of sorrow, their contentment in poverty, their calmness in prospect of death—and they have said, “If all this happiness can be had in Christ, I will come to Him for it.” And in that way He has allured them. Perhaps some of you have never had any great terrors of conscience, or distress of soul—do not fret on that account! If you come by allurements, it is a Covenant way of coming. If you are fascinated by the charms of Christ, it is the very way that God declares He

will draw His erring and His guilty people. Oh, that you would yield to the fascination! I pray that you may feel the allurements and say—

***“I yield—by mighty love subdued!
Who can resist its charms?
And throw myself, by wrath pursued,
Into my Savior’s arms.”***

Do any of you feel some soft drawing? Is there a pierced hand touching you and a loving voice saying, “Seek the Lord”? Have you been very hard, up till now, but does an unusual gentleness steal over your spirit as you are sitting in this House of Prayer? Give yourself up to it—it may be that the time of Divine Grace is now upon you. I hope that it is so, that your birth-night has come and that you are passing from death unto life! We have prayed about you. We met for an hour before service and there was hard pleading for you. And God has given us the desire of our spirit and you are to come to Christ tonight! Blessed Lord, if it is so, there will be work for angels in Heaven to sing Your praises concerning a sinner that repents!

III. But now, thirdly, and with brevity, here is A CONDITION OF COMPANY BEYOND ALL COMPANY. Kindly read the text again. “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness.”

If you have ever heard a sermon from this text, you have probably had it translated to you to mean that God will bring His people in trouble, but it does not mean that. It means that God *would cause Israel to be alone with Him*. It was usual, after the nuptial ceremony, for the husband to take his wife away into some lone spot for a while. The same thing constantly happens among us—when a man is married, away he goes to the seaside for a time—and he takes his spouse away to be with him alone. That is the idea in the text, the Lord says of Israel, “I will allure her to Myself” and then, “I will take her *into the wilderness*. She shall be in My company and in nobody else’s company.” That is just what the Grace of God does—the soul had forgotten Him, before, but now it thinks only of Him. His sweet love has so won it that it is now full of God! Instead of not thinking of Him at all, He is in his first thoughts in the morning, and in his thoughts all day long—and the last thing at night, till friends who do not sympathize say, “Why, you are going out of your mind! You are going religiously mad!” I wish that you would stay in that blessed state into which you were brought when the Lord’s love was revealed to you and His allurements drew your soul to Him.

The soul in the wilderness, alone with God, *does not think of anybody else, and does not trust in anything else*. It used to trust in good works, but it feels as if it has not any, now, though really its first good works are just being produced. Oh, what a clearance of our finery the love of God makes when it comes into the soul! We are the most respectable people who ever lived until we know God—and then we abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes!

Now it comes to pass that God *is our only joy*. Once we had joy in the theater, or joy in the ballroom, or joy in other worldly things, but now we find true joy in God! And all other rejoicing seems only the mirth of fools and idiots. When we have once sat at the feast in our Father’s House, we cannot go back to eat the husks that satisfy swine. We have something

better than that—our Lord has brought us where everything but Himself is a wilderness and our cry is, “O God, You are my God! Early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.” Joy in God eats up all other joy, as Aaron’s rod swallowed up the rods of the impostors! Now we can say of the Lord, “He is all my salvation and all my desire.” Oh, to be wholly His and to enjoy all that we can enjoy of Him! This is what He means by bringing us into the wilderness. That is, into the solitary place alone with Him.

It may also be understood—and the connection requires it—that *God brings His people into the same condition into which He brought the Israelite nation of old*. It was not to afflict them that He brought them into the wilderness—it was to take them *out of affliction* that He led them there—and that is the meaning of our text. When the Lord allures His people, He takes them away from the old Egyptian bondage. He leads them through the Red Sea. He makes it roll between them and their old life and then He treats them just as He treated His people in the wilderness. That is, He provides their food. They live on manna—no longer have they their kneading troughs which they brought out of Egypt. I wonder what they did with those kneading troughs? They never needed them in the wilderness, certainly, for the manna was all ready for them when it fell.

Then, next, the Lord becomes the Guard of His people—a wall of fire round about them. He protects them by a fiery pillar at night and He is the only Guide and Leader of His people—by cloud or by fire He leads them both by night and by day. He becomes the healing of His people, for, in the wilderness, when Israel had sinned and the fiery serpent had bitten them, they looked to the bronze serpent and they lived. The Lord was the Champion and Defender of His people. Sihon, king of the Amorites, did He smite, “for His mercy endures forever; and Og, the king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever.” In the wilderness Israel had nothing but God—did they need anything else? They carried on no commerce. They had no railways. They kept no shops. Well, really, if you could go out every morning and gather your bread and if, when you needed meat, the quails came in any quantity for you to feed upon. And if your clothes never waxed old, neither did your feet swell—that would be a grand life to lead!

The Lord bring you and me under the wings of His eternal Providence and if the world should seem a wilderness to us, yet if God continues to scatter the manna and faith has but hands with which to gather it, and a joyful mouth with which to feed upon it, then, blessed be God, the wilderness is better than anywhere else! “I will allure her and bring her into the separated place where she shall walk by faith. And I will dwell with her, and walk with her. And I will be her God and she shall be Mine forever.” That is the meaning of the promise—a condition of company beyond all company!

IV. Now, fourthly, we have, in our text, A VOICE OF COMFORT BEYOND ALL COMFORT. “I will speak comfortably unto her.” The Hebrew is, “I will speak to her heart”—a style of speech that can only be adopted

by God who made the heart, searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men.

When the Lord gets His people all alone, what *words of comfort* He has with them! What words they are when He assures them of their full forgiveness, when they see all the sins of their former perverse life gone forever and hear the Lord say, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." These are, indeed, comfortable words when they are spoken home to the heart! And so they are when the Lord not only tells His people that all evil is removed, but that all good is theirs—when such words as these come home to them—"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called 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 He, for we shall see Him as He is." And, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Those are comfortable words when the Lord goes on to tell us of our everlasting safety—"They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever." And when in prayer He foretells our coming glory—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am."

I like even better that rendering, "I will speak to her heart." I heard of one who died many years ago and an old divine, who stood by his bedside, reported what he said. He had been a great professor, but he had become an apostate and turned aside. But he used to comfort himself with the universal mercy of God. And when he lay a-dying, he said to the minister, "Sir, I have made a plaster for my wound, but it will not stick." He turned over in the bed and said, "It will not stick! It will not stick!" And so he died. Ah, and unless God speaks the Gospel to the heart, it will not stick. You cannot get it to stick to the wound. It seems pretty enough and you fancy that it will heal—it is a "royal court plaster"—but, for all that, it will not stick! But when the Lord speaks His Truth home to the heart and conscience, by the Holy Spirit, and the poor trembling sinner grips it as for dear life and says, "That is mine—I will venture my soul on it! Christ has died for sinners—I am a sinner and I take Christ to be my Savior!" Then that plaster will stick! What a mercy it is, when God makes it to be so! I can speak to your ears, but I cannot speak to your hearts and, what is more, even this blessed Book of Inspiration could only appeal to the ears! Apart from the Spirit of God, it could not reach your heart. But if the Lord Himself takes His Truth, oh, how blessedly it goes home!

I tell you, you desponding and despairing ones, you may come out of the iron cage tonight! You may, this very hour, enter into joyous peace and liberty if the Spirit of God will but speak home a single text—a solitary Word—a New-Covenant Word to your spirit! Be of good cheer, then—things impossible with men are possible with God—and you may yet be singing instead of sighing, and shouting instead of groaning! Look to Jesus! All our hope lies in Him. May He save you—yes, may the Lord allure you even now! I am afraid I have not spoken gently enough to some of

you poor wounded ones. It is very hard for the preacher to always pick his words to suit all His hearers and, perhaps, someone will come to me, after the service, and say, "Oh, there was something you said that tried me so very much." And, usually, the very people who are most tried by the Word are the very ones that we most want to comfort! Sometimes, a dear soul comes to me and says, "Oh, Sir, I am afraid I am a hypocrite!" I answer, "I never met a hypocrite who was afraid that he was a hypocrite." That could not be, for hypocrites are quite certain that they are *not* hypocrites! And he that is so timid and trembling that he is afraid he may not take these things of which I have been speaking, is the very person whom we must encourage to lay hold of every sweet and precious promise that falls from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ!

May God make this promise true to everyone here who does not yet know Him, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her"! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 2:6-23.**

Verse 6. *Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.* God will cause sin to be painful. He will make the way of it difficult. He will do everything to prevent the sinner running in it—"She shall not find her paths."

7. *And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them.* They cannot find satisfaction in sinful pleasure. That which once they easily obtained, they shall no longer be able to procure.

7. *And she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.* Am I addressing a backslider? Has God hedged up your way? Is there a whisper in your heart which reminds you of better days and happier times? Oh, stifle not that whisper! Let it be heard within your spirit—if it is but a gentle voice, listen to it till it increases in force and sounds like the very voice of God in your soul! It will be for your present and eternal good if you do so.

8. *For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.* It is a sad sin when we take God's mercies and use them in rebellion against Him. Just think of it—the very gifts which Jehovah gave to these people, they presented in sacrifice to Baal! And there are men who are in comfortable circumstances, who spend their wealth for sin. They have health and strength, and they use them in the service of their own evil passions. The very gifts with which God has enriched them become weights to sink them deeper and deeper in the gulf of transgression. Ah, this is terrible! God has often brought men down to poverty, to sickness, to death's door, in order that they might be weaned from their sin. He saw that they were going to Hell full-handed and He judged it better that they should go to Heaven empty-handed! He knew that if they had health, they would misuse it, so He stretched them on the bed of sickness, that they might turn to Him. God has severe remedies for desperate cases—He will do all that

mercy and wisdom can suggest to prevent men from being their own destroyers.

9-11. *Therefore will I return and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and My flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of My hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.* There is no more merriment—the old songs have lost their sweetness and the old games have lost their charm.

12. *And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me. So I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.* So that the joys of sin shall become miseries, as if vineyards were suddenly trained into dense forests wherein lions and wolves might make their lairs. There are some people who can understand this in a spiritual sense. Some, perhaps, who have been made to realize it in their own experience.

13. *And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot Me, says the LORD.* It is terrible when God comes to visit upon men the days of their sin—when for every night of sin they shall have a night of anguish—when for every pleasure that they took in sin they shall feel the scourge of conscience till they have measured out the weary round. “She went after her lovers, and forgot Me, said the Lord.” This was said by Him who never forgot her, by Him whose love was true and faithful to her when she thus went away from Him and defiled herself and dishonored His holy name!

Now read the next verse and be astonished—

14. *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.* You might have thought the Lord was going to say, “Therefore, behold, I will destroy her!” Nothing of the kind. “I will fascinate her to myself, I will draw her away from all her idol lovers and I will speak comfortably unto her.”

15. *And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.* “I will pluck this Israel of Mine out of all her sin. I will give her back the purity and the happiness of her early days. ‘She shall sing, there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.’” You must have noticed how often God speaks of that coming out of Egypt. He says, in another place, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness.” Here the Lord promises to give back to Israel the joy she had when she was young and espoused herself to her God.

16. *And it shall be at that day, said the LORD, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call Me no more Baali.* “You shall call me, my Man, my Husband”—a name of sweet endearment. “and shall call me no more, Baali,” that is, “my Lord, my lordly Husband,” for the Lord’s love shall not be galling to you, but it shall sweetly and gently rule you. Oh, what a sweet change this is, when we no longer tremble before God with slavish

fear, but love Him with intense affection and see in Him our soul's Husband in whom is all our delight!

17. *For I will take away the names of Balaam out of her mouth and they shall no more be remembered by their name.* The word, Baalim, had been profaned—they had applied it to other lords—and when they used it concerning Jehovah, it sounded harsh, as if He, too, was a tyrant master!

18. *And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground.* Everything is in covenant with me if I am in covenant with God! There is nothing so high that it can hurt me, there is nothing so low that it can injure me, there is nothing so great that it need distress me, there is nothing so little that it shall torment me!

18. *And I will break the bow and the sword of the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.* Oh, the security of God's people when they get into their right position towards God!

19. *And 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.* What a glorious promise is this! It is marvelous that our wayward, wanton, wicked souls should be brought back, by infinite mercy, and then that God should be so enamored of us as to declare, "I will betroth you unto Me forever."

20. *I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the LORD.* It is said three times that He will betroth us unto Himself, as if the Lord knew that we would hardly be able to believe it.

21, 22. *And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, said the LORD, will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth; and the earth shall answer with corn, and wine, and the oil and they shall answer Jezreel.* So that there shall be no famine to try God's people! Their prayers shall be abundantly answered and all their needs shall be supplied.

23. *And I will sow her unto Me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people; and they shall say, You are my God.* Oh, blessed Scripture! May the Lord write it on all our hearts! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—261, 476. 607.

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.**

STRANGE DISPENSATIONS AND MATCHLESS CONSOLATIONS NO. 2754

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1859.**

*“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into
the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.”
Hosea 2:14.*

THIS is one of the many instances in the Word of God of His free, rich, Sovereign Grace. The Lord has set the children of Israel before us as a great model. They are our beacons with regard to sin, but they are a pattern to us when we see in them the gracious dealings of a Covenant-keeping God. Often did they rebel, but just as often did the Lord forgive them. Frequently did He smite them with His rod, but He never turned them over to destruction. He still remembered His Covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and He suffered not His faithfulness to fail.

We have, in the prophecy of Hosea, an instance of what God thought of the sins of His people. He commands the Prophet to speak in rough earnest language of their constant rebellion and yet, no sooner has He directed Hosea to deal harshly with His erring spouse, than He seems to stop him in the middle of his furious prophecy and bids him now address her with words of comfort! This is the connection in which our text is found set in the black letters of the volume of threats against guilty Israel. This precious jewel shines all the more brightly in the thick darkness of their sin and despair. This torch of love and kindness sheds a heavenly light and makes their eyes and hearts rejoice.

Let us now turn to these words of the Lord and regard them under the following aspects. First, I see, in the text, *the singular reasons for Divine Grace*. “Therefore, behold!” I see, in the next place, *the strange dispensations of Divine Grace*. “I will bring her into the wilderness.” In the third place, *matchless consolations*. “I will speak comfortably to her.” And, in the fourth place, *sweet persuasions*. “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.”

I. In the first place, we have, in our text, THE SINGULAR REASONS FOR DIVINE GRACE. “Therefore, behold!”

It is not without cause that the word, “therefore,” is inserted here. We are to look to the context to find *what are the premises from which a conclusion of mercy is drawn*. You might naturally conceive, judging accord-

ing to human logic, that the preceding verses described either Israel's goodness, or else her abject repentance if she has gone astray and rebelled. But, on the contrary, there is no mention of these things at all! They speak not of her goodness, but of her badness and, in fact, they speak so strongly that the Prophet uses terms that are never employed except after excessive iniquity. He charges Israel with whoredom and speaks of her as having committed uncleanness with many lovers. This is strong language and shows that he means to declare the excessive character of her sin and, instead of speaking of her as being a penitent, he declares that she was still impenitent. Notwithstanding many, many Providences and the hedging up of her way with thorns, she would break through and run after her many false lovers. And then, strange to say, contrary to all human reasoning, there comes the inference—if I may so call it—an inference of sunshine from a dark cloud, an inference of mercy from a whole mass of sin and iniquity!

If the inference had been, "Therefore I will destroy her, I will cut her in pieces and give her children to the sword, and her women to be carried away captive," our reason could well have seen that it was the natural *consequence*. We could easily have seen that the logical terms agreed, but here it seems as if it were quite a *non sequitur*. How can it be that a, "therefore," should spring up, when the previous verses have been filled with a description of her sins?

Here let us pause to remember that *the reasons for God's Grace to us are far above all human reason*, for He Himself has told us, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." No, I will go further than this and say that not only are God's modes of reasoning far above our own, but *they often seem as if they were even contradictory to ours*. Where we should draw one inference, God draws the very opposite! See yon poor penitent sinner? He "would not lift up so much as his eyes to Heaven; but he smote upon his breast and cried, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" What is our inference from this, looking at the publican as he stands there? Why, that he is a rebellious creature, and that God cannot and will not accept him, but must punish him! Does God draw this inference? No, for, "this man went down to his house justified." See yonder Pharisee with outstretched hands? He stands and prays thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are," and so on. What is our inference? Surely God will accept so good a man as this! He will be sure to justify a man so holy and so moral. Not so, for that man went down to his house *without* justification, unsatisfied, unblest with the smile of Heaven—while yon sorrowing publican received God's gracious forgiveness!

We, ever since the Fall, have learned to reason badly. Our reasoning faculty has been as much confused as any other power that we possessed. We have turned aside from the straightforward path and we know not how to draw the true inference which God draws from our sins. So then, it seems from our text, that so far from looking at any reason for

mercy to anything that is good in man—if God ever seeks in the creature a reason why He should show mercy, He looks not to the good, but to the evil! When we come before God it would be well if we would always remember this. We are committing great folly if when we are spreading our case before Him, we dare for one moment to speak of ourselves as good or excellent. We shall never succeed in that way—He will not listen to us, for this plan has no power with Him! But if, when we come to Him, we can plead our sin and our misery, then shall we prevail. No, we may even go the length of the Psalmist, David, when he prayed, “For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity”—and for a strange reason, you would say—“for it is great.” He used the greatness of his sin as an argument why God should have mercy on him!

O you legalists who are looking to yourselves for some arguments with which to prevail with God! O you who look to your sacraments, to your outward forms, to your pious deeds and your almsgivings for something that will move the heart of God—know this, that these things are no lever that can ever move Him to love! Nothing but your sin and misery can ever stir His mercy! And you look to the wrong place when you look to your merits to find a plea why He should show pity on you!

And yet, albeit that this reasoning seems extremely strange, I may use an illustration which will justify such reasoning as this in the mind of every thoughtful man. Here is a poor creature shivering in the cold with nakedness. And there is one who has warm garments to give away. Will not the nakedness of the man be his claim to benevolence? If there is any generous soul who desires to feed the hungry, it is not likely that he will bestow his bread upon one that has abundance! But if he hears a soul uttering the wail which is excited by the pangs of hunger, that very wail shall make him move his hands to supply the needed food. Generosity, liberality and mercy know of nothing that can move them as misery can. And the very reverse argument is formed from that which men are so fond of using. They will go to God with a plea analogous to this—as if a beggar should meet me in the street, and say, “Sir, give me charity! I am not very poor, I am not very hungry, *therefore* give me charity!” He would not use such a foolish argument as that! He, like a wise man, says, “I am hungry, I am starving, *therefore* give me food.” Would that you would use the same sensible argument when you come before God and plead, not for your merit’s sake, but for your misery’s sake! Think not that you are to tip the arrows of your prayers with the feathers of your own merit—that shall never make them fly to Heaven. It will be better if you can wing them with a sense of your own miseries, for then they shall reach the heart of God and He will send you the promised blessing in return. Strange reasoning, you say, this of Grace—that God will save men, not for their goodness, but if there is any reason that can be found in them, it is rather for their sin and for their misery than for anything good in them!

If you will carefully look at the text, again, you will notice that after the word, “therefore,” there comes a word of exclamation—“behold!” When-

ever we see the word, “behold,” in Scripture, we may be sure that there is something well worthy of our attention. It strikes me that Hosea, when the Lord commanded him to write this verse, was quite staggered. “Lord,” he said, “how can this be?” He was filled with amazement. “I have been threatening Your children. You have told me to set their iniquities before their face—and now you bid me say, ‘*Therefore* I will have mercy upon them.’” The conclusion seemed to him so strange that he was utterly astonished! And the Lord permitted His servant to record his astonishment by putting in that word, “behold.”

Nor do I think that is the only reason for the use of the word. It is also, I think, put there that we may admire the Grace here displayed and that we may remember the mercy of God—and especially the deep-rooted secret reasons for that mercy. They will continue to be, on earth, the theme of admiration and, in Heaven itself, the object of eternal astonishment. When we shall be permitted to see why God had mercy upon man and especially why, out of the human race, he had mercy upon us—why He chose us while others were suffered to perish—we shall be incessantly compelled to lift up our hands in astonishment! And even in the heavenly city, itself, joy shall sometimes be superseded by wonder, and we shall, even there, be astonished to find such matchless Grace displayed for such singular reasons. “Therefore, behold!” Again I would say to those who are trusting in themselves—Give up your foolish hopes! Men and brethren, look not to the empty cisterns, but come away at once to the fountain, the Divine, kingly fountain of Sovereign Grace, for there, and there only, it is that your hope of pardon can be realized! For, in yourself, there is nothing but that which would lead to your destruction—only in Jehovah can reasons for salvation be discovered!

II. The second point is THE STRANGE DISPENSATIONS OF DIVINE GRACE.

God is about to have mercy upon poor fallen Israel, so what does He say? “I Will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness.” This may seem to some a strange way of showing His love, yet it is not an unusual one, for it is the common method by which God manifests His love towards His chosen ones. You will, perhaps, smile when I make the observation that there was nothing which a Roman slave more anxiously desired than to have a box on the ear from his master. “That was a strange desire,” you will say, yet that box on the ear was the object of the morning and evening prayer of many a slave in Rome, for, you must know, if a master once gave his servant a box on the ear, he was free from that day forth and was no longer a slave! Now, that strange manner of freeing a slave is analogous to that which God uses when He is about to set free one of Satan’s bondsmen.

He first of all gives us the blow of *conviction* and then He gives us the liberty of Grace. Is it not singular that God should begin to show His love to His people by taking them into the wilderness? Is it not a strange manifestation of Divine favor that He should bring us, not into Canaan, not to the grapes of Eshcol, not to all the riches of the land which flowed

with milk and honey, but that He should bring us, first of all, into the wilderness? Your experience, if you are a child of God, will help you to understand this. "The wilderness" may be explained thus—when God is about to save a man, He first of all brings him into *a state of spiritual destitution*. He thinks himself rich and increased in goods and that he has need of nothing. Talk to him about the sinful state of a natural man and he is insulted! He says he is as good as his neighbors. He does not know that he has much to confess when he is on his knees. Indeed, he hardly sees the use of confessing to God at all! If such as he does not get to Heaven, at last, he does not know who will!

Now, when God means to have mercy upon a man of that sort, instead of feeling that he has every virtue and all strength, all of a sudden he finds himself without one good thing to recommend him to God! And, worse than this, he finds that he has no strength to perform a single good act. "Oh," he says, "I once thought I could repent and believe whenever I pleased, but, now all my strength is gone, my heart is hard and I can scarcely compel a tear to flow! I imagined that in the last moment of my life, I could say, 'O God, have mercy upon me!' and that, then, I would be saved. But now, I find faith to be quite another thing from what I thought it was. Now I am stripped of all self-confidence. My comeliness is departed, I must robe myself in sackcloth and cast dust and ashes upon my head. My soul is spiritually shut up. I find no food. Nothing comes from within and nothing comes from without." This state of spiritual destitution is set forth by this wilderness state.

Moreover, by the wilderness, doubtless, is meant *affliction*, for full often, when God means to bring a man to Himself, He sends affliction upon him. This is the Good Shepherd's black dog with which He brings His wandering sheep back to Him. It comes howling after us and biting at our heels, and then we fly away to Christ. How many are there among you who were first brought to repentance by the loss of your property, or the death of someone dear to you? If everything had gone on smoothly, the stream would have wafted you along down to the gulf of black despair, but, all of a sudden the flood boiled around you, and the tempest gathered above your devoted head! Then you cried unto God in your trouble and your losses were more than recompensed—your God was found and your soul was saved! Happy are you who lose a fortune to find a Savior! Blessed is the burial of a friend or relative that leads to the new birth of our own souls and brings us to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! We have, many of us, great cause to bless that rough right hand of God which has smitten us so sternly, but which has always been moved with love whenever it has given us a blow of chastisement.

Further, I think this wilderness may mean not only spiritual destitution and affliction, but also *loneliness*. When God means to save a man, He always makes that man to feel himself to be all alone. There was a time with me, I know, when I went up to the House of God and I knew not whether there was anyone else there while the sermon was being delivered. I seemed to be shut in by a black wall while the minister's eyes

appeared to be looking down into my soul. I believed that the good man meant me when he used the word, sinner—I could not think he was referring to anybody else! I loved not society, but was always seeking solitary places for prayer, trying to draw near to God in prayer, to tell Him my needs and to ask for His mercy. It is a happy sign when the Divine Hunter singles out one from the herd. He looks round, singles out His prey, and hunts him until, at last, He brings him down and carries him home rejoicing. The deer, when wounded, retires to weep, and bleed and die alone—and so, too, hearts when wounded love shady solitudes, that they may weep alone before God. This is, I believe, the meaning of, “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness.”

I will give you one more picture and then I think I shall have described this wilderness sufficiently. Can you, for a moment, imagine yourself taken away, all of a sudden, and carried by some giant hand swiftly through the air and deposited in the midst of the Desert of Sahara? You look around you and there is nothing to be seen that can afford you hope. Above you is the burning vault of Heaven with the furnace sun sending forth its fire upon you. Beneath you is the arid sand with no track of a traveler anywhere! At first you rush on, hoping soon to find the desert’s edge and to escape. Night succeeds day and in the thick darkness you still travel on—fear and hope together winging your feet. Day dawns again, but you are as far from deliverance as ever! And I can imagine that with your throat parched, and with your soul melted within you, you would cast yourself down upon the sand and cry, “Lost, lost, lost!” The echo of your words would come back to you from the burning Heaven above you and you would be the complete picture of despair—lost, lost, lost! Yet this is where God brings the man whom He means to save! He puts him into such a position that above him seems to be an angry God. Beneath him a desert of sin and not a glimpse of hope—and he lies down, helpless and despairing, and cries, “Lost, lost, lost!”

My Hearer, are you in such a position? Then, remember that the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost and that you are one of those whom He came to save, for you are manifestly lost. He will never be disappointed with the result of His work! Those whom He come to save, He will save and if you trust Him, He will save you! You shall be brought in among His redeemed people here on earth and you shall see His face and rejoice in His great salvation in the day when He Shall come in the Glory of His Father with all His holy angels with Him!

III. Now, note the next division of the passage—GOD’S MATCHLESS CONSOLATIONS.

Does He bring her into the wilderness that she may be the prey of the vultures, or that the jackals may devour her? Oh, no! He brings her there that He may “speak comfortably to her.” You see how the two things go together. There is a precious golden band in the text—a band which neither death nor Hell can ever shatter, which, like a sacred rivet or heavenly link, joins the two sentences together. “I will bring her into the wilderness”—that is true, we know—“and I will speak comfortably to her.”

That is also true. The two are linked together and cannot be separated. Those who are brought into such a wilderness as I have described, shall hear the comforting words of Jehovah spoken to their hearts!

Now, with regard to these comforts, I would remark that they are *sure comforts*. We may take the words, "I will," which stand at the beginning of the verse, as relating to each clause and, therefore, we may read it, "I will speak comfortably to her." Therefore we have, first of all, sure mercies—"I will." Good old Joseph Irons used to say, "Our *shalls* and *wills* are impotent and impracticable, but God's *shalls* and *wills* are Omnipotent." Has He said it, and shall it not be done? Has He decreed it, or promised it, and shall it not stand fast? Rest assured, poor Soul, that whatever may not be or whatever may be, if you are brought into the wilderness by God, He will assuredly speak comfortably unto you there! It may be a long while that you will have to wait, but, though the promise tarries, wait for it, for the time for its fulfillment shall surely come—it shall not fail! In due season, the Lord will remember you and will not forget you in your low estate, for His mercy endures forever and His faithfulness knows no end. He will speak comfortably unto you.

Note next, that they are not only sure consolations, but *Divine consolations*. "I will speak comfortably to her." Many ministers have tried what they could to cheer the sad, but they have done nothing. I have never learned so much of my own weakness as when, in preaching, I have sought to comfort some of God's tried ones. I have sometimes, in my sermons, put in a little honey on purpose for them, but, somehow, that honey has seemed to ferment and become sour, so that they could not feed upon it. I have talked with them and done all I could to comfort them and, sometimes, I have had to turn them over to my Brothers in the Eldership and they have done their best—and failed. What, then, shall I say, Lord? Your poor servant can do nothing here. Will You do it, Lord? Will you, O blessed Spirit, who are the Comforter, take them by the hand and "speak comfortably" unto them? If You speak, they cannot refuse to hear, and then shall they indeed be comforted! O poor, tried Soul, is not this a rich promise, indeed? "I will speak comfortably to her." He will not merely send an angel or minister to comfort them, but He will Himself do the work—"I will speak comfortably to her."

The third remark I make upon these consolations is that they are *effectual consolations*. The Hebrew bears the interpretation, "I will speak to her heart." We speak to your ears, but God speaks to your heart. Oh, what speaking that is, when God speaks right from His heart into our hearts! Some of us have experienced this at times. We have found the Word of God to well up, as it were, from Him and then, as it has welled up, it has gone down deep into our hearts and we have been made to drink of it to the very fullest. "I will speak to her heart." Poor Soul, if you are brought into the wilderness, God will effectually comfort you. He has effectually convicted you and He will effectually console you! If He has brought you into the wilderness of humility and sore distress, He will as surely bring you into the Canaan of faith and joy!

I remark, in the next place, that these consolations are not only sure, Divine and effectual, but they are full. "I will speak comfortably to her." What rich words of comfort are those which God addresses to His people! He pardons them, He justifies them, He sanctifies them, He preserves them, He upholds them, He prevents them, He brings them safely home, at last, and all this He speaks to the heart of the poor, tried and tempted soul in the wilderness—and thus He makes it "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

It is not in my power, my dear Friends, to speak to your hearts. I can only speak to your outward ears, but let me repeat some of those things which God says when He speaks to the heart. "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." "I even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them." Thus God speaks rich promises of pardon and He also says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

How sweetly He speaks concerning the trials and troubles of this world! "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me." And how graciously He tells His people, "In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." And how comfortably does He remind His people that, come what may, they shall still be secure! "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the fire kindle upon you." And then, when His poor people think He can hardly remember them, He says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you."

And then, lest even this should be of no avail, He says, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." "For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." Truly did I speak, when I remarked that this consolation is full, and well does one of our poets express the same sentiment when he says—

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

We have a Bible that cannot be enlarged! We have promises that cannot be extended! We have blessings that cannot be exaggerated! And imagination's utmost stretch could not make us conceive of anything beyond! Oh, may God, who has brought you into the wilderness of sore trouble,

bring each one now present into His gracious Presence, that you may know that He Himself thus speaks comfortably unto you!

IV. Now I close by coming back to the first clause of the text, and meditating on THE SWEET PERSUASIONS with which God draws us to Himself. "I will allure her."

There are many who are very much afraid they are not converted because they have not had a thunder-and-lightning experience—they were not converted in stormy weather—they had not the terrors of the Law of God and the shaking over Hell's mouth that some have experienced. They have read of John Bunyan and his desperate struggles, but they have not gone through anything of the kind. They can say that they have felt their need of a Savior and realized their sin, but the accounts they have heard of what others have known of the terrors of Hell have been so impressed upon them that they have feared that they could not be God's people. Read our text. It says, "I will allure her." It does not say, "I will drive her." It does not say, "I will drag her." It does not even say, "I will compel her." It does not say, "I will make her run into the wilderness for fear of Me." No, but the Lord says, "I will allure her."

What does this mean? I cannot explain it better than by a very simple figure. I see the fowlers come, sometimes, to Clapham Common. I once saw a man with a robin redbreast in a cage. This poor little bird was made to sing and so tried to decoy other birds from the sky. The fowler was luring birds, catching them by the lure—and, my Brothers and Sisters, this is how God brings many of His children to Himself. We have all been like wild birds, but He has converted some of us, by His Grace, and put us into the cage of the pulpit—and made us sing as best we can, so as to lure poor sinners to come to the Divine Fowler, the Lord Jesus Christ! I wish I could sing better. I would that I were a better decoy, that I might bring more to Jesus. Many a Sister has been a decoy to her brother. Many a wife has lured her husband to Christ. You cannot drag them, but you may draw them. All that you can do, in your daily life, and in your house, or wherever else you may meet with these poor worldlings, is to lure them to Christ by letting them hear how sweetly you sing and see how happy you are, even while you are, as they say, a poor caged bird! Let them see how you enjoy your liberty in Christ and so seek, with all earnestness, to bring them to the Savior!

There is another figure which will explain the Lord's words, "I will allure her." When your little children are learning to walk, they are set up by the side of the table. They are quite frightened at first, for they have hardly tried their little legs yet. The nurse desires that the child may walk a little way. Well, what does she do? She holds out an apple, or a sweetmeat, to tempt it, and it tries to come to her, but it is ready to fall—so the nurse's finger is held out and the child is supported. It rests a moment and it is lured on again, with some toy or picture, something that tempts it on—and thus it learns to walk. Possibly you say that I ought not to use such a simple figure. No, but, I ought, for it is used in Scripture—"I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms," just as a

father might hold up his little one by the arms and let its feet just lightly touch the ground. The Lord condescends thus to speak, and surely I may do the same! May not a man speak thus with his fellows? Yes, surely this is the way in which God brings many of His children to Christ! He lures them! He does not thunder forth and frighten them, but He tempts them on by mercies and baits of heavenly pleasure—and so are they drawn to the Cross of Christ.

Some have been lured by the sweetness of the Character of Christ. They have taken His yoke upon them because He is “meek and lowly in heart,” and they have found rest unto their souls. Others have been lured by the blessings of religion. They have said, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace,” and have said to the people of God, “We will go with you.” Many have been lured by the prospect of Heaven and the joy which has been set before them. And they have counted their lives as less than nothing in order that they might first suffer the reproach of Christ and then inherit His Glory. Do not be cast down because you have not had a terrible experience. Perhaps you are among those whom God sweetly lured to Himself.

So I conclude my discourse by bidding every Christian here to go forth and endeavor to lure poor souls to Christ. You must alter the shape of that face of yours that is so long and miserable! You are not luring souls to Christ—you are doing quite the reverse—you will drive them away from Him. Put away, I beseech you, that constant habit of murmuring and grumbling at everything and everybody. Come, take your harp down from the willows and sing us one of the songs of Zion! Let us have no more groaning—that will frighten away the poor wild birds. They see your misery and how can they be lured to come when they see you so unhappy? I think that the long faces of God’s people do a good deal of mischief. I see nothing to cause them, but just the reverse. Our Lord Jesus says that the hypocrites are of a sad countenance, so I should not like to have a sad countenance, for fear any man should think me a hypocrite!

What does He further say? “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.” Do not let the worldling know that you are fasting. If you have troubles, keep them within you, do not let him know of them—let him see a happy exterior. In this way, you will allure him to Christ! And take care, by the gentleness and kindness of your conversation, to bring him to think of that religion which he has hitherto rejected. I have heard it related of some Methodist that, after praying a long while for his wife’s conversion, threatened to beat her if she were not converted in a certain time. I believe she was not converted, but that was not the way to bring her to the Savior! Instead of wooing sinners and alluring them, there are some who, if they do not go to the length of physical force, nevertheless seem as if they would bully them to Christ, they speak to them so sharply and sternly.

There is never any good done in that way. There are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and more souls are brought to Christ by sweet words than by sour and bitter ones. Let our life be like that of Christ—"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"—and then, added to this, let us have a heavenly cheerfulness about us which will lead others to see that though our religion takes away from us the pleasures of the wicked, it gives us something so much better! Isaac Watts was right when he said—

***“Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less.”***

Go, Beloved, and lure others to Christ! And may God the Holy Spirit bless each one of you! If in the wilderness, may He speak comfortably to you. If hardened in your sin, may He bring you into the wilderness! And if He has already spoken comfortably to you, may He help you to speak comfortably to others! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 9:51-56.**

Verse 51. *And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.* It is a very remarkable expression that is used here—"when the time was come that He should be received up." It does not say, "that He should depart," or, "that He should die." It leaps over that and speaks only of His glorious Ascension into Heaven! When that time was drawing near—and, of course, His death would come before it—Christ "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," where He knew that He should die upon the Cross.

52, 53. *And sent messengers before His face: and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.* And, of course, Jerusalem was a sort of rival of Samaria. And if He was going there to worship, they did not want Him to stay with them. Yet the Samaritans were believers in the first five Books of the Bible. They accepted the Pentateuch, and they ought, therefore, to have practiced hospitality, imitating Abraham's noble example. They erred both against their own Scriptures and against the dictates of humanity when they refused to receive Christ because He was on His way to Jerusalem.

54. *And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, will You that we command fire to come down from Heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?* James and John, two of the most loving of Christ's disciples! John, the most loving of all, startles us all by failing in the matter of love and so being as bad as the Samaritans themselves! I have often noticed that very "liberal-minded" people who denounce bigotry in general, do it with about seven times as much bigotry as those who are out-and-out bigots! In fact, it is a wonderfully easy thing to be a bigot against all bigotry, and to be illiberal towards everybody except fellow-liberals. Well, that is a pity. It is far better to have the spirit of

Christ, even when the Samaritans refuse to exercise hospitality. At any rate, let them live. You notice that John quotes the example of Elijah and this should teach us that the best men mentioned in Scripture did things which we may not copy, and that they did some things right, which it would be wrong for us to do. Under special Inspiration of God, Elijah, the Prophet of Fire, may call down fire from Heaven—but you and I must not do so—we are not sent for any such purpose. Let us, therefore, be cautious how we make even Prophets our exemplars in some things.

55, 56. *But He turned and rebuked them, and said, You know not what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* If that principle had been always remembered and followed, there would have been no persecution. To cause a man to suffer in his body, or in his estate because of his religious opinions, be they what they may, is a violation of Christianity! Consciences belong to God, alone, and it is not for us to be calling for fire, the stake, the rack or imprisonment for men because they do not believe as we do! "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

56. *And they went to another village.* That was the easiest thing for them to do and a great deal better than calling for fire from Heaven upon anybody! If one village would not receive them, another would. And if you cannot get on with one person, get on with somebody else. Do not grow angry with people—that is not the way to make them better. To fight God's battles with the devil's weapons is generally, in the end, to fight the devil's battles on his behalf—let none of us make such a mistake as that!

—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 BACKSLIDER'S DOOR OF HOPE NO. 2569

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 8, 1898.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 22, 1883.*

*“And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor
for a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth,
and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.”
Hosea 2:15.*

A FORTNIGHT ago, you will remember that we considered the very terrible description which the Prophet gave of the sin of God's ancient people. [See Sermon #2564, Volume 44, “*Strange Ways of Love*”—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] They were even described coarsely, because only such imagery could set forth their disgraceful filthiness in departing from Jehovah, the living and true God, and setting up false gods, the rites of whose worship were indescribably obscene. I would not dare to mention what these men did under the guise of religion when they turned aside from Jehovah and set up Baal, Ashtaroth and other idols that were not gods. You will also remember how the Lord, in His holy jealousy, dealt with His people. He sent them affliction after affliction. He took away from them those mercies which they had prostituted for the purpose of sin. He made them poor, sick and wretched. They were invaded and enslaved by the neighboring nations whose deities they had set up in the place of the Most High. Further, you remember—for we tried to describe it—they were so desperately set on mischief that they would not be turned from their wicked ways—they revolted more and more. The more it cost them to sin, the more extravagant they were in it.

Then it was that the Lord, in great mercy, changed His mode of operation. He told His servant, Hosea, to say that He would try another plan of working. The Law had failed, in that it was weak through the flesh, so He would use the Gospel—He would bring the Omnipotent power of love into the field! Our text a fortnight ago was, “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart.” And I sought, then, to set forth the strange ways in which God, with wondrous love, allures His people to Himself—how He draws them away from all their former confidences and hopes and brings them into a wilderness alone with Him. And there He must feed them, or they must die—there He must guide them, or they must hopelessly stray. And there He must be everything to them, or else they must be destroyed with a great destruction. When the

Lord, in love, brings His people to be alone with Him, then it is that He makes His promises come home to their hearts—and His person, His purposes, His ancient love and all the great preparations of that love as to the eternal future are laid home to the hearts of God's backsliding children—and they are made, again, to rejoice therein so that they are comforted. That was our subject, as you may remember.

Now we follow with this next verse which is intended to show yet more the goodness of God towards backsliders when they return to Him, or, if you like, towards sinners when, for the first time, they approach His feet. On this occasion I intend mainly to speak to those who have lost a sense of God's love. Perhaps there may have strayed in here some who were once professors, but they are not professors, now—some who were once members of a Christian Church, but no Christian Church would acknowledge them, now. Once they could, perhaps, speak to others in Christ's name, but they would be afraid to say a word for Jesus now, for they have gone far astray from Him. The message of infinite mercy to such people is, "Return, you backsliding children!" Come back, come home to your God! There is no other place of rest for you in the whole world—you will be as a bird that wanders from its nest. Sinners may rest content in their sin, for as yet they know no better, but you are disqualified even for that! You have so much knowledge still left and so much of conscience still remains that you are spoiled for this world, spoiled for the pleasures of sin, spoiled for all confidence except the one confidence which you used to have in Christ Jesus your Lord. There is no alternative for you but to return, for you cannot go elsewhere. Therefore, come home to your first Husband—that is God's own metaphor—for it was better with you then, than now!

Oh, that the blessed Spirit would now allure you, draw you apart, get you alone with Christ and speak comfortably to you! While He is doing that, permit me to tell you something, first, concerning *restored blessings*. "I will give her vineyards from there." Then, next, concerning *revived hopes*. "I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope." And then, thirdly, concerning *renewed songs*. "She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt."

I. First, then, let me talk to returning backsliders ABOUT RESTORED BLESSINGS.

You have lost a good deal by losing Christ. In fact, to your own consciousness, you have lost everything. All that made you joyous and glad has departed from you like a dream of the night—as a man awakes and finds himself in darkness—even so have you awakened from the brightness of that foolish dream of yours and you find yourself undone. Now come back to God, for in coming back you will have fulfilled to you the promise of our text—"I will give her vineyards from there."

By this is meant, first, that God *will give back to returning penitents that which He took away*. Read the 12th verse—"I will destroy her vines and her fig trees." Now the Lord says, "I will give her her vineyards from there." When you come back to Christ, the very things that were taken

away from you shall be restored to you! It is sometimes so even in *temporal* things. The rod is put aside when it has answered its purpose. Many a man has been kept poor, or sick, or grievously depressed in spirit until the time when he has heard the rod and Him that did appoint it. And then, when he has turned, again, to his God, he has once more prospered. I do not say that it is always so, for there may be other reasons why the affliction should continue, but I do say that it is often so in the experience of God's people. While they have gone astray, they have had affliction upon affliction—but when they have returned to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, He has made them to lie down in green pastures, beside the still waters. I am sure that it is so as to *spiritual* matters.

If you have backslidden, the House of God ministers no comfort to you now. When you come to it, it is no longer a home to you. But if you come back to the Lord, you shall find the same pleasure in the House of Prayer that you used to find in it. Now, perhaps, the Sabbath has become a weariness to you, for it does not bring you any holy joy—it only sounds the knell of your departed blessings. Come back to God and the Sabbath bell shall have all its silvery music restored and you shall wake up on the morning of the Lord's-Day and begin singing—

**“Come, bless the Lord, whose love assigns
So sweet a rest for wearied minds;
Provides an antepast of Heaven,
And gives this day the food of seven.”**

You shall have the House of Prayer made none other than the House of God to you, and the first day of the week shall become to you the best of all the seven!

Possibly, also, you continue to read your Bible, but it appears to have lost all its former interest. You fall upon your knees and try to pray, but you do not meet with God. You associate with the Lord's people, but you find no charm in that communion which was once so hallowed—the very essence seems to have gone from every means of Grace. You go out in the morning, but there is no manna. The dews of Heaven are withheld, so no blessing comes to your spirit. Now, if you return to the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth—and His great love restores you to Himself—then all this shall come back to you! “I will give her her vineyards from there.” Do not wait till all this blessing comes back and *then* return to Christ—do not try to put the effect before the cause! But come now, just as you are, in all your dullness and your deadness—come back to your first love and trust in Jesus as you did at the very beginning—for then the Lord will restore to you all the privileges that made your life so happy and bright.

Notice, next, that not only are these things which are restored to the backsliding nation those that were taken away, but *they are now made to be more hers than they were before*. Read again verse 12—“I will destroy her vines and her fig trees.” Now God says, “I will give her *her* vineyards from there.” She shall feel a peculiar possession about what she now has, for she shall see that there is a deed of gift by which God has again

given to her those mercies which she had lost. Oh, I do love to feel, when the Sabbath comes, that it is God's Day which He has hedged about for me! And when I go to the House of God to worship, I like to think that it is appointed for me there to draw near to God, to open His Book, and to feel that the Bible is my Father's letter to me, a gift from God to me—and that the Mercy Seat was the gift of Infinite Love and Divine Grace, prepared *on purpose* that I and others like I might come to it! How precious do even our common mercies become when we see them given back to us by a Father's hand! I reckon that there is no man who loves the means of Grace like the man who at one time felt them to be dry and barren. When the Lord fills the dry beds of the rivers with the torrents of His love, then we come and drink abundantly and we rejoice exceedingly. When, for a while, all outward means have seemed to become a wilderness to us, oh, how glad we are when, once again, the Lord appears, and puts life, and power, and efficacy into them, so that our soul rejoices in them! Poor Backslider, ask the Lord even at this moment to give you back all that you have lost and to make you feel that He is giving it to you by a double act of Grace and that, therefore, it is yours—you have a Covenant right to it and what He gives you is now your very own so that you will enjoy it to the fullest without any idea that you are presuming when you do so! Thus you will understand the meaning of God's gracious promise, "I will give her *her vineyards* from there."

Further, notice that when the Lord restores a backslider, *He does not withhold even the sweetest of His former blessings*. The Lord give him not only that which is necessary—that might be described as cornfields—but He gives that which tends to luxury, to joy, to exhilaration—"I will give her, her *vineyards*." Vineyards are not necessary to the life of man, but God does not stint Himself in giving to His people barely bread and water, but He gives them things not absolutely necessary, that He may further increase their joys. He gives after a royal manner! The house of God's mercy is not a workhouse, where they weigh out so many ounces of bread—it is a banqueting house where the Lord, as King in Zion, makes His guests to rejoice as He distributes the riches of His Grace! "I will give her, her vineyards." Oh, listen, you who are now distressed! You shall not only have back your former peace of mind, but you shall have even joy in the Lord! You shall not merely be permitted to sit at the Lord's table and eat a little morsel, and then go your way hungering for more—but He will satiate your soul with goodness, He will make you to eat of fat things full of marrow and to drink of wines on the lees well refined!

Never imagine that the Lord will let in a poor backslider to a sort of second-rate Gospel feast, put him in the back rows and give him something less than he gives to his Brothers and Sisters. No, the prodigal's father killed for him the fatted calf which he had not killed even for the elder brother. And if you will come back to God, my wandering Friend, He will give to you the chief things which He has stored up, even the abundance of Infinite Love, till your heart shall leap within you and your life shall become a Psalm, and your whole being shall be as a harp upon

which the fingers of God shall play to bring out sweetest music henceforth and forever! Only return and you shall see what lies before you! Go on in your sin and your way shall become blacker and blacker—the pitfalls and snares shall multiply every step you take—and the darkness shall deepen into a tenfold night! But return unto your rest and the way shall become smoother beneath your feet, your heart shall grow stronger in the Lord, your ways shall be established and a new song shall be put into your mouth, even praise unto your God! Thus runs the promise, “I will give her her vineyards.” She shall have all the mirth and all the joy that a ransomed spirit ought to know! Oh, what comfort there is in this to any who have wandered away from God, but who resolve to return to Him!

I want you also to notice, before I leave this first point, that it is said, “I will give her, her vineyards *from there*,” which means, I think, that God *gives these blessings in the wilderness into which He allures her*. He promises to give her her vineyards in the solitude into which He allures her when He takes her away from all her earthly trusts to be alone with Himself. And, mark you, the vineyards given, “from there,” will be worth ten thousand of the world’s vineyards! I mean, by this, that a joy which is found in Christ, alone, is true joy, one single particle of which will outweigh the joy of all the world besides! The joy that springs from the garden dies when the garden is dry, but the joy that is given in the wilderness is a root from a dry ground so it can never lose its moisture. It can never decay, for it is nourished from above, not from beneath. The joy that I get in the creature dies with the creature from which it comes, but the joy that comes from Christ the Creator is like He from whom it comes—it can never expire! “I will give her her vineyards from there,” that is to say, I will fetch her gains from losses, her crowns from crosses and her sweet from sweat. I will bring her honey from a lion. I will bring her life from Christ’s death. I will bring her Heaven from all His woes! “I will give her, her vineyards from there.”

I should like everyone here, who is very happy, to be asking, “What is the secret of my joy? Am I rejoicing in the Lord? Or, is mine like the mirth of the ungodly that sustains itself on corn, wine, oil and on the abundance of these perishable things? Have I peace at this moment? Then, on what is my peace founded? Is it built on something which I can see, and taste, and handle of the world’s goods? If so, it will fail me at the last! But if I get happiness that springs from Christ, my Lord, who has become everything to me, then I have a peace that I may grasp and hold fast in the article of death as well as in the trials of life! “I will give her, her vineyards from there.” Come, poor Backslider, whatever your sad case—the Lord can give you joy in Himself! All the joy that your soul can hold, He can give you when alone with Himself. Poor Sinner, if you are sorely grieved with a sense of your sin, and if outward trials are pressing you very heavily, the Lord can give you joy that shall fill your heart to overflowing from Himself, alone, if you will but come to Him! He can give you the resolve to come—oh, that, with all your heart, you would now

seek His face and live in Him! May His blessed Spirit work this Grace in you, and to Him shall be all glory!

Many here well know what these vineyards are which the Lord gives to His returning people. I will tell you of some into which I have been, myself, and I wish to live in those vineyards all my days. One of them is access to God in prayer. The wanderer is shut out from God, he cannot come near to God in prayer. But when he returns to the Savior, he finds that the Mercy Seat is still open and he can speak with God as a man speaks with his friend. That is a vineyard bearing the sweetest clusters!

A second vineyard is that of communion with God—to feel that God dwells within us and we dwell in Him—that we are His children and that He is our Father always manifesting Himself to us. That is a glorious vineyard! If a man can but eat the fruit thereof, it will make him long to go into the hill country of Heaven where the best grapes are ripening for the perfected ones.

A third vineyard is that of full assurance of faith. May a backslider ever come back to that vineyard? Yes, that he may! If you, poor Wanderer, do so, you will be a happy man—not only to hope and to trust that you are saved, but to *know* it. And not only to know it, but to know it infallibly, to know it so that all the devils in Hell cannot shake your confidence that it is so—to know it by the witness of the Holy Spirit's inward sealing of the Truth of God to your soul. This is a blessed vineyard, indeed! God will give it to all those who truly come back to Him. And may those who have not wandered, often go and dwell amidst those sweet-smelling vines!

Yet another vineyard is usefulness. When backsliders return to the Lord, He condescends to employ them and honor them in bringing others to Himself. This is, indeed, to live in a vineyard where the grapes are very sweet to the palate, for surely, men can hardly have greater joy than that of leading others to the Savior's feet! And then, besides these vineyards, there are the manifestations of Christ to His own. There are openings up of the Word of God by the blessed Spirit. There are the tokens of Divine Love even in Providence in a thousand varied forms. I cannot tell you all the sweet and precious things—the joys unspeakable—which the Lord gives to His own people when they come back to Him and dwell with Him! Therefore, come back, poor Wanderer, and you shall find it out for yourself! And you who have never come, before, you, also, come by simple, humble faith, and the Lord will receive you graciously and bless you this night and forever!

So much, then, for the first part of my subject—restored blessings.

II. The second division of my discourse is this, REVIVED HOPES—"I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope."

What was this Valley of Achor? It was *the place of their first victory over their enemies*. It was the first land upon which the Israelites entered after they crossed the Jordan and the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground. Hard by the city of palm trees was the fertile Valley of Achor. If ever the Israelites were to go back, again, they must enter Palestine by the same door if they crossed the Jordan at all—the key of the position was the

Valley of Achor, the first region of which they would have to take possession if they wished to win the rest of the land.

And, surely, the spiritual meaning of the metaphor is this—*the Lord will give to backsliders, when they return to Him, a renewed realization of His Grace*—the old joyous feelings, the consciousness of their first love coming back, their first simple faith being revived. This taking possession, again, of that which was theirs at the first, shall be to them, “a door of hope,” that they shall, in time, take possession of the land! I tell you, Brothers and Sisters, it is a very blessed thing to get back to our first days. We may have better days than our first ones if we go on and make the progress God desires for us, but though they may be, in some respects, deeper and fuller, yet I do not know whether we do not all look back upon the first days of our conversion with very fond memories and some regrets. Other days have become indistinct, like coins in general circulation, but, as far as I am concerned, that first day of my spiritual life is, in my memory, as clear, fresh and sharp as when it first came from the mint of time! Oh, the bliss of that first joy when Jesus told me I was His and my Beloved was mine! That first moment of rest when the burden rolled off my shoulders—I will never forget it! I cannot help remembering it at this moment. And it is a very sweet way of putting it, that the Lord will give you back that first Valley into which you then came—that Valley of Achor where first you set your foot—and you shall feel, again, as you felt then!

To use another figure—though now you are covered with leprosy, your flesh shall be, again, to you as the flesh of a little child—you shall feel as if you were *beginning your spiritual life over again*. That shall be to you, “a door of hope,” for you shall say to yourself, “Surely, the Lord means mercy to me. He has led me back to the very spot where He blessed me at first! He has made me feel just as I felt, then, and He has brought me to the same simplicity of faith which I exercised in the young dawning of my spiritual life. Therefore am I persuaded that He means, now, to lead me on from strength to strength that, as I capture Achor, I may capture all the rest of the land and all the blessings of the Covenant may be mine.” Listen to this, Backslider! Pluck up heart of hope! May God help you to do so and to come back to Him, for He will give you that Valley of Achor to be a door of hope!

But we cannot help remembering that *the name of that Valley of Achor signifies trouble*. You have only to look in the margin of your Bible, at Joshua 7:26, and you will find that it was the Valley of Trouble, and the trouble came in this way—when the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground, there was one Achan, or Achar, or *Achor*, who took some of the spoil which was all to have been either dedicated to God or else destroyed. Before the children of Israel could have God's blessing, they had to clear themselves from the guilt of this accursed thing. They went out to battle and were defeated at Ai. Then there had to be a searching and a digging—and at last they found the godly Babylonian garment and the two hundred shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold. And then they took Achan, and all that he had, and brought them into the Valley of Achor—

and destroyed and burned them—and buried them under a great heap of stones. That Valley of Achor was, indeed, a Valley of Trouble, but after Joshua and all Israel had purged themselves from the evil, it became a door of hope to them!

So, dear Friends, when you and I began our spiritual life, it was not long before our joy was marred. Sin was still in our heart and, before long, it broke out. There are many poor sinners who want to find peace, who seem to me to be searching their hearts exactly the wrong way—they are seeking for any good thing there may be in them—but that is a sheer waste of time! The proper thing to do is to search your heart for the *bad* things that are in you—to do as Israel did in the case of Achan when they cast lots that God's will might be known and that His Spirit might reveal the criminal. And then go and dig until you turn up the evil and find the accursed thing. "Why, Sir!" you say, "I can already see quite enough of my sins." Can you? I think that the fault of most sinners is that they do not see half enough of their sin. "Oh, but," you cry, "I see enough to drive me to despair!" I wish you saw enough to drive you to *double* despair, for when a man heartily and thoroughly despairs of himself, then will he begin to hope in Christ! But many men try to find out some good thing in themselves and they dig all over the camp to discover something of great price. Believe me, there is not a grain of pure gold in all your mines! There is not anything worth the finding in all Israel's camp! Dig as long as you may, you will only dig out the evil thing on which God's curse is resting!

There is many a sinner who cannot find the door of hope because he is holding on to some evil thing. There is, for instance, the man who is clinging to strong drink—he never can have peace with God when, perhaps, only once in six months can he walk home in an upright fashion. He cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils! There is another man who is practicing some secret sin. I dare not say what it is, but he knows. Yet he says that he is trying to find peace with God. Ah, Sir, you will never obtain it while you cling to that iniquity! You must cut off the evil thing, even if it is your right arm! You must pluck it out, even if it is your right eye! Here is a person who does something in business that he ought not to do—and here is another man who omits to do what he knows that he ought to do. They think that God will make peace with them on *their* terms, but He makes no terms with sinners unless they will part with their sins and trust in Christ alone! God will not save you and let you save your pet sin—that cannot be! The place in which a man shall honestly give up every willful act and thought of sin and, by the help of God's Spirit, shall quit everything which is revealed to him to be evil, shall be to him a door of hope! The place where he troubles himself because of his sin, where his conscience frets and worries over it. The place where he puts away the sin and buries it—and piles stones upon it because he abhors it—that is the place where God shall come and manifest Himself to him in the fullness of His Grace! "I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope." The place of Grace and the place of purging,

the place of chastisement and the place of turning away from sin—this is the place that shall become the backslider's door of hope!

Now, Beloved, we will not spend all our time in talking about the door and forget what the hopes are, but who can describe the hopes that come trooping through that door? The hope of being kept, preserved and sustained through every struggle of this life's campaign—the hope of entering into eternal rest with Christ—the hope of the resurrection from among the dead—the hope of infinite glory for body and soul with Christ, world without end—all those hopes which your backsliding has cast away shall come back to you! And, filled with hope, your spirit shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

III. I have but a minute or two to dwell upon the last point, whereon one might well speak for an hour—that is, RENEWED SONGS.

You must have noticed, dear Friends, that *whenever men turn aside from Christ, they go away from all the music of true religion.* A little religion is a very miserable thing! If you have just enough religion to let you know that you are wrong, but not enough to make you right, you are spoiled for the joys of the world, yet you do not possess the joys of the *world to come.* I cannot help telling you again the old American story about the apples in the orchard. There is said to have been a gentleman who asked a friend to come and have some of his apples, which he said were among the finest apples in the State. Yet his friend did not come, though he was invited several times. The gentleman thought that there must be some reason for his refusal, so he asked him why he did not come, and his friend answered, "The fact is, while I have been driving by your orchard, I have picked up an apple or two that fell into the road and I can't say that I have, at all, pleasant memories of those apples—they were the sourest that I ever ate in my life! They set my teeth on edge even to think of them." "Oh," said the owner of the orchard, "now I understand! I sent a great many miles to buy those particular apples that grow just by the side of the hedge and fall into the road. I bought them for the special benefit of the boys who might be inclined to steal my fruit. Whenever they taste them, they say to themselves, 'It is no use to rob that orchard, the apples are horribly sour.' But," he added, "if you will come inside, where those boys do not come, you shall then see what a good apple is like."

So is it with religion. All along the outside of the hedge, where those people come who have just a little religion, the fruit is as sour as it can be—repentance that needs to be repented of—and that gripes the very spirit of the man who has it. There are plenty of those things on the outside, but you have no idea of the luscious sweetness of the fruits that grow in the center—and these shall be yours if you come back to the Master and give yourself up wholly to Him! And the result will be that you will again begin to sing!

"*She shall sing,*" says the text. She shall not be able to talk out her joys, she shall feel that she must sing! "*She shall sing there.*" That is, in the wilderness, alone with Christ. "*She shall sing there.*" "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice,

and blossom as the rose." "She shall sing there, *as in the days of her youth.*" Youth is the time for singing! Young converts are usually full of song and if we return to our Lord, after having backslidden from Him, we shall get back the songs of our spiritual childhood as well as all the other good things that were with us when first we knew the Lord. Ah, poor Wanderer, if you come back to Christ, you shall relish, again, the hymns that you began to despise when you acquired that fine taste that some have which scorns the precious things that please God's humble people. I know some who have become so lofty and proud that the Gospel is not good enough for them—they want something much more refined to suit their precious wisdom and their wonderful culture! Yes, but when the Lord puts them on short commons for a while and whips them well for their ill manners, they are glad to get back to the simple hymns and to the elementary Truths of God they once loved. You know how dear, good Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, wanted those around him to sing him a child's hymn and, in another sense, when the children of God are spiritually reviving, they always want to have the hymns that were good for them when they were in their spiritual childhood.

The text further says, "She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, *and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.*" I read you that song—oh, that our hearts might time to its tune! May we come back to the Lord so perfectly that we shall be able to say, "Let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." May we see so much of His conquest of our sin that we may magnify His name and exalt in Him! May we take Him so wholly to be ours that we may say again, "He is my God and I will prepare Him an habitation. He is my father's God, and I will exalt Him." I want you who have gone back from God, to get such a renewed hold on Him that you will not know how to make enough of Him and not know how sufficiently to praise and laud and magnify that infinite love which has brought you, as it were, through the very depths of the sea and landed you safely on the other side! Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord! If your feet may not dance, yet let your heart dance! And if you need no timbrel, as you are not under the old dispensation in which such instruments were allowable, yet let your fingers seem to beat the heavenly tunes! Let your whole being praise and glorify the Lord who has brought you back from the land of your captivity! If you blessed Him when you first came to Him, bless Him yet more, now that you are allowed to come to Him for the second time! If you praised Him when first you plunged in the fountain filled with blood, oh, bless Him still more, now that He comes and washes your feet which have wandered so far from Him. If the first homecoming was with music and dancing, what shall the second homecoming be?—

"Angels, assist our mighty joys."

Rejoice with us over Brothers and Sisters who were dead and are alive again—over lost ones that are now found! So may it be! Poor Wanderers, do come home, do come home! "The door is shut," you say. Who shut it? Certainly not the Father, for He has sent His Son to be the open Door for all who will come unto Him! Christ Himself invites you to return! The

Spirit is given to draw you back to God and if you have never come before, come now! Oh, that you might be persuaded to come, ere yet you leave this House of Prayer, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 2:14, 15; EXODUS 15:1-21.**

[Exposition was always before the sermon.—EO]

You remember that, a fortnight ago, we read the second chapter of the prophecy of Hosea, and I preached from the 14th verse. I am going to continue that subject tonight, so we will read two verses of the same chapter over again. I am sure we shall never exhaust it and you will not be weary of hearing it. We will begin with the text from which I then spoke to you.

Hosea 2:14, 15. *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor for a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.* Now I want you to hear how she did sing in the days of her youth, in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. Turn to the 15th Chapter of the Book of Exodus, where we have the joyful song of the emancipated chosen nation.

Exodus 15:1-10. *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spoke, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation. He is my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host has He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power: Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of Your excellency You have overthrown them that rose up against You: You sent forth Your wrath which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. They were all noise, bluster and boast, but observe the sublime attitude of God, how readily He eased Himself of His adversaries—"You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters."*

11-14. *Who is like unto You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand, the earth swallowed them. You in Your mercy have led forth the people which You have redeemed: You have guided them in Your strength unto Your holy habitation. The people shall hear and be afraid:*

sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. That is, the heathen nations who, at that time, inhabited the land of Palestine. "Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine."

15. *Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.* This great deed of God would be told, and told again, all over Palestine. And the inhabitants would feel that their end was come, for who could stand against Israel's mighty God?

16. *Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Your people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which You have purchased.* And how still they were! All the 40 years that the Israelites were in the wilderness, they were scarcely ever attacked. And even then it was not by the inhabitants of Canaan, but by the wandering Bedouin tribe of the Amalekites, who slew the hindmost of them. It was amazing that no troops ever came from Egypt to molest God's people after the destruction at the Red Sea. Neither from Canaan did any come to block their way. When God strikes, He makes His adversaries dread all future conflicts!

17-21. *You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which You have made for You to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which Your hands have established. The LORD shall reign forever and ever. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them, but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing you to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.* They sang as in an oratorio, Miriam singing the solo, and all the women joining in the jubilant chorus! And well might they rejoice after the great deliverance which the Lord had worked for them.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—709, 548, 34 (VERSION II).

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 DOOR OF HOPE NO. 2750

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 27, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1859.**

*“The Valley of Achor as a door of hope.”
Hosea 2:15.*

A CHRISTIAN must walk by faith, not by sight. The way to Heaven is not one which is to be trodden by the carnal foot of the man who must see before he can believe. It is a dark way to those who have not the eyes of faith. It is a way through the air, utterly inaccessible to those who have not faith's wings. It is a way upward, quite impassable to the man who has not faith's ladder. The way through this world, under the guardianship of God, and upward to the eternal Home of the faithful is by faith and not by sight. Yet, nevertheless, the Lord is pleased to humor our weakness and our frailties—albeit that we would be quite as safe if we had to walk by faith in the dark—as we are when we walk in the light of the supernatural inward sight of faith, still seeing a brighter light than that which glistens around us. Yet it does please God to give us, in this wilderness, comfortable tokens and sure evidences by which we are enabled to understand, even by reason, judgment and sense, that we are His reconciled people. When God withholds the Presence of His comforting Spirit, or when the sunlight of His Countenance is taken from us, we are, nevertheless, quite safe, for then we are enabled to cling to Christ in the dark with the arms of faith—but God often gives us more than is absolutely necessary—He gives us glimpses of Heaven while here below and rich spiritual enjoyment while we are in this otherwise barren land.

Now, on the present occasion, we have to speak not of the meal on which faith necessarily feeds, but of a luxury, a dainty, a kind of celestial dessert which faith feeds upon, not so much for her nourishing, as for her delight. If the children of Israel in the wilderness had manna for their necessities, they also had quail for their satisfaction and delight. Now God gives us, in the Presence of His Son, the manna of Heaven! In the finished work and spotless righteousness of Jesus, He gives our faith its solid and substantial food. But here, in these vineyards—in these gardens which we enter through the doors of hope—He gives to faith its fragrant spices and its clusters of grapes of Eshcol, which, as they come in contact with the spiritual palace, cause faith to leap for very joy!

What is this which, in our text, is called, “a door of hope”? I think it may be understood in four ways. There is, sometimes, a greater embarrassment in the richness of Scripture than in its poverty. In fact, there

can be no poverty in any text. I have sometimes heard a complaint made by one who was studying a sermon, that there was not much in the text. I have generally to complain that there is far more in the text than I can possibly bring out and so, in this one, there seem to be four interpretations, each of which has a host of commentators to back it! And, as I am incapable of judging which is the best, I will give you all four—and you shall take your choice.

If you read attentively the history of the coming of the children of Israel into Canaan, you will see that the Valley of Achor was the first spot on which they settled. Just at the time when they were close to Jericho, they pitched their tents in the Valley of Achor. It was there, for the first time, that they ate the old corn of the land. And it was in that plain that the manna ceased to fall because there was no further need for it. They had entered into Canaan, itself, and this valley was their first possession.

I. Now I take it that by the Valley of Achor, in this text, you and I may understand OUR FIRST SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENTS.

We remember—and we can never forget—the time when we were going through the wilderness, seeking rest and finding none. We remember looking for some substantial city which had foundations, in which our unquiet spirits might find repose. We were cheered, now and then, in that season of conviction of sin, by heavenly manna secretly given—not to feed us by the lips of enjoyment, but secretly given simply for our support while we were seeking something higher, something better—even our heavenly inheritance. We remember well how, with weary feet, we trod the hot sand, with the scorching sun above us—and found no place where we might rest and permanently take relief. Well do we remember the hour when we passed through Jordan, when the Spirit of God led us to the blood of Christ! We were brought to see His finished work upon the Cross, His spotless righteousness in His glorious life and then, laying hold upon Him, and believing in Him, we understood the meaning of the Apostle's declaration, "We which have believed do enter into rest"—we had come to Canaan—to the goodly land which flowed with milk and honey!

And, my Brothers and Sisters, if the wilderness is still fresh in our memory, even more so is that Valley of Achor where we did feed and lie down. Oh, the raptures of that season when I first knew the Lord! My lips will utterly fail to tell of the bliss of that hour when my spirit first cast itself upon Christ. John Bunyan describes his pilgrim as giving three leaps at the Cross, but I must claim at least 300 for my share! How I did leap for joy of heart and lightness of spirit! My sins were gone, buried in the sepulcher of Christ, washed away by the river of His blood and I stood "accepted in the Beloved." Was I not like the prodigal in that hour when his father's arms were about his neck when the sound of music and dancing was in his ears and the fatted calf was spread before him as a dainty feast—the token of his father's affection? Surely, at that day, we went out with joy and were led forth with peace! The mountains and the hills did break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field did clap their hands! Do you not remember how sweet your Sabbaths were, then, how rich was every hymn, how precious was every prayer?

There was not a text of Scripture which was not helpful to you! As for your times of seclusion, your hours of private prayer, were they not as the days of Heaven upon earth? No human penman can describe the heavenly rapture! No banqueting house could equal that, except it be that heavenly banquet of which the spouse sings so sweetly in her song of love!

“But,” you say, “in what way can these early enjoyments be considered to be a door of hope? They are like the Valley of Achor, it is true, but how are they a door of hope?” Why, they are a door of hope to us in the time when we are enjoying them, for then it is we can exclaim, “Surely I am reconciled to God, or else He would not treat me thus. Would He put His lips to my lips and kiss me with the kisses of His love if I were not reconciled to Him? Is it possible I should feel His arms about my neck and sit at His table, and be called His child, if I were still His enemy and my sins were still not cancelled?” The first transports of bliss, the first enjoyments after conversion are like golden doors of hope to those who have just escaped from under the lash of the Law of God and have been delivered from their sins! Surely, all of you who are in that state can say they are doors of hope to you, for, looking back upon your past misery, you say to yourself, “If I were not one of His children, could I be thus? If He had not accepted me in the Beloved, if He had not taken me to Himself forever, from where could this rapture come, this transport, this delight?”

They are, therefore, truly doors of hope to you, in this sense, that as when the children of Israel took possession of the Valley of Achor they did, virtually, take possession of the whole promised land! So you may have had some first enjoyments, which are, in truth, but an earnest of complete and unspeakable happiness. There was an old English custom by which a man took possession of an estate “by turf and twig.” A sod of the turf and a twig from a tree were given to him. It was a token that the whole estate, with everything which grew upon it, was his property. And so, when Jesus whispered into your ear and gave you the assurance of reconciliation with the Father and fellowship with Himself, He did, as it were, give you the whole land of promise! The richest enjoyment of the Believer is yours! You have the foretaste and that is the pledge that you shall yet enter into the possession of the whole! However great the promise, however rich may be its treasure, it is all yours! You have not yet fed upon the clusters of its vineyards, but it is all yours because, in taking possession of your first enjoyment, you have virtually claimed the whole. It was said of Caesar, when he landed here, that he stumbled, but, clutching a handful of earth, he hailed it as a happy omen, saying that in taking possession of that handful of earth, he had taken all England for his own. And you, who on your bended knees fell prostrate before God in that first rich treasure of joy which came into your souls—you took possession of all the inheritance of the saints on earth and of their inheritance in Heaven, too!

Further, I must add that in looking back to those first enjoyments, they are a door of hope to you, you aged ones, who can talk of those days long gone by—and to others of us who can look back some ten, twelve, or 20 years, when first we were quickened by the Spirit and taught to know

the Savior's preciousness. To all such, those early enjoyments are still doors of hope. I would not have you feed on experience long gone by—such bread may be moldy—but yet, I think, sometimes, there is a way of storing up that old manna in the golden pot of remembrance in such a way that it remains sweet even to this day. I know that I have, sometimes, when doubting my interest in Christ, been led to look back to that first season of fellowship with Jesus and to say—

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

And though this stale provision would not do to feed upon constantly, yet, as an old Puritan says, “When there is nothing else in the cupboard, this cold meat that has been left from last night must satisfy us for a little while until we get some fresh food direct from Heaven” We may get some new experience from past enjoyments! You see the pole men and bargemen—they lean backwards to press forwards! Some lazy people lean backwards and never come forward at all, but we may use our experience as the long poles of these men are used and, as we walk backwards and push backwards in recollection, we may be really going forward in faith, in hope and in love!

This we may do and so these early experiences—these loves of our espousals—these early breakfasts in the vineyard with our Beloved—these days of early fellowship and sweet acquaintance may become as doors of hope to our poor troubled spirits.

I have thus endeavored to explain the first meaning of the text. May God make your early spiritual enjoyments to be doors of hope to you!

II. But, again, the Valley of Achor is declared by the Rabbis to have been a most fertile plain. Some commentators of great judgment and discernment declare that the Valley of Achor is identical with the valley of Eshcol, while they are all agreed upon this point—that Achor was one of the richest and fattest valleys of the whole promised land. Wherever you might walk within it, there was not a single barren spot. It was all fertile, bringing forth vines and grapes of the very richest kind, so that the wine that came from them was noted above every other.

And, my Brothers and Sisters, may not the Valley of Achor represent to you and me not only our early enjoyments, but **THOSE VERY SWEET AND MEMORABLE SEASONS WHICH WE HAVE HAD SINCE THEN?** For Christians, though they have long Lents, do have happy Easters! They may sometimes have forty days of fasting, but one day of such feasting as God's children have is quite enough to make them forget all this and go fasting more forty days and yet not hunger! There are some days when God's children are satisfied with fatness—and so satisfied that they have not only all that heart could wish, but their cup runs over and they can do nothing but sit down in astonishment, in a very repletion of satisfaction—content to sing and so to pour out their souls in gratitude before God! Oh, you who think that religion is a dull, dry, dreary thing, from where did you get this idea? Perhaps you have derived it from the Pharisee—it may be that you have acquired this falsehood from the hypocrite—but from the real Christian, I know that you have had very little that will lead to such a conclusion as that!

We are a tried people. We have our troubles, griefs and woes, but we are happy people and never spoke a Prophet more truly than when he said, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." We have not only times of quiet calm and deep serenity, when our peace is like a river and our righteousness is like the waves of the sea, but we have times when our joy exceeds all description—when the river swells to its utmost bank and, running over—covers the green pastures of our life and fattens them for many a future day with its rich deposits of Divine Grace! We have sometimes had very tempests of delight, when our leaping spirits could scarcely stay within our body and when, in a very transport we have said, with Paul, "Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows." In the breaking of bread at the Communion Table, in coming together in our frequent meetings for prayer, in our silent meditations and in the reading of the Scriptures, our Master has appeared to us! He has taken us by the hand and our hearts have burned within us while He has talked with us by the way. At such moments we have been full of Heaven and, if not actually inside the pearly gates, we have certainly stood just this side of them and the gates have seemed to be wide open—and nothing to divide us from Heaven except the infirmity and weakness of our nature!

Think it not a fable I am telling you—it is a sober fact! There are red-letter days in our diary. Some among us, who appear frequently with mournful faces, nevertheless could tell you of days when the light of the sun has been as the light of seven days and, as for the light of the moon, it has been as the light of the sun to them! Their meditation concerning Christ has been sweet and rapturous. He has taken them, as on eagle's wings, and carried them up to the very Heaven of delight where they have beheld Christ and have been able to say, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me."

These enjoyments are doors of hope. The fat Valley of Achor is a door of hope, but in these respects you certainly will perceive it is so. The Believer, after his joyous frames of mind, often has a season of sadness, and then these bright experiences become doors of hope, for he says, "I am sadly changed, but God has not. Did He manifest Himself to me yesterday? He is just the same today as He was then." The faithfulness of God, combined with our recollection of His kindness to us, compels us to draw the inference that He is still good, that He is still rich in mercy and full of loving kindness! And so the old experiences, coupled with our belief in God's Immutability, become doors of hope to us.

Besides, they are doors of hope in this respect, for we argue thus—Did He once shine upon me? Then He is mine forever and He will shine upon me again! 'Tis true, I have not seem the Sun for many days, but He did shine once and He is shining now and I shall see Him yet again. 'Tis true, I see no sun, nor moon, nor stars, but the sun and moon and stars are not quenched by the tempest of our trouble—I shall see them again. Yes, I shall behold His face in righteousness. "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God." Though

He gives trouble, yet will He give peace. Though He kills, He will yet make alive—the third day He will raise me up and I shall again live in His sight!

So you see the rich enjoyments, the transports, the raptures, the delights, the ecstasies of Believers become doors of hope to them when many other doors are shut. Now, Believer, turn back to your experience and see if you cannot make it be a door of hope to you. Are you now distrustful and desponding? Then, think of “His love in times past” and, surely, it will—

**“Forbid you to think
He’ll leave you at last in trouble to sink.”**

Turn back to your Ebenezers, those golden signposts on the road to Heaven. Can you, Believer, sit down by the side of one of those signs of help and then despair? Or can you remember the days of old, the years of former times when your God sent from above and took you and brought you up out of many waters? And do you believe that He has brought you thus far to put you to shame? If He had intended to destroy you, would He have shown such kindness to you as this? Would all these banquets have been given to a foe? Would the King have brought you to His house of wine if He had not intended to bring you in to the marriage supper of the Lamb?

Thus may past experiences be doors of hope—but do not depend upon them, for Christ must still come through them to you—and though it is a door of hope, what is the good of that door if it is locked? You must get at Christ through the door—it must be your door of consolation, for it is through this that you are helped to find Him!

III. So far the matter has been simple enough, but now, in the third place, the Valley of Achor, you will all recollect as a matter of history, was the place where Achan was stoned. All the spoils of Jericho were dedicated to the Lord, but Achan had taken a goodly Babylonian garment and a wedge of gold, and had hidden them in his tent. He was discovered, by God’s Providence, and was brought out and stoned to death and burned in the Valley of Achor and, therefore, it is called by that name to this day.

Now, do you not see how this may be turned to spiritual account? THE PLACE WHERE THE CHRISTIAN MORTIFIES HIS SIN SHALL BECOME TO HIM A VALLEY OF HOPE. You and I have our Achans in the camp. I have already had to stone a host of them and I lament that the evil family is not yet cut in pieces, but there still remain some of the sons of Achan. Would to God I could burn them all! There was a time, my Brother, my Sister, when your Achan was so strong that you would not give heed to that Gospel which lays the sinner low and gives all the glory to God. But you were compelled to bring it out and you did—you cast it out, you stoned it, you burned it with fire—and now you are to be numbered among the humble in Zion. But this day you are still distressed and you say, “How is it I am still afflicted? I have been trying to do good. I can do but little for my Master. Truly, there must still be some accursed thing in my camp.”

Perhaps it may be worldliness—the common Achan of our churches. Possibly it is covetousness—a common sin that is seldom admitted. It is

a singular thing that Francis de Sales, a noted confessor of the Romish Church, said he had met with many who confessed to the commission of the most abominable sins, but not one who ever confessed covetousness. It is an Achan hard to find out, for the man who is worldly says he is industrious! And he who is griping and who grinds the poor and says he is only diligent in business is, doubtless, fervent in spirit somewhere or other, but you cannot find out where it is. Look and see whether this is your Achan. If so, bring it out and stone it! By your contributions to the poor, drain the life-blood from your avarice and make it turn sickly and pale—let it die and burn it—and bury it. And if that is not the sin, seek it out, whatever it is, and bring it out and let it die, for, depend upon it, the place of mortification of sin is the place of the comfort of the soul! If you will be at friendship with but one traitor, God will not give you the comforting light of His Countenance. Bring forth the idol out of your house! Make Rachel rise and search even the camel's furniture, lest the idol be hidden there! Bring it out and let it be utterly destroyed before the face of the Lord your God, for He is a jealous God and He will not let you serve another, nor give your love unto strangers, or else He will hedge up your way with thorns and chastise you with whips of scorpions till He brings you back to the simplicity of your consecration to Him.

It is a high and noble thing when a man knows how to mortify sin. The old Romish pretended saints had a very curious way of doing this. For instance, they mortified their bodies by not cleaning and washing themselves and by wearing their garments till they were full of vermin—they thus thought themselves holy! I am sorry to say we have many such saints in our time—I wish we could find them out and spoil them by a good bath! A thorough washing would not be discreditable to God, while it would be exceedingly healthful to man! Moreover, we have read of some other saints who would eat nothing during Lent but dry bread sprinkled with ashes. They thought that while they mortified their bodies, they pleased God—and did not understand that their lusts and pride might be fattening while their poor bodies might be starving—for what they lose in one way, they gain in the other, until their souls are like Jeshurun—they wax fat and kick! It is in mortifying our evil passions, our lustful desires, our wrong thoughts, our intemperance, our seeking too much after the things of this world, even our abstaining from pleasure which we think allowable in itself, and a humbling of our pride before God—it is this which is such a Valley of Achor as shall be a door of hope to us!

I believe many of our distresses, many of our doubts and fears, arise from our Achans. I may be giving you the most comforting advice if I urge you to search yourselves, and examine yourselves, and turn out the accursed thing. Let it die! Destroy it! Seek to be conformed to the image of Christ. Be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Put away every evil thing from you and then put on, as the elect of God, a heart of compassion, humbleness of mind—and all those things whereby the child of God shall be adorned and beautified—and so shall the Valley of Achor become a door of hope to you. I shall not explain how it will be so—you will find that out for yourselves better than I can tell you. Go and try it

and you will soon discover that the mortification of sin is the gladdening of the soul!

IV. The last interpretation is one closely connected with this. The Valley of Achor was so called from a word which signifies TROUBLE, doubtless because Achan there troubled Israel. "Why have you troubled us?" asked Joshua. "The Lord shall trouble you this day." And, therefore, they called it the Valley of Achor, that is, the valley of trouble.

"Oh!" says one, "I am glad the valley of trouble is a door of hope." But stop! What trouble was it? It was trouble on account of *sin*. There is some trouble which is not a door of hope at all. There are some troubles into which men thrust themselves and they may get out of them as best they can. Trials do not prove a man to be a Christian! There is a way to Hell "through much tribulation," as well as a way to Heaven through "the strait gate." We may go to Hell in the sweat of our brow. We may go from one evil to a greater from the sparks into the midst of the fire. The trouble here intended is trouble on account of sin—and that valley of trouble is a door of hope.

My Friends, I speak earnestly and pointedly. There are some here present in whose hearts the Lord has been at work. You are now in great trouble on account of your sins. You were once peaceable and happy enough in your own hearts. You loved the ways of sin and you little thought of the wages that would follow. You were delighted enough to dance your merry round with the poor foolish worldlings! But now you are startled and amazed to discover your mistake! You find yourself to be a lost soul. Sin follows behind you with terrible howling. You discover that you can by no means quiet your clamorous iniquities which have been demanding your death. You have been lately crying to God for mercy, but the mercy has not as yet come—at least you are not conscious of it. Your trouble has been waxing worse and worse and, as David said, your sore runs in the night and it ceases not. You make your very bed to swim while your tears become your meat day and night. If any should ask you if you are a child of God, you would say, "Certainly not—would that I were!" You are told to believe in Christ and you say, "Oh, could I but believe! But it seems impossible that there shall be salvation for such a sinner as I am. I am the very chief of sinners and the worst of my case is that I do not feel this as I ought to feel it. I am hardened and careless although I mourn my hardness and carelessness of sin."

My Friend, I am glad to see you in trouble on account of sin, for this trouble is a door of hope! Let me show you how it is so. It is, in the first place, a door of hope *because it shows that you are one whom Christ invites to come to Him*. Christ invites the heavy laden—you are such an one, so come to Him! You are one for whom Jesus died, for Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now you are consciously a sinner, rest assured that those He came to save He will save, or else His mission would be a frustrated one. If He came to save sinners, He will save them and you are consciously such a one. I know you can set your hand and seal to this declaration—

"I am surely a sinner.

Then Jesus died for me!

Then let that Valley of Achor be a door of hope to you!

“But,” says one, “I feel myself to be condemned, lost and ruined.” That is the reason that you are to believe! God means you to be saved. Martin Luther used to argue from contradictions and apparent impossibilities. He said, “I will cut your head off with your own sword, O Satan! You say I am condemned, but I tell you for that very reason I shall be saved! Christ came to clothe some. He could not have come to clothe those who were already clothed! He must have come to clothe the naked. I am such an one—then He came to clothe me! Jesus came to wash some. He could not have come to wash those who did not need it, but to wash the filthy. I am filthy—therefore He came to wash me! Christ came to forgive the sinful, to cleanse those who have many iniquities. I am such an one and I claim, therefore, to be one of those for whom His mission was undertaken—and that He came purposely and expressly to save me.”

“Oh,” one says, “that is a very narrow door!” Is it? Well, it is such a door as I have been content to creep through many and many a time, for when everything else has failed me, I have been obliged to come back to this—that if I am not a saint, I am a sinner—and I do humbly confess it. Jesus said He came to save sinners. I know that. Then He came to save me. I clutch the precious Truth of God and joy and peace return at once!

Come, poor Sinner. Do you not see this to be a door of hope? It is not the hope, but the *door* of it. Christ comes to you through the door of your felt necessity and your conscious distress. If now you know yourself to be lost, ruined and undone—if now your heart grieves on account of its own hardness and obduracy of which you accuse yourself—now cast yourself on Him who is “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them.”

And, besides, there is another door of hope here. If the Lord has brought you to feel your need of a Savior, *then you are not dead in trespasses and sins*. Dead men cannot feel! Prick them with a dagger and they start not! Blow out their very brains with a pistol and there shall be no motion, for they cannot feel. Even though the vital part is touched, they cannot feel the pains and agonies of death. And if you are conscious of sin—if you are seeking the Savior—there is hope for you. “But,” one says, “I am dead in sin, notwithstanding all.” Well, now, a king’s ransom for one tear that ever streamed from a dead man’s eye! Come now, I challenge you! I will give you all this world’s wealth if you will bring me some signs of the pulsations of a dead man’s heart, or the moving of dead man’s lips. If you can bring them to me, then I will give you leave to despair—but such a thing cannot be! Your sighs, your groans, your tears, your silent prayers prove that you are spiritually alive! From this take comfort and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope! Let this lead you to remember that where God has begun a good work, He will carry it on. God always begins to work in a way that looks like undoing and not doing. When we begin to build, we first dig out before we build up. And so God digs deep with the spade of conviction before using the trowel of His Grace to build us up unto the edification of His people. We must, my Brothers and Sisters, first of all be slain before we can be made alive!

First wounded before we can be healed! No, we must be buried to self and all self-confidence before we can be quickened to enjoy a resurrection to a new life in Christ Jesus.

I may be speaking to one who says, "I am convinced that my affliction is a door of hope, but the door is shut." "Ah," says another, "and my experience is a door of hope, but I cannot open it." "And," says another, "all my mortification of sins should be a door of hope, certainly, but I do not find it a door of hope to me." They are doors of hope, though not always open doors. What is your duty if the door is shut? Your first duty is to wait till it is open. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Wait on the Lord—be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart."

In the next place, while you are waiting at the door, worship. Wait with many prayers. Wait with many tears. Wait with anxiety. Wait believing that God is just and merciful. And while you are thus waiting, and while the door is shut, let me give you another piece of advice. Cast your eyes up to the lintel and mark well that this door of hope is a blood-sprinkled door. Look up to that sign that the Sacrifice has been offered and, perhaps, while you are looking upon the blood on the lintel, the door itself will open! It is a master key—many have found that when they have learned to spell the blood and trust in that, then the door has opened of itself.

But, if this fails you, what should you do next? Why, knock! Knock! "But," says one, "I have knocked." Knock again and keep on knocking—and never cease, though you are faint. Keep the knocker in your hand, for to him that asks, it shall be given and to him that knocks it shall be opened. But, while you are waiting outside and knocking, let me give you another piece of advice. Clear the door for, perhaps, you are like Cain who was not accepted because sin was at the door. Give up all your lusts and when you have cleared the door, then knock again, and so continue to knock with a good clear door and surely it shall soon open! But if it opens not, let me bid you, once more, comfort yourself by looking through the crevices and the keyhole, for I have known many a poor soul who, when the door has not opened, has looked through the keyhole and has found comfort—and the door has opened immediately. If you cannot get a whole promise, get half a promise! If you cannot get full enjoyment of Christ, touch the hem of His garment! And if you cannot get the children's bread, be like the Syrophenician woman and be willing to be a little dog to eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table. Gently creep up—look down between the doorsill and the door itself. Peep through the keyhole and see if you cannot find some comfort from what you see within.

But let me give you one more piece of advice—keep on knocking and remember that there is One who has the key of that door. Who is He? The Prince of the house of David! He opens and no man shuts! He shuts and no man opens! Who is He? He is near you, wherever you are. If you will believe with all your heart in the Lord Jesus and trust Him and repose all your confidence in Him, you shall find your door open straightway! Look not to the rusty key of reason, but to the golden key which He

carries at His belt. Look to Him, alone, and say to Him, “Lord Jesus, I am content to stay here knocking if You do not open the door, but I beseech You, for Your mercy’s sake, to let Your poor prisoner in and let me see the hope which You have prepared for Your children.”

May it come to pass that you and I, having stood on this side of the door, may soon be seated on the other side of it! While you are on this side, it is a door of hope. On the other side, it is a door of gratitude. If any of you have got inside the door, sing to the praise of Him who opened this door and let you in—and who has given you a feast of good things which He has prepared for all them that love Him.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 5:1-5.**

Verse 1. *Therefore.* The Apostle Paul had the logical faculty largely developed, so his writings are full of, “therefores.” And the Christian religion, as a whole, stands logically connected—doctrine with doctrine, Truth of God with Truth of God. Error is inconsistent with itself, but the Truth of God is consistent, logical, and unerring. “Therefore.”

1. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Are you enjoying that peace, dear Friend, at this moment? If you are, indeed, justified by faith, you are at peace with God. Therefore know it and feel no disquietude. Draw near to God as a dear child might to a loving father. “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God.* When a man is at peace with God, then he has the desire to draw near to Him. When he is justified, he has the right to draw near, so that, being justified and having peace, we have access by faith. And this is not a transient privilege, but the Grace into which we have access is a Grace in which we stand! We abide in it. The Lord has given us, through our justification, a permanent standing near to Himself. “We have access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand”—and this gives us joy—the joy of sweet hope concerning the bright future that lies before us! “We rejoice in hope of the Glory of God.”

3. *And not only so.* Whenever the Apostle begins to talk of the Lord’s bounties to His people, he abounds in the word, also, and in the phrase, “not only so.” As if he had not already said enough when he had reminded us of the joy of hope in God’s Glory, he says, “And not only so.” We have something in possession as well as something to hope for—we have a present glory as well as glory laid up in store! “And not only so.”

3-5. *But we glory in tribulations, also, knowing that tribulation works patience and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.* Beloved, it is a mark of great Grace to be able to acquiesce in tribulation and to accept it with patient resignation at the Lord’s hands. But it is a sign of a still higher state of Grace when we *glory* in tribulation—when we welcome it and say, “Now, the

Lord is about to elevate me to the upper class in His school—to teach me some deeper Truths than I have learned before—to give me a closer acquaintance with some mystery of His Kingdom than I have previously had—to work in my heart some new Grace which has never been there before.” We also glory in tribulations knowing that tribulation works patience. You cannot learn to swim on dry land and you cannot learn to be patient without having something to endure! “Tribulation works patience, and patience, experience.”

There are some who think that they will get experience through tribulation. So they do, in a certain sense, but not experience of the right kind. There is a middle term—patience—which keeps its right place—“Tribulation works patience and patience, experience.” I know some people who have had a thousand troubles, but they have no more experience, now, than they had when they began. I mean they are just as foolish—just as untaught in the things of God—just as ready as before to blunder into a fresh trouble because they have lacked that middle term. Then, further Paul says, “and experience, hope.” Our experience of the Lord’s goodness in the past leads us on to hope for still greater things in the future and, thus, experience works hope. I have seen some persons who were called experienced Christians, in whom it seemed to me that experience had worked despair, for their faces were always very long and very sad—and their speech was as dolorous as it well could be. But here I find that true Christian experience works hope—a hope that makes us not ashamed—“because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”

—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'S WORK IN MAN

NO. 2629

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 2, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1857.

***“And it shall be in that day, says the LORD, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”
Hosea 2:16.***

WITHOUT any preface or prelude, we shall draw from these words three on four lessons.

I. The first lesson from the text is this, that GOD SPEAKS CONCERNING HIS PURPOSES OF GRACE IN MAN WITHOUT NOTICING EITHER MAN'S WILLINGNESS OR UNWILLINGNESS—AND WITHOUT ALLOWING HIS OWN PURPOSE TO BE CHANGED BY THE ONE OR THE OTHER.

According to the free-will plan of salvation, it would be absolutely necessary for God to put it thus—“At that day, says the Lord, *if you are willing*, you shall call Me, Ishi, and shall no longer call Me, Baali. And if you will believe and repent, if you are willing, I will take away the names of Baalim out of your mouth. And if you are willing, they shall no more be remembered by their names.” But note that God puts in no, “ifs,” at all, but talks about men as if they had absolutely nothing to do in the matter—and as if He, Himself, did it all! One might object, “But suppose they are unwilling to forget the names of Baalim?” “Ah,” says God, “but I have their will in My hands! I have the key of man's will—I can open it and no man can shut it. I can shut it and no man can open it.” “But suppose they should be hard-hearted and will not repent?” “Yes,” says the Lord, “but I have the hammer that can break the heart in pieces and make it fly into shivers!” “But suppose they should be stony-hearted and will not melt?” “No,” says the Lord, “but I have a fire that will melt the most adamant rock that was ever known. Yes, that can consume the rock out of the heart and utterly burn it away.” Therefore, speaking concerning the Israelites, who were serving Baalim, who were drunk with sin, who were desperately set on worldling iniquity and who had gone far away from God, He puts in no, “if,” but distinctly says even concerning them, “I will take away the names of Baalim out of their mouth, *and they shall no more be remembered by their name.*”

Have you ever noticed, throughout Scripture, how positively God speaks with regard to His acts of salvation in men? "He *shall* call upon Me, and I *will* answer him." "All that the Father gives Me *shall* come to Me." "Him that came to me I *will* in no wise cast out." "He *shall* see of the travail of His soul and *shall* be satisfied." The free-willer might rise up and say, "But suppose they are not willing to be saved? Will God save them against their will?" To this we reply—There is nothing said about *their will* at all—the only reference is to God's will! It is evident that God has such a power over men that He can work in their hearts just what He pleases, apart from their willingness or unwillingness, so that, when I come into this pulpit to preach, if God the Spirit should so please, though you all should gnash your teeth in anger, yet He could, under the sound of the Word, convert you all. Though you should set your hearts desperately against God's Word and enter His House with a curse upon you, yet He could, before you left the place, change you to another mind!

And though you should have come here with all levity of spirit, hardened in heart, despising God and His Gospel, yet He has such strength that He could, by one word of His mouth, by the breath of His Spirit, transform you into His living children who should do the very reverse of what you are now doing! It is in vain, then, for an infidel to say that he could never be converted, for God could convert him. It is in vain for a man to say, "God will never bend *my* knees in prayer." God knows how to make your knees bend, be they ever so stiff. "I never will, like a coward, cry for mercy," says one. But God knows how to create penitent cries in your heart and how to make them struggle for utterance, too! He has you in His hand, He has the bit even in your mouth. And desperately as you may be set against Him, yet He can turn you wherever He pleases. He who binds Leviathan and cuts the dragon in two will not be stopped by a poor puny mortal like you! But if He has purposes of Grace towards you, He will work those purposes out. If He is determined to save you, He will, Himself, lure you into the wilderness and give you a new heart and a right spirit! And if He has so decreed it, struggle as you may against Him, the hour shall come when, with one blow from the hammer of His Word, your heart shall be broken in pieces! And with one sip of His blessed cordial of Grace, your soul shall rejoice in pardon bought with blood!

This is a great Doctrine of the Gospel—the Doctrine of the power of Grace—the Doctrine that God saves whom He wills, that "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." "Ah," says one, "if I am willing to be saved, will not God save me?" Sir, He *has* saved you! If you are willing to be saved, God has *made you willing*, and therein He has given you the very germ of salvation, for your *willingness* to be saved in God's way is the very essence of being saved! "But," says one, "if I am unwilling to be saved, will He save me?" No, Sir, not while you are unwilling, but, if He so pleases, He will *make you willing* and then He will manifest in you His power to save! God saves no man against his will—and yet it is against his will. Ralph Erskine puts it thus—he says, "I was

saved with full consent against my will.” He means to say, “against my *old* will, that always willed to do evil, but yet, with the full consent of all my powers, they being renewed, created anew in Christ Jesus and, therefore, at once willing to submit to everything that God laid down.”

Oh, how I rejoice to preach a Gospel that does not borrow strength from me, but gets its power from God! What a consolation that, go where we may to preach God's Word, if God wills it, that Word shall be rendered effectual among the very worst of men—among mockers, scoffers and despisers! Why is it that men go not to preach the Word among the Romanists of Ireland? Because they say they will not hear them. Oh, but they would! And we should at least free ourselves from their blood if we did but stand up and testify the Word of God! However unwilling they might be, God could yet, by His abundant Grace, change their hearts! “It is of no use,” said one, “to go to the Bechuana in his kraal—he cannot be saved—he would never be willing to give up his old habits.” But you do not depend upon *his* will at all! You go to him with the Gospel and God gives him a new will and the great change is worked! All you have to do is to preach the Word! “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,” for, with the Word of God, there goes forth His Holy Spirit which changes men, renews their characters and hearts and makes them what they never were before. Oh, I bless God's name that, though all the people in the world should lift their hands against the Most High and declare that they never would be saved, yet God could, in an instant, if so it pleased Him, make the whole of them bend their knees before Him, cry for the mercy they once rejected and seek the Savior whom they once despised! Here lies the power of the Gospel, in that it gains the mastery over man's evil will and without his consent changes his nature, and then fully gets his consent after his nature has been changed!

That is the first Doctrine of God, I think, we may fairly draw from the text.

II. Now for the second, which is, that GOD WILL MAKE THOROUGH WORK OF IT WHEN HE SANCTIFIES A MAN.

Note that these Jews were idolaters, yet God says, “I will not only make them leave off their idolatries, but I will do more—I will take away the names of Baalim out of their memories—for they shall no more be remembered by their name.” God's sanctifying work either is already, or it will yet be a complete one. I said that it either is or it will be complete—it is so in yon bright spirits before the Throne of God and, for the rest of us, if God has begun the good work, He will carry it on to ultimate perfection until the very name of sin shall be clean taken out of our mouth and the remembrance of it shall be purged from our conscience and memory!

It is worthy of remark that this promise has had a literal fulfillment in the case of the Jews. They have many sins, but there is one sin that they have not—except *spiritually*—that is, they are not idolaters! Before the time of their captivity, they were constantly worshipping one false God or

another. It was the hardest thing in the world to keep them from bowing down before blocks of wood and stone. But now, go where you may, you can scarcely find a Jew who is an idolater. Here and there, one or two of them have joined the Romish church and so have become idolaters by bowing down before images and saints' relics—cast clouts and rotten bones and such things. But, taking the Jews as a race, they are the last people in the world to become actual idolaters! That ancient message, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord," seems to have been burnt into them and you cannot get it out of them—neither will they acknowledge any form of faith that seems to deny the unity of the Godhead, or implies that worship is to be given to any save the incomprehensible and mysterious Being whom they, as well as we, worship as Jehovah. The name of Baalim has been taken clean out of their mouths—they do not remember it, neither do they call it to mind!

And it is also a very notable thing, which we have often seen, that men, when they are converted, usually become the most clear of the very sin with which they were once the most defiled. You will note that a man who has been, before his conversion, a great drunk, will, in some instances, not only become exceedingly sober afterwards, but he will even carry his views, if possible, to an extreme. He will be so desperately set against everything that once injured him, that he will even look with suspicion on others who indulge themselves in moderation. You will note it is so with the man who has been an habitual Sabbath-breaker. So surely as he is converted, he will become the most precise Sabbath-keeper you ever knew! The sin that hurt him will be the sin that he will kill, if possible. The burnt child dreads the fire and it is the same with the man who has been burnt by sin. He does not like to touch it again. He must keep clean away from it, turn from it, pass by it and utterly abhor it. So was it with the Jews—the worship of Baalim had been their favorite sin, so the name, Baalim, was to be taken out of their mouth and to be no more called to their remembrance.

But, my Brothers and Sisters, what noble beings you and I will be when not only has our sin been purged, when not only have our daily corruptions been done away with, but when all our sinful nature has been utterly removed! Well said the Apostle, "It does not yet appear what we shall be." No, Brethren, we can scarcely guess what we shall be! But we can for a moment contemplate it. What a noble being man must be when he is thoroughly refined—when all his sin is gone—when there is not an evil passion left—when there is not a lust hidden in a snug corner, but when his soul has become thoroughly pure and his heart entirely renewed! Oh, what a noble creature! And just remember this, poor, weak, and worthless though we are, that faith which we have in us will ultimately purify us and we shall be holy, like yon bright spirits before the Throne of God!

What a grand man would he be who had no sin in him! Suppose him to come into this world? He would lead a life exactly like that led by our

Lord, Jesus Christ, and He was the grandest of all men! It is marvelous to consider the different attributes of His Character, as they are manifested in His life, but remember that we, too, shall be like He when we see Him as He is. We shall be as pure as Adam was in the Garden, with this addition—that our purity shall be not merely spotless, but it shall be so white that it shall be beyond the possibility of ever being spotted! Our nature shall be not merely pure, but so pure that it can never be impure! God will stamp it so indelibly with the stamp of purity that it will be pure throughout eternity! Oh, what a blessed thought—the name of Baalim out of my mouth, sin out of my heart, the lustful glance forever gone from my eyes, evil things from my imagination all gone! Oh, will we not praise our Lord in the bright moment when we wake up in His likeness, when our glorified spirit shall be white as driven snow in the glad companionship of the Immaculate, the Pure, the Perfect? Oh, what joyous shouts we shall raise then! What choral symphonies, what bursts of song, what hallelujahs of gratitude! Verily, words fail to express the emotions we shall then feel, when, pure and holy, clean and purged, we shall be presented, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” before the Throne of God!

“I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.” I think the first day in Heaven will be a day full of surprises. We shall not know what to make of it! Never will there have been a day before, in our lives, when we had not some trouble, or some sin. The first day we are there, when we shall have no devil to tempt us, and no sin to pain us, and no trouble to grieve us—when we find ourselves all pure, I think we shall scarcely know what to do, we shall be so surprised! Mr. Medley’s hymn has caught the right idea—

***“Then let me mount and soar away
To the bright world of endless day
And sing with rapture and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies!”***

We shall be almost like poor Caspar Hauser who was kept for many years—in fact, from his childhood—in a dark dungeon where a ray of light could scarcely enter. He was, afterwards, taken out by his keeper to see the light of the sun and to mingle among men, whom he had never seen before, and to hear their voices even though there was scarcely an intelligible sound he had been taught to utter. Oh, what a delightful thing it would have been for him if he had been uninjured by his confinement! But you and I, uninjured by our confinement in this cavern below, shall be at once snatched from the earth, set down in the streets of Paradise and find ourselves pure! The surprise of a beggar, who wakes up and finds himself a king would not be one-half so great as the surprise of a saint, when he shall wake up in Christ’s likeness and find himself transformed into the pure image of God! Let us contemplate this with joy and gladness and, amid all our daily conflicts, let us count upon the

victory! Let us anticipate the conquest by faith and let us already seize the palm branch and put the crown upon our heads with the ecstasy of hope and with the full assurance of faith, for if we fight, we shall reign! If we suffer, we shall triumph! If we endure, we shall obtain "the crown of life" that fades not away!

That is the second lesson of our text, that Christ will make thorough work of it, wherever He has begun to save and to sanctify.

III. And now I bring to you a third lesson. THERE ARE SOME THINGS, WHICH ARE NOT EVIL IN THEMSELVES, THAT A CHRISTIAN MUST HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH EVIL THINGS.

I will explain what the Lord meant when He said, "You shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali." Was Baali a bad name? Not at all—God calls Himself Baali in two or three places in Scripture. You remember that blessed passage, "Your Maker is your Husband"? It is really, "Your Maker is your Baali." And there are several other instances where the word, Husband, is used in reference to God which might have been left untranslated—and they would have read like this, "Your Maker is your Baali." Why, then, is God not to be called, Baali? The Jews did, at one time, call Him so. They prayed to Him under that title—why might they not continue to do so? Because the heathen had made a wrong use of the word—they called their false God, Baali, and, therefore, God said, "Do not apply the title to Me, because they have used it for their false gods." I can suppose a Jew, like some young man in these times, saying, "Now, no man is going to step between me and my conscience. I believe the name Baali is a very good one. I have always used it and many good men have used it. I use it very sincerely in prayer and it is nothing to me that other people make a bad use of it—I cannot help that! I know that it expresses my thought—it means *husband*, lordly husband—and I cannot be quite so particular as the Prophet Hosea, so I shall keep on using it."

That is how many argue in these days. Says one, "I am a Christian. I intend to serve God, but there are certain pleasures that stand on the boundary line between the allowable and the unallowable." "I intend," says one young man, "to follow them, because I do not see that there is any harm in them. I confess that they are the cause of great injury to others, but they do *me* no hurt. I used to practice them when I was in the world, but they are no hurt to me now—you cannot bring anything in Scripture to prove they are wrong. There is such-and-such a place, I sometimes truly worship God there. I may be mistaken, but I cannot see why I should not do such-and-such a thing when I see nothing exactly wrong in it, though I admit that it has a connection with wrong and others are thereby injured." That is just it—you are not to use the title, Baali, not because it is a bad name, but because others have used it for an evil purpose! So, Christian, there are many things you are not to do, and many places you are not to frequent—not because they are absolutely wrong, but because they have a connection with wrong—and if you

tolerate them, you will be sharing in the sin which is committed by them! And, moreover, whether you know it or not, your going there is but the little and little of which it is written, "You shall fall by little and by little." So that the best way is to stand out against the *littles*—to be rather too strict than too loose—and in so doing, God will give you a reward, for He will make it become a greater happiness to you to abstain from fleshly pleasures than it would have been to have partaken of them. "You shall call Me no more, Baali," because, though the name may be all right in itself, others have misused it.

I can never look upon dice except with abhorrence. If you ask me why, I reply—Because the soldiers at the foot of the Cross threw dice for my Savior's garments, and I have never heard the rattling of dice but I have conjured up the dreadful scene of Christ upon His Cross—and gamblers at the foot of it with their dice spattered with His blood! I do not hesitate to say that, of all sins, there is none that more surely damns men and, worse than that, makes them the devil's helpers to damn others, than gambling! And yet many say, "Well, I only play for the fun of it—you know there is nothing in it." Of course there is nothing in it, but look at the connection of it. Lord So-and-So thinks it a very nice thing for him to go and see a horserace, he says that I cannot prove it to be wrong. Nice company he will meet there! They don't speak very well for the thing.

Another says, "I can do this, that, and the other. It does not hurt me." I daresay you can, but look at the connection of the affair. You are to avoid a thing, not merely from the moral wrong of it, or the injury it is to you, but because it encourages others in their sins! A good pious Jew kneels down to pray and cries to God, "Baali, hear me!" There is a poor idolater by his side and he says, "That good, venerable-looking man just now prayed to Baali—and so may I." "Quite a mistake, my dear fellow," says the Jew. "I did not pray to Baali! I was praying to God Almighty, not to your Baal." "But you said, Baal, my dear Sir." "Ah, my Friend, but you do not understand me! I was praying to the God of Heaven and earth, and not to that poor, paltry idol which you call, Baal." Yet the poor heathen naturally thought the Jew was worshipping the false god.

We are to take care not to do what appears wrong in the sight of others, so as to lead them astray. We are not to be judged by other men's consciences, but, at the same time, we are not to lead others to offend. As far as we can possibly do it, we must seek to cut off those things that are likely to do injury to others. If I were to hear of any of my members going to a theater, I think I would go after them, and they would never go, again, as church members. I might, perhaps, do as Rowland Hill did. He took a box-ticket for the theater and saw some of his members there. "There you are," he said, "I never would believe it from hearsay." And then he walked away and immediately turned them out of the church. It may be that I may have the misery of looking after some of you who make a profession of religion and do not carry it out. I am not now speaking to you worldly men who choose to frequent these places. But I

say to you who profess to be Christ's followers, "Put away even the *name* of such things. Your business is not to talk of its being allowable, but to put it away because others make a bad use of it." You may say, "Baal," perhaps, without any very great sin, but by doing so you encourage others in sin.

A man who makes a profession of religion ought to be something more than other people. He who talks about being saved by Grace and washed in the precious blood of Jesus. He who expects to live up yonder and wear the white robe, and sing the praise of the Eternal before the Throne of God must be different from others. The things which another might do with impunity, he must not dare do. A native of India might live in a jungle and not die, but we, who are not natives of the country, might very soon die of the jungle fever. So, the man who is not a Christian may, perhaps, go into many amusements and yet not become any the worse for them—but a Christian must not go there because he is not an inhabitant of that land! It is not his native air, it is not his proper place and he knows it is not! Therefore, his business is to go as far away from it as he can!

I have read of a lady who wanted a coachman. She advertised for one. Three presented themselves. She called them in, one by one, and she said to the first, "My good man, you want a coachman's place, do you?" "Yes, ma'm." "Well, there is one question I want to ask you—How near to danger could you drive me?" "Well, ma'm, I think I could drive within a yard." "You won't do for me," said she. A second one was brought in and she said to him, after asking other questions, "How near to danger could you drive?" "Well ma'm, for the matter of that, I could drive you within a hair's breadth." "You won't do for me," she said, "you are not the sort of driver I want." The third was introduced. He was a careful soul and when the question was put to him, "How near could you drive to danger?" He said, "If you please, ma'm, I never tried that. I always drive as far off as ever I can." Said she, "You will do very well. You are just the coachman I want." I would recommend you all to imitate that coachman! Do not test how near you can drive to danger, but say, "My business is to drive as far off as I can." Do not to see how much you can endure of that which is not right, but how much you can avoid it, pass it by and not mingle with it!

IV. Now we come to the last lesson from the text. GOD HAS PRECIOUS TITLES TO BE USED ONLY BY BELIEVERS. "It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali."

I left this part of the subject to the last because I am not sure that what I am about to say has all the weight that some would attach to it. There is a difference between the words, Ishi, and, Baali. The word, Ishi, means, "my husband." So does the word, Baali, but the word, Ishi, is the word that the wife would use to the husband as a fondling expression, expressive of her love. The word, Baali, is the word she uses for him as a

humble expression, on those very rare occasions in which she feels herself to be subject to him for a moment. It is expressive of her humility. It is the kind of word Sarah used, when, rather out of the ordinary way, she did reverence to her husband, "calling him, lord." The word, Ishi, is the term she would have used when she called him simply by the loving epithet of "my own dear husband," her man, her Beloved. She would most likely have used the word, Baali, when her husband had spoken a little sharply to her and claimed a little of the headship that the husband has. But when they sat down together, in their softer moments, she would not call him, Baali, any longer, but it would be, Ishi, my much-loved—not feared, but much-loved husband.

"Now," says God to His Church, "you shall no more call Me, Baali—'my Master, my Lord, my haughty Husband,' yet, after all, having all the right attributes of a husband, too, but you shall call Me, Ishi—'my loving Husband.'" Mark, there is nothing wrong in the word, Baali, as I said before, because it is applied to God in that very passage, "Your Maker is your Husband." And there it has a kind meaning, as well as the aspect of superiority, but, still, the word, Ishi, is the fonder title of the two and is, by far, the better. It is the one which we would always wish to use towards God. If we are His people, He does not like us to come crouching and cringing before Him. He does not wish us to come and cry, "Baali," but He wants us to come to Him as to a loving Friend and Father, with the sweet word, "Ishi," upon our lips. He wishes us to come, speaking of Christ as Emmanuel Ishi—"God With Us"—not as Emmanuel Baali—"God Our Ruler." He wishes us to speak of Him as "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh"—"our Man, our Husband"—and not as, "our Man, our Lord."

There is a very blessed distinction here. I think the Christian can perceive it, though the worldling cannot. When a sinner is in his sin, he sometimes attempts to serve God. Conviction of sin works in him some kind of legal repentance—he tries to be better, but the sinner always tries to be better with Baali on his lips—"O Lord, I must do right, else I shall be punished for it. I must mend my ways, or Hell stares me in the face. I must grow better, or else I shall die and share eternal torment." So he tries to do better through fear. Not so the Christian! He tries to serve his God, but he puts the name, Baali, away. "O my blessed God!" he says, "You have done so much for me, I do truly love You. I must love You, I will serve You, I will live for You, I will die for You. It is a pleasure to serve You. If Heaven were quenched and Hell blotted out, I would still serve You, for You are my Ishi, my Loved One, whom with all my heart I serve."

But it is not so with the sinner when he first seeks mercy. He kneels down and prays to God to have mercy upon him, but all the while it is Baali to whom he speaks. He can never *say*, Ishi, while he is under conviction of sin. His cry is, "O Lord, I am the chief of sinners!" "I am not worthy to be called Your son." That is all Baali! But as soon as the Lord

has appeared to him and told him, "I have put away your sin," he offers no such prayer as he did before! He comes with boldness and says, "Lord, I am Your child! For Jesus' sake give me these things," and he prays out of his heart with a fullness of confidence, for it is now, Ishi, not Baali! It was the same God before, but under a different aspect. He was a kind God before, but He was the Baali God. Now He is a kind God, but He is kinder—He is the Ishi God to all Believers.

O Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I would you could all keep this word, Ishi, on your lips! It is a Hebrew word. I bless God for having kept a few Hebrew words in the Bible to make us remember the Jews. But, besides this, there is something very sweet in this old term, Ishi—my man, my Husband! Go home, Beloved, sit down and think of this title. God bids you come to Him boldly tonight and call Him, Ishi. Sit down and begin to think of the Son of God, who became Man. When you see Him in His cradle, call Him, Ishi, and fondle the Infant to your breast. When you see Him a grown Man, go up to Him and, by faith, clasp Him in your arms and call Him, Ishi, while He preaches to you the Sermon on the Mount. Find Him in the Garden. Stand and look at Him, not as some marvelous Man, far above you, your superior, a Baali to you—but come and kneel by His side and as you kneel, see, in contemplation, the bloody sweat still streaming from His brow. Bend over Him and say, "O, Ishi, You are my Man, my Husband, paying the costly price for me by this awful sweat of blood!"

Then follow Him along the pavement. See His back all gory with the lash of Pilate's whip and call Him, Ishi, then. And when you see Him on the Cross, oh, it is *there* that Ishi is spelt more clearly than ever! When His heart is opened, when His veins are bleeding, then you can see written in His blood that name, Ishi—Man With You, your Husband. And then see Him in His grave and call Him, Ishi, there. Track Him up to Heaven in His Ascension and call Him, Ishi, as He leads captivity captive. See Him pleading before the Throne of God with outstretched hands. Look on His breastplate, read your own name and call Him, Ishi! And then look forward—see Him as He comes in the clouds of Heaven—and call Him, Ishi, then. See Him when He and all His people shall be gathered home to Glory. He shall be your Ishi, then—not your Baali, your Lord, your superior—but your Ishi, your Man, your Husband—to be embraced and loved, to be in sweet communion with you, to be your Acquaintance, your Friend, your "Fellow," as His Father and yours has been blessedly pleased to call Him!

And, Christian, when you go forth to labor, tomorrow, take care not to do it as a slave. Practice this, "Ishi," out every day. Do not serve God because you dare not do other than serve Him! Do not serve Him because you are afraid not to serve Him! Do not do it from fear. Do not work like a slave, under his master's lash, but go out and serve your Master from pure delight because He is also your Ishi, your Man, your Husband—

"We would no longer lie,

***Like slaves beneath the throne,
Our faith would 'Ishi, Jesus,' cry,
And You the kindred own."***

Go forth to your work, serving your Lord in love and joy and gladness—
***"Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."***

And now, in conclusion, my Friends, there are many here who cannot say, Ishi, for Christ is not Ishi to them! Baali is the only word they can use for God. What shall we do for them, dear Friends, those who know the Lord here? What shall we do for these? We have a little Sister—what shall we do for her, against the day that she shall be spoken for unto the King? If she is a wall, we will build upon her with many prayers, precious as silver! If she is a door, we will enclose her with the cedar of our supplication! We will, day and night, pray for these poor souls who are not yet brought in, but many of whom must be brought in, that there may be one fold and one Shepherd! Poor Sinner, I will preach the Gospel to you before I send you away. Are you trembling and shivering, crouching and cowering before God? Are you afraid of Him? Do you think His sword is out of its scabbard, hunting after you? Do you see the arrow of vengeance thirsty for blood and winged to slay? Do you see the Law of God after you? Then you have got as far as Baali! Ah, Soul, if you know what sin is, in all its blackness, and if you weep on account of it, and if you desire to be pardoned, if you are willing to abjure all sin and all self-righteousness, here is the way of salvation!

Ishi bids me tell it to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "Let me go, Sir! Let me go home and pray." No, Sir! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! "Let me go out of this chapel and I will run home, and read a chapter." No, Sir! As you are standing there, if you know your need of a Savior, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! Look at the jailor. He had made the feet of Paul and Silas fast in the stocks and shut them in the inner prison, like a brute as he was. But when there came the earthquake that shook the prison, he said, "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," said Paul! He did believe and became a child of God! And he was baptized directly afterwards, walking in the fear of Jesus. I believe conversion is very often gradual, but there is no reason why it should be so. If God has put you, now, in such a condition that you know yourself to be lost and ruined, you have every reason to believe that Christ died for you and to cast yourself upon Him, just as you are, without one plea but that Jesus died for you!

Are you under conviction of sin? Do you feel that God would be just if He were to destroy you? Do you ask, "Can it be possible that all my sins could be blotted out in a moment?" Possible, Sir? It is *certain* that they may be! It is certain that they *will* be! It is certain that they ARE if you now believe in Christ!

A lady called upon me, last Monday, with this trouble upon her. She said she had not heard me preach, but she had been reading my sermons and God had been pleased to bless them to her—not only to her conviction, but to her conversion. She went to the clergyman of the parish, full of joy at having found the Savior. She began to tell him of her gladness and how she rejoiced that all her sins were blotted out. He stopped her, and said, “My good Woman, that is all a delusion! You have no right to believe that your sins are pardoned till you have led several years of piety and devotion!” She went away sad—and she came to ask me if what the clergyman said was true. And when I quoted that verse—

***“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through His blood!”***

“Oh,” she said, “I see it clearly now!” And when I went on to tell her that many who had believed in Christ had been black sinners one moment, and white as snow the next—had cast themselves simply on Christ and had instantly found peace—she could not but take to her heart the precious promises of Christ and, believing in Jesus, being justified by faith, she had the peace of God that passes all understanding!

I pray the Lord may give it to you right now! As many of you as shall now look to Christ. As many of you as shall lift up your hearts to Him. As many of you as God has ordained to eternal life and who, therefore, believe in Him, may you now go out of this house, like the publican of old, “justified rather than the other,” triumphing that you, who came in here to confess your guilt, crying, “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner,” can go out calling Jesus, Ishi, and clasping Him in your arms as your Redeemer, your Savior and your All-in-All!

May the Lord give all of you such faith, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

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

THE CLIMAX OF GOD'S LOVE

NO. 2571

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 22, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 1, 1883.**

***“And it shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”
Hosea 2:16, 17.***

You who have been here, on recent Thursday nights, will remember how Israel was described at the time to which our text refers. [See Sermon #s 2564 and 2569—*Strange Ways of Love*, and *The Backsliders Door of Hope*—read/download the entire sermons free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] She was represented as a woman who had been false to her marriage vows, had left her husband and defiled herself in the most abominable way. Being greatly inflamed with evil passions, she had gone astray times out of number—and then the Lord Jehovah, who was Israel's true spiritual Husband—in the abundance of His love, sought to bring her back to Himself. He exercised her with severe discipline, taking away from her many things in which she delighted, till she became poor, sick and wretched. He hedged up her way with thorns and put obstacles in her way so that she could not find her paths. And when she went after her lovers, she could not overtake them. But, notwithstanding all that, she still continued to go further and further away from Him to whom her love was due—the God to whom she owed everything—the only living and true God who had been so gracious and true to her.

At last the Lord tried other means of bringing her back to Himself. Instead of driving her from Him, or threatening her with destruction, He allured her into the wilderness and there He manifested Himself to her in all the charms of His Divine Purity and Beauty. He drew her away from all her old companions, brought her into a place of solitude and then spoke to her very heart with a voice of Infinite Love so that He won her, again, and brought her back to Himself. And then it was that He once more gave her the joys which she had lost—and a great many others—and made her rich with everything that could cause her to be, indeed, blessed!

Now comes in this passage, which I have just read in your hearing, that which appears to me to describe the climax of God's love. His Infi-

nite Mercy at last taught Israel to know Him in deed and in truth and, by the mighty power of His Grace, she was clean delivered from all her former idolatrous lovers and made to cleave in holy constancy to Jehovah, her God! I want to speak to you about that work of love in the heart of these wanderers which, at last, brought them to be right with their God. And my hope is that our meditation upon the text will be blessed in the same fashion to many others. When a man is truly right with God, he is right everywhere. As long as he is wrong with God, he may be right everywhere else, yet he is not right in the most important matter of all! But as long as he is right with God, everything is put in due order and everything will go on well with him in all respects.

Coming closely to our text, I want you to notice, first, *the conquest of love*—"It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi." That is, "my Husband." Secondly, I shall say a little upon *the jealousy of love*. "At that day . . . you shall call Me no more, Baali." Because that name had been defiled and God would not have His servants use toward Himself a title which had been stained with sin. Then, thirdly, I shall speak of *the nearness of love*, which is a point that lies concealed within the text, but which I will try to bring out. And, fourthly, I shall speak upon *the vengeance of love*, for true love will lead us to take vengeance upon that evil which has brought so much sorrow to our heart—"I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name."

I. First, then, let us think for a little while upon THE CONQUEST OF LOVE—"It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi." That is, "my Husband."

They had never called God by that name. They had stood in awe and dread of the Most High, but as to calling God, their Husband, that they had never done, though He was truly a Husband to them, for He lavished on them all the kindness and tenderness which a husband renders toward his beloved wife. Yet God's people had never given Him that love which was due in return—and they had never dared to call Him by so sweet and endearing a name as that of Ishi, "my Husband." But the Lord said, "At that day, you shall call Me, Ishi." Grace has really won us when it has won our hearts! When we yield to God not a mere external obedience, but the affection of our hearts, then all is won and all is well.

Note, first, dear Friends, that these people were so truly won back to God that *they had a new name for Him*, a name which had never occurred to them before. They had called Him, God. They had spoken to Him as Jehovah, or as El, or as Elohim, but they had never thought to call Him, "Ishi." But now they understand Him better and here is a new name for Him who is, to them, practically a new Being, a new Person. Alas, that still many men do not "know the Lord." There is a depth of meaning in that expression and to multitudes God is quite unknown. It was said, long ago, that it is the highest wisdom for a man to know himself—but I deny that. The first, the highest, the best of all wisdom is for a

man to know his God. As for himself, he is but a speck, an atom, a nothing. If he truly attains a knowledge of God, he will afterwards know himself in the best possible way. Pope said that “the proper study of mankind is man,” but it is not so. His proper study is mankind’s Maker, the God who made us all! But man, until he is Divinely taught, knows not God—he has not, by nature, a name for God. He borrows a name out of the Bible and calls Him, “God.” That is, “*good*.” but he does not mean what he says, for if he thought that God was good, he would love Him. But inasmuch as he does not love God, he does not, in the highest sense, know God.

But when a man comes to know the Lord. When God, in all His wondrous majesty, draws near the heart and opens the eyes of the understanding till the man sees his Maker and cries, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven”—when he feels that the Lord is there and he knows it, then, straightway, he uses a right name for God! That is a very precious name which Christ puts into our mouths when He bids us say to God, “Our Father, which are in Heaven.” And there is a wonderful sweetness when we come to know that we may call Him our Husband. I do not like to compare the two, or say which title is to be preferred—whether Husband or Father—they are both unutterably sweet when they are enjoyed to the fullest.

You see, then, dear Friends, that Grace had taught these people a new name for God. David said to the Lord, “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” In another Psalm, the Lord’s response is given—“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.” So was it in the day of which our text speaks.

Further, that name, Ishi, “my Husband,” is *a name of love*. There is a mutual engagement between the true husband and wife, they complement of each other. So is it with Christ and His Church. Yet, as I read of it in the Bible, it often astonishes me. Paul wrote to the Colossians, “It pleased the Father that in Him,” (that is, in the Divine Husband, Christ Jesus), “should all fullness dwell.” Then to the Ephesians he wrote, “And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.” It is marvelous that the saints should be *to* Christ a fullness, but so it is! He is to be to us as the Husband and we are to be to Him as the dearly-beloved object of that love, desiring to return it as best we can, loving Him and Him, alone, with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. What a sweet name that is for our Divine Lord—our Husband! What but the Grace of God could ever have given backsliding Israel courage to utter it? What but the Grace of God could ever have taught us to know that we, also, might truthfully *say* it? Yet I trust that many of us do say of God in Christ Jesus, “He is our Ishi, our Husband.” This name, then, is a

name of love, suggesting the mutual engagement between Christ and His people.

It is also *a name of honor, involving obedience*, “for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church. . . Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” In the relationship between Christ and His people, everything is written in capital letters, for truly He is the Head of His body, the Church. Therefore, dear Friends, it is for us who belong to Him to be obedient to Christ in everything. It was a wise word that the mother of Jesus spoke to the servants at the marriage at Cana, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” That is *exactly* what we ought to do under all circumstances. Christ’s will is our law. His teaching is our doctrine. He, Himself, we call Lord and we do well, for so He is. He has become everything to us, now, as the true husband is to the true wife. It is a joy to us to obey Him. If a command comes to us from Christ, our feet have wings, like the fabled Mercury! If a word comes from Christ, our mind is wax to be stamped with it, as with a seal! And we desire never to lose the impression. If we know that Christ does but *wish* a thing, it shall be as the bonds of law to us. We wish to do—no, we *long* to do His will and to have every thought brought into captivity to the Law of Christ. I am sure, dear Friends, it is a wonder of Grace when we can say this, for there was a time when we never cared for Christ. A little while ago some of us did not mind what His Laws were, or what His teaching was—He was nothing at all to us. “He was despised and we esteemed Him not.” But now, how different it is! The faintest accent that falls from His lips has in it a power and a majesty which we do not wish to question! He is our Husband and we are His obedient spouse.

Husband, again, is *a name of trust and expectation*. A wife expects her maintenance and all that she needs from her husband and she ought to have it, too. It is the part of the husband to render to his wife all that he can for her necessity and her happiness. All our expectations are from Christ. Some wives bring their husbands a dowry, but we brought Christ nothing but our poor selves. Sometimes a wife has nothing but what she stands upright in, but we had not even that, for we could not stand upright at all. We were like that infant whom the Lord described by the pen of Ezekiel—cast out into the open field, neglected, unwashed, unclothed—left there to die—but when our Lord passed by, it was the time of love and He said to us, “Live.” We had to be indebted to Him for life and we have had to be indebted to Him for everything since then! I have no doubt that some wives think it is a fine thing to have their husband’s purse to draw from, but I know that it is *glorious* to have Christ’s purse to draw from! “Of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace.” And we expect to receive a great deal more and sometimes we sing about what we are to have, by-and-by—

**“And a ‘new song’ is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set!”**

**Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet."**

Yes, this name of husband is a name of trust and expectation and, in God's case, as the Husband of His people, the trust and the expectation are never disappointed!

But, best of all, it is a *name of indissoluble union*. I could not trust myself to speak on this wondrous theme, for even Paul, when he wrote upon it said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh." "This is a great mystery," added the Apostle, "but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." It is, indeed, a great mystery that Christ should have left His Father to become one flesh with His people! Think of Him here on earth, hungry, weary, toiling and, at last, scourged, crucified, faint and dying because He took upon Himself our flesh and became one with us. And now there is such a union between every Believer and Christ as can never be destroyed! Paul triumphantly asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" There is no possibility of divorce between Christ and the soul that trusts Him, for it is written, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away" and, therefore, He will never practice it, nor will He ever banish from His heart one whom He has taken to be His own. "Your Maker is your Husband," is a sentence full of comfort to everyone who can claim that blessed relationship! This union stands fast forever and ever. The Lord did not approve of giving a bill of divorcement in the olden days, although Moses permitted it because of the hardness of men's hearts, and He will never do what He did not approve of, but He will cling to us forever. Once joined to Christ, we shall never be divided from Him, but shall always be able to call Him, "Ishi, my Husband."

Is not this, indeed, a conquest of love? That those who were utter strangers to Christ—that those who were downright enemies to Him—that those who lived year after year, and even when they thought a little, did not give Him a thought? Or if they thought of Him, refused to yield to Him—is it not wonderful that even *these* should come to be as much in love with Christ as the newly-married wife is with her husband—and that these people should be linked with Christ so as never to be separated from Him, world without end? O Beloved, I think I said nothing but the truth when I called it the conquest of love!

II. Now we come to the second part of the text, which speaks of the JEALOUSY OF LOVE—"It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali."

What does, "Baali," mean? It means, husband. It means the same thing as Ishi. I will show you the point of difference, presently, but speaking broadly, it is the same thing. Then, why not call Him, Baali, if it means the same thing? Was there anything wrong in the word, Baali? No, nothing, for the Lord Himself uses it on other occasions. Why, then, does He say, "You shall call Me no more, Baali," when He calls Himself

so? Well, it was for this reason—they had used the name for false gods, they had called them, Baal—therefore they were not to use that title any more for Jehovah. He said to them, “You have been accustomed to speak of Me as, Baal, and to speak of this god, and that god, and all the gods as so many Baals, or Baalim. Now, from this time forth, I will have a name to Myself, and it shall be, Ishi, and you shall never again call Me, Baali.” This was the command of God and, moreover, it met with His people’s full consent. You may depend upon it that what God here orders, His people were willing to carry out. They would no more call Him by a name which had been dishonored by association with Israel’s idols and which, therefore, could not properly be applied to Jehovah.

I want you to listen very intently to what I am about to say. Some of you have lately united with the Lord’s people—may God give you great love to Himself and may that love have a holy jealousy associated with it! There are some things which, in themselves, may be right enough, but having become connected with wrong things, you must not meddle with them any more. If the word, Ishi, means, husband, and the word, Baal, also means, husband, yet, inasmuch as that word, Baal, has been used concerning idols and so has become defiled and despoiled of its beauty and purity, you must not use it in reference to God. There is nothing wrong in the word, itself, but there is evil in its associations. Therefore, drop it. There have been other words that have fallen in a similar fashion. The word, “tyrant,” used to mean a lord or king—there were so many little kings of Greece who were called tyrants and who so misbehaved themselves, that at last nobody wished to wear such a name as that of tyrant! It is no longer applied to a king simply because he holds that office, but only to an oppressive tyrannical despot. So, in the Latin, there is a word which used to mean, servant, but now, if you turn to the dictionary, you will find that it means a thief—and a servant is not called by that name, but it came to mean a thief because, I suppose, in those days many servants were thieves. In this way words get pulled down from their original meaning—and this word, Baal, was just one of them. It is no use saying, “Oh, but there was a time when it was a very proper word to use!” You have nothing to do with that matter—is it a proper word to use *now*? For, if it is not, do not touch it!

There are many things in the world of that sort. I am not going to mention them, one by one, because you have your own senses and you can apply a general rule to particular instances. There are a thousand things which, today, in your minds and in the minds of all thinking persons, are connected with evil. And if you have a truly jealous love to Christ, you will say, concerning any of them, “I must not do this.” Avoid the very *appearance* of evil, keep clear of it altogether! Just picture to yourself a true Ishmaelite kneeling down to worship Jehovah. I will suppose that he has been accustomed to speak of God under that word, Baal, as his Husband and, as he worships,, with others, he cries, “O Baal, hear us!” I can imagine that as God heard that prayer, He accepted

it—the man meant it rightly enough—He worshipped God under a right name, one which the Lord had given to Himself. But supposing that a heathen happened to stand where he heard the Israelite pray? He would say to himself, “That man worships Baal the same as I do!” Well, if it had been my case and I had risen from my knees, and heard such a remark as that, I would have said, “I see that the title I have used is calculated to mislead—I will never use it again—but what word shall I put in its place?” The Lord, here, answers the question! “It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali,” because the name, Baali, was likely to be misunderstood.

For God's sake be pure, for nothing but purity ought to appear in His Presence! For your own sake, be very careful—you cannot be too precise and particular. Your tendencies are toward evil, keep them in check and, for the sake of others, who, if they see you take an inch, will take a yard, be you doubly careful and let not even a name which, to you, may have been sacred and holy, come upon your lips if it has been used in an unholy manner and would suggest a sinful idea to the minds of others! That is the drift of the subject—that a man who loves Christ should be jealous of himself to the last degree.

I never knew anyone who was too precise or too Puritan—I have heard some people say that of certain men and whenever I have come to know those who have been so described, I have found them such godly people that I have wished to be like they! It is always better to be too precise than to be too lax. Our chastity of love to Christ is a thing that must not be questioned. Caesar's wife must not only be beyond blame, but she must be above suspicion—and so must Christians try to be. Oh, that we did always guard ourselves most jealously lest in anything we should grieve our Lord! Better that I deny myself a thousand things which I might take than that I should mislead one person and lead him into sin! “If meat offends my brother, I will eat no flesh while the world stands,” said the Apostle Paul. He might lawfully have eaten meat and he said that he felt free in his own conscience to do as he pleased in that matter, but he had regard to the conscience of others who might be caused to stumble through him. Therefore he made himself weak that he might gain the weak and, lest haply another man, doing what he might safely do, might be lost through doing it. Take care, then, dear Friends, as to your influence upon other people. Do not be among those who say, “We shall still use the title, Baali. We always did before and it is a very proper title. God has applied it to Himself and we are not going to use anything else. What if other people do misuse it? We cannot help that—we are not our brother's keepers.” That is the way Cain talked! “Am I my brother's keeper?” If there is such a man among us, I hope he will be very uncomfortable until he has come to a better state of mind! Our feeling is that we *are* our brothers' keepers and we desire, as much as lies in us, only to do that which will be safe for others to imitate. God help us to put the spirit and teaching of this passage into constant practice in our daily life!

III. Now, thirdly, I want to prove to you that in our text there is a reference to THE NEARNESS OF LOVE. It lies hidden there, as honey is concealed within a flower, and the bee must dive right into the flower to find it!

It appears, dear Friends, according to a great number of commentators, that those two words, Ishi and Baali, though they both mean, husband, yet mean, husband in a very different way. If a husband were to command his wife in an imperious fashion, as I suppose the Oriental husbands usually did, then the spouse might say, "My lord," or, "Baali." But when the husband was kind, tender and loving, his wife might say, "Ishi." Baali means, "my husband," "my lord," as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him, "My lord," or, "Baali." Yes, but, Ishi, means, "My husband," "My well-beloved," "My man," in that genial, loving, tender sense in which that expression is used by a loving wife. Let us be astonished as we learn that God would have His people call Him no more, "Baali," or, "Lord," but, "Ishi," "My Man," "My Husband."

God is thus revealed to His people as *ruling them not so much by law, as by love*. It is no longer "You shall," and, "You shall not," but a sweet constraint is upon them by which they delight to do His will! When the worldling dreads sin, it is because he is afraid of Hell. But the Christian is delivered from all fear of Hell and he hates sin, itself, because he fears to grieve the God he loves. In the Church of God, the great rule is not, "Do this and you shall be rewarded; do the opposite and you shall be punished." That is the way Hagar ruled Ishmael, but that is not the way in which Sarah governed Isaac! The Lord does not put us upon legal terms with Him. He does not say, "You must do this and that, or else you shall have no Grace from Me, and I will cast you off and destroy you." Nothing of the sort! You who believe in Jesus are not under the Law, but under Grace! You are under the sweet and blessed rule of gracious and generous love—

***"'Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."***

The Law of God drives and scourges, but it gets nothing out of us. But Love comes with its abundant gifts of all-sufficient Grace and straight-way we say, "Lord, enable us to serve You. Help us to be obedient to You." Love accomplishes what Law never can—and when we view God as Love, then He is Ishi—and no longer do we look upon Him as ruling us by Law, for then His name would be Baali.

Further, this nearness of love *changes servitude into honor*. When we are under the Law and call God, Baali, life is servitude. Look at some who are trying to serve God without really knowing Him—they must *do* so much, they must *feel* so much, they must *pray* so much, they must *work* so much, they must go through such-and-such ceremonies—and all they do is looked upon as being something required at their hands by a stern taskmaster! Rowland Hill tells the story of one who said that she had been preparing herself for the "sacrament"—she took a week to do it

and then she found out that she had mistaken the day—and she said that through her mistake she had lost the whole week! That is the way they act and speak to whom God is Baali! But the child of God, when he comes to the Communion Table, if he thinks it right to spend the whole week in getting himself in a right condition of heart for so doing, would say, if the Table were not spread, “Well, I have had a blessing even in preparing for it. Even if I cannot, just now, observe the outward ordinance, I have been waiting upon God and so I have drawn near to Him in spirit and in truth.”

It is one of our highest pleasures to attend a place of worship, yet to some people it is a self-denial. Well, I do not say to them, “Do not go to the House of Prayer.” But I do say, “You are not going in the right spirit.” I like to see the people coming here on the Lord's-Day, or on a week-night. I can almost tell them by the way they walk. They trip along joyously as if they were pleased to come and as if they came to enjoy themselves, as I believe they do. That is how God would have you worship Him—in the spirit of freedom—not in the spirit of slavery! Does He want slaves to grace His Throne? In the old days of Legree and the slave-drivers, a man might be thought great who had all his slaves bowing down before him as he walked along, but what true man wishes for that sort of servitude? To rule over free men should be the ambition of a monarch—God will rule over spirits that love Him, that delight in Him, that are perfectly free and that find their freedom in doing His will. You shall call Him no more, Baali, counting it as servitude to wait upon Him, but you shall call Him, Ishi. It shall be a joy and an honor to serve your beloved Lord!

You know how a loving wife waits upon her husband—it is never a slavery to her, but always a delight. She thinks of a hundred things that she can do for his comfort—some of them things that are perfectly unnecessary, they would never be commanded by any kind of law—but her loving heart suggests to her that she should do them so as to give him pleasure. So is it with the child of God. He tries to think of what he can do for Jesus and he never imagines that he can do enough for the Savior who has loved him and died to save him! Had he ten thousand hearts and lives, he would like to spend them all—and the help they bring with them—and the force they have in them for His dear Lord and Master!

The name, Ishi, instead of, Baali, further means that, henceforth, the *Believer's life is not one of fear, but one of confidence*. The slave is afraid of the crack of the whip—look how the blood flies from his poor cheeks, lest he should feel the cruel lash! That is the condition of the man who thinks that his eternal safety depends upon his own watchfulness, his own prayerfulness, his own doings and his own will! But the child of God says, “I am trusting in Christ, I am everlastingly saved and have no need to fear.” And he adds—

**“Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count but loss,**

***My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His Cross."***

He is now not at all afraid. What? Not afraid of sinning? Yes, he is, but not on *legal* ground. The true Christian reminds me of a little boy who had a very kind and loving father and he was very fond of his father, too. One day some boys agreed to go and rob an orchard and they said to him, "Jack, you come with us." "No," he answered, "I cannot go with you, for it would grieve my father." "Oh, but," they said, "your father loves you and he won't beat you as our fathers will if they find out." "Ah," he replied, "that is the very reason why I could not go—because he never beats me—he is so kind and loving that I will not do anything to grieve him."

That is just the spirit that animates true Christians! If we live unto God, we cannot bear to do what is wrong. Immortal principles forbid the child of God to sin—he must be holy! Love binds him fast, crucifies him, makes him dead to what he once loved and makes him live in newness of life. You who prefer the bondage of the Law, may have it if you please. You who like the crack of that whip, may live under it if you will. But oh, if you once really knew the Love of God, you would never want to go back to that servitude! You would never say, "Baali," and crouch down, like a poor woman before a husband who was about to strike her. But you would come to your Lord in loving confidence and say to Him, "Offend You, my Lord? I cannot do it! I love You too well for that. I would give all I am and all I have, that I might give You pleasure, for You are my Ishi!"

O Christ, by your bleeding wounds and bloody sweat, by Your death and resurrection, You are my Man, my Husband! You are Man and You have become Man for me. My Man, to whom my soul is married, once and for all, and I must love You and serve You till my life's last breath."—

***"I will love You in life, I will love You in death,
And praise You as long as You lend me breath!
And say, when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Ishi, 'tis now."***

IV. So to close, I want you, for a minute or two, to notice, in the fourth place, THE VENGEANCE OF LOVE, for, when jealousy is stirred up, love makes a clean sweep of everything that comes in its way—"I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name."

What a *sweeping vengeance* it is! "I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth." The very name of the one we once loved shall be taken away from us! One good effect of the long captivity of the Jews was that after they returned to their own land, they never fell into idolatry again—and I do not believe they ever will. They are clean cured of that evil! I should think it is the rarest thing in the world to find a Jew become a Romanist because it seems contrary, now, to the very nature of Israel to bow down before a visible emblem. But what did the Jews do? They took the name that they used to give to their false god, Baal, and they applied it to the devil—hence you get the term Beelzebub, or Baal-

zebub, the god of flies, the god of dung—a caricature name which they applied to the devil himself. So, the things you loved when you were in the world and made your god, are now to you like the devil! What a change the Grace of God makes when it enters the heart! Has your false god become your devil and what you despised become your God? That is the meaning of the promise of the text—“I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth.” When we pronounce the word that once was sweet to us, it shall positively mean something else. It shall be bitter to us even to think of it. There are some words which were in our vocabulary when we were ungodly, but we never use them now, or, if we do use them, they mean the very opposite to what they meant before we came to love the Lord!

There are professors who talk a great deal about some things that are better not mentioned. Paul says, “It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.” I always regret, when a person tells the story of his past life, when he seems to think it necessary to drag in some of the black bits. If you do so, my Brother, mind that you rub in plenty of salt before you put any of the unsavory meat, otherwise it may leave a bad smell behind. There may be mischief done even by those who fancy that they are magnifying the Grace of God. It is sometimes necessary to tell what we were, in our unconverted state, but if we do so, we must be very careful not to take the name of Baalim on our lips while we are trying to glorify our God!

The fact is, dear Friends, the Lord makes *such a thorough change, such a spiritual change*, that it is true of past things, “they shall no more be remembered by their name.” That is the last clause of the text. You cannot help remembering the things in which you delighted in the days of your ignorance. You cannot quite blot them out of your memory, even though you have forsaken them long ago. But you do not remember them by their old name and you do not call them by that name now. You have learned to call a spade a spade, and you do not know it, now, except by that name. People talk about “seeing life,” but if they were to say to a Christian that he had been seeing life, he would not understand them. He would say, “You do not see life in the places where you go—you see corruption. To see life is to live unto God.” “Oh, but,” says one, “I have been enjoying myself, I have been having pleasure.” But, to the Christian, those words do not mean what they mean to the ungodly man, for sin would be no pleasure to him—it would be utter misery. The swine find great pleasure in a few inches of filthy mud but if you could change them into men and put them to sleep in nice soft beds, I guarantee you that then they would have a good night's rest!

I daresay the devil finds himself at home in Hell, or wherever his dwelling place may be, but if he could be converted into a seraph, he would not stay in Hell for an hour! He would never want to go there again for pleasure, of that I am certain. And when a man who professes to be converted says that he goes into the world, and into sin, for pleasure, it

is as if an angel went to Hell for enjoyment! The Lord give you Grace, Dearly-Beloved, so to love Him and to find such perfect liberty in His service, that though you may be tempted to sin, you will not yield, for invincible love binds you to His heart and holds you fast forever!

Paul said, and it was a grand utterance, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." When a Roman had a slave whom he did not mean to ever sell, or to part with—in his cruelty he branded him with his own name. Suppose that it was Caesar? He took his slave and burned the name of Caesar right into his flesh! So the Apostle says, "I bear in my body the marks"—the brand—"of the Lord Jesus. I am His forever! I never wish to run away from Him, nor can I." There are some friends about to be baptized. I only trust that they will receive the spiritual brand right into their soul. What a brand this Baptism is to a man! You see, it is not on his arm—so he cannot cut it off—it is all over him. It is a water-mark that cannot be removed! You may go into sin, but you have been baptized, and that fact shall rise against you in judgment! Whatever you do, you have been professedly buried with Christ and if you are not dead, you have no business to be buried! But if you have lied to God and, during the rest of your life, if you turn away from Him, yet that mark is still upon you. Woe unto you, for you have been a deceiver!

But the true and genuine Christian does not mind what mark he has, to tell to whom he belongs. "Set it on my forehead," he says, "for there I hope to wear it, by-and-by." "His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads." God grant that we may all come to that glorious condition, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

THE BACKSLIDER'S WAY HEDGED UP NO. 590

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1864,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“She said, I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them. And she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.”
Hosea 2:5-7.

GREAT and grievous was the apostasy of the seed of Abraham from the Lord their God. They had been chosen by special Grace from among all people and had the high honor to receive the oracles of God—yet they were bent on backsliding from God and were unfaithful to the Most High. The gods of the surrounding heathen were constantly a snare to them and they forsook the only living and true God to prostrate themselves before blocks of wood and stone. Though chastened a thousand times they learned nothing by the rod. And though as frequently forgiven and visited with mercy, the holy bonds of gratitude did not bind them to their God. As an abandoned woman leaves a kind and tender husband for the base love of the vilest of the vile, even so both Israel and Judah played the harlot towards the Lord who had espoused them in infinite love.

Yet God has not even now written a bill of divorcement, or cast away the people whom He did foreknow. Through eighteen hundred years the sons of Israel have had to wander to and fro without a settled dwelling place, yet God has not utterly given them up or broken His Covenant with them. For the day shall come when Israel shall return, when again she shall be called Hephzibah, and her land Beulah. Come, long expected day! Appear, glorious King of the Jews! And you, O Judah, return from your captivity! Shake yourself from the dust—put on your beautiful garments and salute the Lord, your Ishi, your tender loving Husband!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, the apostasy of the children of Israel has been recorded for our learning. As they were prone to wander, so are we—and the methods by which God brought them back of old are precisely those which He uses with His erring children at the present day. Instead of wondering at Israel's wickedness, let us examine ourselves and repent for our sins! And while we see the hand of God upon them, let us learn to admire those methods of unerring wisdom by which Divine love preserves the ransomed ones from going down into the pit.

In considering our text, my aim will be to be used as the Holy Spirit's instrument to arouse, instruct and restore backsliders. Such wanderers may be present now. Their first love they have lost and their zeal is quenched. There may be some here who have gone further still and have

forsaken the Church of God altogether, having given up their profession and all attendance upon Divine worship. O that the voice of Israel's God may be heard in their hearts this morning, crying, "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. We commence the consideration of the passage before us with the remark that WHILE SINFUL MEN ARE IN PROSPERITY THEY PERVERT THE MERCIES OF GOD TO THEIR OWN INJURY, making them instruments of sin and weapons of warfare against God. While the children of Israel enjoyed an abundance of temporal comforts they ascribed all these blessings to their false gods. Hear the wicked and treacherous words—"I will go after my lovers who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink." Oh, base ingratitude to their bounteous Jehovah! Infamous ascription of His Glory to graven images!

Prosperous sinners make three great mistakes. At the outset they give their temporal mercies the first place in their hearts. Because their business prospers they do not consider that their soul is perishing! Because there is enough on the table for themselves and for their children they forget that their soul is famished for lack of Heaven's bread! They put the shadows of time before the realities of eternity. They say, "We must live." But they forget that they must also die. So long as the current glides smoothly and the gentle flow of the river of their joy is undisturbed they forget the waterfall, red with the blood of souls, down whose tremendous steeps those treacherous waters will soon hurry them!

Is it not a gross mistake to attach so much importance to this poor body of clay and forget the priceless jewel of the immortal soul? Why do you think so much of a world in which we only tarry for a few evil years and neglect the world where we must dwell forever? Such folly is most shameful in one who was once a professed Christian, because he knew, or professed to know, somewhat of the superiority of the eternal over the temporal. He supposedly knew of the vanity of things earthly and the glory of things heavenly.

Yet because things go well with him—because his wife is in health, his children blooming, his house well furnished, his property increasing, he says, "Soul, take your ease," and disturbs not himself though Heaven is black with lowering tempest and the light of God's countenance is hidden from him. The loss of God's Presence, the man thinks to be a trifle because he is succeeding in the world—as though a man should count it nothing to lose his life if he may but keep his raiment whole to be buried in!

O Fools, why do you put the last things first and the first things last? One error leads to another and therefore such people hold their temporal things upon a wrong tenure. Do observe how many times the word "my" is found in the text. "Give me *my* bread and *my* water and *my* wool and *my* flax, *my* oil and *my* drink." Why, they were not hers but God's, for the Lord expressly claims them all in the ninth verse and threatens to take them all away! Backslider, there was a time when you did confess yourself to be God's steward—when you said, "I am not my own, but bought with a

price." Yet now you have so set your heart upon worldly things that all your talk runs in this fashion—*my* horses, *my* houses, *my* lands, *my* profits, *my* children and an endless list of things which you think to be altogether yours.

Why, Man, they are not yours! They are only lent you for a season! You are but God's under-bailiff. You have possession only as tenant-at-will, or as a borrower holding a loan. The Lord claims even now the prior right to all you have and the day shall come when He shall show you this! For if He has mercy upon you—and I pray He may—He may take these from you one by one and make you cry out in abject wretchedness of soul, "O God, forgive me that I made *these* my gods and claimed them as my own!"

Then further, backsliders are apt to ascribe their prosperity and their mercies to their sins. I have even heard one say, "Ever since I gave up a profession of religion I have made more headway in business than I did before." Some apostates have boasted, "Since I broke through Puritanical restraint and went out into worldly company, I have been better in spirits and better in purse than ever I was before." Thus they ascribe the mercies which God has given them to their *sins* and wickedly bow down before their lusts, as Israel did before the golden calf and cry, "These are your gods, O Israel, which brought us up out of the land of Egypt!"

Sinner, if you did but know it, a long-suffering God has given you these things! Even to you who will perish He has given many mercies as your portion in this life, seeing that you have no heritage hereafter. O take heed, lest you be fattened upon them as beasts for the slaughter. Unto you, Backsliders, He has given these things to try you, to see how far you will go—to what extravagances of ingratitude you will descend and how far you will despise His tender means. O Backslider, is it not marvelous that God has not long ago stretched you upon a bed of sickness, when you consider how much you have brought dishonor upon Christ's name—how you have vexed God's people—how you have made the wicked open their mouths against God?

Is it not a wonder that He did not take you away with a stroke when you first forsook Him? And yet, see—instead of this, He multiplies your mercies! Does He not as good as say, "Return unto your rest for I have dealt bountifully with you. I am married unto you and therefore I treat you as a husband treats his spouse. Although I might well proclaim a divorce against you, yet since I have betrothed you unto Me forever, My goodness and mercy shall not leave you even in your sins." Herein lies the gross mistake of the backslider—that he will attribute his present happiness and comfort to his *sins* rather than to the *forbearance* of God.

Here are three great errors and oh, I fear they are so deadly that unless God interposes in Providence and in Grace, they will be as fatal as the three darts which Joab thrust through the heart of Absalom as he was dangling by his proud hair in the wood of Ephraim! I fear that the goodly Babylonian garment and the talents of silver and the wedge of gold will ruin you as they did Achan of old. These three falsehoods, like the three daughters of the horseleech, will never be satisfied until they have utterly destroyed your soul! You will be wrapped in fine linen and fare sumptuously and all this shall but ensure you the torments of the damned.

Go now, weep and howl for the miseries which shall come upon you—your riches are corrupted! Your garments are moth-eaten! Your gold and silver are cankered and the rust of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have forsaken the right way and are gone astray—following the way of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Hear the Word of the Lord by the mouth of His servant Peter! Tremble at it and be afraid—“If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again. And the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”

II. Let us turn from this gloomy side of our subject and observe with gratitude that THE LORD INTERPOSES ADVERSITY IN ORDER TO BRING BACK HIS WANDERING CHILDREN. Let us consider for a moment the hindrances which a God of Love frequently puts in the way of His elect when they backslide from Him. Here we have the matter opened up to our attention. “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.”

Here you see that it is an unexpected hindrance, for it is placed right in the woman's way—“I will hedge up your way”—it was her way, her habit—she had fallen into it and she meant to keep on. But suddenly she met with an unlooked-for obstacle. Just as farmers, when a public path runs through their field and persons begin to wander too much into the grass or corn, will put up bushes to keep the public to the path. Or just as ranchers, to keep their cattle in their fields, make thick thorn hedges which the beasts cannot break through, so God puts a thorn hedge of troubles right in the way of His chosen to stop them in their sins.

This hedge may be placed in your way in different shapes—perhaps you will meet with it this day. I see the hand of God as it touches the elect but erring man! Suddenly business grows slack—customers fall off one by one—bad debts multiply. Bankruptcy stares him in the face. Where he had enough to lavish on his pleasures he now has not enough to supply his needs. A mighty famine has arisen in the land of sin and he begins to be in need. He little expected this. If anybody had told him when he was so proudly driving that fast-trotting horse along the streets that he would come to hard work, he would have laughed him to scorn!

He thought he should live like a millionaire, but now he seems far more likely to die a pauper. Or it may be that sudden sickness has fallen upon his once strong and healthy person. He could drink with the most drunken and no voice could ring so loud as his in the midnight revelry. But now he is paralyzed—he has lost the use of half his limbs! Or perhaps some internal complaint has weakened him and made him totter along the road in constant jeopardy of sudden death. Now the smooth road is rough, indeed, and the world has lost its many charms.

Ah, Sinner, the sound of music is hushed for you and the joys of the flowing bowl are yours no more. Your foaming tankards, your wantonness

and chambering are gone—Mercy has torn them from you in love to your soul! Possibly the hedge is made of other thorns—perhaps the man's children sickened. There are many funerals in the house in quick succession. That first-born son, the expected heir, the joy of his father's heart falls like a withered flower. His wife is cut off as a lily snapped from its stalk and he stands weeping—a widowed husband—a childless man. Any of these ways, and thousands more which I need not here recount, are God's methods of building walls across the way of those whom He ordains to bless.

When the man breaks through one hedge, the Lord of Mercy will build another and maintains His hedges at such a degree of strength that the bullock which is most accustomed to the yoke shall not be able to push through. O Backslider, the Divine finger can touch you in the most tender part and though up to this moment you have boasted, "Nobody can make me wretched! Nothing shall ever make me fret," yet He can shut you up in such despair that none can remove the heavy bar! Think of what your brain may yet become—it is cool and calculating now and you can clearly see that your fellows are left behind in the race of competition—but remember how soon an unseen cause may soften that brain into imbecility, or excite it into incipient insanity! How soon may that boasted brain become like a burning sea throbbing with waves of fire!

Beware lest such a visitation become the prelude of the wrath eternal! My prayer for you is that more gentle means may bring you to repentance. But to that you will never come unless the Lord hedges up your way with thorns. Observe that it was a very disappointing impediment. While the prosperous sinner was securely pursuing his way he was stopped. "Why," says the man, "if it had not been for that, I should have made a fortune. Why did death come just when my fair girl looked so lovely in the bloom of opening womanhood and when my dear boy had grown so engaging that his company was my delight? Ah, this is trouble, indeed! To meet with misfortune just when I had built that new house and held my head so high, and expected to see my daughters so respectably married—why, this is very disappointing."

And the man kicks. And though once he professed to be a child of God, yet it is painfully possible that he is ready to curse God and die. But if he knew—oh, if he knew the Divine motive—he would thank God for his troubles on bended knees! You remember that story of the painter in St. Paul's when on high he painted his picture upon the ceiling? As he went backward upon the stage to look at it and was so engrossed with his occupation he was just on the edge of the stage and in great danger of being dashed to pieces by a fall from that dizzy height. A friend saw him and knowing that if he called out to him he would be startled and thus his fall might be hastened, he took up a brush full of paint and threw it at the picture. The desired effect was produced, for the painter in great anger rushed forward to upbraid him and thus his life was spared!

God seeing you painting a fair scene of life and happiness on earth suddenly spoils it all—you rush forward, crying out against Him. But oh, what reason have you to thank Him for that disappointment which has robbed Satan of his prey and saved your soul! Moreover, what painful

hindrances our heavenly Father often uses. He hedges the sinner's path not with rhododendrons and azaleas, not with roses and laurels, but with thorns. Prickly thorns which curse the soil and tear the flesh are God's instrument of restraint. Nothing but a thorn hedge would have stopped the man—he was so madly set upon his present course that he would dash through anything else.

But God, whose eternal mercy has marked that man out as a special object of love, uses the most effectual remedies and plants a fence of thorns. Are you smarting this morning—so smarting that you wish you had never been born? Do you feel so much the cuts and lashes of evil fortune that you would sooner end your existence than continue any longer as you are? I bless God for this, if you are one of His children, for it is this and this only, that will change your ways!

Furthermore, the fence is effectual if the thorn hedge will not suffice—it is written, "I will make a wall." There are some so desperate in sin that they will break through ordinary restraints. Then a wall shall be tried through which there is no breaking, over which there is no climbing. Ah, Backslider! Backslider! Perhaps you have already broken through the thorn hedge—your trials have not been sanctified. I have known some who have had enough trials, one would think, to have melted a heart of adamant and yet they have set their faces like a flint against God and gone on worse than ever. "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey Him?" said Pharaoh, when he was vexed with many plagues. And so have you said!

God, I trust, will not destroy you as He did Pharaoh, but He will break, one way or another, the iron sinew of your proud neck. For when it comes to a wrestle between God and you, you may be sure of a fall! The Lord never was defeated, even by the stoutest adversary and He will not, in your case, be frustrated in His design. If you are really one of His chosen, you shall meet with an affliction such as perhaps you never heard of in any other man. And if nothing but this will stop you, He will invent some new form of disease, some fresh method of pain in order to get at your soul. If you cannot be saved by the gentle wind, He will send the storm.

If this suffices not, He will try the hurricane and if you will not run into port even then, tornado shall follow tornado till you are broken to pieces like a wreck and compelled to swim to the Rock of Ages for rescue. These are but parts of His ways and even His hard things are full of mercy. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, but the cruel things of God are full of tender mercy! He only uses these methods because nothing else will do and He would sooner that you should enter into Heaven with every bone broken, than that you should descend into Hell with the full use of your powers.

III. In the third place, you would think that the sinner would now stop, but instead of it, according to the text, **EVEN THOUGH GOD WALLS UP THE WAY OF SIN, MEN WILL TRY TO FOLLOW IT, BUT IN THE CHOSEN THIS RESOLVE WILL BE IN VAIN.** "She shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them. And she shall seek them, but shall not find them." Do you see the man? He has suffered such loss that he cannot find the means to sin as he used to do! Where he had money to spend to in-

dulge himself he now finds an empty purse but yet he tries to do his worst.

He goes up and down that wall to see if there is not a hole in it somewhere. He tries to scramble over it where there is a projecting stone—he climbs half-way up, and falling, cuts his hands—but he will try again and again. He runs all along that thorn hedge and looks and looks again for a gap and oh, if he could find but one! If he could but escape from God's boundaries! If he could but scrape enough money together to have another debauch. If he could find just enough to play the gentleman again. But he cannot—he has no means whatever to indulge his sin.

Perhaps the case runs another way—God has taken away from the man all the pleasure of sin. He cannot be so satisfied as he used to be with his money. As he puts it into the till he despises it—and when he sees it accumulating at his banker's it only brings him care and no content as once it did. His children turn out, one by one, a curse to him. In business everything seems determined to plague him. Whereas at the theater he could gaze and listen with ecstasy, the whole affair is now tame and dull. Those wines, so full of flavor, have now, through his satiety lost their usual charm. Let him do what he will, the world is all a blank and wretchedness for him!

Like Tiberius he would give a mint of gold to anyone who would invent him a new pleasure or restore the vigor of the old. But no, the thorn hedge is too well made—the Great Farmer has planted it too well. The sinner would become a spiritual suicide but he cannot, let him desire it as he may. He is desperately set on destruction as though it were to be desired. O Sinner, how is this—how has the fall spoilt us that we should be so enamored of our own destruction? O my God, what a creature is man! Though he knows that sin will be his ruin, yet he hugs it as though it were his chief mercy! He heaps to himself destruction as though it were gold and digs for his own ruin as for hid treasure!

Oh, if the righteous were half as intent in seeking after goodness as the wicked are in hunting after sin, how much more active would they be! If we were half as strongly set upon the things of God as sinners are set upon their own ways and their own pleasures, we should have no waverers, no timid, cowardly spirits! Truly this love of sin is so strange that if we did not see it in ourselves we should wonder at it! But Christian, this is in you as much as in the worst of men! You, too, if it had not been for Divine mercy, would have plunged on from bad to worse. If Omnipotence itself had not seized the reins and turned us into the way of Truth, we should at this moment have been dashing on in the road of sin!

I say if Omnipotence itself had not interposed—it was not the minister, it was not conscience, it was not merely Providence. It was more than this—Jehovah's own right arm threw back the horse on its haunches and cast the rider to the ground as He did Saul at Damascus, or else we should have hastened on to our destruction and perished through the hardness of our hearts. Let us sing unto Him whose mighty mercy has rescued us and let us pity those whom the restraints of Providence cannot bind—those who will, if they can—leap through stone walls to have their way and their sin.

Thus, dear Friends, we have presented to you the deplorable picture of the infatuated sinner, perfectly infatuated and drunken with the love of sin and enmity to God! And Mercy itself, so far as we have gone, foiled of its purpose. The thorn hedge not enough—the stone wall not enough. What shall come now?

IV. Our next business is to consider THAT THE BACKSLIDER'S FAILURE IS FOLLOWED BY A BLESSED RESULT. The hunt was very arduous but the greedy hunter has missed his prey and there he sits weary with the chase and ashamed of himself. What comes of it? Do observe it, for the result is one which I hope you and I know already. "Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now." O Lord, teach some who are here this morning to pray this prayer!

Observe here is repentance attended with sorrow. The poor creature in this case feels, deeply feels to the very soul, the wretchedness of her condition. She is in so bad a plight that though she had despised her former state she now confesses it to be better. Observe that it is an active repentance. It is not merely "I will return," but, "I will go and return." When the Grace of God sets a backslider upon returning, he will stir up all the powers of his soul to seek after God. He cries, "My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning." I say more than they that watch for the morning.

There is much earnestness in a sinner seeking Christ, but, if possible, there is more in a backslider returning from the error of his ways—for he has not only the guilt of sin to mourn over—but the double guilt of having despised the Savior, of having known the way of righteousness and having turned from it. Here are two spurs to make him speed on in his course. Observe, dear Friends, that the confession which this poor soul makes of folly is one which is sustained by the best of reasons. She says, "Then was it better with me than now." Let us see whether this is not true with you.

Well, Backslider, what have you gained by it, after all? Have you gained anything more comfortable than the light of your Father's face. You once could say, "Abba, Father!" You rejoiced to know that God was at peace with you. You were reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. Now God is angry with you! Your fears tell you that He has forgotten to be gracious. What can make up for this loss? When God lights a candle, what brightness is in the room! But when God's candle is gone, where is the sun and where the moon? They give no light to you.

Before, when you were in your right senses, you had the privilege of going to the Throne of Grace. You could tell your needs before God and spread your sorrows there. But you have no Throne of Grace to go to now. Why, you scarcely dare pray! As for your friends, you would not like to tell them your troubles. Poor Prodigal, what sorry friends are those who waited on you in your days of wealth! They sat with their legs under your mahogany and drank your wine while you had any—but you know that you would be a fool to expect any help from *them* now that *you* need it.

Your lovers have forsaken you and those who once were so kind—where is their love now? Do I see one among you who has been cast off by her companion in sin and shame! Ah, Woman! Poor wretched Woman! Have

you been made to feel that smart so common to those who sin as you have done—cast into the street by him who first decoyed you by his fair promises of love? Your case is but one of many and there are thousands who find that the world knows not what faithfulness means.

First sin deludes, deceives, and pretends to love and then afterwards it casts off its victims. Ah, you had a father's house to go to and a father's mercy to plead. But you do not have it now—it was better with you then than now. And then, you had God's promises to fall back upon. If you had any trouble, you opened your Bible and there was a passage to cheer you. When you had losses, the cheering words exactly met your case. But now that Book is full of fire—it flashes lightning upon you as you read it—there is not a promise there which smiles on you!

Your fears whisper that the treasury of God is shut against you. Once you had communion with Christ Jesus—ah, now I touch a tender string—you did sit at the banqueting table of Christ! Unless you were awfully deceived and a gross hypocrite, you could say, "He has kissed me with the kisses of His mouth." After this, how could you go to the door of that deceiver Madame Wanton! How is this? O Soul, if you have ever known the love of Christ I am sure you will say, "It was better with me then than now."

What can the world afford you comparable to fellowship with Jesus? One hour upon His bosom is worth ten thousand years in the palaces and courts of the world's wealth and royalty and you know that it is so. There is no room to entertain a comparison for a moment—

***"What peaceful hours you once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still.
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."***

O that your repentance, fixed upon such reasons as these, may be deep! May you make a confession of your extreme folly and now fall down before God and find mercy!

To close this point, this repentance was acceptable. It is not often that a husband is willing to take back his wife when she has so grossly sinned, as the metaphor here implies. And yet observe that God is willing to receive the sinner, though his sin is even more aggravated. By the mouth of Jeremiah He speaks these words—"Return unto Me, for I am married unto you." I do not know anything which should make the backslider's heart break like the doctrine of God's immutable love to His people! Some say that if we preach that "whom once He loves He never leaves, but loves them to the end," it will be an inducement to man to sin.

Well I know man is very vile and he can turn even love itself into a reason for sinning, but where there is as much as even one spark of Grace, a man cannot do that. A child does not say, "I will offend my father because he loves me." It is not even in fallen human nature, generally, unless inspired by the devil, to find motives for sin in God's love and certainly no backsliding child of God can say, "I will continue in sin that Grace may abound." They who do so show that they are reprobates and their damnation is just.

But the backslider who is a child of God at the bottom, will, I think, feel no cord so strong to hold him back from sin as this. Backslider, I hope it

will also be a golden chain to draw you to Christ. Jesus meets you, meets you this morning. You were excommunicated. You were driven out from among God's people with shame but Jesus meets you, and pointing to the wounds which He received in the house of His friends at your hands, He nevertheless says, "Return unto Me, for I am married unto you." It is a relationship which you have broken and it might legally be broken forever if He willed it—but He does not will it—for He hates divorce.

You are married to Jesus. Come back to your first Husband, for He is your Husband still! The Fountain which washed you once can wash you again. "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The robe of righteousness which covered you once can cover you again! Though you have cast it from you with scorn, yet it is yours and the Father bids His servants bring forth the best robe and put it on you. He says, "Come to Me!" You have forgotten the Lord, but He has not forgotten you! You love sin, but He will change your will and set your heart upon Himself, for He is determined that you shall be His forever!

Is not this a soul-melting doctrine? If there is so much as a spark of spiritual life in you, I think you will say, "Against such love as this I cannot sin! Against such tender mercy I will not rebel—I will return unto my first husband, for then it was better with me than now." I do not know, but I may be speaking very pointedly and personally to some here—I hope I am. I know that the most of you are not in this condition and for this I thank my God. I pray you, however, lift up your hearts in prayer for those who are and ask my Master that as this bow is drawn at a venture He may direct the arrow.

There are some such here—I know there are. There are some here who have come this very morning with no idea that God would meet with them. You have put the reins upon your neck and you have given yourselves up. The restraints of morality can scarcely bind you and yet once you prayed at the Prayer Meeting and sat at the sacramental table and you put on the Lord Jesus Christ by profession in Baptism. But oh, what are you now? Your life would not bear to be talked of. Your conduct has become so gross and vile you might have expected to have heard this morning some word that should have cut you off forever from hope! But, by God's Grace, instead of it the silver trumpet sounds today with notes of love and pity. Return! Return!—Your Husband woos you over again—return! For then it was better with you than now.

V. Not to be longer on the point, let us observe in the fifth place that **THERE IS AN AWFUL CONTRAST TO ALL THIS.** There are some who prosper in this world until, like a wide-spread tree, they are cut down and cast into the fire. There are backsliders, who, never having had the root of the matter in them, go back unto their own ways to the land from which they came out and continue there forever. I beseech you never trifle with backsliding. I have put God's Free Grace in the boldest manner that I could just now, but oh, let me warn any man who would pervert that Free Grace into an excuse for sin!

Let me warn him against playing with backsliding! One man may roll down a precipice and may scarcely be injured, but I would not try it, for I might break my neck. One man took poison and he was hurried off to the hospital and by the use of proper antidotes was spared, but I would not advise you to try it—no I would beg you to put it away from you. Chosen vessels of mercy, notwithstanding their backslidings, are brought back. But ah, remember that nine out of ten of those who backslide *never were God's people!* They go out from us because they were not of us and this is the history of their lives and may be the history of your life—ah, and may be the history of mine yet!

They joined the Church. They had been greatly impressed under a sermon. They were young, they knew little as yet of the trials of life—being in the Church they walked consistently for years. They kept the faith. But the Church was cold and they grew cold, too. They neglected weekday services. The closet was forsaken. Family prayer was hardly attended to. Then they forsook the sanctuary altogether, but they were still moral and upright. They began soon to associate with those whom once they avoided—their business went on well.

They had risen from the lowest grade of society to occupy a middle position. They still prospered—gold accumulated. They were the successful people. There was a worm at the root of it all, it is true, but nevertheless it looked so fair and seemed so well. The man did not like to remember that he ever had gone to that little Meeting House—he felt ashamed that ever he had associated with those whom once he knew to be the people of God. He went on still accumulating wealth, but one day he was found dead! Shall I pursue his history? In Hell he lifts up his eyes in torments forever! With this as the special worm that never could die to gnaw his conscience—that he *did know* in his *head* the way of righteousness—but had turned away from it in his *heart!*

In letters of fire he sees written across that burning sky: “YOU KNEW YOUR DUTY BUT YOU DID IT NOT. You have come from the cup of the Lord to the cup of devils—you turned aside from the people of God to the children of Satan! You deliberately chose the evil and you forsook the good—you perished not as the ignorant perish, not as they perished who were careless from their birth—not as those who were unvisited by pangs of conscience, or who knew not the Word! You perished in the light of the Gospel, with the sun of mercy shining upon your eyeballs! You perished, though you stood, as it were, on the very doorstep of Heaven! You drifted back to Hell in the teeth of a tide of mercy.”

“This, I say, may be your case and mine, if we are not really rooted and grounded in Christ—we may fall by little and little. We may even continue till we die to be Church members and yet backslide in heart by slow degrees until we become rotten through and through and God casts us on the dunghill. I say by the special and miraculous mercy of God His elect will be ingathered, but take heed, Sirs, that you build not on your *profession*, for profession is no proof of election. You must be born again and only the man who continues to the end shall be saved. May we have such perseverance given us, for His name's sake.

VI. With this last we conclude—IS NOT THIS SUBJECT A VERY SOLEMN WARNING TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD? What some do others may do. If one man falls, another may. If one professor turned out to be a hypocrite, so may another. If one minister reels from the pinnacle of honor and is dashed upon the rocks beneath, so may another. I want to make a personal application of this to myself and I pray my Brothers in office behind me, venerable though some of them are in years, to remember that this may be their case.

And you, my associates and fellow members, many of you united to the Church before I was born, remember that age and habit are no security against apostasy! There must be the continual keeping and anointing of the Holy Spirit. I beseech you, and here I do beseech myself also, let us watch against the beginnings of backsliding. Let us take care of the little sins. O let us watch against the little coolnesses of heart. Brethren, no man backslides all at once. Few men who profess to be saints become outward sinners in one step. It is usually by little and by little. I pray you do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together!

Wake up from your coldness in private prayer if this has come over you. If your love to Christ has grown cold stay not in this state of danger but pray to the Master to inflame your heart again! If any of you have in any respect whatever fallen from your first love—if that old enthusiasm which was in us as a Church has departed from any of you—pray God to give it back to you. If any of you are not bringing forth such fruit unto God as you used to do, O be suspicious of yourselves! Carnal security may be the Heaven of fools, but it is the ruin of Believers—

***“Be watchful, be vigilant, dangers may be,
In an hour when all seems secure to you”***

Especially at this time when the eyes of the world are fixed upon you as a Church and upon me as a witness for God, let us walk carefully. If ever I might ask your prayers, no, *claim* them as my *right*, it is now! I beseech you who love God, ask for me my Lord's upholding Grace that His servant may not flinch nor turn his back in the day of battle. Ask for yourselves the same, that when the fight shall grow less hot and there shall come an hour of calm and quiet thought, I, your pastor and yourselves, my fellow soldiers in Christ, may look down the ranks and say, “Not one comrade has fallen. The arrows flew thick about them but their armor was complete! The enemy was fierce, but the Master gave them strength equal to their day. He has kept those whom He gave to us and not one of them is lost.”

May it be yours and mine on Heaven's starry steps to look back upon the superlatively glorious Grace which shall have kept us to the end and brought us to the land where there shall be no more sin! Let us trust the Savior. There is the sinner's hope—there is the saint's strength! Let us cling to the Cross again and may Almighty Grace keep us there and so glorify itself forever. Amen.

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

THE UNKNOWN GIVER AND THE MISUSED GIFTS NO. 2252

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 17, 1892.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1890.

*“For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil,
and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for
Baal. Therefore I will return, and take away My corn in
the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof,
and will recover My wool and flax.”
Hosea 2:8, 9.*

IN reading any of the records concerning the people of Israel and the people of Judah, one stands amazed at two things, and scarcely knows which to wonder at the most. The first thing which causes astonishment is the great sin of the people. And the next thing, which is even more marvelous, is the great patience of God. I scarcely know which of the two things causes me greater surprise—that men should be so guilty, or that God should be so gracious! On every page of Israel's history, the kindness and forbearance of Jehovah are manifested towards the people whom He had betrothed unto Himself. Even in the midst of their backsliding and idolatry, He did not forget the Covenant which He had made with their fathers. Yet, in spite of all this goodness, the people sinned times without number and grieved His Spirit again and again! Instead of being led to repentance, they sinned yet more and more! Their iniquity and the forbearance of God stand like two mountain summits of the history of the chosen yet wayward people.

Let us transfer these thoughts to ourselves and see if we can, with any justice, cast a stone at the people who, in spite of such love, went so far astray. Alas, we are condemned by the comparison! We are nothing better than they were! Our case is, perhaps, fuller of contradictions and inconsistencies, if that is possible. Is it not amazing, first of all, that we should have been so guilty, that we should have persevered in sin so many years, that even after we have known God we should have been so unfaithful to Him, so unfaithful to our own convictions and to our own conscience? Is not this awful fact amazing? But that God should love us, still, that He should follow us with warning and invitation, that His Holy Spirit should strive with us and continue to strive until He wins the day—and that in

spite of our shortcomings and our transgressions—He should have remained faithful to us, even to this very hour, is still more amazing!

O my Soul, sink low in deep humiliation because of your sinfulness! But, rise higher and yet higher in adoration of the unutterable love, the boundless mercy of God to you in spite of your iniquity! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, if it were possible for us to only know adequately these two things—man’s sin and God’s love—we would have learned more than the greatest scientists of this world ever knew! And we would have attained to more true wisdom than all earth’s philosophers ever possessed. There are some, who in their search for knowledge, have almost seemed to walk the heavens in order to tread the stars, and to dive into the depths to arrange the rocks and all their ancient life. But there are two things that none of the wise among men have ever been able to compass. Two things which unaided reason has always failed to grasp and always will—sin and love! Sin for its thunder and love for its music—sin for its Hell and love for its Heaven. But we who have been taught by the Grace of God, do know something of sin—may we know increasingly what an evil it is! I trust we also know something of Divine Love—may we be filled with it, even to overflowing!

But, coming now close to our text, I am going to make four observances upon it.

The first will be one that seems self-evident, yet is often forgotten, namely, that *God is the Giver of every good gift*. “I gave her corn, and wine and oil.” In the second place, I will dwell upon the sad fact that *many seem not to know this*. “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil.” My third observation will be that *this ignorance leads to perversion of God’s gifts*—the gifts of God were profaned by being “prepared for Baal.” In the last place, the solemn Truth of God will demand our attention, that *this ill use of God’s gifts causes God to withdraw them*. “Therefore will I return, and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and I will recover My wool and My flax.” We lose what we are determined to put to improper use. So you see that my discourse promises to be a very practical one.

I. The first thought in the text which claims our attention will be THAT GOD IS THE GIVER OF EVERY GOOD GIFT. “I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold.” Whether we know it, or not, it is true that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Do not, then, exult over your brother if you are more richly endowed with God’s gifts than he is—“For who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive?” All things that we possess have been bestowed upon us, for it is as certain that we brought nothing into the world, as that we shall take nothing out of the world. We receive everything from the great Distributor who opens His hands and satisfies the desire of every living thing. Though used with reference to a higher gift than any of those mentioned in the text, the

words of John the Baptist are true concerning all God's gifts, "a man can receive nothing, except it is given him from Heaven."

But someone may say, "Corn and wine are mentioned here, first of all—surely these are *the fruit of tillage*. Men sow and reap. Men plant and gather grapes. How, then, can these things be the gift of God?" Why, the moment we think seriously of this matter, we perceive that no farmer can command a harvest! No vinedresser can be sure of fruit unless He that rules the heavens and sends the dews, the rains, the snow and the frosts shall take care, both of the budding vine and of the ripening clusters. All that springs from the earth comes by a miracle of God's benevolence! If God withheld His hand, you might plow your land, but you would wait in vain for the harvest—an unfruitful season would not return to you even so much as the seed which you had sown. When famines come upon the nations because of blighted harvests, then men ought to understand that the corn, the wine and the oil are God's gifts—but, alas, many are very slow to learn even that elementary lesson!

Perhaps others say, "Our share of these things comes to us as *the earnings of labor*." Of course, in some form or other that must be true. Ever since man fell, that Word of God to Adam, "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread," has been the rule of life for his sons. If men do not till the soil, but dwell in cities, they must still work—but in less pleasant ways than the farmer knows. They may have to toil in murky workshops where they would be glad to catch a breath of fresh breezes that come over the fields. I know we get our bread by our work, but then, who finds us work? Who gives us strength to do it? Let God but withdraw from us His gracious power and our hands would hang feebly at our sides. You know how true this is. When you have been laid aside on the bed of sickness, then have you understood that, unless God gave health, the breadwinner could not go forth to his service and there would be nothing on the table for the wife and children. It is *God* that gives us our bread, however hard we work in order to earn it. Still have we need to present the petition that our Lord taught His disciples, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Besides this, the text also mentions *the gain of commerce*. "I multiplied her silver and her gold." Here, also, God's hand is plainly seen. I admit, of course, that men gain their silver and their gold by trading—but will the ship come home again in safety unless God watches over it? Will the men that go into the heart of the earth to dig for minerals come up alive unless the Providence of God preserves them? Is not the benediction of Heaven needed in every enterprise to which men can put their hands? "Except the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes in vain." The success of business is based upon a thousand conditions and surrounded by many risks, as every merchant knows. How easily God can lay His finger upon my human scheme and bring to nothing all our plans!

They used to call those who engaged in commerce, "merchant venturers," and they were rightly named. There is many a, "perhaps," about

business life in these days of cruel competition, even in our home trade, and it is even more at a venture that a man goes to a far-off land for gain. God must give him success if he is to get it. In our bills of lading we even now insert a clause by which the ship-owner disclaims responsibility in certain contingencies, among which is mentioned, "the act of God." And when men dispatch a vessel, they often pray—and they always ought to pray, "God speed this ship," for God-speed is needed if it is to reach its destination safely!

But some come in by their own corn, their own wine and their silver and gold by *the legacies of their friends*. In such a case, you may easily trace the gifts of God. If your parents have left you sufficient money for your maintenance, who gave you those parents? Who placed them in a position to be so generous to you? Who arranged the place and manner of your birth but the great Lord of Providence? If you are living in specially favorable circumstances and are able to obtain food and the other necessities of life, with a good share of its luxuries which others can only gain by long labor, if at all, ascribe to it, I beseech you, the bountiful Providence of the Most High. If you do not give all the glory to the Giver of these gifts, surely you are forgetting your God.

And yet, perhaps, another says, "I have not labored with my hands, but I am a man of resources. What I possess is *the result of thought*. I have carefully elaborated an invention and, in a few months I have been able to get for myself what others cannot get with a whole life of toil! Surely I may trace *my* prosperity to my capacious mind." And if you do, you will be very foolish unless you also adore the God who gave you your mind! By whose power is it that you have had the wit to gain wealth so speedily? I beseech you be humble in the Presence of God, or you may, in a few days, lose your reason—for it has often happened that men who have had more wit than others have been among the first to lose it! "Great wit to madness is allied." In many a case it has proven to be so. Remember Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, builder of cities, inventor of great things, and yet, "He did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of Heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws," because he was proud and exalted *himself* against God, neither gave glory for His greatness to the Most High.

We therefore settle it in our hearts as true, once and for all, that God is the Giver of the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and the silver, and the gold, and whatever temporal blessings we enjoy! If honestly gained, we trace them to His hands and we should thank Him now and always for every good gift that we have received from Him.

I need not make a list of spiritual blessings, nor need I remind you that they all come from God. You know how dependent you are upon Him for them. By nature you are dead. What spiritual life can you get for yourselves without God? Can the dead make themselves live? When you have been made alive, you are pardoned—can you pardon yourselves? From where can forgiveness come but from God? You have more than pardon if

you are a child of God—you are possessed of righteousness—how shall you ever have it but as God arrays you in the righteousness of Christ? Joy and peace are our portion, but both come by believing—they are the gifts of God! Holiness, too, and everything else that prepares us for Heaven and helps us to reach that blessed place, is the gift of God freely bestowed upon unworthy men. We were unworthy when He began to bless us and we are *still* unworthy—yet the hand that at first bestowed the gift upon us continues to enrich us every day in all bountifulness! Shall we not praise Him, lifting high our grateful song?—

***“Come You fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Your Grace!
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise!***

We will not withhold our thanks for such abounding goodness—

***“Oh, to Grace how great a debtor
Daily I’m constrained to be!
Let that Grace, now, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.”***

So much for the first point.

II. Now, secondly, and we come closer to our text, MANY SEEM NOT TO KNOW THIS. “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold.” She did not know and in this lack of knowledge she stands not alone. There are great numbers in the world who do not know this elementary Truth of God—that all good gifts, of any kind whatever—come from the hand of God. Why is this?

With some it arises from *natural ignorance*. Myriads of men know not God, as yet, and they are to be pitied if they have not even heard of Him. I fear that in London there are many who have never received even the plainest instruction with regard to God and His Christ. It ought not to be so, seeing that so many in earlier years have passed through our Sunday schools into which a child may go and come out, again, and know but little that will abide with him. It is a pity that this should be the case, but facts go to show that I state no more than the plain truth. There are many whom we may meet in the street who could give us no intelligent account of what they owe to God. They scarcely know who He is! They use His name as a part of their profanity and that is it. Brothers and Sisters, I charge you, by the living God, that as far as your ability goes, you do not suffer a single person in London to be ignorant of God and what men owe Him! With all your might, instruct those with whom you come in contact concerning the great Creator, Preserver and Judge of men—and show them how all our blessings are to be traced to His generous hand! Thus shall be laid a foundation whereon may rest a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are, however, many more who, from *thoughtless ignorance*, do not know that God gave them their Providential mercies. Oh, what a thing it is that the bulk of the people by whom we are surrounded should have a thought for everybody but God! Some persons are strictly honest to their

fellow men, but they never think that they owe God anything. Everybody is treated fitly by them except their Creator! They will be ungrateful to nobody but their very best Friend—and all for lack of thought. Is it not ten thousand pities that so many miss Heaven from heedlessness and that so many go down to Hell for lack of thinking how they may escape from it? “The wicked shall be turned into Hell,” says the Psalmist, “and all the nations that forget God.” What did these do who thus perish? Did they blaspheme? No. They only forgot God. Did they oppose His purposes? No. It is not said so—they *forgot* God—that is all. He that forgets his king becomes a traitor. The soldier that forgets his captain becomes a deserter. The child that forgets his mother becomes a prodigal. But the man that forgets his God is the worst of all—his sheer thoughtlessness leads him to the abyss of woe!

Some lose sight of God because of their wrong thoughts. They look upon everything that happens as luck. “I was a lucky fellow,” says one. “Wonderfully fortunate I have always been,” says another, “I have always had good luck.” So God is pushed from His Throne and men pay their tribute to an imaginary something which is really nothing—but which they call, “luck.” If luck has actually done anything for you, then by all means worship luck and pay homage to it! But it is not so. Luck, fortune and chance are the devil’s trinity! If things have gone well with you, it has been so because it has pleased the Most High to favor you. I pray that you may not be unmindful of the heavenly blessing, but thank your God and bless His name.

“Well,” says one, “I do not attribute my success to luck. I say I owe it to myself!” So you turn from your God and worship yourself, do you? The Egyptians have been counted the most degraded people of this world in their worship. They worshipped onions, till Juvenal said, “O blessed people, who grow their gods in their own gardens!” But I do not think they were quite so degraded as the man that worships himself. If I could bring my soul to worship an onion, I could never degrade myself low enough to worship myself. A man who makes himself his own god is mad! When you begin to adore yourself as a self-made man, you have surely come to the very abyss of absurdity and idolatry. “Know you that the Lord, He is God; it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” Let us, then, not be guilty of the folly of forgetting Him to whom we owe our all. “O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” Still, alas, it is true that some, through their thoughtlessness or their corrupt thought about God, know not that He gave them their corn and wine and oil!

There are others who forget God from *assumed ignorance*—they know better, but they profess that they are too intelligent to believe in God! Do you often hear the proud boastings of such men? Oh, it is folly of the most profound kind for any man to think he is too intelligent, or too clever, to believe in God, or to trace anything to Him! “These things happen according to the laws of Nature,” they say. “The arrangements of Nature are fixed

and invariable.” Thus, “Nature” becomes nothing more than a false god which they worship. They have elevated a certain something which they call, “nature,” into the place of God—and they suppose that God is somehow tied by His own laws and can never do any other than that which He has been accustomed to do. By such reasoning natural law is lifted up and made higher than the Omnipotent God, Himself! Go, you that worship Nature, and worship her if you will!

I have not generally found much worship in it. I had a neighbor who said to me, “I do not go and shut myself up in the stifling atmosphere on a Sunday. I stay at home and worship the god of Nature.” I said to him, “He is made of wood, is he not?” “What do you mean?” he said in some surprise. “I think,” I answered, “that I have heard you at worship and, you seem to me, to adore your god by knocking him down.” “Ah,” he said, “have you heard me playing skittles on Sunday?” “Yes,” I said, “you are a pretty fellow to tell me that you stay at home and worship the god of Nature. Your worship is all a lie.” When you hear men talk about this god of Nature, it often means that they only want an opportunity of having more drink, or of amusing themselves, or of otherwise wasting the hours of God’s holy day. As for us, I trust that we shall not assume an ignorance which is not ours. We *know* that God gave us all we have and unto Him shall be the praise!

A great many have no real lack of knowledge at all if you search their minds. Theirs is a *practical ignorance*. They know not that God gave them these things in the sense that they do not confess that it is so. They never speak about Him as the One who provides for all their needs. They never praise Him for His bounty. They may, perhaps, jerk out a, “Thank God,” as a matter of common speech, but there is no thankfulness in their hearts. Practically, they live from year to year as if there were no God and spend their time and their substance as if they were under no obligation whatever to the great Lord of Providence. Practically it may be said of them, “They know not that I gave them their corn and their wine and their oil.”

A lower depth is reached by those who do not recognize God because of their *willful ignorance*, who, because of their deeds of darkness, hate the Light of God and refuse to acknowledge the gifts of God. Our Father in Heaven “makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain upon the just and the unjust.” But the unjust do not receive the refreshing showers as from His hands, nor do those who are evil acknowledge that it is God’s sun that shines upon their head! They *hate* God and are willfully ignorant, “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”

Now, it does seem to be a very grievous thing that men should be indebted to God for everything and should never praise Him. That they should, every morning, be awakened by the light that He gives—and every evening be helped to sleep by the shades of darkness with which He mer-

cifully closes the day and curtains the night—and yet that they should never adore His name! Am I not speaking to some here, who, through a tolerably long life, have never thought of their God, or whose thoughts concerning Him have been but fitful and feeble? I would like to hold you to your seat for a moment, my Friend, while I ask you whether you do not feel ashamed that you have never considered the claims of the Most High, or have never thought that He could have any claims, but supposed that you had just to live to think of yourself and your friends and, perhaps, of your fellow men, but never of your God? His goodness has been practically denied by you!

You have lived as if there were no God, or as if He were too far off to operate upon your life. You live as if you had received nothing to have secured for Him your service. Yet what have you done? Does a man keep a cow without expecting its milk? Would he keep a horse without putting it to work? Would he own a dog if it did not fawn upon him and come at his call? Yet God has kept you all these years and He has had nothing from you but sheer forgetfulness, or, possibly, something worse than that! What do you say to this? I press the matter upon you and ask you to carefully review it before your own conscience and before the Lord—to whom you must, one day, give account! Seeing that you have received so much from Him, you should, at the very least, acknowledge that He is the Giver of all your good things. May God the Holy Spirit make you confess that you have not dealt well with your God. And may He strive with you until, by His almighty Grace, you shall be constrained to change your evil course and acknowledge the goodness and mercy you have received from Him throughout your whole life!

III. In the third place, when men thus fail to recognize and acknowledge God's goodness, THIS IGNORANCE OFTEN LEADS TO THE PERVERSION OF GOD'S GIFTS. See how God puts it with reference to the people of Israel, "I multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." What a depth of infamy it would be to receive the bounty of one king and to pay homage therewith before the throne of his rival! This is what Israel did and, alas, too many imitate them today! The people burned incense to the false god of the heathen on every hill. "She decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers and forgot Me, says the Lord." This was a great iniquity! The very gold which God gave them, they fashioned into ornaments for their idol, and poured out the wine that came as a gift from Heaven, as an offering at Baal's shrine!

There was a certain Indian potentate who deposed his father from the throne and then desired that father to send him his jewels, that he might wear them at his own coronation. These people desired God's gifts in order that they might present them to Baal and, alas, in this impiety they have many followers! How many there are who are using, against God, all that He has given them! They have prepared it for Baal.

We do this whenever the gifts of God are used *to augment pride*. This is a temptation that besets all. We have all a tendency to swell and grow great, simply because God has given us more than other people—whereas that but makes us the greater *debtors*. I have heard that in the days of imprisonment for debt, there were people in prison who used to be quite proud because they owed ten thousand pounds and who looked down with scorn upon a poor fellow who had come in there only owing a hundred pounds, or perhaps, only a five-pound note. The more they were in debt, the more they thought of themselves!

Now, is not that the case with every proud man? Because you have greater ability, or greater wealth than another, you owe so much the more to God—and yet you are foolish enough to make that which ought to be a reason for being humble, a reason for being proud! God surely feels that His gifts are being misused when we handle them so as to make ourselves haughty and important. In doing this we forget Him who gave us all, even as Hosea, in another place, says concerning the people, “According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore they have forgotten Me.”

Moreover, the gifts of God are perverted when we use them *to justify sin*, setting our necks stiffly in the way of evil because, though we have wandered from God, the corn and the oil are still continued to us. “There are my rewards that my lovers have given me,” said this nation that went after Baal—and, therefore, she thought that her worship of Baal was worthy to be continued. How horrible a thing it is for a man to boast in his sin because God does not swiftly follow it with judgement—and to continue therein because God does not at once withdraw His common mercies! Those whose hearts are set in them to do evil because the sentence against the evil work is not executed speedily shall have sore distress in the day when, at last, the righteous God arises to judgement!

Again, God’s gifts are ill-used when, because of the very abundance of them, we begin *to excuse excesses*. The drunk and the glutton pervert what was meant to be a good gift into an occasion of sin and riot. God gives us all good things richly to enjoy, but, when, instead of enjoying them, men abuse them and ruin themselves, body and soul, by missing the gifts of Heaven, it would be small cause for wonder if God was roused to remove the gifts put to such base use. And since so many of those around us abuse God’s gifts in this manner, it behooves us, who desire to glorify God, to use all things with great temperance and wholly to abstain from some thing, lest we should cause our brother to stumble.

Equally bad is it when a man uses the gifts of God’s Providence so as *to foster selfishness*. His silver and gold are multiplied—he hoards it up and makes a god of it. The poor are at his gate. Let them stay there—why should he trouble about them? The Church of God needs his aid. Let it need it. It shall have nothing from him! “Soul,” says such a man, “you must lay up much goods for many years.” And, when he has effected his purpose, then he talks to his own soul, again, poor creature that it is, and

says, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years: take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." He has made a god of his goods and thus he has perverted God's gifts and used them to God's dishonor. He has given them to Baal!

It grieves one's heart to see gifts of God used *to oppose God*. What would you have thought of David, when Jonathan gave him his sword and bow, if he had taken the sword and cut off Jonathan's head? Or if he had fitted an arrow to the string and shot Jonathan in the heart? It would have been ingratitude. But men fight against God with God's own gifts! A woman endowed with beauty, the rare gift of God, uses it to ensnare others to sin. God gives us garments and there are some who use their very garments for nothing else but pride—and who go through the world with no motive but display. A man has a musical voice given to him, but he sings what God cannot be pleased to hear, and what no man or woman ought to listen to! Another has great intellect and he gives himself up to pulling the Bible to pieces and, as far as he can, to destroy much good. Another has a voice that is clear and loud—and he has much skill in using it—and you hear him stand up and lead others to war against their Maker and to sin with a high hand against the King of Heaven!

Oh, the pity is that there should be so much of good in the world, all heaped up to *rot*—that so many gifts of God should be used by men against Him! When those in high authority oppress the righteous, they use their authority against God, and when men in high standing are seen at police courts advocating that which is injurious to morals, they not only degrade themselves, but they make us think that the "nobility" with which they are said to be endowed must be a myth! God keep us all, dear Friends, from ever using the gifts of our Maker against our Maker. And we are certainly acting against Him when we go contrary to anything that is honest, lovely and of good repute. And when, in any way, we sanction that which will do our fellow creatures wrong and will be injurious to the interests of true righteousness, and the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ.

My text is sadly true with reference to many—"She did not know that I gave her corn and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." They prepared for God's enemies what God, Himself, had given them, and what He meant to be used only for His own Glory.

IV. And now my fourth observation is this—THIS PERVERSION OFTEN MOVES GOD TO WITHDRAW HIS MISUSED GIFTS. "Therefore will I return, and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and my flax." God has given to many of you a great many mercies. Remember that if you become proud of them—if because you have become fat, like Jeshurun, you begin to kick—He can take His gifts away. If you forsake God, who made you, and lightly esteem the Rock of your salvation, He will forsake you and withdraw His bounty.

He can withdraw His gifts *easily*. “Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward Heaven.” You have seen the crows on the plowed field, have you not? There they are, blackening the ground. But clap your hands and they are gone! So have we often seen it with a man’s wealth. There has been a little change in the money market, some little turn in commerce, and all his money has taken to itself wings and flown away. Is it health and strength that you have, or great wit? Ah, Sir, a puff of wind may take away life! A little gas may be fatal to health! We know not what dependent creatures we are. God can easily take away the blessings which He gives. Therefore let us remember Him in the use of them. “Whether, therefore, you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.”

Moreover, God can take away His gifts *unexpectedly*. In the text, He says, “I will take away My corn in the time thereof,” that is, in harvest. “And My wine in the season thereof,” that is, just at the time of vintage. When it seems as if the harvest and vintage were secure, God would send a sudden blight upon both and they would perish. God can take things away when they almost touch the tips of our fingers. And He can easily deprive us of misused blessings at the very moment when we think we are most sure of them! “There’s many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip” and there is many an occasion of final disappointment when we think we have succeeded. We are only secure as we trust in the Giver of all good.

God can take away these things *rightfully*. What would you do if you had one whom you fed who was always kidding against you? Would you feed a dog that was always barking at you and trying to fly at you and do you mischief? Is it not right that God should take away Providential benefits from men when they misuse them and pervert them to His dishonor? It is of His Grace that these things are ours at all—He has but to withdraw that Grace and to deal with us as we deserve, and lo—we are impoverished at once!

If God takes these things away, I would pray that He may take them from you *mercifully*. I was riding, one day, with a young gentleman who was leading a very reckless life, indeed, but whose father was a very gracious man. I found that the son had taken to horseracing and I said, “That is right—go on as fast as you can—till you have lost every penny you have, you will scarcely be willing to turn to God. Young fellows like you do not often come home, except round by the swine trough. When you get down to that, then, I trust, you will cry to God for mercy and say, ‘I will arise, and go to my father.’” He was very astonished at my advice, but I think it was the right thing to say under the circumstances.

How often have I seen something of this sort take place! The Lord has taken wealth away from a man or He has taken away health, or else the man has fallen into dishonor—the Lord takes away the corn in the time thereof, and the wine in the season thereof—and then it happens, as we have it in the verse before the text, the afflicted one says, “I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now.” So long as you come to Christ, I do not mind if you come round by “Weeping-

Cross.” Even if you come with a broken leg, with the loss of an eye, or with consumption making a prey of you, it will be well, if only your souls are saved and you come home to your great Father, we will be glad!

But why do you want to be *whipped* to Christ? Why not come willingly? Why do you need to have these Truths of God burnt into you as with a hot iron? Why not learn them easily. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding—whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” Be not hard-mouthed with God, for He will master you if He once takes you by the hand! If He means to bless you, He will conquer you, though He may have to use rough measures with you. By-and-by, when He has broken you in, He will deal with you in all the infinite tenderness of His compassion— and you will acknowledge that even His roughness was all the result of His love for you!

Now, I close by saying that the Lord may take these things away from us *justly*. He sometimes withdraws His bounty without intending mercy. The sufferings of guilty men here are like the first days of a horrible tempest that will continue forever and ever. If they will not turn to Him when He calls in mercy, but continue to reject His love, then He will begin to speak in thunder—the first storm of His righteous wrath shall only be the beginning of an endless hurricane—

**“You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear.
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there.”**

I have tried to speak very earnestly, but if I have failed to speak as tenderly as I would, may the great Master forgive me! Oh, that you would acknowledge your indebtedness to God! Oh, that you would cast away your idols! “As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be reconciled to God.”

God grant that you may be led by the blessed Spirit to yield yourself to Him who has given you so much cause to trust Him! And to His name shall be eternal honor! Amen, and amen.

Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon—Hosea 2.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—709, 524, 596.

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

GOD'S PEOPLE—OR NOT GOD'S PEOPLE

NO. 2295

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people; and they shall say, You are my God.”
Hosea 2:23.*

*“As He says also in Hosea, I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.”
Romans 9:25.*

To my mind, it is very instructive to notice how Paul quotes from the Prophets. The Revelation of the mind of God in the Old Testament helps us to understand the Gospel revealed in the New Testament. There is no authority that is so powerful over the minds of Christian men as that of the Word of God. Has God made known any Truth in His Word? Then it is invested with Divine authority! Paul, being himself Inspired by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to write fresh Revelations of the mind of God, here brings the authority of God's Word in the olden times to back up and support what he says—“As he says also in Hosea.”

Beloved Friend, if you are seeking salvation, or if you need comfort, never rest satisfied with the mere word of man. Be not content unless you get the Truth from the mouth of God. Say in your spirit, “I will not be comforted unless God, Himself, shall comfort me. I want chapter and verse for that which I receive as Gospel.” Our Lord's reply to Satan was, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Give me, then, but a Word out of God's mouth, and I can live upon it! But all the words out of man's mouth, apart from Divine Inspiration, must be as unsatisfying food as if men tried to live on stones.

Notice, again, how Paul teaches that the very essence of the authority of the Scriptures lies in this, that *God* speaks through His revealed Word—“As HE says also in Hosea.” It is God speaking in the Bible whom we ought to hear. The mere letter of the Word, alone, will kill, but when we hear God's voice speaking in it, then it has power which it could not possess otherwise. It is a blessed thing to put your ear down to the promises of Scripture till you hear God speaking through them to your soul. It is truly profitable to read a Gospel Commandment and to listen to its voice until God, Himself, speaks it with power to your heart. I pray you, do not regard anything that is preached here unless it agrees with what is written there in the Bible. If it is only my word, throw it away! But if it is

God's Truth that I declare to you, if God, Himself, speaks it through my lips, you will disregard it at your peril.

I will make only one other observation by way of introduction. Is it not wonderful how God's Word is preserved century after century? There were seven or 800 years between Hosea and Paul and it is remarkable that the promise to the Gentiles should lie asleep all that time, and yet should be just as full of life and power when Paul was quoting it after all those centuries! God's Word is like the wheat in the hand of the mummy, of which you have often heard. It had lain there for thousands of years, but men took it out of the hand and sowed it—and there sprang up the bearded wheat which has now become so common in our land! So you take a Divine promise, spoken hundreds or thousands of years ago, and lo, it is fulfilled to you! It becomes as true to you as if God had spoken it for the first time this very day and you were the person to whom it was addressed. O blessed Word of God, how we ought to prize you! We cannot yet tell all that lies hidden between these covers, but there is a treasury of Grace concealed here which we ought to seek until we find it.

Having thus introduced our texts as taken from God's Word in the Old and New Testaments, and as being God's voice to us, speaking adown the centuries with all the freshness and force it would have if it were uttered anew tonight, I invite every unconverted person to listen with both his ears and his whole heart, to hear if there shall drop some living word of cheer and promise that shall make this evening to be his birth night! If so, this shall be the time wherein his captivity shall be ended, his mouth shall be filled with laughter and his tongue with singing—and his spirit shall rejoice in God his Savior!

I. Now, first, in considering the words in the Epistle to the Romans, let us look at THE ORIGINAL STATE OF GOD'S PEOPLE. "I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved."

If we look at the original state of God's people, we shall gaze upon a very gloomy picture. Yet this portrait reveals the state in which every unconverted man is tonight—the state in which all of us, who are now saved, once were! We were not God's people—that is to say, *we had not God's approval*. I speak now of all those whom God has saved. There was a time when there was no approval of them! As the Apostle says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." So was it with those who were not God's people—their thoughts were contrary to God's thoughts, their ways were such as God could not endure—their speech grated in His ears, they followed the devices and imaginations of their own hearts! The prince of this world had dominion over them and God's Grace had not been displayed upon them. They went astray like lost sheep.

That is *your* condition tonight, Sinner—you are the object of Divine *disapproval*. "Not beloved," says the text. "Not beloved." How can you be beloved of God? How can the Lord take any delight in a man who takes no delight in his God, who tries not even to *think* of Him—who breaks His Law with impunity—and finds pleasure in that which God abhors? "Not My people," says the text. That is, they were not the subjects of Divine approval.

Next, such people *receive from God no good thing of the highest order*. “Oh,” say some, “but we are receiving all sorts of temporal blessings from God.” I know you are and you ought to thank Him for them. But as you are not His people, and not beloved, even these good things turn out to be evil things to you. Your table becomes a snare and a trap to you. Men who receive God's mercies before His Grace has brought them to Himself, make idols of the good things He bestows upon them. They receive benefits at His hands and use them to provoke Him to anger! They take of their wealth and they say, with the rich fool, “Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years. Take your ease—eat, drink, and be merry!” And so they forget that they must die and they forget their God.

Oftentimes, even health and strength become a snare to men. They will plunge into greater sin because they have so much vigor of body. We have known some who have been so robust in health that they would not *think* of God, or of Christ, or of their souls, or of eternity! I tell you, Sinners, that while you are as you are, God's curse rests upon your blessings! There is no good thing out of Christ, for that which would be good *with* Christ becomes evil *without* Christ! It becomes a thing which destroys rather than blesses and which helps men the more rapidly to destroy their souls. Oh, what a sad state is yours of whom God says, “They are not My people, and they are not beloved”! While they are as they are, they cannot receive the highest good from God—even the best things that He sends them, they turn into evil.

Remember, too, you who know not God, that you are in a very miserable condition because to you *there is no application of the precious blood of Christ*. Jesus died for sinners, but you pass by His Cross as though you had nothing to do with it. Israel in Egypt was saved because God saw the blood and passed over the houses of His people. But you are not beneath that crimson sign! You have never looked to Christ by faith! No blood is on the lintel and on the two side posts of your door. All we can say of you, as we look at you, is, “Not beloved! Not beloved.” Oh, poor Souls, you who have not believed, what does the Scripture say to you? Why, that you are “condemned already” because you have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God! You who have not believed in Christ are lying in the Wicked One—and what does that expression mean? Why, lying in his bosom, as if you were the darling children of the devil! How can there be any sign of the Divine delight or complacency towards you while your delight is in Satan and in sin? No, you have no interest in the precious blood of Jesus! Ah, me, what would I do if this were my case? I would sooner lose my eyes, my hearing, my sense of taste! I would sooner lose life, itself, than lose an interest in the precious blood of Jesus! Yet some of you live at ease though there has been for you no pardon of sin, no washing in the blood of sprinkling. You are still guilty before God.

Again, when these people were called by God, “not My people,” and, “not beloved,” there had been *no saving work of the Spirit of God upon them*. I am addressing some here, tonight, who have never had their hearts broken by the Spirit of God. They have never been brought to repentance, they have never been led to faith in Christ. Consequently, to them the Spirit of God is not a Quickener. To them He is not a Comforter.

To them He is not an Illuminator. All His Divine offices are fulfilled in other people, but not in them. They are strangers to that blessed power without which no man can come to God, or believe in Christ. Oh, what a sad condition for any to be in—"not My people," and, "not beloved"! They have no trace of that life which they would have if the Spirit of God had made them to pass from death unto life. God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living—and as long as you are dead in sin, He is not your God in this special sense—neither does He call you His people.

Those who are in that sad state have no relief in prayer. They do not pray—they cannot pray! Now, when I am in trouble, I need nobody to advise me to pray. A trouble no sooner comes to me than I spread it before God and I find a sweet relief at once. Oh, if there were no Mercy Seat, I should wish that I had never been born! But there are some of you who never truly pray. Such prayers as you do offer have no heart in them, no life in them and, therefore, God does not hear you, and you live on in this world without prayer. Men, how can you exist thus? Life must be to you like a burning desert where every particle of sand blisters the foot that treads upon it. What can this world be to a prayerless man?

And as you are without prayer, so you are *without the promises of God to sustain you*. The wealth of God's people seldom lies in ready money. Their treasure consists mostly in promises to pay—promises which God has made to His own people. But for the ungodly there are no blessed promises! God will give nothing to you who will not even believe His Word! He has made no Covenant with you who will not even trust His Son! You remain as He says—it is not my word, but His—"not My people," and, "not beloved," as long as you are without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Whatever promises He has made to His people, you are without power to plead those promises at the Throne of Grace, for they do not belong to you.

In addition to all this, you are now *without any fellowship with God, or with His Son, Jesus Christ*. God made this world, but you never speak with the world's Maker. You are guarded by His Providence and yet you have no fellowship with the God who rules over all. Why, the joy of life to some of us lies mainly in our fellowship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! He is the very center of the circle in which we move. He is the height and glory of our manhood. He is the All in All of our existence. We would not wish to live if it were not for Him. He is the sun that makes our Heaven bright—all would be dark without Him—and yet some of you have no communion with Him, perhaps not even any knowledge of Him! Oh, my dear Friend, you have no Christ, no Savior, no communion with God, no fellowship with the Most High! What a terrible condition is yours!

Besides this, *you have no hope of Heaven*. If you were to die as you now are, what could be your eternal portion but to be driven from the Presence of God, and from the Glory of His power? The Lord Jesus would say of you, "I never knew them, I never knew them. They are not My people. They are not My beloved." Why, you have never even sought Him! You have never cried to Him! You have never forsaken the sin which He hates! You have never rested upon the Atonement which He has made! You have never trusted in His living power to save! Ah, poor creatures that you are, how I pity you!

“Do not call us poor,” you say. “We are rich, we are increased in goods and have need of nothing.” So much the worse is your poverty because of your fancied wealth! It will be an awful thing to go from your well-spread table to the place where you will be denied a drop of water to cool your burning tongues! It will be a terrible thing if you go from the weakness and sickness of the dying bed at once to stand before your God—to be driven from the pangs of your last moments into that dread position of a culprit, unpardoned—to receive sentence from the great Judge of All. “Not My people,” and, “not beloved.” I cannot bear the thought of your doom, and I can say no more on that terrible theme.

II. But now, in the second place, I have to speak of THE NEW CONDITION OF GOD'S PFOPLE. Listen, and as you listen, may God make it to be *your* new condition! There are many in this world to whom my text has been proven to be true—“I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.”

Now see the change which God can make. It is God who makes it! The very same people of whom He said, “They are not My people,” He now calls His people! Yes, and in the very place where He said that they were not His people, He says they are the people of the living God. Now, what if tonight I have been saying of such and such that they are not God's people? But what if, before they leave this place, God should say to them, “You are My people”? Oh, what a blessed change would have taken place in them! Let me describe it.

If the Lord shall say to us, tonight, “You are My people, and you are My beloved,” then we shall know, first, that He thinks upon us, that His mind is toward us, that He has a kindly regard for us, that He takes delight in us, that His heart is set on doing us good! Oh, you who love the Lord and are His children, think of this—you have the thoughts of God running towards you in streams of ever-abounding tenderness, mercy, goodness and faithfulness!

And, as the Lord thinks of us, *He speaks to us*. Oh, to think that the Lord should speak to those who were once not His people, and speak to them so effectually as to make His sweet promises enter into their ears, yes, into their hearts! And should become familiar to them, for, “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant”! Oh, how sweetly does God commune with His own children! How He does open up His very heart to them and make them to know Him, even as Jesus manifests Himself unto His chosen as He does not unto the world! It is a choice privilege of a child of God to be thought of and then to be spoken to by the Lord!

More than that, *God hears us speak*. When we are His people, and His beloved, then our accents become sweet in His ears. You know that your dear children often speak very poorly and badly, and other people do not much care to listen to their talk. But to a father's ear the sound of his own child's voice is always sweet! You have been away from home for some weeks. I know that you are longing to hear the dear prattlers once again. Well, like as a father loves the voice of his child, so does our heavenly Father love the voices of His beloved whom He calls His people—and He has regard to what they say—He hearkens to the voice of their cry.

Then, beloved, He not only hears us, but *He grants us our desire*. He will come to our deliverance in the time of trouble. He will bestow upon us all good things—“No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Oh, the privileges of those who are God's people! The theme is too vast for human language to compass!

One special mark of our new condition is that the Lord *forgives our sin*. Once we were loaded with sin, but now we have not a single sin left upon us. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin! Paul challenges the whole universe to lay anything to the charge of God's elect, for God has justified them. “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Oh, the heaped-up blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! And that is true of all whom God calls His people, though they once were not His people!

And then, dear Friends, sin being forgiven, the Lord *works all things for our good*. Whether we are joyous or depressed, if we are the Lord's people, all is working for our good! “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Our losses and our crosses, our bereavements and our bodily pains, as well as our rapturous joys and our highest delights, are all working out the best results for us!

More than this, when we are in trouble, *God pities us*, for, like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Yes, and *He sends us relief*, too, according to that word of David, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” What is better, still, God dwells in us, as He said, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” And the Holy Spirit has come, and taken up His abode in these mortal bodies—and He dwells there, our Teacher and our Comforter, our Guide and our Friend.

By-and-by, *the Lord Jesus will come, again, and receive us unto Himself*, that where He is, there we may also be. I wish I had the tongues of men and of angels that I might tell you the splendor of the position of those who are the Lord's own people, the Lord's own beloved! And who were these people once? I come back to my text. They were not God's people, and not beloved—“I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.” Now then, some of you, whom God cannot now look upon except with anger—why should He not look upon you with love, tonight, through Jesus Christ? He that believes in Christ Jesus may have the blessed assurance that the Lord loves him and that he is one of the Lord's people!

You may have come in here saying, “I belong to the devil. I am sure I do. I feel within my spirit that I am under his cruel sway. Alas! I have not a spark of Grace, or a thought of goodness. I am as far off from God, holiness and Heaven as I can ever be.” Then to you, may God say, “I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved”! Oh, the magnificence of this Grace that waits not for man,

neither tarries for the sons of men, but works according to the eternal purposes of God and accomplishes all His sovereign will!

III. This brings me, in the third place—going back to the text in Hosea—to notice THE GRAND RESULT OF THIS WONDERFUL CHANGE. “I will say to them which were not My people, you are My people; and they shall say, You are my God.” Here is a dialogue between the Lord and His people. God says something to them and they say something to Him.

Remember that there is no change in God—it is only a change in our relation to Him, because those who have become His people were really His people, in His everlasting purpose, from before the foundation of the world—though they were not actually so as to their own spiritual condition. But now, when this change comes to pass in their relations to God, see the grand result of it!

First, *the Lord says, “You are My people.”* Now I pray that the Lord may come, tonight, and speak to some who never made mention of His name before, some who never knew Him, who never trembled at His Word, never hoped in His mercy, never trusted in His Son, never, indeed, meant to be His people at all! I trust that the Lord will now say to some of them, “You are My people.” Oh, what a wonderful experience it is when the poor lost sinner finds out that he belongs to God, that he has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, that God means to save him, that He will not let His Son’s blood be shed for him in vain! I remember the shame and yet the joy that filled my soul when I first woke up to the consciousness of what Christ had done for me. I remember the confusion of face I felt because I had treated such a Savior so badly and yet I also felt intense delight in thinking that He loved me, notwithstanding all my sins. This is a text that comforted me— I pray the Lord to send it home to some other heart— “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” And this one, also, “I have called you by your name; you are Mine.” Oh, if the Holy Spirit would apply those Words with power to some sinner’s heart, tonight, what a running after God, what a seeking after Christ there would be!

“I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people.” The Lord does not always say that to His people with equal force. At first, they half hope that it is so. They indistinctly hear His voice saying it, but as faith increases, they hear Him say it more distinctly, “You are My people.” I feel that it is most gracious of God to call those His people that were not His people. You see that He gives them a new name and that overrides the old one. I think that I hear someone saying, “I have found the Savior!” “What? What?” says somebody who knows you. “*You?* Ha! We all know what *you* were.” Perhaps one says, “Ah, you know that you have been as bad as any of us!” Possibly in one case they might say, “You talk of being God’s child? You are a fallen woman,” or, “You have been a thief,” or, “You have been a liar,” or, “You have been a frequenter of places where God is forgotten, a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God.”

Yes, but, Beloved, if the Lord says, “I have called you by your name; you are Mine,” you can say to yourself, “They may say what they please about me, and I must acknowledge the truth of it all, but this Word of the Lord, ‘You are Mine,’ overrides them all!”

What a blessed text this is for one who has lost his character, for one who has lost all repute! If you come to Christ, and believe in Him, here is a text that applies to you! God says, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." God can make "right honorables" out of those who are, in themselves, most dishonorable, and He can give them a name and a place among His people. Yet I can imagine God looking upon someone here, to-night, and saying of such an one, "How can I put Him among the children? What? Put such a sinner among My children?" I can fancy there is somebody here who is so extremely sinful that if I were to propose to God's people that he should be received among them, they would say, "We would not like to receive that man into the Church." Ah, but when our heavenly Father welcomes home His prodigal son, He will not have the older brother talk like that! He comes out and reasons with him, and says, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad, for this, your brother, was dead, and is alive again, and was lost, and is found."

Jesus would have us receive the very chief of sinners, the jailbirds, the Hellbirds, the men who have gone farthest astray—the men who have lost all hope, the most forlorn and self-condemned, the most dejected, distressed, devil-haunted men and women out of Hell! These are just the people in whom the Grace of God triumphs over all sin! "I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." "And I will say to them, which were not My people, you are My people."

When the Lord says this to any, their sin is put away! My Lord is a great Forgiver! My Lord, whom I preach to you tonight, who was once nailed to the Cross, is able to save all them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. "He delights in mercy"—it is His right-hand attribute, His last-born, His Benjamin! Never does He display His mercy more than when, like the mighty sea, His love rolls over the very tops of the mountains of iniquity and covers them!

I close by noticing what the Lord's people say to Him, "*They shall say, You are my God.*" That is the right saying for every one of the Lord's people, "You are my God." Poor Sinner, may God the Holy Spirit help you to begin to say that, "You are my God"! Here is a text that should help you to say it, even as it helped me in the hour of my conversion, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Will you look to God, Sinner? Will you say to the Lord, "You are my God"? "My God, I have long forgotten You, I have blasphemed You, I have rebelled against You, I have desecrated Your Sabbath, I have decried Your Gospel, I have ridiculed Your servants! But, behold, I look to You, for I have sinned. Have mercy upon me for Your dear Son's sake!"

That is a good beginning, but may you have Grace to advance beyond that experience, so that you may come and lay your hands on Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, saying, "This Savior is my Savior. I accept Him as my Substitute, to stand in my place"! When you have once rightly uttered this blessed sentence, "You are my God," God's Grace will help you to keep on saying it! There is no getting farther than this, "You are my God." That is the end of all good things. What more

does a man need? What more can a man desire? There is not a good thing anywhere out of Christ!

One of the old Puritans, in the days when nobody much liked going to sea, said, "When a man is in a ship and in his own little cabin, if he casts his eyes all around, and sees nothing but the wild waste of waters, without a sign of land anywhere—nothing but angry billows tossing the vessel up and down—and if anyone says to Him, 'Will you leave your little cabin? Will you leave your little ship?' 'No,' he says, 'where else can I go? There is nowhere else to go.'" That is just how I feel tonight about my Lord! My cabin, my ship, my Christ, my faith in Him, gives me rest and peace! I cannot see anywhere else that I can go except to destruction and despair—so my soul says over again, "You are my God, you are my God. Others may have what they will, but I will have my God. They may have what god they like, but You, Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—You are my God and on You my soul does rest, seeking no other confidence."

Will you say that, tonight, my dear Hearers? I do not know your cases, but I know that if I need to get sheep into a fold, a good way is to set the gate open as widely as ever I can! And then another good way to entice the sheep in is to have rich pasture inside. Well, I have tried to set before you the rich, Free Grace of God to the very chief of sinners. And I have pointed to the opened Door that is wide enough to let the biggest sinner come through! Jesus said, "I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

Now, if Noah's ark had a door that was big enough to let an elephant through, then it was big enough to let a dog through, or a fox, or a cat, or a mouse. You may come if you are the biggest sinner in the world, but I do not suppose that you are, for the biggest sinner died and went to Heaven long ago. Paul says that *he* was the biggest sinner, the chief of sinners—and I believe that he knew what sized sinner he was. If there was room for him to go through the gate of salvation, there is room for you! May God's Grace draw you this very night—and unto the God of all Grace shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
HOSEA 2:5-23.

In this chapter God compares Israel to a woman who had been unfaithful to her husband in the very worst and most wicked manner.

Verse 5. *For their mother has played the harlot: she that conceived them has done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.* She attributed to false gods the gifts which God had given to her. This was great ingratitude to God, and a high insult to His holy majesty.

6. *Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.* That is what God does to sinners whom He means to save. He will not let them take their own course. He gives them thorny trials which hedge up their way. He puts an obstacle in their path—perhaps some sickness or poverty. When men are desperate in

wickedness, God has a way of stopping them. Even in their mad career, His mighty Grace comes in and says, "So far shall you go, but no further."

7. *And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them.* Thus sinners go after the pleasures of the world and the pleasures run away from them. They make one thing their god, and then another, and they put out all their strength to attain the object of their ambition, but God thwarts them. In Infinite Love, He baffles all their endeavors because He means to bring them to Himself!

7. *Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.* That is what He brings us to—wary of the world, yes, wary of life, itself—we get worn out in the ways of evil, and then we say, "I will go to God." What a blessed conclusion to come to! However terrible the whip with which He scourges us, it does us good. The fierce billow that washes the mariner upon the rock of safety is a blessing to him.

8, 9. *For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and My flax given to cover her nakedness.* God claims the blessings of Providence as His own and when He sees His people misuse them, He says, "I will recover them. She is giving them to Baal, she is using them for an evil purpose—I will take them away."

10, 11. *And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of My hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.* When God deals with men, He uses no half measures! If they have been very happy in the ways of sin and He intends to save them from their evil courses, He will take away all their joy. They shall henceforth have none of the merriment in which they indulged. He will give them better happiness, by-and-by, but for the time being it shall be true, "I will cause all her mirth to cease."

12. *And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.* Her most precious things shall be destroyed, or, if they are allowed to exist, they shall become a cause of fear and trouble. Oh, how often have I seen this verified in the experience of men and women whom God has saved by His almighty Grace!

13. *And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot Me, says the LORD.* They burnt no incense at Jerusalem. They refused to offer sacrifice there, but they went to this hill and to that, to worship the different images of Baal, and said, "These are our gods." Therefore, God says that He will make them sick of their idolatry! They shall grow tired of thus polluting His holy name and degrading themselves by worshipping things made of wood and stone.

14. *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.* Oh, glorious verse! She that went so far astray, God will come and draw her back from the path of sin! He will get her alone. He will bring her into a place of grief and sorrow, a wilderness—and then He will come near and speak sweet words of comfort into her ear. “I will allure her, as the bird catchers whistle to the birds and draw them to the net, so will I allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, the place of loneliness, the place of need, and I will speak to her heart,” so the Hebrew has it, for God knows how to speak, not only into the ears, but into the heart.

15. *And I will give her her vineyards from there.* He will give back what He took away. He will seal with loving kindness the real kindness which made Him deal roughly with her at first.

15. *And the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.* Oh, Backslider, God can give you back your early joy, your early love, yes, and your early purity! And He can make you sing as at the beginning! Therefore, be of good comfort and come to your Lord—come even now, with all your sins about you—and He will receive you!

16. *And it shall be at that day, says the LORD, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call me no more Baali.* “Baali” means, “My Lord,” in the sense of *domination*. But God will not seem to us, anymore, like a domineering Governor, as we once thought Him. But we shall call Him, “Ishi,” “My Husband.” There shall be such nearness of love, such confidence of hope between the restored soul and her God, that she shall call Him no more Baali, but Ishi.

17. *For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.* Oh, the love of God! He does not want us to remember our old ways. I do not like to hear people talk about their old habits, except they do it very tenderly, with many a tear and many a sigh, and tell the story to the praise and glory of Divine Grace. God takes the old names out of our lips—we forget them, we have done with them, we bury the dead past—and we live in newness of life.

18. *And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of Heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground.* So that the insects should not devour the crops, the foxes should not spoil the vines and the birds should not steal the seed! So will God take care of His people! It does seem that, when we once get right with God, we get right with everything—when we are at peace with Him—then neither beast, nor fowl, nor creeping thing can do us harm.

18. *And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.* They had been much troubled by war. It had killed their children, destroyed their homes and made them poor and wretched. Now God says, “I will break the bow and the sword and the battle.” How often God gives a heavenly calm to us when we are once washed in the blood of Christ and covered with His Righteousness! I remember how the storm within my heart was hushed into a deep calm as soon as I had seen my Lord and had yielded my heart to Him. Oh, you that are in storms tonight, I pray that God may bring you to

Himself and give you “peace, perfect peace!” And then what more will the Lord do?

19. *And I will betroth you unto Me forever.* What? This woman that had gone so far into evil? Can a man receive such an one back? No, but God can! He says there shall be a new betrothal, a new marriage—“I will betroth you unto Me forever.” Blessed word!

19, 20. *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.* You shall know Jehovah! You shall know that there is none like He, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin—and faithful to His people even when they are unfaithful to Him! Is there any god like our God? Have you ever tasted His Grace? Do you know His pardoning love? Have you ever been brought back to Him? Have you been restored to His favor? Then I am sure you can say, “There is none like unto Jehovah.”

21, 22. *And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, says the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.* God would send rain when it was needed. He would be all ear to hear on behalf of His people. He would not only hear them, but hear the very earth they tilled, and the heavens above their heads, as if Nature, itself, began to pray when the child of God learned that holy art!

23. *And I will sow her unto Me in the earth.* He would make the people to be like the seed which He, Himself, would sow, and cause to spring up and abide.

23. *And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy.* I would like to read that again. Somebody has, perhaps, come in here, tonight, who has never obtained mercy. Perhaps you have been seeking it and you have not found it. Hear God's promise, and lay hold upon it—“I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy.”

23. *And I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people; and they shall say, You are my God.* See, it is all in, “shalls,” and, “wills!” God is speaking! God Omnipotent, Omnipotent over men's hearts. He is not saying, “I will if they will,” but, “I will, and they shall,” for He has the key of free agency—and when He turns it in the lock, without violating the free will of man, He makes him willing in the day of His power to the praise of His Divine supremacy, for God is God when He saves as much as when He reigns! Yes, His reigning Grace is the very glory of His Nature, and this we love and adore. Grant us a taste of it! Amen.

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

A FEAR TO BE DESIRED

NO. 2801

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 19, 1902.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7, 1878.**

***“They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.”
Hosea 3:5.***

THIS passage refers, in the first place, to the Jews. If we read the whole verse and the preceding one, we shall see that they describe the present sad condition of God's ancient people and inspire us with hope concerning their future—“For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king or prince, without sacrifice, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.” From this and many other texts of Scripture, we may conclude, without a shadow of a doubt, that the Jews shall, one day, acknowledge Jesus to be their King. The Son of David—who is here, doubtless, called by the name of David, and who, when He died upon the Cross, had Pilate's declaration inscribed over His head, “This is Jesus the King of the Jews”—will then be acknowledged by them as their King and then shall they be restored to more than their former joy and glory. God has great things in store for the seed of Abraham in the latter days. He has not finally cast them away and He will be true to that Covenant which He made with their fathers—and on Judaea's plains shall roam a happy people who shall lift up their songs of praise unto Jehovah in the name of Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior! Whenever that shall happen, we, or those who will then be living, may know that the latter days have fully come because it is foretold here and in other passages that this is what will occur in the latter days. I am not going to attempt any explanation of the prophetic intimations concerning the future, but this one fact is plain enough—when the end of the world is approaching and the fullness of the Gentiles is gathered in, and all the splendor of the latter days has really commenced, then “shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness.”

On this occasion I intend only to call your attention to this expression, “They shall fear the Lord and His goodness,” for what Israel will do, in a state of Divine Grace, is precisely what all spiritual Israelites do when the Grace of God rests upon them. The fear of the Lord, which is the begin-

ning of wisdom, fills the heart and the goodness of the Lord becomes the source and fountain of that fear in the hearts of all those whom the Lord has blessed with His Grace. So I shall, first of all, ask you *to notice a distinction which is to be observed*. Secondly, *a Grace which is to be cultivated* and then, thirdly, *a sin which is to be repented of in the case of many*.

I. First, then, here is A DISTINCTION TO BE OBSERVED.

Human language is necessarily imperfect. Since man's fall and especially since the confusion of tongues at Babel, there has not only been a difference in speech between one nation and another, but also between one individual and another. We probably do not all mean exactly the same thing by any one word that we use—there is just a shade of difference between your meaning and mine. The confusion of tongues went much further than we sometimes realize and so completely did it confuse our language that we do not, on all occasions, mean quite the same thing to ourselves even when we use the same word. Hence, "fear," is a word which has a very wide range of meaning. There is a kind of fear which is to be shunned and avoided—that fear which perfect love casts out—because it has torment. But there is another sort of fear which has in it the very essence of love and, without which there would be no joy even in the Presence of God! Instead of perfect love casting out this fear, perfect love nourishes and cherishes it and, by communion with it, derives strength from it. Between the fear of a slave and the fear of a child, we can all perceive a great distinction. Between the fear of God's great power and justice which the devils have—and that fear which a child of God has when he walks in the Light with his God, there is as much difference, surely, as between Hell and Heaven!

In the verse from which our text is taken, that difference is clearly indicated—"Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord"—so that *this fear is connected with seeking the Lord*. It is a fear which draws them towards God and makes them search for Him. You know how the fear of the ungodly influences *them*—it makes them afraid of God, so they say, "Where shall we flee from His Presence?" If they could, they would take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost part of the earth if they had any hope that God could not reach them there! At the last, when this fear will take full possession of them, they will call upon the rocks and the hills to hide them from the face of Him who will then sit upon the Throne of God, whose wrath they will have such cause to dread! The fear of God, as it exists in unrenewed men, is a force which always drives them further and yet further away from God. They never get any rest of mind until they have ceased to think of Him—if a thought of God should, perchance, steal into their mind, fear at once lays hold upon them again—and that fear urges them to flee from God.

But the fear mentioned in our text draws to God! The man who has this fear in his heart cannot live without seeking God's face, confessing his guilt before Him and receiving pardon from Him. He seeks God be-

cause of this fear. Just as Noah, “moved with fear,” built the ark wherein he and his household were saved, so do these men, “moved with fear,” draw near unto God and seek to find salvation through His love and Grace. Always notice this distinction and observe that the fear which drives anyone away from God is a vice and a sin—but the fear that draws us towards God, as with silken bonds, is a virtue to be cultivated!

This appears even more clearly in the Hebrew, for they who best understand that language tell us that this passage should be read thus, “They shall fear *toward* the Lord, and *toward* His goodness.” *This fear leans toward the Lord.* When you really know God, you shall be thrice happy if you run toward Him, falling down before Him, worshipping Him with bowed head, yet glad heart—all the while fearing *toward* Him, not away from Him! Blessed is the man whose heart is filled with that holy fear which inclines his steps in the way of God’s commandments, inclines his heart to seek after God and inclines his whole soul to enter into fellowship with God that he may be acquainted with Him and be at peace.

It is also worthy of notice that *this fear is connected with the Messiah.* “They shall seek the Lord their God and David their King”—who stands here as the type of Jesus, the Messiah, the King of Israel. And further on it is said, “They shall fear the Lord and His goodness.” And I should not do wrong if I were to say that Christ is Jehovah’s goodness—that, in His blessed Person, you have all the goodness, mercy and Grace of God condensed and concentrated. “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” So that fear which is a sign of Grace in the heart—that fear which we ought all to seek after—always links itself to Christ Jesus! If you fear God and know not that there is Mediator between God and men, you will never think of approaching Him. God is a consuming fire—then how can you draw near to Him apart from Christ? If you fear God and know not of Christ’s Atonement, how can you approach Him? Without faith, it is impossible to please God—and without the blood of Jesus there is no way of access to the Divine Mercy Seat. If you know not Christ, you will never come to God! Your fear must link itself with the goodness of God as displayed in the Person of His dear Son, or else it cannot be that *seeking* fear, that fear *toward the Lord* of which our text speaks. It will be a fleeing fear, a fear that will drive you further and yet further away from God into greater and deeper darkness—into dire destruction—in fact, into that Pit whose bottomless abyss swallows up all hope, all rest and all joy forever!

II. Let this distinction be kept in mind and then we may safely go on to consider, in the second place, THE GRACE WHICH IS TO BE CULTIVATED—“They shall fear the Lord and His goodness.”

We will divide the one thought into two and, first, I will speak about that fear of God which is the work of the Holy Spirit—a token of Grace, a sign of salvation and a precious treasure to be always kept in the heart.

What is this fear of God? I answer, first, *it is a sense of awe of His greatness.* Have you ever felt this sacred awe stealing insensibly over

your spirit—hushing and calming you—and bowing you down before the Lord? It will come, sometimes, in the consideration of the great works of Nature. Gazing upon the vast expanse of waters—looking up to the innumerable stars, examining the wing of an insect and seeing there the matchless skill of God displayed in the minute. Or standing in a thunderstorm, watching as best you can, the flashes of lightning and listening to the thunder of Jehovah's voice—have you not often shrunk into yourself and said, "Great God, how awesome You are!"—not afraid, but full of delight, like a child who rejoices to see his father's wealth, his father's wisdom, his father's power—happy and at home, but feeling oh, so little? We are less than nothing, we are all but annihilated in the Presence of the great eternal, infinite, invisible All-in-All. Gracious men often come into this state of mind and heart by watching the works of God and so they do when they observe what He does in Providence. Dr. Watts truly sings—

***"Here He exalts neglected worms
To scepters and a crown—
And on the following page He turns,
And treads the monarch down."***

The mightiest kings and princes are but as grasshoppers in His sight! "The nations are as a drop in a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance," that has not weight enough to turn the scale. We talk about the greatness of mankind, but "all nations before Him are as nothing and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity." Again Dr. Watts wisely sings—

***"Great God! How infinite are Thee!
What worthless worms are we!"***

When we realize this, we are filled with a holy awe as we think of God's greatness and the result of that is that we are moved to fall before Him in reverent adoration!

We turn to the Word of God and there we see further proofs of His greatness in all His merciful arrangements for the salvation of sinners—and especially in the matchless redemption worked out by His well-beloved Son, every part of which is full of the Divine Glory. And as we gaze upon that Glory with exceeding joy, we shrink to nothing before the Eternal—and the result is once again lowly adoration. We bow down and adore and worship the living God with a joyful, tender fear which both lays us low and lifts us very high, for never do we seem to be nearer to Heaven's golden Throne than when our spirit gives itself up to worship Him whom it does not see, but in whose realized Presence it trembles with sacred delight!

It is the same fear, but looked at from another point of view, which has regard to the holiness of God. What a holy Being is the great Jehovah of Hosts! There is no fault in Him, no deficiency, no redundancy. He is whole and, therefore, holy. There is nothing there but Himself, the wholly perfect God. "Holy! Holy! Holy!" is a fit note for the mysterious living creatures to sound out before His Throne above, for, all along He has

acted according to the principle of unsullied holiness. Though blasphemers have tried, many times, to—

**“Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His judgments, be the god of God,”**

they have always failed and still He sits in the lonely majesty of His absolute perfection, while they, like brute beasts, crouch far beneath Him and despise what they cannot comprehend! But to a believing heart, God is all purity. His Light is “as the color of the terrible crystal,” of which Ezekiel writes. His brightness is so great that no man can approach it. We are so sinful that when we get even a glimpse of the Divine Holiness, we are filled with fear and we cry with Job, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” This is a kind of fear which we have need to cultivate, for it leads to repentance and confession of sin, to aspirations after holiness and to the utter rejection of all self-complacency and self-conceit. God grant that we may be completely delivered from all those forms of pride and evil!

The fear of God also takes another form, that is, *the fear of His Fatherhood, which leads us to reverence Him*. When Divine Grace has given us the new birth, we recognize that we have entered into a fresh relationship towards God—namely that we have become His sons and daughters. Then we realize that we have received “the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Now, we cannot truly cry unto God, “Abba, Father,” without, at the same time, feeling, “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” When we recognize that we are “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,” children of the Highest, adopted into the family of the Eternal, Himself, we feel at once, as the spirit of childhood works within us, that we both love and fear our great Father in Heaven who has loved us with an everlasting love and has “begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away.”

In this childlike fear there is not an atom of that fear which signifies being afraid. We who believe in Jesus are not afraid of our Father—God forbid that we ever should be! The nearer we can get to Him, the happier we are. Our highest wish is to be forever with Him and to be lost in Him. But, still, we pray that we may not grieve Him. We beseech Him to keep us from turning aside from Him. We ask for His tender pity towards our infirmities and plead with Him to forgive us and to deal graciously with us for His dear Son’s sake. As loving children we feel a holy awe and reverence as we realize our relationship to Him who is our Father in Heaven—a clear, loving, tender, pitiful Father—yet our Heavenly Father who “is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.”

This holy fear takes a further form when our *fear of God’s Sovereignty leads us to obey Him as our King*, for He, to whom we pray and in whom we trust, is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and we gladly acknowledge His Sovereignty. We see Him sitting upon a Throne which is dependent

upon no human or angelic power to sustain it. The kings of the earth must ask their fellow men to march in their ranks in order to sustain their rules, but our King “sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be” a king! As the Creator of all things and all beings, He has a right to the obedience of the entire creature He has made. Again I say that we who believe in Jesus are not afraid of God even as our King, for He has made us, also, to be kings and priests, and we are to reign with Him, through Jesus Christ, forever and ever!

Yet we tremble before Him lest we should be rebellious against Him in the slightest degree. With a childlike fear we are afraid lest one revolting thought or one treacherous wish should ever come into our mind or heart to stain our absolute loyalty to Him. Horror takes hold upon us when we hear others deny that “the Lord reigns”—and even the thought that we should ever do this grieves us exceedingly—and we are filled with that holy fear which moves us to obey every command of our gracious King so far as we know it to be His command. Having this fear of God before our eyes, we cry to those who would tempt us to sin, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” It is not because we are afraid of Him, but because we *delight* in Him, that we fear before Him with an obedient, reverential fear! And, Beloved, I do firmly believe that when this kind of fear of God works itself out to the fullest, it crystallizes into love. So excellent, so glorious, so altogether everything that could be desired, so far above our highest thought or wish, are You, O Jehovah, that we lie before You and shrink into nothing! Yet, even as we do so, we feel another sensation springing up within us. We feel that we love You and, as we decrease in our own estimation of ourselves, we feel that we love You more and more. As we realize our own nothingness, we are more than ever conscious of the greatness of our God! “Your heart shall fear and be enlarged,” says the Prophet Isaiah, and so it comes to pass with us. The more we fear the Lord, the more we love Him, until this becomes to us the true fear of God—to love Him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. May He bring us to this blessed climax by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit!

Now I want to dwell, with somewhat of emphasis, upon the second part of this fear—“They shall fear the Lord *and His goodness.*” It may, at first, seem to some people a strange thing that we should fear God’s goodness—but there are some of us who know exactly what this expression means, for we have often experienced just what it describes. How can we fear God’s goodness? I speak what I have often felt and I believe many of you can do the same as you look back upon the goodness of God to you—saving you from sin and making you to be His child—and as you think of all His goodness to you in the dispensations of His Providence. You may, perhaps, be like Jacob who left his father’s house with his wallet and his staff—and when he came back with a family that formed two bands and with abundance of all that he could desire, he must have been astonished at what God had done for him! And when David sat upon his throne in Jerusalem, surrounded by wealth and splendor, as he

recollected how he had fed his flock in the wilderness and afterwards had been hunted, by Saul, like a partridge upon the mountains, he might well say, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"

In this way, *God's goodness often fills us with amazement*—and amazement has in it an element of fear. We are astonished at the Lord's gracious dealings with us and we say to Him, "Why have You been so good to me for so many years and in such multitude of ways? Why have You manifested so much mercy and tenderness toward me? You have treated me as if I had never grieved or offended You. You have been as good to me as if I had deserved great blessings at Your hands. Had You paid me wages, like a hired servant, You would never have given me such sweetness and such love as You have now lavished upon me, though I was once a prodigal and wandered far from You. O God, Your love is like the sun—I cannot gaze upon it—its brightness would blind my eyes! I fear because of Your goodness."

Do you know, dear Friends, what this expression means? If a sense of God's goodness comes upon you in all its force, you will feel that God is wonderfully great to have been so good to you. Most of us have had friends who have become tired of us after a while. Possibly we have had some very kind friends who are not yet tired of us, but, still, they have failed us, every now and then, in some points—either their power could not meet our need, or they were not willing to do what we needed. But our God has poured out His mercy for us like a river! It has flowed on without a break. These many years He has continued to bless us and has heaped up His mercies, mountain upon mountain, until it has seemed as though He would reach the very stars with the lofty pinnacles of His love! What shall we say to all this? Shall we not fear Him, adore Him and bless Him for all the goodness that He has made to pass before us? And, all the while, feel that even to kiss the hem of His garment, or to be beneath His footstool is too great an honor for us?

Then there will come upon us, when we are truly grateful to God for His goodness toward us, *a sense of our own responsibility* and we shall say, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" We shall feel that we cannot render to Him anything compared with what we ought to render—and there will come upon us this fear—that we shall never be able to live at all consistently with the high position which His Grace has given to us. As God said concerning His ancient people, we shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that He has procured for us. It will seem as though He had set us on the top of a high mountain and had bid us walk along that lofty ridge—it is a ridge of favor and privilege, but it is so elevated that we fear lest our brain should reel and our feet should slip because of the height of God's mercy to us! Have you ever felt like that, Beloved? If God has greatly exalted you with His favor and love, I am sure you must have felt like that many a time.

Then, next, *this holy fear is near akin to gratitude*. The fear of a man who really knows the love and goodness of God will be somewhat of this

kind. He will fear lest he should really be, or should seem to be, ungrateful. "What," he asks, "can I do? I am drowned in mercy. It is not as though my ship were sailing in a sea of mercy—I have been so loaded with the favor of the Lord that my vessel has gone right down and the ocean of God's love and mercy has rolled right over the masthead. What can I do, O Lord? If You had given me only a little mercy, I might have done something in return to express my gratitude. But, oh, Your great mercy in electing me, in redeeming me, in converting me, in preserving me and in all the goodness of Your Providence toward me—what can I do in return for all these favors? I feel struck dumb and I am afraid lest I should have a dumb heart as well as a dumb tongue! I fear lest I should grieve You by anything that looks like ingratitude."

Then the child of God begins, next, to fear *lest he should become proud*, "for," he says, "I have noticed that when God thus favors some men, they begin to exalt themselves and to think that they are persons of great importance. So, if the Lord makes the stream of my life flow very joyously, I may imagine that it is because there is some good thing in me and be foolish enough to begin to ascribe the glory of it to myself!" A true saint often trembles concerning this matter. Sometimes he is even afraid of his mercies! He knows that his trials and troubles never did him any hurt, but he perceives that, sometimes, God's goodness has intoxicated him as with sweet wine, so he begins to be almost afraid of the goodness of his God to him. He thinks to himself, "Shall I be unworthy of all this favor and walk in a way that is inconsistent with it?" He looks a little ahead and he knows that the flesh is frail and that good men have often been found in very slippery places, and he says, "What if, after all this, I should be a backslider? You, O Lord, have brought me into the banqueting house and Your banner over me is love. You have stayed me with flagons, and comforted me with apples. You have laid bare Your very heart to me and made me know that I am a man greatly beloved! Shall I, after all this, ever turn aside from You? Will the ungodly ever point at me and say, Aha! Aha! Is this the man after God's own heart? Is this the disciple who said he would die rather than deny his Master?" Such a fear as that very properly comes over us at times—and then we tremble because of all the goodness which God has made to pass before us.

I think you can see, dear Friends, without my needing to enlarge further upon this point, that while a time of sorrow and suffering is often, to the Christian, a time of confidence in his God, on the other hand, a time of prosperity is to the wise man, a time of holy fear. Not that he is ungrateful, but he is afraid that he may be. Not that he is proud—he is truly humble because he is afraid lest he should become proud. Not that he loves the things of the world, but he is afraid lest his heart should get away from God—and so he fears because of all the Lord's goodness to him. May the Lord always keep us in that state of fear, for it is a healthy condition for us to be in! Those who walk so very proudly and with too great confidence are generally the ones who first tumble down. My observation and experience have taught me this. When I have met with anyone

who knew that he was a very good man and who boasted to other people that he was a very good man—he has generally proved to be like some of those pears that we sometimes see in the shop—very handsome to look at, but sleepy and rotten all through!

Then, on the other hand, I have noticed a great many other people who have always been afraid that they would go wrong and who have trembled and feared at almost every step they took. They have feared lest they should grieve the Lord and they have cried to Him, day and night, “Lord, uphold us!” And He has done so and they have been enabled to keep their garments unspotted to their life’s end. So, my prayer is that I may never cease to feel this holy fear before God and that I may never get to fancy, for a moment, that there is, or ever can be, anything in me to cause me to boast or to glory in myself. May God save all of us from that evil! And the more we receive of His goodness, the more may we fear, with childlike fear, in His Presence!

III. Now I must close with just a few words upon the last point which is, A SIN TO BE REPENTED OF.

I cannot help fearing that I am addressing some to whom my text does not apply except by way of contrast. Are there not some of you, who are unsaved, and yet who do not fear God? O Sirs, may the Holy Spirit make you to fear and tremble before Him! You have cause enough to fear. If you live all day long without even thinking of God, or if, when you do think of Him, you try to smother the thought at once—if you say that you can get on very well without Him and that life is happy enough without religion—I could weep for you because you do not weep for yourselves! You say, “We are rich,” yet, all the while, you are wretched, miserable and poor. Your poverty is all the worse because you fancy that you are rich. You are also blind. That is bad enough, yet you say, “We can see.” It is doubly sad when the spiritually blind declare that they can see—for they will never ask for the sacred eye-salve, or go to the great Oculist who can open blind eyes—as long as they are satisfied with their present condition. It is a great pity that many unconverted men do not fear God even with a servile fear. If they would only begin with that, it might prove to be the lowest rung of the heavenly ladder and lead on to the blessed fear which is the portion of the children of God!

There are others of you, I am afraid, who never fear either God or His goodness. How I wish you would do so, for the Lord has been very good to you. You were saved at sea after you had been wrecked. You were raised up from fever when others died. You have prospered in business, on the whole, though you have had some struggles. Blessed with children and made happy in your home—all this you owe to the God whom you have never acknowledged! The goodness of God to some ungodly men is truly amazing! I think, when they sit down at night, when everybody else has gone to bed, and remember how they began life with scarcely a shilling to bless themselves with, yet God has multiplied their substance and given them much to rejoice in—I think their hearts ought to be full of gratitude towards their Benefactor. I would like all such

people to remember what God said by the mouth of the prophet Hosea, "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness." Take care, O you ungrateful souls, that the Lord does not begin to strip you of the mercies which you have failed to appreciate! I pray that you may be led to confess from where all these blessings came and to cry, "My Father, You shall be my Guide henceforth and forever. Since You have dealt so lovingly and tenderly with me, I will come and confess my sin to You and trust in Your dear Son as my Savior and Friend, that I may henceforth be led and commanded by You, alone, and may fear before You all the days of my life."

May God grant to everyone of us the Grace to believe in Jesus, to rest in Him and then to walk in the fear of the Lord all our days, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 103.

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.* We ought to be always blessing God. This sacred employment should be like an atmosphere surrounding us at all times. Yet there are special seasons when we feel as if we must wake ourselves up and brace ourselves up for some special adoration, talking to ourselves as the Psalmist does here.

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.* Alas, that forgetfulness of God's benefits is an evil kind of worm that eats into the very heart of our praise. Oh, for a retentive memory concerning the loving kindness of the Lord! Come, my heart, you have been thinking of many things while you have been away from the House of Prayer. Now forget them! Perhaps you have even dwelt upon your sorrows and remembered the wormwood and the gall. If so, now let those sad memories vanish, "and forget not all His benefits."

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* What a great, "all," that is! From your childhood until now you have been full of iniquities—and the Lord has been equally full of forgiveness.

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* There is no other physician like He—and all human physicians, whatever skill they may possess—derive it from Him! Blessed be the healing God!

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* Else had you, long ago, gone down into the Pit! But redemption has kept you out of it. Your natural life and your spiritual life have both been preserved to you through the precious blood of Christ.

4. *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* We talk about crowned heads. There are many such here in this assembly. Let

everyone whose head is crowned “with loving kindness and tender mercies” magnify the name of the crowning Lord!

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.* You were down on the ground lately, with all your feathers shed, but they have grown again and you are up on the wing once more. Your youth has been given back to you! Renew, then, your praises of your God. With the dew of your youth restored to you, let the dew of your gratitude also abound. Who would not bless the Lord when he knows the blessedness of pardoned sin, a wounded spirit, healed, the life redeemed from destruction, youth restored like the eagle’s and the whole being crowned with loving kindness and tender mercies?

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Therefore let the oppressed praise Him! Let the justice which adorns His Throne be the subject of our constant delight. There is no act of oppression, on the part of the great ones of the earth, at which He will wink—“The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.”

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* Bless Him for having thus revealed Himself, giving us His Holy Word in which we see Him as in a mirror. When God makes Himself known to His people, then is the time for them to praise Him! You can scarcely worship an unknown God, but when He makes Himself known by special revelation in your heart, then you must and you will praise Him.

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* Therefore again praise Him. All who know and love the Lord should form a great orchestra continually magnifying His holy name!

9. *He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.* So that if you are just now being chided by Him—if you have some consciousness of His anger—begin to bless Him that it will not last long! “He will not always chide.” Behold the rainbow painted on the storm cloud and bless the name of the Lord even while you are under His afflicting hand.

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Therefore praise Him again and again. Had He dealt with us as we deserve, we should not have been here. But we are still here, on praying ground, and on pleading terms with the Most High! Therefore let us praise Him.

11. *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Such great mercy as this should have the highest praise of which we are capable. This verse speaks of the height of God’s mercy—the next one tells of its breadth.

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* They are gone—never to return! It is impossible that they should be imputed against us any more forever! Therefore praise Him to the very utmost.

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* Notice that as this sacred song rises, it gets more tender. If it is not quite so jubilant, the praise is all the deeper and quite as thrilling. One of the sweetest thoughts that we can have concerning God is that which relates to His fatherly tenderness toward His children.

14. *For He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.* Let His name be praised for this! Dust must be handled daintily, lest it should resolve itself into its separate particles—and God thus delicately handles us.

15, 16. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.* Yet does God think of us, even as He does of the grass—and as He gives to each blade of grass its own drop of dew, so do we seem to feel hanging about each one of us a glistening drop of mercy, for which let us praise His holy name as the sunlight of His favor sparkles in every drop of His loving kindness!

17, 18. *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.* Then, surely, we must bless God for His favor to our posterity, for His loving kindness, not only to ourselves, but also to our children, and our children's children! As we look back, we praise the God of our fathers and as we look forward, we praise the God of our children's children!

19. *The LORD has prepared His throne in Heavens and His kingdom rules over all.* For which again let us say, "Hallelujah!" The Lord of Hosts is no dethroned monarch! He has not lost His power to govern all whom He has made! "His kingdom rules over all."

20. *Bless the LORD, you His angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.* Magnify Him more than ever, if that is possible, you mighty hosts who—

***"Day without night
Circle His Throne rejoicing."***

21, 22. *Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.* The praise is now spread widely, over all the universe! Yet, O my heart, do not forget your own personal note in it—"O Bless the Lord, O my 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.**

THE SILKEN FETTER

NO. 888

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 29, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Fear the Lord and His goodness.”
Hosea 3:5.***

THE whole verse runs thus: “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.” A brief word may suffice upon the prophecy. I think no reader of Holy Scripture can doubt but that the seed of Abraham, however long they may be in blindness, will at the last obey the Messiah, Jesus, the Son of David, and in those days the goodness of God to them will be so extraordinary that they shall fear and wonder at it. Constrained by gratitude, they will be numbered among the most earnest servants of the Lord. May the Lord hasten so blessed a consummation in His own time.

O that the happy day would dawn, when Israel’s sons shall acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, to be the Messiah that was promised of old! The expression, “Fear the Lord and His goodness,” much impressed me and I have therefore ventured to take it from its connection that we may meditate upon it. Is it so, that there are powerful motives and active causes for fear not only in God Himself, but also in His goodness? Alas, dear Friends, too many who enjoy Divine blessings are far enough from fearing Him! His goodness, from the very commonness and continuity of it, casts them into a self-complacent slumber in which they dream that they will continue in prosperity forever—but they spend not even a single thought on Him from whom all goodness flows.

Alas, another class of persons are even excited by the goodness of God to a height of pride and arrogance. If Pharaoh is fixed on a powerful throne. If his dominions are in peace. If the Nile causes Egypt to be fat with harvest, the proud monarch defiantly demands, “Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?” If the hosts of Sennacherib are mighty in battle and if God gives prosperity to his kingdom, what will Sennacherib do but wax exceedingly haughty against God, the God of Israel and laugh His people to scorn? Many a man has put his trust in his riches and has presumed against the Most High. Because he has enjoyed long years of success, he believes that no evil can befall him, and his pride towers aloft, even to the very heavens!

Alas, even in those men who are right-hearted, in whom Divine Grace reigns, it has too often happened that the goodness of God has not worked in them a corresponding gracious result. Hezekiah is endowed with riches and displays them with ostentatious pride instead of honoring his God in the presence of the ambassadors that came from far. He sought only to give them a high idea of himself and thus by the pride of his heart he

brought upon himself a stern rebuke from his Lord. Asa prospered, but when he was lifted up in outward circumstances, he became also lifted up in heart and departed from the Most High. Even good men cannot always carry a full cup without some spilling. Even those whose hearts are right have not always found their heads steady enough to stand with safety upon the pinnacles of prosperity and honor.

Yet, my Brethren, though these things occur as the result of the goodness of God, in spite of the evil of our hearts, yet the true and right effect of goodness upon us ought to be to make us fear God. Not to lift us up, but to keep us down. Not to make our blood hot with presumption, but to cool and calm it with a grateful jealousy—not unduly to exhilarate us until we become profanely defiant—but to sober us with conscious responsibility till we humbly sit with gratitude at the feet of Him from whom our good things have proceeded.

This, then, is to be the drift of this morning's discourse—the right and proper result of the goodness of God upon our hearts. I shall address myself, first of all, *to God's people* and secondly *to such as are yet unreconciled to Him*.

I. First, TO GOD'S PEOPLE. It is yours, Beloved, to fear the Lord and His goodness. You have received of God's goodness in two ways—the first and the higher is His *spiritual* goodness to you with regard to your immortal nature and your eternal concerns. The second form of goodness in which God has been very lavish to some now present is the Providential bounty of God towards you as a pilgrim in this present world.

Let us take the first and dwell upon it and survey the *spiritual goodness of God* to you, His people, for a moment. It was no small goodness which chose you at the first, when there was no more in you than in others whom God beheld in the same glass of His purposes. He might have passed you by as He has passed by tens of thousands of others, but He chose you because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He determined that you should be the vessels of mercy to be filled with His Grace. It was no slight goodness which ordained a Covenant on your behalf with Christ Jesus, a Covenant ordered in all things and sure, which is, I hope, to you today all your salvation and all your desire, even if your house is not so with God as you could wish.

It was no slight goodness which fulfilled that Covenant, by the gift of the Only Begotten. My words, when applied to such a topic, seems to me to be threadbare and miserable things, too poor to set forth the loving kindness manifest in our Incarnate God dwelling among men. In our holy Savior working out a perfect righteousness. And above all, in our bleeding Redeemer making expiation for innumerable sins by the giving up of Himself to death. Here are heights of goodness which the deer's foot of imagination shall never scale. Here are depths of mercy which the plummet of most profound reasoning can never fathom—what do you not owe unto Him who loved you and redeemed you unto God by His blood?

Think again of the goodness of God to you when you were as yet unconverted—what longsuffering—what tenderness! When you were determined to perish, He was determined to save. When you rejected His offers

of mercy, He did not reject you. He would not take your denial for a reply, but He persevered with the sweet solicitations of His Gospel and with the silent influences of His Holy Spirit, until at last He made you willing in the day of His power and brought you to that Cross to find your Hope hanging there. And you were filled with joy and peace as you looked up to Jesus and rested in Him. Months and years have glided away since then, but all along life's checkered way, Divine goodness has continually followed you.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, I need not be choice in my language in order to excite gratitude in you. If you will but now turn over the pages of your diary, one by one, and think of what God has done for you since that dear hour when He brought you to His feet and placed you among His children. Why, your bread has been given to you spiritually and your waters have been sure. You have been preserved *from* temptations and preserved *in* temptations and brought *out of* temptations! You have been led first into one Truth of God and then into another. You have been conducted, step by step, in the pathway of experience. Little by little, as you have been able to bear it, He has revealed Himself to you. You have been kept until this day by His power—you have been comforted unto this day by His Presence—you are being taught every day by His Spirit and you are being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Oh, the goodness of God to you! If *you* do not feel it, I desire to be, for my own part, overwhelmed with thankfulness, so as to say in my own soul, "Oh, the goodness of God to me in spiritual matters! Oh, His goodness to an unworthy one who continues still unworthy! Oh, His goodness in watering the plant that bears so little fruit! Oh, His goodness in ministering comfort to one so ready to create distresses by foolish fears! Oh, His amazing goodness in bearing in His teaching with one so prone to forget and so slow to understand." Brethren, we cannot mention even the small dust of our great Father's mercies! He has outdone all that we have asked or even thought in what He has revealed to us. He has dealt well with His servants according to His Word.

Now, all this goodness, which I would gladly recall to your remembrance should constrain you to fear the Lord. To fear the Lord and His goodness—how is this to be done? First, there should be a fear in your souls *of admiration* to think that ever the infinite God should deal graciously with *you*—that He who made the heavens and the earth should stoop from His loftiness down to *you*. That you, being sinful and having therefore provoked Him and angered His sense of purity—that He should stoop to you in your defilement and loathsomeness and should reveal His Son in you! The wonder grows as we think not merely that He should give mercy, but such mercy! Not merely Divine Grace, but such boundless Grace, such unsearchable goodness and loving kindness!

A truly enlightened mind is bewildered amid the multitude of the Lord's favors and bowed down with sacred awe. The fear that has torment, love has cast out—but the fear which must ever suffuse a spirit when it stands on the brink of the boundless and gazes into the infinite—such a devout and wondering fear we feel when we behold the everlasting love of God! I remember well being taken one day to see a gorgeous palace at Venice

where every piece of furniture was made with most exquisite taste and of the richest material. Where statues and pictures of enormous price abounded on all hands and the floor of each room was paved with mosaics of marvelous art and extraordinary value. As I was shown from room to room and allowed to roam amid the treasures by its courteous owner, I felt a considerable timidity. I was afraid to sit down anywhere, nor did I hardly dare to put down my foot, or rest my hand to lean. Everything seemed to be too good for ordinary mortals like myself.

But when one is introduced into the gorgeous palace of *infinite* goodness, costlier and fairer by far, one gazes wonderingly with reverential awe at the matchless vision! "How excellent is Your loving kindness, O God!" I am not worthy of the least of all Your benefits. Oh, the depths of the love and goodness of the Lord! Saints who have tasted that the Lord is gracious should fear Him for His goodness with the worshipful fear of *adoration*. Everything which comes to us from Divine Love should bow us to our knee. Mercies should be the unhewn stones of which we should build an altar to our God. Even the sterner attributes of God compel devotion in right minds much more than the gentle glories.

Survey the nightly Heaven and feel how true it is, "An undevout astronomer is mad." Galen, the physician, when studying the marvelous fabric of the human body, declared that he who saw not there the handiwork of God must be devoid of reason. When one reviews the goodness of God the same feeling is produced—but it is more melting, personal, tender and practical. In the works of creation we behold grandeur and goodness, but in the Grace that gave to man a Savior, you behold all the attributes of God in a soft subdued splendor which charms the soul to a more loving worship than Nature alone can suggest.

From Nature up to Nature's God is well, but from Grace to the God of Grace is the more sure and easy way. I have never worshipped, even in the presence of Mont Blanc, or amid the crash of thunder, as I have at the foot of the Cross. A sense of goodness creates a better worshipper than a sense of the sublime. In our best seasons the most excellent sublimities of Nature become too little for us—they dwarf rather than magnify our conceptions of God. The day in which I saw most of creation's grandeur was spent upon the Wengern Alps. My heart was near her God and all around was majestic. The dread mountains like pyramids of ice. The clouds like fleecy wool. I saw an avalanche and heard the thunder of its fall. I marked the dashing waterfalls leaping into the Yale of Lauterbrunnen beneath our feet, but my heart felt that creation was too scant a mirror to image all her God—His face was more terrible than the storm, His robes more pure than the virgin snow—his voice far louder than the thunder, His love far higher than the everlasting hills.

I took out my pocketbook and wrote these lines—

***"Yon Alps, who lift their heads above the clouds,
And hold familiar converse with the stars,
Are dust, at which the balance trembles not,
Compared with His Divine immensity.
The snow-crowned summits fail to set Him forth
Who dwells in Eternity and bears***

**Alone the name of High and Lofty One.
 Depths unfathomed are too shallow to express
 The wisdom and the knowledge of the Lord.
 The mirror of the creatures has no space
 To bear the image of the Infinite.
 'Tis true the Lord has fairly writ His name,
 And set His seal upon creation's brow,
 But as the skillful potter much excels
 The vessel which he fashions on the wheel,
 E'en so, but in proportion greater far,
 Jehovah's self transcends His noblest works.
 Earth's ponderous wheels would break, her axles snap,
 If freighted with the load of Deity—
 Space is too narrow for the Eternal's rest,
 And time too short a footstool for His Throne.
 E'en avalanche and thunder lack a voice
 To utter the full volume of His praise.
 How then can I declare Him?
 Where are words
 With which my glowing tongue may speak His name?
 Silent I bow and humbly I adore.”**

But in musing upon the Person of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation, a very different result has been experienced. I have been prostrate under the weight of Deity there revealed and ready to die amid the splendor there so graciously unveiled to my soul in rapt communion. Not fear which comes of bondage, but that which is borne of gratitude and bliss has bowed me before the mercy-throne with awful wonder at Divine goodness!

Further, the goodness of God to us should suggest *aspiration* as well as adoration. If He has treated us so as never any other did. If He has dealt with us in tenderness surpassing thought, then will we serve Him if He will but condescend to accept the sacrifice. There was never such a God as He. Oh, what an honor to be His servants! With tears of joy bedewing our eyes, we ask, “My God, may we be permitted to serve You? Is there anything of service or of suffering which You can condescend to allot to such as we are? Your goodness constrains us with Your fear—we are bound by it to be Yours forever.”

Brethren, the greatness of God's goodness should suggest to us great service. The continuance of that goodness should move us to persevere in honoring Him. The disinterestedness of the love of God should make us ready for any self-denials. And above all, the singularity and specialty of His goodness towards His elect should determine us to be singular and remarkable in our consecration to His cause. Each Believer is so remarkably a debtor to his Lord that he should not be content to render mere ordinary tribute, but should be panting and sighing that he may attain to eminence in holy labor. He owes more than others—He should render a worthier return.

Oh, if the goodness of God would inspire but one here today to make a full surrender of his whole life to Jesus' love, what a gain would this be to the Church! If some young man whom God has favored with special mercy would say, “Here am I, indulged as I have been with God's goodness I will

press into the front rank of self-abnegation. I will give myself up, spirit, soul and body, to the Master's service in foreign lands," what might he not achieve! Come, you gallant of heart, you generous of spirit—you owe a boundless debt to Him—it is but your reasonable service that you give Him your all! Come, lay your hands upon His altar horns and dedicate yourselves this day as a whole burnt-offering unto Christ! This is that fear of God and His goodness which every saint should covet.

We should also fear the Lord and His goodness in the sense of *affection*—an affection combined with the fears peculiar to holy jealousy. Has the Lord done so much for us? Then how we ought to tremble lest we should grieve so kind a God! If you have a master for whom you do not care because he is ungenerous or tyrannical, you will be little careful to please him, except so far as your sense of duty might demand. But when you are serving a kind and generous person who has been your benefactor from your youth up, you would not, for all the world, vex him either by negligence or fault. No father commands the obedience of his children like the parent whose affection to his children has been most manifest and undoubted. Fathers who provoke their children to anger must not wonder if they find them discouraged in their reverence.

Our gracious God wins the deepest affection of His people and they become jealous lest by anything done or undone they should grieve His Holy Spirit. Oh, that blessed, holy fear, that sacred jealousy of sin! I wish we all had more of it. We had, I fear, more of it at our first conversion, but alas, many professors have little of it now. They are too familiar with the world. They have lost their sensibility of sin. They are no longer quick as the apple of an eye—they allow sins which horrified them once. God save us from getting a film over our consciences by slow degrees. He that serves God serves One who is very jealous. Remember, Beloved, there are some among us here who have been permitted to enjoy communion with Christ in a very remarkable degree. You have been like John with his head on Christ's bosom, taken into the innermost chamber of Divine affection.

Now, none can grieve God so soon as you can! There are none that must pick their steps more carefully than you! A common subject would be allowed by a monarch to do 50 things which one of his familiars must not do. Are you a favorite of the King? It is an awful thing to be beloved of Heaven—it is as dread as it is glorious—and it calls for great care and deep anxiety. May the Lord grant that you may walk humbly before Him with that fear of His goodness which dreads lest for a single moment God should be provoked by your temper, your thoughts, words, or deeds.

We must fear Him again—for I have a sevenfold fear to describe and must therefore be brief upon each—with *humiliation*. The goodness of God to us, if it finds us in a healthy state, will always make us think less of ourselves. We shall be like Peter's boat, which when empty floated high, but which when full began to sink. God's great mercy to us will make us sit down with David, overwhelmed with astonishment and say, "Why has this come to me? What am I and what is my father's house?" Reckon that your soul is right with God if His mercy humbles you. But if it puffs you up, there is some base thing within your heart that must be purged away.

Again, the goodness of God ought to make us fear Him with a sacred *anxiety*, an anxiety of a double character. Am I really His? This great salvation which I hope I have received—have I really received it, or is my experience mere fancy? I see before me a vast estate, is it mine, or do I misread the title-deeds? Does it belong to some other, or actually to me? The higher thoughts you have of the Grace of God in the Gospel, the more carefully should you examine yourselves whether you are in the faith—the more anxious should you be to go every day to the Cross to make your calling and election sure by looking into those five wounds again and counting once more the purple drops and crying with holy faith, “Thus my sins are washed away.” Oh, if you had but a small Heaven and a God of little mercies, you might play fast and loose with them—but with a God who brims with kindness and a Heaven that is flooded with glory, oh, be anxious that there is no question in dispute as to whether you are Christ’s or not!

Our second anxiety should always be this, “If I am, indeed, His and I have such goodness bestowed on me, am I rendering to Him what He may expect?” Beloved, you are God’s vineyard. He has built a hedge about you. He has watered you and planted in your soul the choicest vine of the true spiritual life—but see how little fruit you have yielded to Him in return! He looks for clusters and He finds but gleanings! You give harbor to the wild boar of the wood, but you find little room for the Lord of the vineyard. He looks at your branches and lo, they are covered with the moss of carelessness and at your root the ground is overrun with evil weeds of pride and self-seeking. What more could He do than He has done for you? What more of goodness could He show you? Oh, fear and tremble lest you give Him *nothing* where He has given so much, rendering no interest on your talents, no return for the outlay of His mercy.

Once again, there is another fear, We should fear the Lord and His goodness with the fear of *resignation*. You remember Job, noble Job? He was once very rich and increased in goods. God had been very good to him for many years, both in spirituals and temporals and Job loved his God because of His goodness. This love he proved to be genuine, for when the cattle and the camels and what was worse, his children and his health were all gone, he said, “What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

In the hour of the gladness of your spirit, you ought to say within yourself, “Ah, after He has pardoned me, made me His child and promised me that I shall be with Him in Heaven forever, He may do what He wills with me. Lord, here am I, do what seems good in Your sight. By Your Spirit’s help, I will not complain though the bone comes through the skin through long tossing on the bed of sickness. Since You have delivered me from Hell, what is sickness that I should complain of it? If the wind whistles through my scanty rags and my table is bare and my house unfurnished—if I have a Christ on earth and a Christ in Heaven to be my portion—then I dare not murmur.”

Now this is the true fear of God, and if we could always keep in it, how happy should we be! If we were so satisfied that God is good, that we would not believe He could do us an unkind turn, so overjoyed with His spiritual goodness that all else appeared mere dirt and dross, we should honor our Lord more and be far more blessed ourselves. Thus I have spoken at length upon fearing the Lord and His goodness, taking it as spiritual goodness. Now, for a few minutes, I wish to address myself to Believers in Christ who possess much of the goodness of God *in Providential matters*. All the saints are not poor. Lazarus is a child of God on the dung-hill, but Joseph of Arimathea is no less beloved though he has great riches. Many were converted to God from the poorest classes in the Apostles' days, but the Ethiopian eunuch, who had great possessions, was none the less a genuine disciple.

Now, there are some of you whom God has always prospered in your business. You have a healthy family growing up around you, while you enjoy excellent bodily health—indeed, you have the comforts of this life in profusion. I beseech you above others to fear the Lord for all this goodness. The tendency of prosperity is too often injurious. It is much harder to bear than adversity. As the refining pot to silver and the furnace to gold, so is prosperity to a Christian man. Many a man will pass through trouble and praise God under it, who, when he is tried with no trouble, will forget his God, decline in Grace and grow almost a worldling.

Believe me, there is no trial so great as no trial, even as an old Divine used to say that there was no devil so bad as no devil. There is no state in which a man is in such great danger as when he can see no danger—

***“More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempest howling overhead.”***

Let me put these few thoughts to you, you who are blessed with temporal goodness. Fear God much more than ever before, *lest these temporals should become your God*. Money is compared in Scripture to thick clay, because it sticks. And what is more, it sucks a man into itself. Many a man sinks in wealth like a horse in a bog—his possessions suck him under. While your earthly goods are kept under foot, they will do you no hurt, but when they rise as high as your heart, they have begun to bury you alive. While a man carries money in his purse, it is well, especially if the rings are not too tight—but when he carries it in his *heart*, it is bad, be he who he may—his gold shall eat as does a canker and work him infinite mischief.

Child of God, need I tell you this? You know better than to trust in uncertain riches. Well, then, if you worship the golden calf, you will be guilty, indeed. Oh, be anxious to fear your God and not to be an idolater! Fear Him more than you ever did at any time of your life before, and in proportion to your prosperity let the depth of your godliness increase. Fear God and His goodness, again, *lest you should undervalue your responsibilities*. What you have is none of yours. As far as your fellow men are concerned, your possessions are your own, but as far as your God is concerned you have nothing. You are but a *steward*—and is it the part of

an honest steward to be constantly amassing for himself and refusing his master his due?

Why, if a steward should say, when he pays his master a certain part of his profits, "I have been generous and have given my master so much," is he not a rogue to talk so? All that he makes in a year, since he is but a steward, belongs to his master and it is not generosity in his case to render it up! O Believers, all that you have belongs to Him who bought you with His blood! I pray you ask for Divine Grace that you may not accumulate sin as you increase your wealth! There is awful sin resting somewhere in the Church. I know some Christians who are giving to God's cause beyond their means and others fully up to their proportion. And yet there are souls perishing by tens of thousands because they have not the Gospel and they might hear the Gospel within a week if we had the pecuniary means of sending it to them. We have the men waiting, but not the means to support them.

There are heathen nations in darkness ready to receive the Gospel—Providence has opened the door—but there is a lack of funds for entering the door. Now, I believe there is no lack of funds whatever among the whole body of professors, but the gold gets into the hands of certain pretenders to religion who are base hypocrites, since they profess to be wholly Christ's, but their actions belie them. They do no more than others, and what is done is rather to get their names in the subscription lists than with an eye to God's Glory. It is a sad thing it should be so, for we ought never to give to receive honor of man, but out of love to God and God alone. The more you have, the more responsibility you have! Get Grace, then, to know and feel your responsibility and ask for more Grace as your talents increase, that you may be honest with your God.

Thirdly, fear God and His goodness, *lest He turn His hand* and make you poor. How soon can He dry the springs and send a drought upon you! He can send seven years of famine to eat up all the years of plenty. If He should do so to you who serve Him so miserably, how you will wish that you had served Him when you had the opportunity! God never leaves His people, but He often chastises them. And I do not doubt that many a man is brought down in the world because God tried him in other circumstances, but he was not faithful. "Ah," says the Master, "he is not a good steward and I will not trust him any more." I should not wonder but that many of you might have been rich, but when in prosperity you did not give in proportion and the Lord said, "I will not put My talents out to so bad a servant."

Is it not often so, that when Christian men have given away their wealth in shovelfuls, God has given it back to them in wagon loads? "There was a man," said Bunyan, "and some did count him mad. The more he gave away the more he had." Let all wealthy Christians remember that He who gives them prosperity today may give them adversity tomorrow and therefore with holy fear let them adore their God while they have the opportunity of serving Him. You should fear the Lord now, especially while you have your children about you and you are in health, because

you will have to leave all these things very soon. They may leave you, but certainly *you will have to leave them.*

Oh, let loose of worldly comforts! Enjoy them as though you had them not. Take them and say as you receive them, “*These are but passing, fleeting things.*” Embrace not such deceptive clouds, look not on these as your rest, but as slight refreshments on the way to your eternal Home. Beloved, fear God and His goodness because *He is better than all His gifts of Providence.* Let Him give you a fair house and a goodly estate. Let Him plant you among the rich and the noble. Let Him bestow on you good health and cheerful spirits. Let Him give you a numerous and happy family. Let Him cause His candle to shine upon you—still He is better than all this!

All these put together could not fill a hungry soul. God alone can satisfy a true heart. You have Him, and having Him you have more than all the rest can contribute to you! Therefore, fear Him and fear His goodness. This is a lesson for the prosperous people of God to learn.

II. May the Holy Spirit help us to say a few solemn words to SUCH AS ARE NOT GOD’S PEOPLE, but remain enemies to God, careless and yet prosperous. God has been very good to you. He has spared your lives, that is something. You might to have been in Hell, you ought to have been there. If Justice had had its due you would have been there. You have oftentimes provoked God. *You could not bear to be teased 10 minutes and yet you have vexed your God these 40 years* with your sins, your negligence, your despising of His Sabbaths, of His Word, of His Christ. You have put your finger, as it were, into the very eye of God in speaking ill of His Gospel—perhaps in ridiculing those Truths in which His honor is most concerned. And yet you have been spared!

You have not only been spared, but have been surrounded with the comforts of this life. I speak to many here who are not among the poorest and the neediest—you have received many comforts. In fact, you have all that heart could wish except the one thing necessary. God has dealt very graciously with you, indeed. Now hear a message from God to you! Will you not fear Him and serve Him out of gratitude? Is it not unjust to receive so much and to give nothing in return, no love, no thanks, no service? If you make a tool you make it for your own use and expect some benefit from it. God has made *you* for His own Glory and yet He has had no Glory out of you. If you keep any animal on your farm you expect service and yet God has kept you and you have rendered Him no return. Do you not feel ashamed that so good a God should be so ill repaid?

I know you have so much manliness about you that you would feel very hurt if any friend who had rendered you a kindness should accuse you of being ungrateful. You have always felt through life that ingratitude is one of the vilest of vices and that it lowers him below a brute, since the brute has a kindness for those that do it a kindness. The dog will fawn in return if you fondle it. The ox knows its owner and “the ass its master’s crib.” And would you despise yourself to be worse than they? And yet you are so if you fear not God who has treated you so well. Let me ask you, why will you not serve Him? Is there anything that you can set off against His kindness to you? Do you suspect Him of any sinister motive? If so, your

gratitude might be withheld. Do you suppose that Divine goodness does not lay you under any obligation? Surely you cannot be so foolish!

Well, then, if, indeed, God has for long years of remarkable goodness had from you no recompense but neglect, shall it always be so? Is there not an invincible power in tenderness? The old fable tells us of the sun and the wind which strove to see which could first remove the traveler's cloak. The wind blustered, but the traveler only wrapped his cloak more tightly about him. But when the sun shone warm and soft upon his head, the traveler speedily cast off his cloak. If God had dealt roughly with you, I should not have wondered if you had said, "I will not serve Him." But after His being so kind to you—off with that cloak of indifference and be His servant! Will not the warmth of God's love thaw your soul? The chilling frost of threats might have hardened you into a rock of ice, but this sunshine of prosperity which the Lord has given you—will it not melt you—will it not bring you to Jesus? God grant that it may be so with many in this house, now and evermore.

Ought you not also, Brethren, to *fear God out of hope*? If He has dealt so exceedingly well with you in temporals, though you have not feared Him, have you not every reason to expect that He will do as well for you in spirituals? You call at a friend's house—you are riding on horseback. He takes your horse into the stable and is remarkably attentive to it—the creature is well groomed, well housed, well fed. You are not at all afraid that you will be shut out—there is surely a warm place in the parlor for the *rider* where the horse is so well attended to in the stable. Now, your body, which I might liken to the horse, has had its temporal prosperity in abundance. Surely the Lord will take care of your *soul* if you seek His face!

Let your prayer be, "My God, my Father, be my Guide. Since You have dealt so well with me in these external matters, give me Grace within my heart, give me the true riches, give me to love Your Son and trust in Him to be forever Your child. You have given me the nether springs, give me to drink of the upper springs. I have the blessings which You give to the ungodly, O give me the blessings of the godly, the peculiar heritage of Your saints!" O Holy Spirit, constrain many thus to hope and pray!

Should you not, again, fear the Lord and His goodness out of great *admiration*? For how well, how kindly, how strangely well has He dealt with you! You could not have been patient with anyone who had plagued you such a length of time and yet God has been so with you! I have sometimes thought, as I have read the story of the dying Savior, that even if Jesus Christ had never lived and died for me, if I had no part in His precious blood, I must still love Him because of His love to other people. He is so good and so kind, that were I lost, myself, I must admire the loving Savior. Do you not admire what you have seen of God's kindness to you? And do not you feel that such a God and such a Christ should have your heart?

Lastly, let me say you may well fear God out of *apprehension* concerning His goodness, for the goodness which He now renders to you will pass away before long. All the temporal mercy of God is but like a land-flood—but the surface water. You have not touched the great springs which can-

not be dried up. The great deeps belong only to Believers. Theirs is the fountain of Jacob which never can be exhausted. Your comforts are but the surface waters and will be gone. What will you do, then, when you have only the goodness of God to think of to leave a bitterness upon the memory because you loved not God for His kindness when you had it?

Remember, if God's kindnesses do not bring you to repentance, He will deal with you in another way. The axe of the Roman lictors was bound up in a bundle of rods and the bundle was tied together with knotted cord—and the reason was this—when the judge examined the prisoner, then the lictors began to undo the cords, knot by knot, waiting to see if there was any hope that the prisoner might escape. They waited to see if there was any repentance that might permit the scourging to be put away. If not, when the cords were unbound, then the rods were used and if the culprit turned out to be a greater offender—still, then came the axe—but only as a last resource.

So the Lord, up to now, has treated you with great mercy. He has not untied the knots yet, but the angel of Justice is beginning to untie them. There is trouble in store for you except you turn and repent! There will come first one rod—sickness to the child. Then another—loss in business, sickness to yourself, death to your wife—more rods. I have seen this in observing God's hand in many. And if all the rods bring you not to repentance, then the axe remains to be used last. Woe to that man whom neither goodness nor severity can move—whom neither loving kindness could draw, nor justice drive! For such a man there remains nothing but to be cast away forever from God whom he would not love, from Christ whom he would not accept, from mercy which he despised, from love which he rejected. O let it not be so with you!

I feel this morning as if my tongue were tied, comparatively, contrasted with the way in which I want to speak to you young people who at present live in much gaiety and pleasure. It would be such a noble thing, such a *just* thing, such a fitting thing, if in the heyday of your joy you would come to Jesus because God's mercies draw you. O say in your hearts, "My Lord, You have shone on me and I, like the flower, will open to You and pour out the love of my heart like sweet perfume. You have kept me from poverty and from sickness. You have preserved me from many of the ills of life—here, then, Your lamb for whom You have tempered the wind, comes to You and says—'Good Shepherd, carry me in Your bosom. Mark me with the red mark of Your blood. Take me into Your flock.'—

***'Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found.'***

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE THE SERMON—Psalm 103.

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

LET HIM ALONE

NO. 1140

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

***“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”
Hosea 4:17.***

TO what purpose these vast assemblies Sunday after Sunday? Why do you crowd these aisles and galleries till every seat is occupied, and every foot of standing room is filled? Have you, all of you, a zeal to worship? Do you all thirst to hear the Word of the Lord? Ah me! I am beset with fears and misgivings. My heart is troubled for full many of you. Many persons entertain the evil notion that preaching sermons and hearing sermons is a light matter. When the occasion is past, the exhortation closed, the congregations broken up and the Sunday over, they think that all is done and ended. The doors are shut and what they have heard they no longer heed any more than if they had been at the theater, and the curtain had fallen, and the lights were out.

To them the Sunday is but as any other day and the preacher but an orator who helps them to while away an hour. But it is not so. Whether *we* look for a result from the proclamation of God's Word or not, you may be sure God looks for it! No man in his senses sows a field without looking for a harvest. No man engages in trade without expecting profit. Oh, Sirs, God is not mocked! He does not send His Word that it may return unto Him void. Neither does He think that it is enough when His servants have been as those who make pleasant music, or sing a sweet song and the audience may repair to the sanctuary as they would go to a theater—content to be pleased and careless about being profited.

Listen, then, to this solemn lesson! For every Sunday that I occupy this place I shall have to give an account before God. My fidelity to my congregation is of such solemn moment that were it not for the infinite mercy of God in Christ Jesus, I feel it had been better for me that I had never been born than to have to render in that account. Oh, the faults of which I am, myself, personally conscious! They fill me with shame, though they are, I fear, but few compared with what God, Himself, beholds in the service I attempt to render!

But, then, *you* also will have to answer for every sermon you have heard or may yet hear. Dare any of you imagine that an opportunity of hearing the Gospel is given to you that you may tread it under foot? Oh, what would dying men give to hear the Gospel again! What would lost souls in Hell give if they could have the opportunities of Grace again! They are priceless beyond all estimate and, as they are so precious, a strict account will be taken of them! The hearer who went his way and said, “I

heard the sermon and I formed a judgment of the preacher's style," and flippantly quoted this or that, will find that another view of the service has been taken by Almighty God—and another form of reckoning will be carried out before His Judgment Seat!

Do you suppose that the preaching of the Gospel is no more than the performance of a play? Or shall men come and listen to the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, preached earnestly to them with less concern than to an orator in Parliament? Are death and judgment, Heaven and Hell, to be looked upon as common themes which awaken nothing but a passing interest? You may judge so if you will—but God's servants dare not think so, nor does God, Himself, think so.

The text suggests these enquiries. It appears that the Ephraimites, or rather the whole people of Israel, the 10 tribes, had been warned again and again and again—and because they did not turn at the warning, but refused the message of God and continued in their sin—at last God was provoked with them and He said to His servants, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." No longer waste your powers on careless minds. On such a rock as that it is vain to plow. The case is become utterly hopeless! Cease your labor. Go somewhere else where your hallowed occupation will be more remunerative, where hearts will be touched and ears will be opened to the Word. "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."

Fearing lest there may be some in this congregation—no, being persuaded that there *are* some on the verge of being such, I shall try to speak, first, upon the sin which provoked this punishment. Then I will speak upon the strange punishment. And thirdly, upon such practical reasoning as arises out of the whole subject.

I. WHAT THEN, IS THE SIN WHICH PROVOKES THIS UTTERANCE, "Let that man alone"? The sin appeared to be, in Ephraim's case, continuance in *idolatry*. Israel had set up idols. They knew the Lord, but when they separated from the tribe of Judah, Jeroboam, in order to keep them from going up to Jerusalem, set up golden calves. It was not intended that they should worship other gods, but the theory was that they would worship God, the true God, through the representation of an ox, which represented power.

It was a symbol which they conceived to be appropriate and instructive, just as they tell us nowadays, "We do not want people to worship idols, but they are to worship Christ through a representation of a cross, or of a man hanging on a crucifix. This will teach them and assist their devotions. They are not to worship the *image*, itself, but to worship God *through* the image. Now, be it never forgotten that this method of devotion is expressly forbidden in the Law and is contrary to one of the Ten Commandments. "You shall not make to yourself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything which is in Heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them nor worship them."

This command was disregarded, and the 10 tribes became practically the representatives of the Papist or Ritualist of the present day. They worshipped God through images and after a while they went further, (as this kind of superstition always does go further)—they began to set up false gods and goddesses—Baal, Ashtaroth and the like. Thus at length they went aside altogether from the Most High. Prophet after Prophet came and said, “If you do this you will be visited with judgments for it. The Lord our God is a jealous God and can only be worshipped in the manner which He has, Himself, ordained. If you decide to worship Him in these new-fangled ways, with these devices and superstitious ordinances of your own, He will be angry with you, and will smite you.”

They listened not to these Prophets. Even Elijah, that mightiest of God’s messengers, gained but a slender hearing from them. Elisha, his successor, was equally disregarded. Servant after servant of God’s household came to them and admonished them in the name of the Lord. It was all to no purpose. They despised the message, persecuted those who delivered it and in the sequel put many of them to evil deaths. So, at last, the Lord said, “They are bound to their idols; they cling and cleave to them with a morbid infatuation. Their heart is callous. Their purpose stubborn, they will never give them up. Let My servants, therefore, return and refrain themselves, and go no more to them. Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”

I fear the like judgment will come upon the Ritualists of our time, but I prefer to deal rather with you who hear me this day. To you, also, this bitter foreboding is addressed, or ever your ears are deaf to counsel and your conscience numb to reproof. Any vice deliberately harbored, any *one* sin persistently indulged may bring about this fearful result. God will speak of you, then, not as an erring creature whom it is possible to reclaim, but as a wretched outcast whom it is necessary to abandon! A man may be overtaken with a fault. If he has been guilty of drunkenness, his conscience rebukes him. Falling into that sin once or twice, he has felt, (as well he may), that he has been degraded by it. Let that man continue—and I might especially say, “Let that woman continue,” (for the common use or the constant abuse of intoxicating drinks exerts its baneful spell over both sexes)—let anyone continue to violate the laws of sobriety—and before long that sin will become a rooted habit. Then conscience will cease to accuse and God will practically say, “Ephraim is given to his cups: let him alone!”

Or let a man begin some practice of fraud in his business. At first it will trouble him—he will feel uneasy. By-and-by his systematic dishonesty will bring him no compunction. He will become so familiar with crime that he will call it *custom* and wonder how he could have ever been so chicken-hearted as to feel any trouble about it at all! God will let him alone and leave him to eat the fruit of his own ways. He is given to his sin and his sin will bind him with iron chains and hold him a captive.

I cannot, of course, pick out the special sin of any here present, but whatever your sin is, you are warned against it! Your conscience tells you it is wrong. If you persevere in it, it may come to be your eternal ruin. God will say, "The man is joined unto idols: let him alone!" Continuance in sin provokes sentence—especially when that continuance in sin is perpetrated in the teeth of many admonitions. A person who continues in sin, unwarned, may, comparatively, have but little fault compared with another who is frequently and faithfully rebuked.

The child, who in his early sinfulness was affectionately admonished by a gracious mother, who felt the hot drops of her tears fall on his brow because his offense had grieved her. The child who was again and again admonished when he had grown somewhat older, by a faithful father, but laughed to scorn paternal teaching and went further and further astray, does not sin at all so cheaply as the Arab of the streets who has been poisoned by bad example from his youth up. Some of you who have sat under the sound of the Gospel, where the Word of God is preached in awful earnestness, will sin 10 times more grievously if you despise the exhortations of the Lord, than those whose Sundays were wasted by listening to sermons which never touched their conscience and were never intended to do other than lull the moral sense and charm the taste.

You, young man, cannot have been warned as you have been of late by that kind friend. You cannot have been admonished as you have been, lately, by that Bible you have been reading, which has deeply impressed you. You cannot have been impressed as you have recently been by the example and especially by the dying words, of your departed sister and then go on as you used to do, without incurring seven-fold guilt! Continuance in sin after admonition is that which provokes God to say, "He is joined to his idols: let him alone."

Remember, too, that where a man becomes guilty of despising the chastisements of God and perseveres in his wickedness after having suffered for it, there, again, the guilt assumes a double dye. For instance, the sailor has been profane, a common swearer. At whatever port he has touched he has spent his time in riotous living. But the other day he was at sea in a tremendous storm and he cried unto God. He escaped, as it were, by the skin of his teeth, and while he was being saved from impending death, his heart trembled on account of his guilt. Now, if that man, after being saved from shipwreck, goes back to blasphemy and debauchery—there will be sharp reckoning with him.

That soldier who has been in the hospital, laid aside by sickness brought on by his own folly, who, after his life was despaired of, has nevertheless recovered—if he shall return like a dog to his vomit—every sin that he will commit will count for many times as much as those sins he rebelled in before that warning. That young man who left his father's house in the country, where he had been trained to virtue, and came to London, and plunged into its whirlpool of vice, but who, in the infinite mercy of God has been snatched like a brand from the burning for a while

and is able, again, to come up to worship with God's people—if he should go back like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire—woe be unto him!

It may be that he will never have God's rod to make him smart again. The rod will be put up and the axe of justice will be used before long. You know how the Roman lictors, as they went through the street with the consul, carried a bundle of rods. And when a culprit was brought before the consul, he would say sometimes, "Let him be smitten with rods," and they began to unbind the bundle. It was a rule that the "fasces," as they were called, should be tightly bound so that it would take a long time to unbind them. This was to give time for the criminal to make confession, or to plead something as a mitigating circumstance.

Sometimes, where the case was one of treason, which perhaps the culprit repented and confessed, he would be forgiven. They would be, for a while, untying the knots, and the consul would look the man in the face, to see if there were any signs of relenting, or if he were altogether stubborn. Then when the rods were unbound, it was a good thing for the criminal if the lictors began to smite him with the rods, because that might be a token that he was not to die. But if the rods were laid aside and the axe brought forth, then it was known that he must die.

So God has smitten you in mercy. Fever and disease have been God's lictors that have used the rods upon you. By-and-by He will say, "Let him alone," because He is reserving you for the axe of future and inevitable doom. Oh, Sirs, the Lord knows all your hearts! Where are you? I may be speaking right into the face of some of you who have endured many afflictions and been brought low by poverty and need, or by disease and sickness, so that you have come to death's door. And all this has been the milder chastisement of God by which He has been saying to you, "My Child, do not destroy yourself!" It has been the hand of Mercy put upon the bridle of that wild horse of yours, to draw him back, that he may not leap with you over the precipice! But if you spur him on in defiance of the hand of Mercy, you will be permitted to take the leap to your own destruction, for God may say, "He is joined to his idols: let him alone."

Once again. This punishment may be brought, and generally is brought, upon men when they have done distinct violence to their conscience. Before sin has come to its worst there is a great deal of struggling in men's minds. Conscience will not be quiet. It cries out against the maltreatment which it suffers from ungodly lives. Many a young man, especially if he has been well brought up, and many a young woman, too, if she has been trained in religious ways, will have times in which they are pulled up short and it comes to this—"I have been wrong. If I go further in this wrong I shall suffer for it. There is a way of Grace. I see the door of Mercy open to me." They have stood hesitating, as if a hand had been laid on their shoulder, and they have felt as though they were turned from the wrong and drawn into the right way.

But some have fought against Mercy, and the evil spirit has set before them all the sparkle of fleshly lust and worldly pleasure. And at last, with a desperate effort, they have dragged themselves away to their sins. Now, the next time they do that they will not suffer half the compunction. And the next time after that they will have less, still, for every time Conscience is violated it becomes less vigorous and is more easily tranquilized. I remember an earnest Christian man telling me how, before conversion, he used to spend his nights in shameful ways and frequently would be in the streets—though the son of a most respectable man—in a state of half intoxication.

As he stood under a lamp one night, with his brain confused and his mind bewildered, he put his hand into his pocket and took out a letter. By some strange impulse he was induced to begin to read it. It was a tender appeal from a loving, pious sister. Unknown reflections cast their shadows across his breast. Taking counsel with himself he thought, “Well, what is it to be?” He was sober enough, even then, to feel as if he had come to a point. Thinking over the matter, and deliberating upon it, it pleased God to lead him to put that letter back into his pocket, and say, “I will go home, and I will seek my sister’s God.”

That resolution proved to be the first step to his conversion—

**“He left the hateful ways of sin,
Turned to the fold and entered in.”**

Ever afterwards he came to regard this as the crisis of his soul’s history. He said to me, “If that night I had gone elsewhere and God’s Spirit had not graciously led me there and then to something like decision, it may be that it would have been the very last time my conscience ever would have troubled me. And I should have gone headlong to destruction.” I wonder whether such a time as that may have come to some of my hearers! If it is so, O Eternal Spirit, throw in the weight of Your Omnipotent influence to decide the will of man for that which is good and right—and let not evil win the day!

Do you not see in the pictures I have drawn and the descriptions I have given, some delineation of that aggravated guilt which provokes the withering blast of incensed Mercy turned into Wrath which wails forth the woe of my text, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone”?

II. Now, I crave your earnest attention to THE SINGULAR PUNISHMENT—“Let him alone.” Is there anything in this to excite our surprise? The calamity is so dire that we may well shudder at it! But the sentence is so just and the issue so reasonable that we can only acknowledge it to be such as might have been expected. What can be more natural? There is a piece of ground. Last year it was fertilized and it was sown with good seed, but nothing has come up from it. The year before the like pains were bestowed upon it.

They trenched it, and it has been thoroughly drained. There could not have been better seed cast upon it than has been used. Yet nothing grew last year. No harvest rewarded the laborer’s toil. Year after year its hope-

less barrenness has vexed the farmer's soul. Farmer, what will you do this year? "Do?" he asks. "Why, I will do nothing! What can be done with it? Let it alone." Is he not right in his verdict? Here is a man grievously sick. The doctor called upon him, but they shut the door in his face. He called again and he gained access to the patient—but the patient cursed him. He called again and gave him a prescription. The sick man took the prescription, tore it in pieces and flung it away. What do you mean to do, Doctor? "What can I do?" he says. "I must let him alone! What can I do? My services are rejected. I am treated with insult! What more remains for me?"

And here is a sinner in danger of being lost. The Lord says to him, "Behold My Son! I have anointed Him to be a Savior. If you trust Him, He will save you." This counsel is despised. It is thought nothing of, forgotten, neglected, put off—in some cases scoffed at, made a matter of ridicule, treated with hatred—and perhaps the deliverer of the message is made the subject of persecution. What will God say? Why, "That is a case in which I will let him alone! I sent his mother to him when he was a child. I sent his Sunday school teacher to him. I sent a godly friend to him. I have sent My servant, the minister, to him, times out of mind. I have put good books in his way scores of times. It is all in vain!"

Brothers and Sisters, is there anything that can be more reasonable or more just than for God, on His part, to say, "Let him alone"? The tree never has brought forth any fruit! What need is there to waste any more time upon it? It seems right on God's part that He should say, "Let him alone." You judge if it is not so! Well, but what happens when a man is thus let alone? Why, he is as a great many people would like to be. Liberty is given him! No. Let me correct myself—he takes license to pursue his own course. He is no more "pestered and bothered about religion."

He is no more fretted and worried in his conscience about duties and obligations. God's people begin to let him alone, for, if they speak to him, he only growls at them and returns an answer which grieves their hearts. So they keep out of his way, or if they do speak to him, their word, though given in earnest, is taken in jest. Like water on a slab of marble, the warning does not penetrate the surface or affect his heart. He has got out of the way of being impressed. Now he has no mother to trouble him. She has long slept under the green ward.

He has no poor old father, now, to talk to him about his sins—he has long been carried to Heaven. No minister disturbs him, now, for he gives the servant of God a wide berth and keeps clear of him. No books come in his way that can at all alarm him—he will not open them if he thinks they might. Give him the Sunday newspaper, that is enough for him! Give him a book of science, or something that has to do with this time. Having put his faith in infidelity, he fortifies his heart against fear—he takes care not to trouble himself about religion. No qualms or questioning. No doubts or disputes disturb him. No fierce temptations or fiery trials distract his peace.

Everything seems to go merrily and smoothly with him. He is the man to make money. He is the jolly fellow that can indulge in sin with impunity—put his hand into the fire and take it out again without being hurt—where another would be badly burned. He seems to wear a charmed life. God has said, “Let him alone!” Those about him envy him—but if they knew! If they knew! If they knew! If they knew that God had “set him in slippery places,” and that “his foot will slide in due time,” they would no more envy him his prosperity and peace than they would envy the bullock that is fattening for the Christmas show, or the full-fleshed sheep that is driven to the shambles. His end is destruction!

Perhaps I am speaking to some who are wrapping themselves up quite complacently in the idea that the lines have fallen to them in pleasant places, that fortune smiles on them and their reputation is in the ascendant. They would not wish to have their course altered and yet the terrible sentence has gone out against them, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” O men, I pity you from my soul, but I fear you will ridicule my sympathy. Alas! Alas, I can but mourn in secret, for I see that your day is coming! I have shown you, then, what it is to be let alone by God.

Do you ask, now, “What is the general result of it?” Why, let me tell you. For the most part it leads the man into greater sin than he had ever committed before. It leads him to become more defiant and more boastful than before. Very frequently he becomes a scoffer and a skeptic. And not infrequently he becomes intolerant to the poor and a persecutor of those who fear the Lord and observe His ordinances. Restraints are taken off from him—those moral obligations which curbed him and that respect for public opinion which induced him to practice a little decency—he has renounced. They are nowhere to be found.

Vain conceits fill the place of virtuous counsels. He violated Conscience and Conscience has left him. He wearied out those who rebuked him and they have ceased to reprove him. Or if they rebuke him, he turns a deaf ear to their admonitions. He has become like the adder that cannot, and will not, hear the wisest charmer. So the man goes from bad to worse, still with the full conceit that he is among the happiest and most highly favored of mortals! But here is the evil of it! The dreadful sound is in my ears! God has said to all the agents that might do that man good, “Let him alone!” But wait awhile! He will not say that to the agents which can do him *harm*.

God has not said to the Devil, “Let him alone!” He will not say to Death, “Let him alone!” He will not say to Judgment, “Let him alone!” Nor will He say to the devils of Hell, “Let him alone!” He will not say to infinite Misery, “Let him alone!” On the contrary, He will let loose all the destroying angels against him and the man who was let alone in sin shall not be let alone in punishment! I cannot speak of this as I could wish. These are things to be thought of and weighed in the soul. I pray that you may so weigh them, that, if you have fallen into a state of indifference, you may be awakened out of it and resolve that it shall not be so any longer. Oh, that you would

cry out in terror, “God helping me, I will not be one of those of whom God shall say, ‘Let him alone!’ ”

III. THERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM THIS VERY SAD SUBJECT to which I must now draw your attention. It becomes the preacher, so long as he does not know the individual—and this he never can know—to whom God has said, “Let him alone!” to try and use the utmost endeavor to awaken every careless and indifferent man within his reach. I pray the Spirit of God to help me while I try to do so. Some of you are living in this world entirely for your own pleasure or your own gain. I do not deny that it is right that you should seek gain, or that it is natural that you should desire pleasure. Neither do I think that attention to the things of God will deprive you of any gain that is worth having, or of any pleasure that is desirable. But the sad thing is that many of you are living as if there were no hereafter.

Now, do you really believe that there is no future in reserve for you? If you are quite persuaded that you are no better than a dog. If you are quite certain that you are nothing but an animal and that in due time, when you die, and the worms eat you, that will be the end of you—why, Sirs, if I were of the same mind I should have but little to say to you! I should wish you to be as virtuous as may be in this life—for that is the best way to be happy and to benefit the community—but I do not know that this is any particular business of mine. I would leave that matter to the policeman and the magistrate.

But do you really suppose that you have no higher origin than the flesh and no further destiny than to mingle your dust with the mold of the earth? Would you like me to speak to you as to a dog? Would you like anybody to *treat* you as a dog? Being, as you say, only a dog, why should you not be treated as such? Can you, in your heart of hearts, really believe that the cemetery and the shroud, and the sexton’s spade will be the last of you? You do not believe it! You cannot believe it! You may try to persuade yourself that the terrors of judgment to come are merely bugbears of the imagination—but there is something within you—an irrepressible consciousness of immortality which tells you you will live after death.

God has fixed the conviction of a future state as a kind of *instinct* in men, so that where the Gospel has never come, a future state has been conjectured, though for the most part but dimly inferred rather than distinctly expected. There has scarcely been a heathen tribe so abject but they have had glimmerings of the fact that there is another state after death. Well, my dear Sir, I cannot conceive that you have degraded yourself into the notion that you are a beast! At any rate, I will not allow *myself* to think that you are a beast. You will live somewhere or other after your present career is closed. Does it not stand to reason that if you have lived entirely for self there must be a reckoning with you?

Somebody made you! God made you! If you keep a horse or a cow you expect some service of it and, if God made you, He must expect you to

render Him some service. But you have rendered Him none. Though He has winked at your disobedience in this life, do you think He will always wink at it? Well, if you think so, you are grossly mistaken, for, as the Lord lives, there is a Day of Judgment coming when the Lord Jesus Christ shall descend from Heaven with a shout and all the dead shall rise out of their graves! And all the living shall appear before His Great White Throne. You will as certainly be there as you are here!

And when you are there, you will discover that every secret thought of yours has been written down against you and will be read out and published before mankind. Then and there, for every idle word you have spoken, you will be brought into judgment! Can you think of this as *possible*, even though you may not admit that it is certain? Can you yet remain callous, indifferent, unconcerned? Is there not a something in your heart that says, "If this is so, it is terrible—it is terrible for me! What must I do to be saved?" I am bound to answer you, (and cheerfully do I answer you), "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Whoever you may be. However far you may have gone astray, trust Jesus, dying and bleeding for sinful men, and now gone into the highest heavens to plead at the right hand of the infinite Majesty—trust Jesus and you shall live! But if you have not Christ to put away your sin, to espouse your cause and to plead for you in that Last Great Day—as surely as you live, whether you believe it or not, this is true—the Judge will say, "Depart from Me you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels."

And that may happen to you within much less time than you dream. Not many Monday nights ago, there came a beloved Christian Sister, here, who joined with us in prayer. She was taken ill. She did not leave this house conscious. She was taken home with death upon her. Her disease proved to be past human aid and in an hour or two she died. I hope there will never be another death in this Tabernacle, but more than once individuals have been thus called away from our very midst. Before this congregation shall have broken up, some of you may have gone to the world of spirits! In all probability within this week, one of you will be summoned before the Great Judge. If it is you, Sir, or if it is you, good Woman, are you ready?

Are you ready? Do you feel no trouble about that question? Then I think you may be among those whom God has given up. But if the question rings through your soul like a knell and cuts like a sharp knife, then I pray you do not think God has given you up—and do not give yourself up—but fly to Jesus! Yes, before you lay your head upon the pillow and fall asleep, cry mightily unto the living God to save you so that you may be His in the day when the earth and the heavens will be in a blaze and ungodly men will sink into Hell! That is the first practical inference—it is the preacher's duty to continue to warn men.

Another practical thought is—if any of you are awakened, be obedient to the voice of Conscience and the calling of the Spirit. Oh, if you have any

life, do not attempt to stifle it! Rather fan it to a flame! If you do but feel a little of the pain of penitence, pray God that it may deepen into true contrition and sincere repentance. If you feel anything, do not, I pray you, repress the feeling if it is anything of a spiritual kind. I knew when I was seeking the Lord what it was to feel that. I would have given everything I had to be able to repent. When on my knees, I felt that if I could but have shed a tear for sin, I would have been willing to be poor and blind my whole life long!

To have a hard heart is an awful thing! It is well, however, when it can repent and when the man can smite upon his bosom, with tears, and sobs, and groans, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" If there is any tenderness in you, oh, do not crush it out! Do not despise it! Look well to it and, above all, fly away to Christ at once! With many a man it is, "now or never." Whenever you hear the clock tick, this is what it says to you, "Now or never." "Now or never." "Now or never." "Now or never." Ah, if some would hear that, it might be the means of driving them to the Cross of Christ at once, where they would find eternal life!

Dear young people, especially, do not postpone the thought of eternal things while you are young and tender. Do not say, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for you." When Grace comes into the heart while the heart is yet young and tender, there is less struggling against it in most cases. And it is a more cheerful task for the soul to submit itself to the power of Christ. The Lord bless that thought to you and make it a converting power to your souls.

And, last of all, if there should be an unhappy individual here who says, "I believe God has given me up"—let me ask you a question. Friend, does the suggestion of such a thing make you very sad? Then the Lord has *not* given you up! Do you say, "I feel alarmed lest I am given up"? Then you are not given up! He is more likely to be given up of God who says, "I do not care whether I am or not! Give me my jolly companions. Give me my amusements. Give me plenty of money to spend, and good health and strength to enjoy myself, and you may have Heaven if you like—I will run the risk of the future."

Ah, Sir, though you talk big, I do not believe in your bravado, for I know that many braggadocio sinners are cowards at heart, and I hope, notwithstanding what you say, there is something in you that answers to the appeals I have made. But there may be some who really mean, down deep in their souls, that they have steeled themselves against reproof and are prepared to dare all consequences. They stand like oaks I have seen shivered from top to bottom by lightning, never to send forth a shoot again. Ghastly and grim amidst the forest, they lift up their heads as though they were huge deer with antlers, glorying in their desolation.

There are such withered souls, defiant in awful desperation. Oh, if there are such here, if they were friends of mine, I would say, "O Man, be in pain and travail like a woman with child rather than be damned! O Man, better for you that you should, from this moment, begin a life of tor-

ment and agony, and never look up to God's sun again, and never see the fields, nor hear the birds sing with joy, nor ever have a hopeful thought of this world again, so that you may but be saved, rather than go on with all your mirth and jollity, and then lift up your eyes in that eternity to come where you shall be forever, forever, forever lost! For, let those say what they will, who are the enemies of your soul—I speak the Truth of God before the Lord—if you are lost, you will be lost forever!

And if God once pronounces that word, “Depart, you cursed!” back to Him you can never come, but departing, and departing, and departing into blacker night, and into denser glooms, you must forever and forever continue. This is the dread inscription over the gate of Hell—“All hope abandon, you who enter here!” This is branded on their chains and stamped upon their fetters! This is the worm that never dies and the fire that never can be quenched! The letters of fire that burn overhead in the dungeon of eternal despair spell out this word, “Eternity! Eternity! Eternity!” O my fellow Men and Women, as I shall meet you at the Judgment Seat, I implore you to fly away to Jesus lest you perish eternally!

When your eyes and mine shall meet again in the next state. When we have passed through the grave and the resurrection, do not say I did not tell you of sin and of punishment and of the Savior! You will not dare to say it! But as I, poor guilty sinner as I am, stand there, this shall not be one of the sins laid to my charge—that I was not in earnest with you—and that I did not speak all that I felt to be the Truths of God. To Jesus Christ I fly, myself, on my own account, for if I am not washed in His blood, unhappiest of mortals surely am I, for I have preached to more men for a larger number of years than any other man, perhaps, that lives! And if I have played with souls, I have their blood upon me and the most accursed of men am I!

But I shelter my soul beneath the purple canopy of my Savior's atoning blood! My Hearers, come under that same shelter, all of you! There is room enough for you! That blessed purple covering will hang between us and God even though there were millions of us, and it will cover us all! Nor can there be any fear that the dart of Divine Vengeance shall smite any of us who will cower down beneath the blood-red Propitiation! God save you, Friends, who are strangers here! God save you, Friends, who frequent these courts! God save you all for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Proverbs 1:20-33.

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

A CAUTION FOR SIN-SICK SOULS NO. 2819

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1861.**

*“When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then
Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to King Jareb: yet he
cannot heal you, nor cure you of your wound.”
Hosea 5:13.*

THERE is a tendency, in the heart of man, to want something to look at rather than something to trust to. The children of Israel had God for their King and a glorious King He was. Where else was there found such impartial justice, such tender compassion for the poor, or such perfect righteousness in every statute that was ordained and every sentence that was enforced? But they said, “No, let us have a king whom we can see—a king whose pomp and magnificence shall dazzle our eyes, even though he will take our sons to be his bond slaves and our daughters to be his confectionaries. Let us have a king that we may see the gaudy glitter of his crown with our eyes and hear the sovereign mandate from his throne with our ears.” God granted them that request.

Their sole allegiance was due to that almighty King whose superlative Glory admitted of no natural similitude. The Lord Jehovah was the God of Israel, a God always ready to forgive their sins, to hear their prayers and to seek their welfare. But the children of Israel said, “Not so! Let us make a king to judge us like all the nations—and let us set up gods after the fashion of the Gentiles, that our hands can handle and that our eyes can behold! Let us have blocks of wood and stone. Let us have the carved images of the heathen.” Neither would they rest till they had set up for themselves in every high place, gods that were not gods. For this the Lord chastised them—He gave up their lands to famine and their habitations to the spoiler. He brought enemies from far countries to lay them waste, so that the State became sick and the whole nation impoverished. Then the people of Ephraim opened their eyes and looked to their condition.

But when Judah saw himself to be wounded, what course did he pursue? There was God waiting to help him when he returned to his allegiance. There was Jehovah ready to heal all his distresses, to give him back all that had been laid waste and to restore to him everything that the spoiler had taken! But, no, the arm of Jehovah was not enough for Judah—Judah must rely upon a force that could look imposing in its array. “Oh,” said the people, “let us send to the king of Assyria and let him

furnish us with tens of thousands of soldiers, and aid us with his mighty men so we shall be safe! Thus will our State recover itself.” But if they had trusted in God, my Brothers and Sisters, how secure they would have been! Mark what God did for them in the days of Hezekiah. Their enemies came upon them in great numbers—Hezekiah prayed before the Lord. And it came to pass, *that night*, God sent forth the blast of His nostrils and their foes were utterly destroyed! When the men of Judah arose early in the morning, “behold, they were all dead corpses!” As often as they trusted in God, they found immediate succor and their enemies were put to confusion!

But not so was their heart stayed in its confidence. No, they cannot rely upon the unseen arm. They must have men and men’s devices. They must have something they can see. Unless they have the spear, the sword and the shield of the Assyrian state, they can feel no sense of security. They went to the Assyrian king—they sent to king Jareb, “yet could he not heal them, nor cure them of their wound.” How foolish they were to hope he could, for, as soon as they sent their ambassadors to the king of Assyria, he flattered himself while he spoke to them, “Oh, you want help, do you? I will send you some soldiers to help you.” Remember that their houses had been stripped of all the gold and silver they contained to give a present to the king of Assyria. “I will send you soldiers to help you” he said to them—and then he whispered to himself—“After they have helped you, they shall help themselves!” And so they did. When they had come and, for a little while, had fought for the people of Israel and set them free, then they turned round upon them and carried them captive and spoiled them of all they had! This comes of trusting in man. “Cursed be the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm; but blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord and whose hope is in the Lord.”

Looking at this fallacy of a nation as illustrative of a common tendency of mankind—and using my text as the picture of a sinner in a certain peculiar state of mental anxiety, I shall observe, first, *the sinner’s partial discovery of his lost estate*. Secondly, *the wrong means which he takes to be cured of his evil*. And then I will endeavor to direct you, as God shall enable me, to *the right means of finding healing and deliverance* through the Atonement and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. We have in our text somewhat of A PICTURE OF THE SINNER WHEN HE HAS PARTIALLY DISCOVERED HIS LOST ESTATE.

Mark, *it is but a partial discovery*. Ephraim felt his sickness but he did not know the radical disease that lurked within. He saw the local ailment, but was ignorant of the organic derangement of his very vitals. He only perceived the symptoms! He was uneasy, he felt pain, but the discovery did not go deep enough to show him that he was actually dead in trespasses and sins. “He saw his sickness and Judah saw his wound.” Yes, he saw his wound—it smarted and, therefore, his eyes were drawn to the spot. But he did not know how deep it was. He did not know that it had pierced to the heart, that it was, in fact, a death-blow—that the whole head was sick, that the whole heart was faint and that, from the crown of the head even to the sole of the foot, it was all wounds, bruises

and putrefying, festering sores! There was but a partial discovery of his lost estate.

How many men there are who have got *just far enough to know there is something the matter with them!* They little reckon that they are totally ruined, though they do feel that all is not quite right with them. They are conscious that they are not perfect, not even up to their own low standard of rectitude—hence they begin to be uneasy, albeit they still seem to think they can make themselves better and that by degrees of reformation and daily prayer they will become superior to what they are. They have not yet learned the Doctrine of the Fall, the deep depravity of mankind, the total perversion of the human heart. They have only gotten so far as some modern ministers who speak of man as being a little marred, but not entirely broken—as having had a fall and become somewhat damaged, and rather spoiled as to outward beauty, though not altogether ruined, or incapable of raising himself up and recovering his strength. In fact, the fashionable phrase that has been recently coined is, “the *lapsed* state of men.” Depend upon it, when men use *Latinized* words to express their meaning, they do not mean much! The Fall of man is full and entire—and when people frame certain phrases of rather uncertain significance instead of talking honest English—they show a disposition to dispense with the bare facts. I know there are some sinners brought so far as to find themselves undone and to feel convinced that unless some change takes place they are not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. But they have not as yet seen the fountains of the great deep of their depravity broken up. They have not been taken into the chambers of imagery and shown the abominations of their own hearts! They still cling with some hope to their own devices.

However, I would remark that even this, *though it is but a partial discovery of their state by nature, is not without its good effects.* When a man gets this far, the first good sign in him is that he cannot speak against religion. While he is at peace with himself, he calls religious men hypocrites—he can rail at the things of God and despise and trample them underfoot. But the man who is like Ephraim, in our text, will not be very anxious to find fault with others. His philosopher’s tongue has been plucked out and he is now a little more gentle in his speech as he sighs for something in religion that he would like to have. “Oh,” he says, “I do not now find fault with the good folk who are always praying and singing. Would to God I could become like they are! Would that I had as they have—an interest in the blood of Christ!” So far, so good.

Such men, again, are generally thoughtful. I have known many a man who, before he came into this state, was a very daredevil and never thought anything with regard to his soul and eternity. Yet, when brought to know his sickness and his wounds, he has become not only thoughtful but serious, until some of his former companions have noticed it and called him, “Old Sobersides,” or some such epithet, and laughed him out of countenance. They tell him he is a saint. The man says, “I wish what you are saying was true.” They tell him, “You are beginning to be religious.” “Yes,” he says, “I wish I were really so.” Some man once called me *a saint* as I went along the street and I turned round and said I wished I

could make him prove his words. I would certainly like to be one! Such is the condition of a man when he begins to discover, though it is but partially, his lost estate. He is thoughtful. He cannot laugh as he did. He does not now shut his eyes, throw the reins upon the neck of his lusts and let them rush madly on down to the Pit, but he tries to curb them and hold them in with bit and bridle, for he knows that all is not right within him.

Such a man, too, has another good trait, another hopeful feature in his case—that he begins to attend to the things that belong to the peace of his soul. You now see him coming into the House of God be it Chapel or Church—to hear the Word preached. He never cared for that before. He worked so hard all the week that he was not able to go out on a Sunday—but now he feels he must go. He must be by the side of Bethesda’s pool. Even though the angel stirs not the water, he feels a kind of satisfaction while he is lying at the edge of the healing pool. He longs to be saved and, therefore, he is found in the Way, hoping that God may meet with him.

Such a man, too, you will find, takes no pleasure in sin. If he is asked by his worldly companions to go into the haunts of vice where once he went, even should he go, he comes away and says, “It was the dulllest evening I ever spent. No enjoyment whatever does it yield me. God has turned the sweet wine of my memory into bitter gall. ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’ I can find no comfort in sensual pleasures.”

Have I been depicting the state of one who is here present? I hope I have and I pray God that what I shall be able to say will, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, be instrumental in leading such an one to the true remedy for his soul-sickness.

II. But when the man is thus partially awakened to know his lost estate, HE USUALLY BETAKES HIMSELF TO THE WRONG MEANS FOR DELIVERANCE—“Then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb.”

A sinner, when he finds himself lost, usually at first thinks, “*I will make myself better*, I will be diligent in religious observances—I will attend to every ceremony, I will keep my tongue from evil and my life from speaking guile. I will restrain my steps from evil haunts, my hands from evil deeds.” And so he thinks within himself that all his sins will be forgiven and that he shall have rest for the sole of his feet. Be it known, once and for all, that all this is a vain and useless effort to work out a radical cure in the soul of man! All that man can do apart from faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ is utterly in vain! Let him do his best and strive to the very uttermost—not one inch has he proceeded on the road to Heaven! He has done mischief instead of doing anything meritorious. He has pulled down instead of having built up!

O you that are now hoping, while you are under conviction, that you will get relief by works of your own, let me remind you that *you are undertaking a long task* which will tax your endurance. The men mentioned in our text went a very long way to the king of Assyria—it was a wearisome journey they took, while God, who was near at hand, was forgotten! How long do you suppose it would take you to work out your own salva-

tion by your own good works? Why, my Friends, you may bend your knees till your joints grow stiff. You may work till there is no flesh upon your bones. You may weep till there is no moisture in your body from which to draw a tear and you may persevere incessantly in every exercise of body and mind—trying fresh postures and trifling with fresh problems—but you will find yourselves not half a league nearer eternal life than when you left the life of sin you used to like—

**“Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Your Law’s demands—
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone—
You must save and You, alone.”**

If a criminal should get it into his head that he could climb up to the stars by going up the steps of a treadmill, he would be about as rational as when a poor sinner thinks of getting to Heaven by his own good works! Tread, tread, tread—up, up, up—but never one inch higher! As old Matthew Wilks used to say, “You might as well hope to sail to America on a sere leaf as hope to go to Heaven by your own doings.” This is not the way, Man, and run ever so fast in it, if it is not the right road, it will not bring you to the right end! If a man takes the road to the right when he needs to go to the left, he may run as fast as a race horse, but he will but lose his labor and find out that he is a fool for his pains.

And it is not only a very long task, but *it is a very expensive one*. If you would have salvation by the works of the Law, you must give body and soul up—all you have—hope and joy and comfort included. I used to live near some persons who regularly attended mass early every morning and I noticed how straight they used to look down the face. I thought they had good reason to be gloomy if they were trying to reach Heaven by their own righteousness. It is enough to put any man out of countenance if he has to stand before God and justify himself! We might put our hands upon our loins and roll in the dust in despair if we had no hope but in our own merits. Go and look for cooling streams in the arid desert. Cast about for fresh water to drink in the midst of the sea. Seek shelter on the mountaintop where the hurricane is spending its fury and then crave for comfort in the Law! Go and visit Sinai, you that seek to be saved by your own works. Look at it—shrink, tremble and despair! Behold, the mountain is altogether on a smoke while God proclaims His holy Law! If it melted like wax of old, how much more, now, after you have broken the commandments and incurred the penalty—now that God comes not to proclaim the Law—but to execute His fierce anger upon the law-breakers?

“Well,” says one, “but suppose we do our best, will not that suffice?” My Friend, God requires from man, if he would be saved by his works, *perfect obedience*. Nothing but perfection can be acceptable to a perfect God. One wrong *thought*, one evil *desire*—not to say anything of one wrong *act*—will effectually shut any man out of Heaven if he desires to go there by his own works! That one sin at once puts up an impenetrable barrier across that meritorious way to Heaven which is known by the common name of, “the Law.” If you can be perfect and have kept the pre-

cepts from your youth up, and shall do so till your dying day—then might there be salvation by works. But if there is *one* flaw, then is that road to Heaven effectually stopped up so that no human foot can ever tread it!

And, once more, let me remind you, O Man, when you try to be saved by your works, *you presume that your enemy will prove to be your friend!* “And who is my enemy?” you ask. Why, Moses. The Law of God is sworn against you. It has become your enemy and do you go to your enemy to help you? It is a device of Satan to try and draw poor sinners away from the path of faith into the path of Law. Remember how John Bunyan graphically describes it? Poor Christian, with the burden on his back, is going to the wicket-gate with the light above it and, all of a sudden, a very good-looking gentleman meets him and says, “It is a dangerous journey you are going, you had better turn aside to the right there. There is a town there known as the town of Legality, where lives a very skillful physician who will soon help you off with your burden. And if he is not at home, he has got a very good lad who will do almost as well as his master. Go there and you will soon get cured.” Away went poor Christian! Nor had he gone far before he found that he had come to the foot of Mount Sinai and the mountain hung right over the way. And there stood Christian. And while he was looking up, presently the mountain began to shake, the thunder to roar and the lightning to flash—and he fell down upon his face and said, “I am undone, I am undone!” Then came Evangelist and showed him the right way once more.

Just so, Sinner, if you trust to the works of the Law, you will have to cry out, “I am undone, I am undone.” Mr. Morality cannot cure you—he may put on a little poor man’s plaster and make your wound worse, and tie it up, and bandage it a little, but he can never relieve your pain, or recover your sore. It will go on bleeding, notwithstanding all the balsams he can apply. No hand can heal a sin-sick soul but the hand that wounded it, even the hand of God, through the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord!

It is astonishing, after all the Gospel preaching in England, how deeply rooted is this constant fallacy of going to king Jareb for cure! Not very long ago, having engaged to preach at a seaport town, I arrived some hours before night and, as I was standing by the riverside, I thought I would like to go down the river in a boat. So, hailing a waterman, I went with him and, while sitting in the boat, wishing to talk with him about religious matters, I began by asking him about his family. He told me that the cholera had visited his place and that he had lost no less than 13 of his relatives, one after another, by death. So I said, “Have you, my Friend, a good hope of Heaven if you should, yourself, die?” “Well, Sir,” he said, “I think as how I have.” “Pray tell me, then,” I said, “what is your hope, for, of a good hope no man need ever be ashamed.” “Well, Sir, I have been on this here river, I think, for these 25 or 30 years, and I don’t know that anybody ever saw me drunk.” “Oh, dear! Oh, dear!” I replied, “is that all you trust to?” “Well, Sir, when the cholera was about and my poor neighbors were bad, I went for the doctor for ‘em, and was up a good many nights. And I do think as how I am as good as my neighbors.”

Of course I told him that I was very glad to hear that he had sympathy for the suffering and that I considered it far better to be charitable than to be churlish, but I did not see how his good conduct could carry him to Heaven. "Well, Sir," he said, "perhaps it will not. I cannot be often going to church, but I think, when I get a little older, I shall give up the boat and take to going to church, and then, I think, that will be right—won't it, Sir?" "No," I said, "certainly your resolutions will not renew your heart. And should you ever perform them, they will not purge your soul from its sinfulness. Begin to go to church as soon as possible, but you will not be an inch further, if you think that by attending the sanctuary you will be saved." The poor man seemed perfectly astounded while I went on knocking down his hopes, one after another. Then I put the question, "You have sometimes sinned in your life, have you not?" "Yes," he said, "I have." "On what ground, then, do you think your sins will be forgiven?" "Well, Sir," he said, "I have been sorry about them and I think they are all gone—they do not trouble me now."

Trying to awaken his conscience, I said, "Suppose you were to go and get into debt with the grocer where you deal, and you should say to her, 'Now, mistress, you have a score against me. I cannot pay for these goods, I am sorry to say, but I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll never get into your debt again.' Why, she would say that was not the way she did business and do you suppose that is the way in which God does business, or that He is going to strike out your debts because you say you will not run deeper into debt?" "Well, Sir," he said, "I should like to know how my sins are to be forgiven. Are you a parson, Sir?" In reply, I said, "I preach the Gospel, I hope, but I do not go by the name of a parson. I am only a Dissenting minister." I told him how the Lord Jesus Christ had paid the debts of sinners. How those that reposed in Him and rested in His blood and righteousness would find peace and mercy. And the man was delighted and he said he wished he had heard that years ago. "But, to say the truth, Master," he added, "I had not felt quite easy, after all, when I saw those poor creatures taken away to the graveyard. I did think there was something I needed, but I did not know what it was."

I tell you this little personal incident because I see here a great many working people and I know they delight in a little homely dialog. It is not what we do or devise, the religious rites we observe, or the romantic aims we aspire to, the self-satisfaction we encourage, or the sufferings we endure, that can lead us to the land of the Light of Good! Not all your uprightness, however plausible, or your honesty, however rigid you may be, will carry you to Heaven! Your good works are good enough in themselves, good enough in your generation—but they will never do for a foundation to rest upon. Do not run away and say something like the foolish man who went to a place where there was a house being built and, seeing the chimney pots standing there, he took them and laid them in the trench to make the foundation.

"What are you doing?" said one of the workmen. "Why, laying the foundation." "What, with the chimney pots?" "I did not know that it was wrong," he said. "Well, take them away—they won't do for a foundation." "Oh!" said the other, "you are finding fault with them." "No, I am not find-

ing fault with them, but with the place where you put them. They are good enough on the top, but they won't do at the bottom." So with good works—they will do at the top, but they will not do at the bottom! As a foundation for the soul to rest upon, nothing will suffice but the righteousness of Christ and His finished work. This is our hope of salvation! Our good works are good enough afterwards, when God the Holy Spirit, by His Grace, works faith, love and all other good things in us.

III. WHAT, THEN, IS THE WAY OF SALVATION?

Whoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary he should know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down from Heaven and was, for our sin, Incarnate in human form, born of the Virgin Mary, lived a life of sanctity and of suffering and, at last, this glorious Son of God—this grief-stricken Son of Man—became obedient even unto death. In the garden He wrestled and shed, as it were, great drops of blood in the prospect of the coming terrors of His death-struggle. To the Cross He was nailed, amidst shame, ignominy and scoffing. There He endured incredible pain, pangs of body and agony of soul. He hung there, through the thick darkness, three hours and, at last, when the appointed time was come, when He had suffered all, when the full chastisement of our sin had been laid upon Him and the iniquity of us all had received its dreadful retribution at His hands, He cried, "It is finished!" Thus He gave up the ghost, was laid in the tomb and then arose from the dead on the third day and ascended to Heaven.

Now, if you would be saved, my Friend, it is necessary that you should believe in Him who was the Son of God and the Son of Man, and that you should believe in your heart these things of Him—First, that He is a Divinely-ordained Savior, able to save all those that come to God through Him. You must believe, likewise, that He is willing to save and that He will save those that seek salvation, believing and trusting in His power. When you have believed this, you have gone a good part of the way toward that saving faith which shall bring you into a state of Grace. It is by acting upon this belief, by casting yourself simply on the merits of His blood and of His perfect righteousness as the ground of your acceptance before God, that you shall find peace. No man can be saved if he does not trust his soul in the hands of Christ. We must give up ourselves from our own keeping into Christ's keeping saying, "Lord, take me, save me, make me what You would have me to be and then, when Your Father shall require my soul at the Last Day, stand as my Surety and bring me, perfect and spotless, into His Presence."

I must add one thing more—there must be what the old divines call a recumbency—a leaning on Him, a dependence on Him. But here I must warn you that some people have an idea that if they get faith in Christ, it matters not how they live, or what they are. Now, be it understood, once and for all, we are saved by *faith*—not by works! But we must have good works *if we are really saved*. You know that faith is not only leaning on Christ, but *obeying* Christ. Suppose there is a man who says to me, "You have committed such-and-such an offense. You are in such-and-such difficulties, but if you will implicitly trust me and leave the matter entirely in my hands, I will see that you come through all right." Well

now, if I get to meddling with it, that will prove I do not trust him! But, by-and-by, he comes to me and says, "My dear Friend, are you trusting me wholly?" "Yes," I say, "I am reposing all my trust in you." Suppose he says, "I want you to look over this document, which you must sign, and then I shall want you, on a certain morning, to be at such-and-such a place." What if I answer, "I shall do no such thing! I will not sign the deed, nor meet you by appointment." "Then," he says, "you are not trusting me." "I am leaning on you and trusting you," I say. "Well," he says, "unless you do what I tell you, your faith is not genuine faith, neither are you trusting in me at all."

Now, if you are perfectly trusting Christ, your next question will be, "Lord, I am trusting to be saved by You, but how will You have me be saved?" "Oh," says Christ, "I will save you, but you must break off those old habits." "Oh," you say, "Lord, assist me with Your Grace and I will renounce them all." "Well," says Christ, "and if you would be saved, I will have you, in the next place, attend to My ordinances. Come forward and make a profession of your faith. Be baptized. Unite yourself to the Church visible. Receive the Lord's Supper." But you say, "No, Lord! I will do no such thing." "Well, then," He says, "you are not trusting Me because whatever I tell you to do, you ought to do it."

You may have heard the good illustration which Mr. Cecil gives of faith. His little child was standing, one day, at the top of a dark cellar. She was in the light and he was down below in the cellar. "My dear child, jump down and I will catch you," he said. And the child, without a moment's thought, sprang into the father's arms! Now that is one kind of faith. That is when we are enabled so to trust Christ that we do, so to speak, venture our souls on Him, risk all with Him. But mark, that is not the complete picture of the faith of saints. This kind of faith some people profess to have, but their lives do not bear out their profession and, therefore, there must be something else to make it clear. And Mr. Cecil gives another illustration through the same little girl. "I said to her, one day, as she had a necklace of beads, 'My dear child, you know I love you and you would do anything I told you. Take those beads off and throw them into the fire.' She did so at once." Now, the first faith was the faith of daring, venturing herself. But the second proved her faith to be true and genuine, when she could obey at such a cost. To a large extent, faith and obedience are really one, and it is useless for you to say that you believe in Christ as your Savior if you do not obey Him as your Lord. Some try to do so, but their faith is worthless. But when we can unite unwavering trust with implicit obedience, we prove that we are really trusting in Christ—and then we are safe.

O my dear Hearer, if I have puzzled you instead of making the Truth of God plain, I can say I did not intend to do so. I would have you to understand, if you are troubled on account of sin, that God requires nothing of you but what He gives you. He requires nothing but that you should depend for all on Christ. That is all He asks. Do it. Oh, may His Holy Spirit enable you to do it now!

Let me tell you a parable which shall illustrate faith. There were two children, according to the fable, walking with their father along a narrow

ridge. On either side there was a dark, deep precipice. One of the dear children put his hand inside the father's hand and his father grasped it. The other put his little fingers round his father's hand and took hold of his father's hand. It was not long before, in the midst of the thick darkness, the children grew weary. And the child who had taken hold of the father's hand perished. But the child who had put his hand into the father's hand and let the father take hold of it, was carried safely to the end. Now, put your hand inside the hand of Christ and when He bids you obey Him, don't take it away! Give yourself wholly up to Him to be His—come life, come death, for better or for worse—to be His to trust and His to obey, being from this time forth His forever!

Oh, may God the Holy Spirit lead us to do this! It is easy enough when the Holy Spirit enables us, but it is hard enough when our human nature kicks against it. May Sovereign Grace subdue our hearts and teach us to depend on Christ—and no more foolishly attempt to work out our salvation by impossible means! I can only pray that God will bless this brief, hurried discourse, and to His name shall be the glory, through Christ Jesus. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 1:1-20.**

Verse 1. *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.* During the time in which Isaiah prophesied, the worship of God was, upon the whole, maintained in Judah. Yet, prosperous as the times appeared to be, there was visible to the eyes of the Lord much iniquity. He who saw not as man saw, but who looks beneath the surface and into the hearts of men, saw that the condition of the people was exceedingly unsatisfactory. Do not forget that these upbraiding words were spoken during the reigns of comparatively good kings. Try to imagine how the Lord must have felt towards the people who lived in the reigns of bad kings.

2, 3. *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.* God's own people were worse than the brutes that perish! They had no gratitude towards their Maker and Preserver. Am I not addressing many persons of the same kind, who have little or no thought concerning Him who made them and who supplies all their needs? God seems here as if He were tired of appealing to His people, so He speaks to the heavens and the earth, as if He knew that even inanimate things would be more capable of feeling than hardened Judah was!

4. *Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.* If I am now addressing any who have backslidden from God, let them take these words of His to heart—He observes how you have forsaken Him. He

feels grieved at your provoking Him. He mourns over your going backward from Him. May you be moved by the Holy Spirit to mourn, too!

5. *Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.* One of God's ways of bringing people to Himself is by chastisement and affliction. He had tried that method upon Judah—He had used His rod so long that, at last, He exclaimed, "Why should you be stricken anymore?" What is the good of My sending any more affliction upon you? Now, whenever the rod is of no more use, there will be a sharper instrument to follow! When men can no longer be chastened for their good, the axe of execution is ready to be brought forth. What a sorrowful description is here given of the people of Judah and their land!

6-8. *From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.* The Lord had allowed invaders to pillage the land until it was almost reduced to a desert, yet, even then, the people did not, and would not, turn unto their God! It is a terrible thing when sickness, or loss of property, or frequent bereavements do not bring men to their knees. Unsanctified afflictions prophesy certain condemnation to us. "He, that being often reproved hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

9. *Except the LORD of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.* The state of the country, even under godly kings, had become so bad that if there had not been a remnant according to the election of Grace, there would have been no help for the land and its inhabitants—and they would have been burnt up like Sodom and Gomorrah.

10-15. *Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the Law of God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me, says the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of ram, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the brood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblation; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot! Away with it, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moon and your appointed feasts My Soul hates: they are a trouble unto Me, I am weary to bear them, and when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.* It is very possible for people to be outwardly very religious and yet really to be very wicked. The fact is that the multiplication of rites and ceremonies, the observance of forms, feasts, fasts, new moons and all the rest of mere external ritual—may rather indicate an increase of sin than an increase of anything else! Often, in proportion as men's hearts get further and further away from God, they have more and more of outward ritual, more

Roman rags on the priest's back, more smoking incense, more gorgeous architecture! The more of all the externals of religion, the less they have of the internal and eternal. If a man is conscious that he needs something in the shape of godliness and he knows that he has none of it in his heart, he often tries to get it outside. But this is what God says—

16, 17. *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doing from before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well.* Repentance, practical change of life, renewal of heart, the giving up of evil, the following of right—this is what the Lord approves. Otherwise, all your fripperies and trickeries of worship are loathsome to Him. Do you think your finest music is sweet to the ears of Him who listens to the angels' everlasting songs? Do you imagine that you can build temples worthy of Him who made the heavens and the earth? What cares He for temples made with hands? He despises all material things where the heart goes not with them—but purity, holiness, true spiritual worship—these are the things in which He delights!

17. *Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* This is better than all your incense, or the fat of rams and he-goats.

18. *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.* This, too, is what God loves—confessed sin, pardoned by His infinite mercy and Grace.

19, 20. *If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.*

—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 PRESENT CRISIS

NO. 1483

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

***"I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense,
 and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early."
 Hosea 5:15.***

THE Lord does not always tell us what He will do. "Verily You are a God that hides yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior." He has told us that "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing" and our Lord Jesus has said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power." When He does make known to us what He is about to do, it is not to gratify our curiosity but to direct our conduct. In this case the Lord speaks aloud concerning His intentions. He had grown weary with chastening His people and, therefore, He was about to withdraw Himself from them and leave them alone, as a man leaves a hopeless work, or as a judge leaves the bench and gives the prisoner over to condemnation.

He says, "I will go and return to My place," as if His waiting time was over and He would no longer remain in their midst to be provoked by their obstinacy. This withdrawal would occasion the non-acceptance of their prayers and offerings, even as He had said in a former verse, "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them." This He tells them in order that they may be led to implore Him to remain with them. Or that if He is already gone, they may, by hearty confession of their sin and an immediate seeking of His face, prevail upon Him once more to visit them in His Grace. If God is about to go, then all is going, even *hope* itself is. The Divine departure is the worst of calamities and, therefore, it is but right that those who are threatened with such a judgment should put their thoughts together, consider their ways and use the best means to hold Him by the skirts before He has departed, or to bring Him back again before He has effectually closed the door between Him and them. There should be an eager desire to bring the King back so that once more the heart may sun itself in the light of His favor.

Dear Friends, I shall speak, this morning, with the most anxious desire to be practical. I am longing and praying in my heart that wherever sin has begun to separate us and God, we may be stirred up to acknowledge our offenses and to seek His face. And that where such a separation has long existed there may arise an intense desire of the whole soul to return from its banishment and draw near to God. We shall, this morning, use our text, first, in reference to *our national troubles*, for the words were originally spoken with regard to the *national* troubles of Israel and Judah. Secondly, we shall use it in reference to *our personal trials as Believers*. And then, thirdly, in its relation to *the personal trials of the unconverted*. Instructive lessons may be learned here in each of the three cases. May the Holy Spirit speak the Truth of God home to our hearts.

I. And first, with regard to OUR PRESENT NATIONAL TROUBLES. I desire to speak of these things as before God in all sincerity and simplicity. I know it is impossible to touch upon such a subject without being suspected of political bias, but I can truly declare that from all such partiality I desire to be freed so that I may speak, not as a partisan, but as the servant of the living God. Calmly and solemnly would I speak words of soberness and truth and justice. It is a burden to my heart to speak a hard word of my own beloved country and if I seem to do so it is not in wantonness, but because of a pressure upon my conscience which will not let me be silent.

Surely no one will deny that our country is passing through a season of great and grievous adversity. We have been perplexed for many months and even for years with perpetual rumors of wars. For a long time no man knew, when he went to bed at night, but what the journal of the morning would inform him that our nation had plunged into war with at least one of the great powers of Europe. Our policy has been such, whether wise or unwise, that we have been constantly on the verge of conflict. It is amazing that we have escaped from embroiling ourselves in a long and serious war, for many a time the flames of contention have threatened a general conflagration.

This disquietude, itself, has been a serious injury to the prosperity of our country, for trade and commerce make prosperous voyages upon the waters of *peace*—but even before those waters are disturbed by the storms of actual war—while only the *threat* of battle ruffles the surface, they make small headway or are driven back. Commerce is timid as a dove and is fluttered by every turmoil or whisper of coming trouble. In a thousand ways political agitations stab at the heart of national prosperity! In addition to this we have been actually engaged in two wars at least—wars certainly expensive and questionably expedient. In these two conflicts it is impossible for us to gain honor since they are cases of the mighty assailing the feeble.

Laurels gained from nations so far inferior to us would have been unworthy of a place upon the brow of a brave nation. We have invaded one country and then another with no better justification than the law of superior force, or the suspicion of future danger. Disaster has followed upon the heels of disaster and at the end of it all there are great expenses to be met. Our acts of aggression must be paid for, not only with the blood of our soldiers, but with the sinew and sweat of our working men.

Results of industry which ought to have gone to support the arts and promote the comfort and advancement of the race have been thrown away in wasteful feats of arms. The food which should have fed our children has been flung into the mouth of the lion, to be devoured by war, that its evil spirit may become yet more ravenous. Willful waste, it is to be feared, will be followed by woeful need unless God, in His mercy, shall interpose. We have meddled in many things and have threatened at least three of the great quarters of the globe either with our fleets or our armies. Nothing could content us till we had drawn the sword against a brave, though savage people, whose fighting may well be fierce, since it is for their invaded fatherland!

These wars, whatever their issue, are serious calamities. On the back of all this war has come depression in trade. Everywhere there is complaining and not without cause. Even the most cheerful of men who have always been rejoicing when others have lamented, have begun, at last, to look very serious and to admit that the times are threatening. Striving tradesmen wonder whether they shall be able to “provide things honest in the sight of all men.” Many a man now plans and labors but his care and toil earn but a scant reward. All trade is dull and some trade is dead. Some branches of industry are already paralyzed and there is but little prospect of their ever being revived.

The land mourns and men’s hearts sink for fear. Matters are not so bad as despondency would paint them, but even hope is unable to draw a cheerful picture. It is a day of darkness and of gloominess—a day of clouds and of thick darkness. As if all this were not enough, the heavens refuse to assist the processes of our farmers. For the most part, the hay crop, so necessary for the cattle, may be regarded as lost and now great peril is upon the corn. In some places the corn is too backward to have suffered much at present, but in others the prospects are dark, indeed. It seems certain that a continuance of this constant rain must deprive us of the most precious fruits of the earth.

Farmers are beginning to cry out bitterly and there is a demand that prayer should be offered in all the churches for fair weather. May God be pleased to look upon our land and deliver us in this hour of trouble, for, indeed, it is a time of loss and ruin to thousands! If ever prayer was needed, it is surely at this hour! You who live in London do not know much about what is happening to the crops and what the eye does not see, the heart does not rue—but to our agricultural friends this ill weather is a matter of most serious consideration—they are suffering very heavily. No one can doubt that the badness of trade affects the farmer in common with the rest of the community—and now comes the further burden of sunless skies, winter in summer and the clouds returning after the rain.

In the first matter, that of a warlike policy, we may, by God’s goodness, make a change. It may be possible that before long better principles will come to the front and we may no longer be made to appear as a nation of snarlers and growlers, breathing defiance and delighting in war. God grant it speedily! But as to the two other matters, what can we do? We are powerless to quicken trade! We are certainly powerless to stay the bottles of Heaven. If God wills it, the clouds will gather from day to day and drench our fields with their pitiless downpour. Deluge will follow deluge till the corn shall rot in the fields if God so determines.

Prayer is therefore desired and well it may be! But by some, prayer is desired as if it were quite certain that if certain pious words are repeated the rain must necessarily cease and the weather become favorable. I am not quite so sure! Let prayer be offered, by all means, but only under certain conditions can it prove *effectual*. I know of many reasons why it may be possible that such prayers as are likely to be offered will not be heard, but instead the threatened judgment of God may, nevertheless, come upon us. I desire, this morning, to speak about prayer in the way of warning, lest men should place an unwise confidence in the formality of *read-*

ing a form of prayer in churches, or uttering extempore formalities in meeting houses.

Few men believe more thoroughly in the power of real prayer than I do and I have tested and proved it in many remarkable ways so fully that I have no doubts as to its efficacy and heartily magnify the name of our prayer-hearing God. But we must still use our understandings, lest we be deceived and come to expect what we shall not receive. I would call to your recollection the fact that, under certain circumstances, God does *not* answer prayer. Our text says, "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense." And, if this is the case, there will be no answering of prayer till *repentance* is manifested.

Sometimes the heavens are brass, even to good men, and their cries reverberate and come back into their own ears, not without a blessing to *themselves*, but still without any visible reply as to the people for whom their intercessions were offered. It is not every sort of prayer that God will hear, for He says by His servant Isaiah, "When you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: *your hands are full of blood*" (Isa. 1:15). Intercession is sometimes useless, for Jeremiah tells us, "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people" (Jer. 15:1).

Ezekiel also warns us that the presence of the godly may not, at all times, avert judgment, for thus says the Lord, "Son of man, when the land sins against Me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out My hand upon it and will break the staff of the bread thereof and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, says the Lord God" (Ezek. 14:13, 14).

David, doubtless, prayed earnestly that he might escape from the chastisement of his sin when he numbered the people, but it could not be removed. He had a choice of three evils, but one of the three was inevitable. When God has come to this point with a people, that He must and will smite them, *prayer* is their only resource and even that may fail to avert the threatened stroke. A child may have so transgressed that his father may feel bound to punish him and then he will not spare the rod because of his crying. I pray God that the rain may cease, but if it should be continued, it will not be because the Lord *cannot* help us, or has ceased to answer prayer.

Here is the secret of it all—I tremble as I quote the words—"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear. *For your hands are defiled with blood*" (Isa. 59:1-3). Remember, too, that not only may God withdraw Himself in anger, but it may be His determination to punish a people out of a far-seeing design for their good. Perhaps, as a nation, we have had too much prosperity. Ease and plenty have begotten pride and luxury and these may have weakened the spirit of the nation. It may have become absolutely necessary for this favored nation, if it is to still be the stronghold of liberty and the fortress of Gospel Truth,

that it should again endure those northern blasts of adversity which have aforetime strengthened it at heart.

It will not be the first time that our land has suffered for her good. Bad harvests and decaying trade are not new things to Englishmen! There linger among us now a few venerable men and women who can tell us of the straits of the old war time—of how there was great scantiness of bread, heaviness of taxation and frequent alarms from abroad and riots at home. What a long and dreary time it was when the sound of cannon might almost be heard across the straits and watch fires were ready on every cliff and height! Yet good came of the affliction and since that gloomy time the country has made rapid progress in many respects! Especially in civil and religious freedom—may it be so again! I would not wish ill to my country, but if our fellow men will not remember God except in adversity, adversity, itself, might be desired by the kindest heart.

If true religion is to be cast into the dust by boastful infidelity! If a bastard popery is to be allowed to occupy our national churches! If drunkenness is to remain shameless and almost universal! If the language of the common people is to become filthy and obscene! If the exaltation of one favored sect above its fellow Christians—a crying deed of injustice—is to be perpetually endured! If our nation is to shed the blood of weaker nations and send its armies into lands which are none of ours—then it will not be a strange thing if the Lord resolves to punish—and it will be hard for the righteous man to find an argument with which to plead for pity! When the offense is repented of, the punishment will be withdrawn—but can we expect pardon on any other terms? Can we even *ask* for it? The verdict of the sternly just would rather be, “Let the rod fall,” than, “Let it be withdrawn,” if only by severe means the nation can be made to put away its evil deeds!

In our text God declares that He will not give audience to His erring people, but will retire into His secret place until they acknowledge the offense and seek His face. It may be so with our nation at this time. And if it is, we need to be exhorted to something more than public prayer! There is need of a work more thorough and more difficult than the public use of a devotional form! But, says one, “We hope we shall have *national* prayer.” I hope so, too, but will there be a national *confession of sin*? If not—how can mere prayer avail? Will there be a general desire to do that which is just and right between man and man? Will there be a declaration that England’s policy is never to trample on the weak or pick a quarrel for her own aggrandizement?

Will there be a loathing of the principle that British interests are to be our guiding star instead of justice and right? Personal interests are no excuse for doing wrong! If they were so, we should have to exonerate the worst of thieves, for they will not invade a house until their personal interests invite them! Perhaps the midnight robber may yet learn to plead that he only committed a burglary for fear another thief should take the spoil and make worse use of it than he! Does the footpad stop a passenger on the road for any other than his own interests? When our own interests are our policy, nobility is dead and true honor is departed—but I fear that only a *minority* are of this mind.

Will the nation repent of any *one* of its sins? Will it settle itself down like the people of Jerusalem during the great rain of Ezra's time and do that which is right in the sight of God? Remember what they said in that day—"The people are many and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing." If stern reformation went with supplication, I am persuaded that prayer would prevail. But while sin is gloried in, my hopes find little ground to rest upon. But will there be general prayer? No, there will not. I speak sadly, but I speak no more than the truth.

There are numbers among us who say that prayer is of no use with regard to the winds and the clouds, for certain laws govern the weather and prayer cannot affect those laws. These men, therefore, will not pray and there are multitudes of others of the same spirit whose atheism is practical though it is unavowed. How, then, can prayer be *general* when such vast numbers utterly disregard it? Turn your eyes to Nineveh! When Jonah threatened that great city and, upon its repentance the judgment was withdrawn, of what character was its humiliation? From the king on the throne even to the beasts in the field—all were clothed with sackcloth and fasted and cried out to God—and therefore we marvel not that He heard them!

Will there be any such crying to God among us? I think not! A defiant silence will seal millions of lips. But what of those who are *supposed* to pray? Are all these men of the Elijah stamp, whose fervent prayer could open or shut the windows of Heaven? We dare not put much confidence in the prayers which will be offered. Will they be offered in *faith* by a tenth of those who will repeat them? I wish I could hope so. By many, the public prayer will be regarded as absolutely ridiculous—and by many more as a mere matter of form which it is proper to use—but in which no confidence, whatever, can be placed.

Do not, therefore, say, if the rain should continue by the month together, that prayer was ordered by the Archbishop of Canterbury and that God did not hear it and, therefore, all prayer is idle! No, but see what kind of prayer it will be and how little connected it will be with *confession*—and how little it will be general and how little it will be sincere—and then you will not wonder if no comfortable answer comes of it. It may be that my text will be the sole answer of the Lord—"I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early."

What, then, is to be done? This much is to be done—all hope for a country lies in the true Believers who dwell there! Remember Sodom and how it would have been spared had there been 10 righteous men found there and know that you, also, are the salt of the earth by whom it is to be preserved! Loathe the spirit of those who say that because we are citizens of Heaven we are to have nothing to do with the concerns of men below. A more un-Christianlike sentiment, a more selfish sentiment never degraded spiritual minds! Wherever the Jews dwelt, in the days of their scattering, they were commanded to care for the good of the people among whom they dwelt.

Here are the words of the Lord by Jeremiah—"Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall you have peace." Surely Christians are not to be less generous than Jews! Happily we are not under a despot! In England we are our own governors and the man, who, in this land does nothing to secure the good government of the country is, by his silence, on the side of wrong! You cannot shirk your responsibility except by clearing out of the land altogether—and then, if it suffers by your absence, you will still be found guilty. You are part and parcel of the nation, for you share in its protection and privileges and it is yours, as Christian men and women, to feel that you are bound, in return, to do all you can in the midst of it to promote truth and righteousness.

What then? What course should we now pursue? Let us make confession of sin on behalf of the people as Moses and Jeremiah and Daniel did! You may not consider that to be sin which I judge to be so, but, my Brothers and Sisters, you see sin enough all around you of one sort or another. Take it to yourself and, as the high priest went in to the Holy Place to plead for the people, so you act as a priest before God in your quiet personal devotions! Confess the sin of this *nation* before God! If it will not repent, repent for it! Stand as a sort of consecrated sponsor before God and let the sin be on *your* heart till you fall on your face before the Most High! Remember, the saints are intercessors with God for the people! You are God's remembrancers and, as you are called to make mention of His name, keep not silent day nor night, but in this hour of trouble pour out your hearts before Him!

Get up to your Carmels and cry aloud, you that know how to cry unto God, that He may send deliverance! And when you have prayed for this people and asked the Lord to forgive its sin and also to take away the chastising rod, then all of you promote, by your daily lives, your precepts and your actions, "whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report." Be on the side of temperance and sobriety—be on the side of peace and of justice—be on the side of everything that is according to the mind of God and according to the law of love! Love God and your fellow men and seek to promote all interests which look that way.

I believe that a country can never have a larger blessing, a truer safeguard for the present, or a firmer security for its future greatness than a band of praying men and women who make mention of it before the Throne of God! English history, from the first day till now, is as full of instruction as the history of Israel from Egypt even to Babylon. Did you ever read Cowper's wonderful description of the care which God has taken of this little island? How He has favored and protected it? When all the nations were in arms against it, they could not touch its shore for God was there! And, on the other hand, the Lord has laid us low and made us suffer when we have boasted of our fleets and armies. Our nation has been as much under the peculiar and especial Providence of God as were the descendants of Jacob themselves and, therefore, God deals with us as He does not deal with other nations!

The smothering of black men with smoke in the caves to which they had fled. The burning down of human habitations and the hunting of men as if they were wild beasts is greater iniquity with us than it would have been in savages, or even in Papists or Mohammedans! Our religion is higher, nobler, purer than theirs! We ought to be ashamed to act as they do! Bloodshed, by some nations, God winks at, for they know but little better—but a country which has in it the very sun of the Gospel shining in the fullness of its strength should set to the world an example which it can follow and, if it does not, it may expect to have trouble after trouble and blow after blow from the hand of God!

Thus have I spoken what was burdening my heart. Make what you will of it—it is the warning of an honest lover of his country who fears the Lord and fears none besides! Judge me to have spoken with political bias or not and censure me as you choose. I could say no less, or I would gladly have held my peace. Before God I am clear in this thing of any attempt but an upright one. May God grant that my feeble protest may touch the hearts of those who ought to feel its truth. I am not very confident that it will be so, for we have fallen upon evil times and the heart of the people has waxen gross.

II. And now, secondly, let us view the text in reference to our PERSONAL TRIALS AS BELIEVERS. Brothers and Sisters, let us now commune with one another concerning the ways of God with our own souls. The Lord will not cast off His people—notwithstanding their faults, they are His own children and they shall be His children forever. But when His children sin, God is sure to chasten them for it. “You only have I known of all the people, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.” He leaves His enemies alone for a while, but He smites His sons. His foes shall go unpunished till the end shall be—but as for His beloved, He is exceedingly jealous over them and He will make them smart when they sin.

Has the Lord been chastening any of us of late? Has the moth been in our estates, or has the lion been tearing our peace? Let us turn at His rebuke! Let us say unto the Lord, “Show me why You contend with me. Lord, if You are smiting me, I would not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, but I would turn unto You at once, before You smite me again.” It is good to repent at once and seek our heavenly Father’s face. For, note next, when chastisements are of no avail, withdrawal follows!

The Lord has promised that He will not forsake His people, nor will He utterly do so, but there are withdrawments which are not included in that promise. God may so hide Himself from His servants that they may have no conscious fellowship with Him, no enjoyment of His Word, no power in prayer. In fact, they may pray and He may shut out their prayer. Their life may be sapless and spiritless; joy and peace may flee. They may possibly try, at such times, to make up for their loss by enjoying the world. They may run after carnal pleasures and vain amusements, but they cannot fill their minds with them—they have no joy with such empty vanities—Grace has made them incapable of finding soul food in the corn and wine of earth. They must have their God or die!

Let me tell you most solemnly that it is a very sad thing when God has withdrawn from a believing spirit and the more holy a man has been, the

more sadly will he lament that he is now under a cloud and the more earnestly will he cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!" When these withdrawments of God are painfully felt, then we should begin most eagerly to search out the sin which has caused them, for sin is at the bottom of it all. If, Believer, there is a quarrel between your Beloved and yourself, is there not a cause? Our Lord Jesus is no fitful lover who, in a moment, will leave the soul which is espoused to Him merely to indulge a whim! Far from it! He never trifles with us, but treats our love as a sacred thing. There is some grave cause whenever the Beloved frowns.

Then is the time for a thorough search, a sweeping of the house and a cleansing out of all things that offend. Throughout the heart, the understanding and the lips, let a thorough search be initiated and if any sin is detected—and it will not be long before it will be—let it be brought to light and judged. Set it in the light of God's Countenance and there confess it and lament it. Offer no excuses and explanations, but honestly confess the wrong and leave it! Have you restrained prayer? Confess it! Have you neglected the reading of the Word of God? Confess it! Have you been neglectful of your children and your family as to training them in the nurture of the Lord? Confess it!

Has there been laxity in your contact with the world? Have you given way to flippancy and levity? Have you been proud? Have you been slothful? Have you indulged too much in the pleasures of the table? Has your heart set itself upon your wealth? Then bring the idols out and let your heart see the wounds which they have given you and what it is that you have doted on and what these things are which have come between you and your God! Surely you will be ashamed of them when you consider that their love is the price for which you have parted with your Savior's Presence! Is this a goodly price that your Lord was exchanged for by you? Judas's pieces of silver were not more contemptible than these poor paltry bribes! Lament the treachery of your heart and hear Him ask you, "Do you love Me?" Do not hesitate to answer, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You."

But, Beloved, when you have obtained a sense of the sin or sins which separate you from God and have made a full confession, then take care that you seek the Lord with hopefulness and confidence, for, notwithstanding all this, you are still His child and must not give way to a paralyzing despair. You are married to Christ and there is no divorce with Him, "for the Lord, the God of Israel, says He hates putting away." He will not cast off forever, nor put away His erring spouse. Come, therefore, to Him with humble confidence! He has torn and He will heal. He has struck and He will bind us up. Seek His face, for His face is towards you! The very face of God is Jesus Christ! The Son of God is He in whom we see the Father! Even as you see a man in his countenance, so God is seen in Christ! Seek God in Christ Jesus, for thereby good shall come unto you.

Do not say, "It is of no use, I have backslidden and revolted again and again and He will now refuse me totally." No, He will not reject you! You are not out of reach of His love—He will turn, again, and have compassion on you, for He delights in mercy! If He withdraws, it is only that you may sigh after Him and seek after Him. A nurse, when her little child will go

away from her and fall into danger, will sometimes hide herself from it to teach it better. She still sees the child, though the little one cannot see her. She is near to help, but the child cannot find her and so it begins to cry for her and does not rest till she is found. The child will not so soon wander again.

Even so may the Lord hide His face to make us cry after Him, but He is very near us, all the while, and He will yet be found of us. "Behold," says He, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man open to me I will enter in." It is not much, is it, to open the door? That is all He asks. Open and let Him in, for He adds, "and I will sup with him." "Ah, Lord," say to Him, "we have no provision fit for You." But know assuredly *He brings* His supper with Him and we sup *with Him* and He with us! He only wants you to lend the house, by opening your heart, for He has brought the food! Yes, He is, Himself, our Bread from Heaven!

Now, to whom is this spoken? To sinners? No, no, it is spoken to the Church of Laodicea, which was "neither cold nor hot." Her Lord was ready to spit her out of His mouth and yet in mercy He cries, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." O Backslider, Jesus waits to be gracious to you! He longs to restore you! Only acknowledge your transgression and return to Him! Be of good cheer as to acceptance, for He casts out none who come to Him. End this backsliding for there need be no more misery! God help you to rise, this very day, into a closer walk with Him and may He keep you by His side forever! To be out of fellowship with God is for the heart to be in a state of spiritual disease. Things must be wrong within when we are wrong with God. When we do not walk in the Light, as God is in the Light, there is some evil in the eye of the soul. Dread the evil and cry for healing!

To be away from God is to be in a state of spiritual weakness. Samson may shake himself as at other times, but he can do no deeds of strength when the Lord has departed from him. God is our strength and God's hiding makes us weak as water! If the Lord should leave us, we cannot plead with Him and prevail, nor can we plead with men and win them for Christ. Our strength has departed—both towards God and towards man—when our fellowship with God is suspended. Our heart cannot leap like a young roe upon the mountains—our spirit limps as one whose bones are broken. We cannot even gaze through the gates of pearl to see the Glory which the Spirit reveals, for our eyes are dim so that we cannot see afar off when Jesus is away.

If you are in this condition, you are in an evil case—carking care invades you, anxieties annoy you, your temper gets the mastery, Satan accuses—and conscience trembles! Your spirit is like that of a carnal man and you are apt to speak unadvisedly with your lips and to be readily moved by every external influence. What is worse, when a man is out of fellowship with God, he is in danger of presumptuous sins! David, on the terraces of his palace, had not been walking with God, or else the sight of Bathsheba had not caused him so grievous a fall. Lose communion with Christ and you are on the verge of a folly which will stain your character and terribly mar your life! It is only when we are near to God that we are safe—therefore let a sense of danger drive us to Him at once!

I speak from a widespread observation as well as from an inward experience. There is but a step between distance from God and the nearness of temptation and sin. If God thinks much of you, He will have you near Him, or else He will make you miserable. He will not permit you to rejoice except in Himself! If your love is not worth His having, you may love whom you like. But when He loves you much, He will be very jealous over you and if He finds you are content to be without His company, He will make you suffer for such wantonness ingratitude! That By-Path Meadow business—that going down the green lane to get off the pebbles of the right road; that getting away from Christ to have a taste of the world's sweet delusions; that coming down from our high places as if we had grown weary of being happy and were discontented with an angelic life—all that means a succession of afflictions and regrets which can only, at the very best, end in our getting to Christ, again, with broken bones.

Such wanderings are painful, end how they may! David's life, before his sin—how different it was from his life afterwards! You can always tell which Psalms he wrote before his transgression—they are so jubilant, so full of holy rejoicing! But afterwards, when he sings, it is in a bass voice. He sweeps his harp, but the strings are disordered. He loves his God, but it is the solemn, tearful love of *repentance* rather than the bright sparkling love of delight in God. Do not err, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, for error brings sorrow. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." If you have gone aside to evil, then seek early the face of God and He will be found of you in Christ Jesus!

III. And now my time is almost spent. I have but a few minutes to use on the third head and I would, therefore, speak few words, but speak them very earnestly, indeed. We shall now think of THE PERSONAL TRIALS OF THE SINNER. Oh, you that are unconverted, if God means to save you, He will, before long, begin by chastening you in body or in mind. You will have trouble! You are a wandering sheep and God will send His black dog after you to fetch you to the fold. If one trouble does not do it, you will have another and another and another! Perhaps I speak to some who, as the result of Providential chastening and the work of conscience on their spirit, have already been awakened—let them take heed of trifling with their awakening!

After that earnest sermon, or after reading that stirring book, you began to pray, but your desires and feelings have now subsided. I would have you greatly grieve over this. Let me warn you that God may withdraw Himself from you altogether. Some have been sitting in this Tabernacle, now, for *years* from whom I fear God has withdrawn Himself, for you used to feel much moved by the Gospel, but it is not so now! You would not come when you were called and admonished, but you revolted more and more—and now His mercy is growing weary of you. You were smitten again and again, but you still rebelled and now God says, "Let him alone." This is a more terrible calamity than you suspect—unless it is averted, it will be your ruin!

I may be speaking to some strangers here who, at one time, had a disturbed conscience, but they have grown very callous of late. You are in danger of eternal wrath but you are amazingly carefree! You can even make jokes about religion, can't you? Poor souls! I fear the Lord has given

you over for a time, at least—I hope not forever! Do you ask me what you should do? I reply that according to our text it is high time for you to seek the Lord! You were smitten before you tried self-righteousness, Church-going, Chapel-going, sacraments and so forth—as the Prophet says, you went to king Jareb, but he could not heal you of your wounds. You must now return to your God or you will never be right. It is vain to look to priests, or sacraments, or religion—all these things put together are nothing!

You must have personal dealings with your God and you must confess your sin to Him, or you will be eternally undone. Go and do it this morning! Tell Him all that you know about your sin and ask Him to have mercy upon you for Jesus' sake. Seek to know Him as He manifests Himself in Jesus. Be willing to believe whatever He pleases to reveal. Be anxious to be reconciled to Him. Long to be at peace with the great God who made the heavens and the earth. Why should there be a quarrel between your Creator and your soul? The way of reconciliation is by the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. You must, therefore, trust Jesus and then you shall find the peace of God. Oh may His Spirit help you to do this now! Seek Him and seek Him intensely, resolving that you will never cease to seek till you find God full of mercy and love to you. Come, I pray you, and turn unto the Lord, now, and may the Holy Spirit aid you in doing so.

He has torn and He will heal you. He has struck and He will bind you up. After two days He will revive you. On the third day He will raise you up and you shall live in His sight! God Himself must heal you, or you will never be healed! He who has broken your heart must give you comfort or you will never have any! Hasten to your chamber at once and then upon your knees cry out unto God with the prayer of faith. Be not content with your own sense of sin. Do not say, "I am doing fine, for I have felt my guilt." No, your *sense* of sin may be but the first drop of a shower of eternal remorse. Get away to God in Christ and rest not till you are *there*.

Oh, if I had the power to put this into fitting and forcible words I would implore every man and woman that I look upon not to live without God! He made you and you *cannot* be happy without Him. While He is angry with you, you cannot be at peace! He bids you come to Him. The blows of His Providence are meant to separate you from the love of sin and drive you to your God! In Jesus Christ, the great Father stretches out His arms to you and says, "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."

Believe in Jesus and live! "Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call 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." God bless you, my beloved Friends, for His name's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 5.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 620, 614.**

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

REASONS FOR TURNING TO THE LORD NO. 1396

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 13, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Come, and let us return unto the Lord. For He has torn, but He will heal us. He has struck us, but He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us. On the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.”
Hosea 6:1, 2.***

[Mr. Spurgeon was exceedingly unwell and his voice painfully weak, hence the pause in the middle of the sermon, during which the congregation sang part of a hymn to enable the preacher to gain strength enough to resume his discourse. This was the last sermon before Mr. Spurgeon's departure from home to obtain needed rest. It has been revised by Mr. Spurgeon at Mentone. The sermons are continued regularly every week.]

IF man had never sinned, what delightful communion there would have been between him and God! A fairy vision rises before us of loving obedience and condescending fellowship, holy delight and boundless favor, lowly adoration and fatherly smile, perfect bliss and infinite complacency. Alas! Alas! It is no more than a *vision*! God would have treated man with familiarity and indulgence, lavishing favor and honor upon him. The Garden of Eden, fair as were its glades and lovely as were its flowers, was but a faint image of the things prepared for man had he continued in loyalty to God—inconceivable delights would have filled up the days of our life on earth had not the serpent's trail come across our nature and slimed it over with sin.

I shall not attempt any picture of man dwelling with God and God revealing Himself to man in new forms—always increasing man's knowledge and, at the same time, causing His bliss to overflow. Alas! That dream has never been realized. That dangerous fruit which hung upon the tree of The Knowledge of Good and Evil has been plucked and eaten and we will not pause to rehearse the sad story of the foul iniquities and the countless ills which have come upon mankind and severed man from his God. Because of the Fall and man's depravity, Justice now comes in with his rod and sword and changes the complexion of our life.

God deals very graciously with man, but not at all after the fashion in which He might have dealt with him—He cannot, now, perpetually smile, but is led, by His holiness, to look on him with wrathful countenance. The loving God, compelled by love, itself, frowns at sin. He threatens, He denounces. His justice and holiness lead Him to use rough words towards His erring creatures. He does more—in infinite love He chastens as well as rebukes. Instead of fatherly caresses, the great Lord wisely takes down the rod and lays it on the backs of those whom He most truly loves. “He scourges every son whom He receives.”

Those nearest to His heart and most approved of His soul among the sons of Adam have, nevertheless, to feel that “our God is a consuming fire.” Placed in the crucible, they are thrust into the white heat of the furnace and there are they called to suffer that their dross may be removed. If thus the Lord is severe to His own people, what are His dealings with the ungodly? “God is angry with the wicked every day.” The wise men of modern thought have made a new god of late—one of those gods newly come up that our fathers knew not and who is quite unknown to the Bible—as false a god as Apollo or Baal! The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob these deep thinkers cannot endure, but if you say that God is angry with the wicked every day, these modern god-makers tell you that He is too loving for that—that He cannot possibly be angry, but loves *all*, has redeemed *all*, and will, in the long run, *save all*—including Satan, himself!

They adore a god made of putty or of wax—plastic, effeminate, molluscous—with no masculine faculty about him and no quality that entitles him to the respect of just and honest men. For a being who cannot be angry at wrong-doing is destitute of one of the essential virtues and a moral ruler who is not angry with the wicked—who refuses to punish crime—is not Divine. We find no such God as this modern saccharine idol when we come to search the Scriptures, for there the true God says, “If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you.” “To the froward He will show Himself froward.” “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.”

He is revealed as a God who “will by no means spare the guilty,” but declares that every transgression and iniquity shall have its just punishment of reward. Since evil obtained sway over the human race, God walks towards men, therefore, not at all as He might have done if men had never fallen. He speaks to them in the stern voice of a judge and handles them as one who sees the need of a rod. He treats men not so roughly as they deserve, for He is infinitely tender and gentle, but still with such severity as becomes necessary to show that He cannot smile on transgression. The conduct of God towards man is not like His dealing with the angels—not like His dealing with cherubim and seraphim but, according to our text—He tears, He strikes, He kills.

It is of such a God as this that I have to speak, tonight, and of such acts as these I have to talk with you. My design is not that any may flee from the Lord, but that as the result of what we have to say, many may *return* to the Lord, who He has struck, but who He will heal. Who He has slain, but who He will restore. There are three things in my text which are, to my mind, very clear. The first is a smiting God. The second is a believing heart, for he who used such words as my text was no unbeliever. And, thirdly, a persuasive voice—the voice which so pleadingly cries, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.”

May God the Holy Spirit teach me how to proclaim the name of the Lord and render the Word quick and powerful to the salvation of the blood-bought. How much I need His strength in my extreme weakness! Pray for me, you saints of God, that once again I may faithfully and effectively do duty as one of the Lord’s ambassadors.

I. First, then, I see plainly enough in the text A SMITING God—"He has torn, but He will heal us. He has struck us, but He will bind us up." Notice, first, that the person who wrote these words discerns the Presence of the Lord, for he is convinced that his trials come *from* God. Ungodly men set down their troubles to chance and sometimes they even trace them to the devil—as if they expected their father to have dealings with them! Frequently they lay their ills at the door of their fellow men and grow quarrelsome, malicious and revengeful. It is a happy day for a man when he knows in whose hand is the rod and learns to trace his troubles to God!

Alas, there are even some children of God who greatly err in this matter when under affliction—they spend their time in bewailing second causes—and do not look at the First Cause! This is very brutish. If you strike a dog with a stick he will bite at the stick. Had he a little intelligence he would bite at *you*, knowing that the blow came not from the stick or stone, but from the hand that used these implements! So is it usually with unbelievers in trouble—they look at the secondary agent and they spend their anger or their thoughts entirely there. If, in the day of adversity they would consider, they would perceive that affliction springs not out of the ground, neither do distresses come by chance, but the hand of the Lord is in all these things.

"Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord has not done it?" Whichever way the trial comes, it comes from Him. If the trouble was caused by a triumphant enemy or by a deceitful friend. If it comes as a loss in business or as a sickness of body—or if it wounded us through the arrows of death piercing the heart of our beloved—in either case it was the Lord. Learn that lesson! He has smitten or struck you! He has torn you! He has done it all! He has ordained our trials for judgment and established them for correction—let us not despise them by refusing to see His hand or by angrily rebelling against Him. We read that, "Aaron held his peace," when his two sons were slain with fire because it was the fire of the Lord that struck them—what could he say?

If even Christian men too often forget the Lord's hand, we need not be at all surprised that unconverted men do so. Perhaps I am speaking to one who has been followed by a succession of disasters till he is now surrounded by a sea of affliction. You have scarcely escaped from one trouble before you have plunged into another! It seems to you as if your "bad luck," as you call it, were no more absent from you at any time than your shadow. You cannot get on at anything! Whatever you touch withers beneath your hands. You have been ill again and again. You have lost your best friend when you most needed him. You have lost your job and wherever you apply you get no favorable reply. It is true that you are not wise enough to trace some of these misfortunes to your own bad habits—your indolence or your drunkenness.

I wish, however, you were even as wise as that, for then you might amend your ways. If you grow wiser, still, you would say, "It cannot be that I am to have stroke upon stroke and loss upon loss without there being some reason for it, for God does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." I should not wonder, my Friend, that you are so sorely smitten because the Lord has some great design of love to your soul! Look at

the prodigal son in the distant country. He had plenty of money and he spent it in riotous living. He was in fine health and lived in the fastest style. Wine and women soon took away his money and then he said that bad luck had befallen him.

Of course it had and the young squire was obliged to swallow his dignity and independence and seek for a job! He looked in the daily paper and searched up and down among his dear friends who had drunk to his health with gallons of *his* rare old wines. But they knew of nothing for him and gave him the cold shoulder. No money-lender would grant him a loan and no man gave him any. He walked his shoes off his feet, but could find nothing to do. He had rags upon him and hunger within him. He was a broken down gentleman without a trade and without the physical strength to dig or plow. What could he do? He was “down on his luck,” as men of his kind are known to say—and nobody wanted his company.

One person who had some sort of pity for the poor wretch found him employment and he commenced active life in the noble capacity of a pig feeder—“He joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.” He was now at his lowest, for his occupation was filthy and degrading—and the wages were not enough to keep body and soul together—so that he often envied the hogs that could so readily fill themselves with husks. Yet in this deep distress there was mercy and hope—his way home was round by the swine trough! He might never have come to his father if he had not come, first, to those pigs and husks!

Perhaps, O tried Sinner, the way to God for you is through your troubles. If the Lord had prospered you in that piece of betting, for instance, or if you had got on in that infamous business which you ought never to have touched, you might have been a rich man and have been damned! But you are not to be rich—God does not mean that you should be. He means to follow with stroke upon stroke and tearing upon tearing till at last you shall realize that He is saying to you, “Return to Me, for you will never rest until you do.” You shall never know prosperity until you have come clean out and made your peace with God! Then shall your peace be as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

I am certain that I speak as though I were a prophet to the soul of some who are in this house tonight and I pray God that if it is so, they may look on the series of trials through which they have passed as being really sent to them, not by chance or haphazard, nor by the conjunction of the stars, nor by anything of that atheistic foolery which men are so fond of inventing—but sent from God Himself with benign intent! He smites, He tears, He slays—but this is all the surgery of love! The person who uttered these words, then, had learned to trace his troubles to God.

Now, notice that it is customary with God to smite His own according to His own Words, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” I remember being severely called to account by a fastidious critic for using the following vulgar metaphor, which I will therefore use again. It may serve for another paragraph for some other superfine reviewer. I think I said that if you were going home and you saw a number of boys round a house breaking windows, it is 10 to one that you would not care much about what they

did. BUT, if you saw your own boy doing it, he would be sure to get as sweet a box on the ears as you could manage to convey to him!

Would that be because you loved him less than the rest of the boys? Not so, but because you loved him more! You had something to do with him and nothing to do with the rest—therefore he obtained the privilege of correction which the others missed. Now, oftentimes the sinner who falls into trouble, or the Christian who endures heavy trials, does not receive such severe treatment because the Lord is about to destroy him, but because He has a secret love to his soul. Thus says the Lord, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.” These chastisements and heavy blows which are compared in the text to tearing and to striking, often fall upon God’s own beloved because they *are* His beloved and He cannot, in any better way, display His love to them.

“I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree”—no axe has come to his root and no blight to his leaf—God has left him alone to fill the earth with his branches. But why? Was it not that he might become fit for the fire when the axe of the woodsman would lay him low? But look at the vine which bears fruit and you shall see, every year at the proper season, the ruthless knife of the pruner cutting away what seems to be the liveliest shoots, removing the hopeful branches and leaving the poor vine to bleed, or to appear to be a mere dry stick! Yes, the vine is worth pruning—it belongs to the vinedresser’s choice plants and he looks to it for rich clusters.

As for the green bay tree—who cares to prune it? What profit would come of blunting the knife on a fruitless tree? Woe to you who are increasing your stores—you who never have aches or pains! Woe to you who say that no thought of sin will ever depress you! Woe to you who can drink your fill and eat abundantly without being sick or sorry. Lo, you are fattened like bullocks for the slaughter and there shall nothing happen to you till death’s poleax lays you low! Count it to be one of the most fearful curses that can happen to you to be happy in your sins! “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.”

You who are tossed to and fro and are broken by sorrow need not start with dread because you are made to suffer, for the Lord lays heavy hands upon His own and reserves the ungodly for His wrath. The dealings of God with men will often appear to be very severe. Kindly read the 14th verse of the 5th chapter—“I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away.” From this it is clear that our text, when it says, “He has torn,” alludes to a lion rending his prey. The Lord seems, sometimes, to spring upon a man and suddenly to bring him down. And then by terrible trials He appears to lacerate him from head to foot. Fears, pains of body, awful suggestions within his mind, loss upon loss in business, grief upon grief, his home desolate, his

heart broken, his hope gone—such things does the Lord lay upon men until they know what the Lord meant when He said by His Prophet, “I will be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them.”

God does this with men and yet He means them no ill. The case of Hezekiah explains it all. Hear him cry in the bitterness of his soul, “I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will He break all my bones: from day even to night will You make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: my eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. What shall I say?” But his own answer to his own question is, “O Lord, by these things men live and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so will You recover me, and make me to live?” The text says that the Lord smiles. He uses such force that He leaves bruises and welts, for, “by the blueness of the wound the heart is made better.”

He smites and He knows how to do it, for He is a wise corrector. “He that chastises the heathen, shall not He correct?” He can touch a man in His most tender place and make the stoutest heart to quail. He knows our frame and when He comes to deal with us in wrath, even though there is love behind it all, yet still He smites very sternly. David says, “All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning.” And in another place he shows that this chastening is no child’s play, for he says, “When You with rebukes do correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty to consume away like a moth.” Yes, and according to the text, God may lay a man’s soul so low that he may count himself to be as dead and he may continue like one in the grave by the space of two days—and yet on the third day He will raise him up!

This, of course, is not to be taken literally, but represents a considerable period, though a period that has an end, during which heart and flesh utterly fail. God knows how long to make a man lie under the sentence of death. It will not be four days—that would be too long, for one said of old, “By this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days.” There shall be three days wherein deadly despair shall rule—but destruction shall not actually take place—as Jesus came up out of the earth on the third day, so those who have felt the sentence of death in themselves shall come out into the joy of resurrection-life to praise and bless His name.

I perceive that I almost startle you while I show you what God does with the sons of men. But there is one thing I ought to add. “He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” A man who lies in the hospital half his time has still more mercy than he could have claimed. And he who shivers in this winter’s cold and knows bitter penury, yet still has more mercy than he deserves. And he among us who sinks lowest in sorrow of soul—he who seems to go down into the dread abyss till all God’s waves and billows go over him—he may still thank God that he is not in the torments of Hell! He who suffers most may be grateful that justice has not yet taken the plummet and the line and meted out righteous wrath!

At our worst we are indulged with a fullness of mercy compared with what our transgressions deserve! And, oh, I want to show you that there is love in it all. I do not call him a loving father who sees his boy indulge bad

habits and never chastens him. I do not call her a loving mother who, when she has seen her child showing ill-temper and displaying self-will, has never chastened her. It is often a wicked self-indulgence which prevents parents from doing what should be done to drive out wickedness and train for a noble life. When a father, with tears in his eyes, has taken his boy alone and said, "I cannot be like Eli, upon whose house there came the curse because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not. I must chasten you at times. If you will thus break my commandments and grieve God and dishonor my family, I must make you smart for it, though every stroke is a pain to me."

I say when a father acts in this way, he is both wise and kind. Many a young scoundrel, now in the streets of London, might have been a moral young man if his father had done his duty by him. And, mark you, God will never have this to be laid at His door—that He permits sin in His family and leaves His chosen unchastened! His own children must feel the rod and be brought under the bond of the Covenant. "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

Here let me wait a minute to recover my voice and gather a little strength, for I am very feeble. Could you, do you think, ease me for a moment by singing a verse or two of the 605th hymn in "Our Own Hymn Book," to the tune, "Farrant"?—

***"Come let us to the Lord our God
With contrite hearts return.
Our God is gracious, nor will leave
The desolate to mourn.
His voice commands the tempest forth
And stills the stormy wave,
And though His arm is strong to smite,
'Tis also strong to save.
Long has the night of sorrow reigned;
The dawn shall bring us light:
God shall appear, and we shall rise
With gladness in His sight."***

Tremblingly I will now endeavor to go on to the next point. May the Holy Spirit guide my mind, and heart and tongue.

II. Secondly, I see in the text A BELIEVING HEART—to my mind a remarkably believing heart because the man believes in the goodness of God even when he is smarting and suffering. Do notice it. He says, "Come, let us return to the Lord, for He has torn, but He will heal us. He has struck, but He will bind us up." It is wonderfully easy to believe in God when you have all you need and are free from trial. But such fair-weather faith as that is very often a mere sham. True faith believes in God when He is angry and trusts Him when the rod is in His hand—and to my mind, as I have said before—it is a very beautiful instance of faith which we have in this text.

The man has been torn, yes, torn as a lion tears his victim—there are the gashes, bleeding and smarting—yet he cries, "Come, and let us return to the Lord." What, to the God who has torn us? Yes, yes! Let us go to Him, for He will receive us and will not cast us away, but, on the contrary, He will heal the wounds He made! You cannot think too well of God, nor expect too much mercy from Him! Beloved, if you believe that He will par-

don your greatest sin for Jesus' sake. If you believe, tonight, that He will cheerfully receive you to His bosom because of His dear Son. If you believe that He can make you an heir of Heaven by faith in Christ—you will not believe too well of God! I shall challenge you to try and make your thoughts of the Lord too high and honorable! If you attempt the task, you will certainly be foiled in it.

This believing heart in my text actually finds an argument in the blows of God why we should trust Him. Does He not say, "He has torn, but He will heal us. He has struck us, but He will bind us up"? Yes, and there is argument here. When a physician finds a man's bone badly set and breaks it again, what am I sure that he is going to do? Why, to set it, and set it right! When I see a physician using a very severe remedy in a very difficult case, say a blister, or some form of bleeding, or the like—I feel certain that he does not mean to leave his patient to bleed to death and that he does not wound without a purpose. If a spreader should be inserted in order that the wound may be kept open till the proud flesh is cut away, I know that the physician does not do that out of unkindness, but that he intends the good of his patient. He means to do something which, for the time, the patient cannot appreciate, but about which he must exercise faith. If I were at any time to be subject to the surgeon's knife, I should have no hesitation in feeling that if he wounded me he would see me through the operation and do his utmost for my restoration.

Now, God is the great Surgeon of men's souls and sometimes He has to put man upon the table and cut—and cut to the very bone! But He never means to kill. He never takes the knife of discipline except with the intent to bind up every wound He makes and set the man upon his feet again, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. "Though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies." So, you see that he who wrote the text did well to argue from the tearing and the smiting that God must mean well to the afflicted soul. And, notice such is the faith of this text that the writer expects to be restored though he writes himself down among the dead. "After two days," he says, "will He revive us."

I know—I wonder whether you know—what it is to feel as though utterly dead to all spiritual power, all natural hope, all claim on mercy and, sometimes, even to all possibility of salvation. I may be addressing one tonight who feels as though his death warrant had been signed and sealed. He has the sentence of death in himself. But, dear Brother or Sister, still have faith, for so the text has it—"We shall live in His sight." You know what Job said—to my mind it is the grandest thing a man ever said—he was not reigning on a throne, but sitting on a dunghill! He was covered with boils and scraping himself with a potsherd, yet he was more than royal.

Glorious old Job bravely said, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." This was grand! Can you imitate it? Though you feel as if you were slain. Though you sit in your pew tonight and say, "Well, it is of no use. I know I am undone," yet I charge you to trust the Lord, your Redeemer, over the head of it all! Trust the Covenant God in the teeth of everything! Believe God to be true and every fact and circumstance and thought and

feeling to be a liar! Cling to the eternal mercy of God who casts out none that come to Him by Jesus Christ! Oh, it is a blessed thing to be empty and to believe that God can fill you—to be nothing and to believe that He can make you His child! It is a blessed thing to be lost and to believe that the Lord can save you—to feel condemned and yet to believe that Christ can justify you! Oh, to sink and sink and sink, even into the grave of all natural hope and yet to feel that you shall rise again when the third day has come! This is the faith of God's elect!

Notice that the faith of my text looks for brighter things, for it says, "In the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." You are afraid of God now, perhaps, but when He comes and lifts you up out of your state of spiritual death-gloom you will delight to see Him, to feel Him near, to know that He has quickened you and to spend your new life in delightful communion with Him! You shall live in His sight! What heavenly living that must be! Life under the eyes of the Lord! Life such as *He* calls life! Life which *He* can look upon with pleasure! In His Presence is fullness of joy and this, His wounded ones shall know when He has healed them! I wish I could say what I want to say, but I am very feeble and, therefore, not much at ease in speaking. Yet I do not know but what my broken words may, after all, be best—when voice will not answer to mind and we have to bring out our discourses piecemeal—the morsels may be all the sweeter to the afflicted.

But this is what I want to say—I pray you never, never, never yield to that temptation of the devil which would lead you to cry, "God is dealing roughly with me! He will never save me!" No, expect quite the contrary! Because of these blows and strokes, because of your misery of heart, because of your troubled conscience, because of your inward distress you may all the more have hope! Nothing is more dreadful than to be without sensation—that is a token of *death*! But to be broken in pieces all asunder! To feel your thoughts to be like a case of knives cutting to the very center of your heart—this, at the very least, proves that life is still in you! Besides, remember that the path to joy is sorrow, the door to life is by death, the road to salvation is by condemnation in the conscience. The way to enjoy God's love is, first of all, to be troubled under God's wrath.

That brings me to my third point, upon which I must be brief, but I would be earnest. Oh, Spirit of God, enable me!

III. The text has in it A PERSUASIVE VOICE. Oh that I could say it in wooing tones! But though the music of love is in my heart, my voice is hoarse. Bear with me, however, while I cry, "Come! Come! Come, let us return unto the Lord." This persuasive voice is to be attentively regarded, in the first place, because it pleads for a right thing. Dear Friends, if we have wandered away from God and if God is angry with us, what ought to be our first step? Why, to get back to God! If I had offended any man or felt that I had done him an injustice, I hope I should not need much persuasion to go to him and confess my wrong and ask him to give me his hand. I trust it is the same with you.

Now, since you have grieved the Lord, you ought to be the first to seek reconciliation. And if instead of it, He is first and comes to you with overtures of peace, surely you should not need much persuasion to end the

quarrel! Come, poor erring child, you have acted sinfully towards your loving Father—does not your heart, itself, suggest to you the resolve—“I will arise and go unto my Father”? You have grieved Him and because you have grieved Him, He has struck you that you may know for yourself the evil of your actions! Let the first smiting suffice and yield at once to His reproofs. “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.”

A great part of the persuasiveness of the text lies not merely in the rightness of it, but in the speaker putting himself with the people whom he entreats to return. He says, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.” My dear Hearers, willingly enough, without any sort of mock humility, do I feel compelled to put myself among you. If you have never returned to the Lord, come, let us go together, for I know the way and have good cause to tread it over again. I went to Him, I almost forget how many years ago, but I was only a stripling of 15 years of age. Deeply conscious of my guilt, I sought the Lord God of my fathers in much brokenness of spirit.

He had struck me. He had torn me. He had slain me by the Law of His mouth. Where could I go? I tried every helper, but I found all carnal hopes to be mockeries. I went trembling to my God and pleaded the precious blood of Jesus—and He healed me! He bound me up and He gave me to live in His sight! To this I bear my solemn and sure witness. But though I went to Him so many years ago, I have been many times since. I have felt sin upon the conscience. I have had my own inward depravity to mourn over. I have had to feel myself to be nothing, yes, and to be *less* than nothing! And I have been very heavy in soul and, therefore, driven by distress to my Lord.

Yes, I have gone to Him a thousand times! And therefore I did not boast when I said I knew the way. Ah, poor helpless Soul, I know your down-castings and distractions, for I know the heart of a stranger by having felt, myself, to be an alien to my mother’s children, unworthy to be numbered with the family of God. I have comforted God’s people, but sometimes could not comfort myself! I have tried to fill others while mourning my own emptiness! But I bear witness that I never went to my Lord in vain. Come, give me your hand—one on this side, one on that—and let us return to the Lord! Come, let us make a ring all round the place and hand in hand let us return to the Lord!

You who do not know the way will, perhaps, be helped by brotherly sympathy as we tell you how we resolved to return. You that think yourselves the biggest, blackest sinners—you do not think so badly of yourselves as I often think, and rightly think, of myself—but though of sinners the chief, and of saints, the least. “I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day.” And you, dear Friend, though up till now you have never sought Jesus, I hope that you will seek Him now and find abundant satisfaction in laying hold upon Him.

Notice that this exhortation is put in the present tense. “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.” It is not tomorrow. It is not next year. It is so written that it means—“Let us return to the Lord *now*.” If at all, why not at once? The sooner a good thing is done, the better. As far as I am concerned, there is a very personal reason for pressing upon any unconverted

person here that he should return to the Lord now. I reckon it to be a great privilege to be able to stand here and bid you come to the Lord, though the exercise of that privilege has worn me out and made me brain-weary and full of pain. That privilege I shall not enjoy for some little time and it would charm me if I might win you now.

Oh that my Lord would make this last sermon of mine for a while—perhaps forever—to be a weight cast into the scale to decide a hesitating will for Christ! I see the balances—how evenly they are poised! I see them trembling—a decision is to be arrived at one way or the other. This side for God—shall it go down? Is there weight enough? Satan clings to the chains of that evil scale! He seeks to drag it down! He casts in new temptations. Who will win? With all my heart would I throw earnest entreaties into the scale of right that salvation may win the day! But which shall it be? Which shall it be? Perhaps the turn it takes tonight will be the turn it takes for eternity! God grant that it may be for God, for His Truth, for Christ, for Heaven—and not for the world, for sin, for self and eternal perdition! O Holy Spirit, work mightily to decide men aright!

The pleading of my text—and with this I close—is rendered all the more powerful because it is full of pleasing expectancy. Imagine that you had to try to make up a quarrel and the offending person were to say to you, “Well, suppose I agree to end this dispute. Will the other party be satisfied?” Upon the answer to that question your hope of success would very greatly depend. It has sometimes been my lot to have some such work as that to do and I have not felt quite sure that I would succeed till I had crossed that bridge. The aggrieved individual has been in a very hot temper and I could not altogether wonder, for he had been shamefully treated. “Well,” I have said to the offender, “I will try my best, you know, and it will greatly strengthen me if I can say that you bitterly feel that you were in the wrong and desire to offer an ample apology.”

My client has said, “I should not mind going a good way in apologizing, but it can only be on the condition that I shall be kindly met. If I am to be repulsed—well, I shall not say anything until I have some idea of the temper and spirit of my opponent.” When I have been able to say, “The person whom you have offended is grieved for you as much as for himself. He is quite willing to receive you at any time and will give you every token of forgiveness. He hardly needs you to make any confession at all, he is so ready to forgive you—and nothing will give him greater pleasure than to have your friendship”—why then the other party has said, “What? Does he really say that? Does he speak kindly of me after what I did? Did he really say that he would be glad to see me at his house? Did he speak of me as still being his *friend*? Then be so good as to tell him that I am very sorry and I will be round to say it myself, directly.”

Now, my God, my gracious God, bids me say that He is a God ready to pardon! You have not to go and propitiate Him, make Him tender and plead with Him in prayer till you melt His heart. No! He waits to be gracious to you! He has come tonight, by His poor feeble servant, to entreat you to accept His love and Grace. Let my broken accents reach the ears of your hearts. Repent of sin! Believe in Jesus Christ and look to Him for mercy! May God help you to do so and to do it now! Do not let returning to

the Lord be left to be talked of when you get outside—return before you rise from your seat! I dread that vain companion who waits for you at the door. I am afraid of that idle chat on the road home. Do not even allow the exhortation of the text to wait to be thought of when you get home, for perhaps it may then be forgotten—but NOW—upon that seat or standing where you are, may God help you to respond to the gracious invitation, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord. For He has torn, but He will heal us. On the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.”

God bless you, dear Friends. May His richest blessing rest upon every one of you. Other voices will be heard, here, for a few weeks, but none will speak more lovingly than mine all broken, cracked, hoarse and unmusical though it is. May those Brothers who speak to you have more strength than I have—and more Grace! If they shall be the means of bringing some to Jesus whom I have never reached, I shall be glad, indeed! I want you all, members of the Church, to be very, very diligent in helping in the February meetings by your efforts and your prayers. My dear Brothers Clarke and Smith are well fitted for their work. You ought to have this Tabernacle crowded every night of the week—that is what I want to hear!

Each one of you must get to work to get the outside people into the house that they may hear and live! The evangelists will be here for the best part of the month and if you all work hard and earnestly to gather the crowds together when those two Brothers speak and sing, I do not doubt that a blessing will rest upon them like that which came upon our Brothers Moody and Sankey in years gone by.

Pray for me, I beseech of you, and having done so, prove the sincerity of your prayers by helping in the Lord’s work—this will be as medicine to your sick pastor’s soul and body! I rely upon you, each one, to see these services made a success, God the Holy Spirit helping you.

[A fortnight elapsed between the preaching of the above sermon and its being revised. Mr. Spurgeon is mending and begs for the prayers of his friends that he may, before long, be quite restored and may return to his work in full vigor.]

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

OUR MISERIES, MESSENGERS OF MERCY NO. 400

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 14, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Come and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn and He will heal us. He has smitten and He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us: in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight.”
Hosea 6:1, 2.***

TENDER fathers seek first to train their children by gentle means. The Lord, in His long-suffering dealt very kindly with His erring Israel, sending them favor after favor and blessing after blessing, saying by His acts, “I have given them their corn and their wine and their oil. They will surely turn unto Me and say, ‘Our Father, You shall be the guide of our youth.’” But the more He multiplied His bounties, the more they multiplied their iniquities as they burned sacrifice unto the gods of Edom and of Moab—even to those that were no gods, saying, “These be your gods, O Israel, which have given unto you your corn and your wine and your oil.”

So they spent the mercies of God in sacrifice upon their idols and committed transgressions with the false gods of the heathen. They consumed with their lusts the very mercies which God had sent to bring them to repentance. When at last God saw that this measure did not move them because their sin was written as with an iron pen and engraved upon the very horns of their altars—then He tried harsher means. He hewed them by the Prophets—they rose early and they prophesied until the going down of the sun, giving line upon line, precept upon precept—threatening them with the anger and vengeance of God.

At last that vengeance came. He carried them away captive and they went into a land that they knew not—among a cruel people—whose speech they could not understand. Again He delivered them out of the hand of their enemy. And yet, again, because of their sin, He sold them to Assyria and afterwards to Babylon. So that at last, after they had been rent and torn, they might say within themselves, “Come and let us return unto the Lord.”

Now, my Brethren, the people of Israel are but a picture of ourselves—especially are they representatives of a certain class, some of whom are now present. God has tried you with mercy upon mercy—kept you long in health till you scarcely ever had a day’s sickness. He has given you all that you could wish, till your cup was brimming and flowing over. But you used His mercies for your own self-indulgence and the bodily strength which was given you to be a blessing you have made a curse. Streams of mercy never ceasing, God has granted to you, and your return has been streams of sin, broad and black and deep.

And now today He has been changing His ways with you. I am speaking to some whom God has of late heavily afflicted. Seeing gentler means

would not do He has turned your wine into wormwood and your honey into gall. He has made you sick in body and dispirited in mind. Your earthly goods are melting like snow before the summer's sun. Your children die before your very eyes and the desire of your heart is taken away with a stroke. God has made all His waves and His billows go over you. The Law has sounded its trumpet in your ear and brought your sin to remembrance. Conscience has started up in alarm from its long sleep and cries like a mighty man that wakes up from his slumber and finds the camp besieged.

You are troubled and sore broken. Your heart is melted like wax so that while you are sitting in the house of God today you are complaining, "I am the man that has seen affliction." And perhaps worse than that you are groaning, "His wrath lies hard upon me, I cannot look up." It is to you I am about to speak this morning. I single you out from the crowd and I trust while I address you there may be also some words of comfort or of instruction for the rest of the congregation. Oh, may you, my Hearer—you upon whom I fix my eye this morning, you whose case is the case of Israel in Hosea—may you say, "Come and let us return unto the Lord, for He has torn and He will heal us. He has smitten and He will bind us up."

I desire to come straight up to you who are in this condition and put my hand inside yours—holding you fast while I strive in God's name to reason with you—beseeching God the Holy Spirit to reason better than I can. I pray He sweetly moves your soul, till you say, "I will arise and go unto my Father." Three things I must do this morning. First, I must *deal a blow at the old Tempter, who has got the first hand at you*. Secondly, I will come to *reason comfortably with you*. And then, thirdly, I must *lovingly persuade you*, saying—"Come, let us return unto the Lord."

I. First then, I must DEAL A BLOW AT THE OLD TEMPTER WHO HAS GOTTEN BEFORE ME AND HAS BEGUN TO DECEIVE YOU.

I cannot tell what is the precise temptation that Satan has been using with you, but I think it is very likely to be one of four. The first one has been this—"Oh," says he, "see how troubled you are, nothing prospers with you. What pains of body you suffer and how depressed you are in spirit. God is a tyrant to you, He treats you cruelly. *Hate Him*—set your teeth together and curse him. Say, 'If He treats me thus He is *not* a God that I can love. I will abhor Him from my very soul.'"

I have uttered that temptation in startling language because such dark insinuations as this have been very common with much tried and troubled men. I remember many who, in telling their experience of how they were brought to Christ, have confessed that when first the hammer of God's Law fell upon their hearts it hardened them. When God smote, they were like the bullock which kicks against the pricks of the ox-goad. They felt like a high blooded, unbroken horse—the bit was in their mouths—but they pulled and tugged at it. And the more it cut and wounded them the more resolved they were that they would not turn. In fact, hatred was stirred up against God by what was intended to bring them to His feet.

Soul, does Satan tempt you thus? Then indeed it is a sad proof that *sin is madness*. I can only compare your case to yon poor maniac who has labored hard to destroy himself by throwing himself into the fire or into the water. Some kind person willing to bear all the inconveniences of such an office has volunteered to be his keeper. See, the man is dashing to the water's brink and means to throw himself into the stream. His keeper holds him back and with stern words and sterner acts throws him down upon the ground and binds him so that he cannot take the fatal leap.

But look again. He longs to burn himself, he makes a tremendous effort to thrust his body into the flame! But his keeper shuts him up in a room where he cannot get at the devouring flame. All the while this madman hates him, curses him, spits upon him and would do anything if he could but kill his keeper and tear him to pieces in his fury. Mark you, when the maniac shall get back his reason he will kiss the feet of that man whom now he hates, he will say—"I bless you for the loving violence which has restrained me from my own destruction. I thank you for denying me my own will—that you stood in my path and thwarted my mad desire—and that you would not let me ruin myself."

Now, poor sinner, God is doing this with you. Oh, do not hate Him. He does not hate *you*. He is not dealing with you in wrath, but in mercy. There is still behind the black cloud the sun of His mercy shining. Oh, that Satan may be cast out of you that you may not be tempted to hate God because of His sore smiting of you.

Or, perhaps the temptations of Satan have taken another shape—not so much hatred as *sullenness*. You have lost all you care for now and you think that your state does not matter much to you. You would as soon die as live. And as for your soul, you think you cannot be more wretched in Hell itself than you are now. And you say, "So let it be. It is so bad that it cannot be mended." You do not bestir yourself but you sit down with a stony heart waiting to be crushed. You are like some poor man benighted on the frozen Alps who feels sleep creeping upon him and is content to lie down there and die—as he certainly must unless some friendly hand shall shake him out of his desperate sleep.

There is a kind of numbness which pain brings to the body, which has its equivalent in the spirit—a numbness because the grief has been so acute that nature could bear no more. Then death itself loses its horror in the nearer terrors of the soul. "My soul chooses strangling rather than life." Soul, Satan desires to have you that he may utterly destroy you and this is one of his ways. He seeks to make you torpid that he may find you dead. For when you are sullen he knows that the warnings of the ministry and the earnest exhortations of the Gospel will have but little force with you. Wake, Man, wake! Your danger is awful! Multitudes have perished here.

Wake, I pray you, wake! Oh, if you have any sensibility left, wake up! Depend on it, that bad as your case is, it will be worse in the world to come unless the badness of it be now blessed to your soul. Oh, Man, the pains you have had as yet are but as a hurt finger—they are but mere trifles compared with the miseries of eternity. Instead of opiates to make you

sleep, let them be goads to stir your sluggish flesh and make you start from the deadly couch of presumption. I would be but too glad if I might thrust lancets into you again and again—anything sooner than you should sleep that sleep of death and be utterly destroyed.

Possibly, however, the temptation of Satan has taken the form of *despair*. “Oh,” says he, “there is no hope for you. You can clearly perceive that you are the subject of divine hatred. God has not dealt with others as He has with you. These trials are but the first drops of the long shower of His eternal wrath. Depend upon it,” says Satan, “now that your conscience is in this state your convictions will deepen into a settled remorse. And then that remorse will end in final despair and everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Your sins are too many and too great. There is hope for any man—but there is no hope for you. You are beyond the lines of mercy.

“The arm of grace is not long enough or strong enough to reach such a wretch as you are. You are not jammed in Hell yet, but you are the same as if you were. You are reprobate. The decree shuts you out of Heaven while the greatness of your sin confirms it. You are bound up in fetters that cannot be broken and will be cast into a horrible pit out of which you never can be drawn.”

Satan, you are a LIAR! Oh, that this poor heart did know it—I tell you this to your face, Satan, for you did once bewitch *me* with your falsehood. You did bring me into this state of despair, too—till I was ready to put an end to myself, because I thought nothing awaited me but the wrath of God. Oh, you lying Hell-hound, how you did slander my Lord and Master! He was willing to receive me but you made me think He would reject me. He stood waiting at the door of my heart, saying, “Open to Me,” and you said that He had gone, that He had shut up the heart of His compassion and doomed me forever to destruction.

I will get even with you, you great destroyer of souls, for your cruel treachery with me—as long as I live I will raise the hue and cry against you. Soul, do not believe him—he is a murderer of souls—and a liar from the beginning. There *is* hope for *you*. There is hope for you *now*. There is still the Gospel preached to you—still is it freely presented in your hearing. May you say today, “Come, let us return unto the Lord” and He *will* heal you. He *will* bind you up. He will receive you to His heart. He will in no wise cast you out.

But it may occur that yet a fourth temptation has been tried with some of you. Satan has said, “Well, now, you can see it is of no use. Give it up altogether and if you cannot be happy one way, try another. You clearly perceive that you are shut out of Heaven, Well, make the best of this world.” “Now,” says the devil, “Christ will not have you. What is the use of your going to a place of worship? Do not go. Stay away. It is hopeless. The Gospel will never be of any use to you. You have heard it these three or four years and you only are more hardened. Don’t go again. Besides, why make yourself miserable for nothing? Drink your fill of the world’s delight. If you cannot get the best good, get the other. Eat, drink and be merry.

“Live a fast life and satisfy yourself. You may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. You may as well perish for a great sin as perish for a little one. God evidently has cast you off—follow your own way and choose your own delight.” Oh, Soul! Oh, soul! How sad it is that these afflictions and warnings of conscience which are meant to bring you *to* Christ should be used by Satan as the reason why you should go *from* Christ. Oh, Soul, the Lord has designs of mercy for you now. He has begun to try you in your circumstances and afflict you in your soul. And the devil knows it and is afraid of losing you and so he wants you to get out of the way of mercy just when mercy is coming.

What? Suppose you have as yet gained no good by attending the means of grace—does that prove that you will not soon be blessed? You are traveling in the wilderness. You had a torch and the wind blew it out—you lit it again and it blew it out again. Do not say that therefore you will never see. The sun is rising, the sun is rising and the fact that torches have been blown out does not prove that the night will last forever. If your false hopes have left you and your self-righteous trusts have all been taken away, I am glad. I am glad it is dark with you—for the darkest part of the night is that which heralds the dawning of the day.

I am glad the Lord has laid you low, for it is now He means to lift you up. Do not, I pray you, be cajoled out of this divine mercy by the temptations of the fiend of Hell. Rouse yourself, Man! Cry, “Through He slay me yet will I trust in Him! If I am at Bethesda’s pool and the water is not stirred, yet will I die there,” (that you will never do—mark that). “Though I pray and He hears me not, yet my cries even to my dying hour shall go up to Him.” And mark you, He will surely hear you! Only do not be led astray of the Evil One to turn what is the mercy of God into an excuse for excess of riot. Instead listen now to the voice of wisdom and mercy while I seek in the second place to reason with you comfortably that I may bring you to say, “Come, let us return unto the Lord.”

II. Now forget your troubles for a little while if you can—or only think of them as a background for the brightness of THE COMFORT which I would give you as God’s messenger.

1. So you say you have had so many trials in life and so many strivings of conscience that therefore you feel you must be too guilty to be saved? Do you think that you have been punished for your sins? Permit me to remind you that this is not the place where the Judge of all the earth usually punishes sin. His wrath He reserves for the Day of Judgment and the world to come. All sorrow is the result of sin. But still it does not come to any particular man except in some remarkable instances. Now there was Job—will you equal him among the saints? Was he not one of the chief of them?

Yet he was more tried than any other man. That evidently was not because he was a greater sinner than others. Do you not know the fact that often the most wicked men are the most prosperous, while the most holy are the most afflicted? Therefore this is not the place where God dispenses Providence according to the sole and absolute rule of justice. That is to be in the world to come. How would you account for such an instance as

this, which occurred not long ago in a certain railway accident? There were two men who entered the train. One of them a Christian, the other a worldling. The Christian man took his seat. So did the other.

At a station the worldly one said, "I should like a game of cards. Will you get out and go with me?—there is So-and-So in such a carriage—come with me and we will play together." "No," said the other, "I would much rather be out of your company, if that is what you are at." "Well then," said he, "good morning, I am going there." An accident of the most frightful character occurred. The Christian man saw those on each side of him killed—his two companions crushed and he himself such a mass of bruises and broken bones as you scarcely ever saw. His leg was broken in seven different places and he was, as it seemed, at death's door.

His companion who went to play cards was perfectly safe. All the carriage in which he rode was untouched! Now this plainly shows that this is not of the world in which God deals with men according to the rules of justice. Ships sink whether men are at prayer or whether they are cursing God. Providence here is not ordered according to the rule by which God shall dispense His favors or His fury in the world to come. This is the land of long-suffering rather than of execution. This is the land where God in His wise Providence rather brings us to repentance than to punishment. Now I can see the hand of God in all. The man who escaped as a card player, I fear, was hardened by the Providence by which he escaped.

Yet, mark you, God was glorified because His Providence will become a savor of death unto death to that man should he live and die impenitent—while in the Christian who was thus injured God is honored. For if you could see him as I saw him—with his smiling face relating the fact that he has never murmured once though he had laid upon his bed for very many weeks—you would only admire the favor and goodness of God which gave the sinner space for repentance and gave the believer room to display the grace of patience. It was good for the one that he was afflicted. It was good for the other that he escaped.

But this is not the hand of punishment and your having more afflictions than others may be because God loves you. Certainly it is not because He hates you. I have seen the wicked in great power—spreading themselves like green bay-trees. And I have seen them in their death, too—and they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. They are at ease, they are settled on their lees. They are not emptied from vessel to vessel. As for God's people—they are chastened every morning and vexed every evening—and the Lord's hand lies heavy on them. Yet there is God's goodness in that heavy hand and infinite loving kindness in their tribulations.

God only gives the wicked prosperity as we give husks to swine. He gives them this world's transient things because He loves them not. I pray you then, do not misconstrue your sufferings of body and mind—they may be tokens of mercy. They certainly are not indicators of any special wrath.

Secondly, you will say that you have great distress of mind and trials of soul and therefore there is no hope for you. I say, therefore, *there is hope*.

Perhaps some of those troubles of mind come from Satan. Now observe This—Satan very seldom troubles those men who are all his own. A poor Negro who had been tempted by Satan was once laughed at by his master about it. Said he, “The devil never tempts me, I do not even know that there is such a being in existence.” They went out sometime after shooting wild ducks. As the master shot at a covey of them and some of them were wounded he was exceedingly earnest with clubs and stones to secure those that were wounded—while he left those that were evidently dead to float on the stream till he had time to pick them up.

This gave the Negro a fine opportunity of explaining his master’s experience. “Massa, while you was a splashin’ in de water after dem wounded ducks and lettin’ de dead ones float on, it jist come into my mind why it is dat de debil troubles me so much while he lets you alone. You are like de dead ducks—he’s sure he’s got you safe. I’m like de wounded ones—trying to git away from him—and he’s afraid I’ll do it, so he makes all de fuss after me and jist lets you float on down de stream.

“He knows he can get you any time, but he knows it now or never wid me. If you were to begin to flutter a little and show signs like you were a goin’ to get away from him he would make jist as big a splashin’ after you as he does after me.” But again, you will remember that it is not God’s way to send convictions of sin to reprobates. Do men plow the sand? Do they send their oxen upon the rock? Do they attempt to use materials that are utterly rotten? No, they give them up and leave them alone. Now, why is the all-wise Jehovah at work with you unless He has gracious designs for you? I hope it is because He is about to bring you to Himself.

Let me show you in the *third* place that this is according to the analogy of nature. Did you ever hear this parable?—There was a certain shepherd who had a sheep which he desired to lead into another and better field. He called it and it would not come. He led it and it would not follow. He drove it but it would only follow in own devices. At last he thought within himself, “I will do this.” The sheep had a little lamb by its side and the shepherd took the lamb up in his arms and carried it away and then the ewe came, too. And so with you—God has been calling to you, mother and you did not come.

Christ said “Come,” and you would not. He sent affliction and you would not come. Then He took your child away and you came then. You followed the Savior then. You see it was loving work on the shepherd’s part—He did but take the lamb to save the sheep. The Savior took your child to Heaven that He might bring *you* to Heaven. We had before the Church the other night a sister who is here now. I dare say there were four in the family and the Lord took one child away. But that was not enough—He took another and another—and the fourth lay sick and ready to die. And then the mother’s heart was broken—and mother and father both came to Jesus.

Oh, blessed afflictions, blessed losses, blessed deaths that end in spiritual life! Now this, I trust, is how God is dealing with you. You know if a man has a field and desires to gather a harvest from it, what does he do? First of all he plows it. The field might say, “Why these scars across my

face? Why thus upturn my sods?" Because there can be no sowing till there has been plowing. Sharp plowshares make furrows for good seed.

Or take yet another picture from nature. A man desires to make of a rusty piece of iron a bright sword which shall be serviceable to a great warrior. What does he do? He puts it into the fire and melts it. He takes away all its dross and removes all its impurities. Then he fashions it with his hammer. He beats it full sore upon the anvil. He anneals it in one fire after another till at last it comes out a good blade that will not snap in the day of warfare. This is what God does with you—I pray you do not misread the book of God's Providence. If you read it aright it runs thus—"I will have mercy on this man and therefore have I smitten him and wounded him. Come, therefore, let us return unto the Lord, for He has wounded and He will heal, He has smitten and He will bind us up."

I have other arguments to use and you must bear with me somewhat patiently. You are wounded in spirit this morning, poor Mourner. Will you remember that it is God's delight to bind up broken hearts? "He tells the number of the stars." What is the next verse—do you remember it?—"He binds up the broken in heart." What a mighty stoop this is! From counting the stars and leading them forth—mighty worlds though they are—He bows to become a surgeon to the poor wounded heart! You know what Christ's occupation is in Heaven?—"He shall wipe away tears from off all faces."

What a blessed occupation—wiping away tears! Soul, Christ will be glad to wipe away your tears now. He delights to do it—Christ is never more happy than when He is showing His heart to sinners. He is so glad when He can find His poor lost sheep and put it on His shoulders and carry it home. It will make you glad to be saved. But He will be infinitely glad to save you and delighted to receive you, for He delights in mercy.

Please remember, yet once again, that the wounds which you now feel *He* made Himself and if He is willing to heal any wounds, how much more those that He has Himself made? There are some diseases in which the surgeon is compelled to wound. The proud flesh has gotten in. The cure has been a bad one and in order that it may be thoroughly sound, he perhaps makes a cross cut—a deep cross cut that goes into the very core of the matter. Well, his lances have made a bad wound—do you think the doctor will not do his best to heal it?

I will go to him and say, "Surgeon, you did yourself make the wound—you made it in order to my healing. heal the wound, I pray you, heal me." Occasionally when a man has broken his leg, it has been badly set by some bungler and when he has consulted a skillful surgeon, he says, "I can do nothing for you till I break your leg again." And so often is it with men's minds. They get peace, peace, when there is no peace and there is no doing anything with them until God breaks their heart again. Suppose a surgeon should break a man's leg again—do you think he would go away and leave the poor man without setting it? No, he broke that he might heal it—that he might make the cure a sound one.

And so is it, perhaps, with your broken heart. Go to Him, then, go to Him. Say, "Lord, you did break my heart. I was a hard blasphemer once but You have brought me to my knees. I once said, 'I would never enter a place of worship.' Lord, you know I go there now, though I get no comfort. But I pray You give me comfort. It was such-and-such a sermon that brought me to despair—Lord, guide Your servant to preach another that will bring me into liberty. Lord, if You have not broken my heart, break it now. But if you have broken it, Lord, I appeal to You to heal it. You have begun the work by killing me, finish the work by making me alive. You have begun by stripping me, Lord, clothe me."

That is a good argument. He will surely do it, He will not fail to carry on and complete that which He has begun to perform.

Once more only—and perhaps this will be the best argument of all—remember you have got His promise for it. The text I read is a promise. It looks at first sight as if it were spoken by man and so it is. But then inasmuch as it is put in God's Book as the utterance of God's inspired Prophet, it is a part of God's Word and it is warranted to be most true. "He has torn and He will heal." Go and put your finger on this text and say, "Lord, You have torn me and it is written in Your word, 'He will heal us.'"—

***"Lord, I know You cannot lie,
Heal my soul or else I die."***

Put you your finger on the next—"He will bind us up." Say, "Lord, I do not deserve it. I deserve only to perish, but then *You have said* You will do it—be as good as Your Word. Lord, here is a poor sinner near despair, he comes to you—bind up his broken heart. Give him peace." And Soul, the everlasting hills shall bow, the hoary deep shall itself be burned up and earth's foundation shall be removed—but God's Word shall never pass away, nor shall His promise fail in one single case! Only believe the promise. Receive the promise—and this very day—poor broken heart, He will heal your wounds and you shall have joy and peace in believing through Jesus Christ our Lord.

III. I shall not detain you much longer, but I have now the third point to dwell upon and, O Spirit of the living God, bless these words! Jesus, woo hearts to Yourself while we seek to win them to Your love.

And now I would come LOVINGLY TO PERSUADE YOU and the persuasion I would use is this—"Come, let us return unto the Lord." Do you see it? The Prophet does not say, "Go," but "*Come.*" He does not say, "Go you," but "*Come, let us.*" Poor Soul, you say there is none like yourself. Behold I take my place side-by-side with you. Are you a sinner? So am I. Do you deserve God's wrath? So do I. Have you gone very far astray? So have I. Come, let *us* return, let *us* go together. Or if that comforts you not enough, let me tell you I have gone as you now are. As despairing, perhaps more so. As cast down, perhaps worse. But I have found Him to be a loving Savior, a blessed Savior, willing and able to save to the uttermost.

Soul, come and try Him, come and try Him. My Brothers and Sisters in Christ—did Christ reject you when you came to Him? You were as bad as others, some of you were worse—did He reject you? I am sure that if I

should ask it there would be not one thousand here but a vast company who would rise and say, "I sought the Lord and He heard me. This poor man cried and the Lord heard me and delivered me from all my fears." Soul, come, let *us* return. He saved me. He will save you.

***"Tell it unto sinners tell—
I am, I am saved from Hell."***

If he could and would save one, why not another? And if the thousands of Israel, why not poor sinful *you*?

Then, that I may persuade you further, let me remind you that to return to God is not a cruel request. He does not ask you to perform a pilgrimage and blister your weary feet, or to thrust an iron in your back and swing yourself aloft as does the Hindu. He asks you not to lie on a bed of spikes or starve yourself till you can count your bones. He asks no suffering of you—for Christ has suffered for you. All He asks is that you would return to Him and what is that?—that you would be unfeignedly sorry for your past sins. That you would ask His grace to keep you from sin in the future. That you would now believe in Christ who is set forth to be the propitiation for sin—that through faith in His blood you may see your sin forever put away and all your iniquity cancelled. That is neither a hard nor a cruel demand. It is for your good as well as for His glory. O Spirit of God, make the sinner now willing to repent and to believe in Christ!

But yet again—remember the comfortable fruits which will surely follow if you return. What would you think if I could show you yourself within a week? There you stand. You are singing —

***"A debtor to mercy alone,
Of Covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear with your righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring.
The terrors of Law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior's obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view."***

What man is that? Why that is the man who came in here last Sunday morning and said he was utterly lost. He heard the minister exhort him to trust Christ and he did it—and that is where he is standing now. He has been brought up out of a horrible pit and out of the miry clay and his feet are set upon a rock. "If I thought that would be the case," says one, "I would try it." My dear Sir, you need not think it will be the case. God promises—and He cannot lie—"He that believes and is baptized"—He does not say, "*may* be," but "*shall* be saved." And God's "*shalls*" and "*wills*" do not play with men. But He speaks them in real earnestness, "Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

Dare you say that this is not true? "No," you say, "it is undoubtedly true." Well, then, if you call upon the name of the Lord you shall be saved, or else the promise is false. Again, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they will be whiter than snow." Do you believe that? Is it not a promise made to the penitent who casts himself at the feet of Jesus? Very well, try it personally. And if you

cast yourself there—either this Book must be withdrawn and God must change—Christ’s blood must lose its power—or else He must and will save you.

Oh, that there were such a heart in you and such a mind towards God that you would now say, “I do believe. I will believe. I trust my Savior with my soul.” This done, you are saved. Once more, may I not plead with you to return to God because of the precious love of Christ? Love, I know, has great power to move. You will remember how in that wonderful book, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” there is a singular instance of the power of love. Miss Ophelia had been laboring to train up that wicked girl, Topsy, but she would not learn anything. Miss Ophelia tried to make her say the Assembly’s Catechism in order that she might know all about it.

But one day, Eva, the little Eva, (the very Gospel incarnate, just as Miss Ophelia was the picture of the Law), sits down by her side and says to her, “Topsy, why will you be so naughty? What is it makes you so wicked?” “Miss Eva,” says Topsy, “it aren’t no use my being good—nobody loves me.” The little girl puts her arm round her neck and kisses her, saying, “Why I love you, Topsy and it grieves me very much to see you so naughty.” “Oh,” said Topsy, “I will try to be good if you will but love me.” Love had won the poor child and had subdued her.

Well, now, perhaps you are saying, “If Christ would but say He would love me, I think I could repent that I ever sinned against Him. I think I would be willing to give Him my heart.” Soul, if that is what you say, He does love you. He loved you and gave Himself for you. Behold His Cross—is there better proof of love than that? See His flowing wounds. Hear how He groans. Behold Him dying! “It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and He saves them because He loves them.

Oh, if that love will woo you, it is indeed in plenteous abundance flowing down to you now. “Ah, well,” you say, “I cannot do enough for Him.” If that be true, I am glad you have got as far as that and I have finished when I have told you an anecdote which I trust will do us all good.

A missionary was preaching to the Maori tribe of the New Zealanders. He had been telling them of the suffering love of Christ. How He had poured forth His soul unto death for them. And as he concluded, the hills rung to the thrilling question—“Is it nothing to any who pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow?” Then stood forth a plumed and painted chief, the scarred warrior of a thousand fights. And as his lips quivered with suppressed emotion, he spoke, “And did the Son of the Highest suffer all this for us men? Then this Indian chief would like to offer Him some poor return for His great love. Would the Son of God deign to accept this Indian’s hunting dog? Swift of foot and keen of scent, the tribe has not such another and he has been to the Indian as a friend.”

But the missionary told him that the Son of God had need of no such gifts as these. Thinking he had mistaken the gift, the chief resumed—“Yet maybe He would accept this Indian’s rifle? Unerring of aim, the chief cannot replace it.” Again the missionary shook his head. For a moment the chief paused. Then as a new thought struck him, suddenly despoiling

himself of his striped blanket, he cried with childlike earnestness, “Perhaps *He who had not where to lay His head* will yet accept the chieftain’s blanket. This poor Indian will be cold without it, yet it is offered joyfully.”

Touched by love’s persistency, the missionary tried to explain to him the real nature of the Son of God—that it was not men’s *gifts* but men’s *hearts* that He yearned for. For a moment a cloud of grief darkened the granite features of the old chief. Then as the true nature of the Son of God, by His grace, slowly dawned upon him, casting aside his blanket and rifle he clasped his hands—and looking right up into the blue sky, his face beaming with joy, he exclaimed—“Perhaps the Son of the Blessed One will deign to accept this poor Indian himself!”

Is that what you say this morning? You would give Christ this and that and the other? Soul, give Him your *heart*. Say to Him now,

**“Jesus, I love Your charming name,
'Tis music to my ear;
I wish I could sound it out so loud,
That earth and Heaven might hear.”**

And then it is done. The compact is concluded. The work is over. You are in the arms of Christ. You love Him and He loves you. He wounded you but He has healed. He killed you but He has made you alive. Go in peace. You are loved much. Your sins which are many, by God’s grace, are all forgiven you. Amen!

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

THE BLESSINGS OF FOLLOWING ON NO. 1246

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

***“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”
Hosea 6:3.***

I MUST first remove the moldy piece from the text, and that is the word, “if,” which has no sort of business here whatever. You notice that the translators put it in italics, to intimate to us that it was no Word of God, but one of their own words which they thought necessary to complete the sense. We might read—and we should, to be far nearer the sense—“Then shall we know *when* we follow on to know the Lord.” Or, perhaps, better still, “We shall know: we shall follow on to know the Lord,” for there is no trace of *question* in the matter, and no indication of an, “if.” We will cut out man’s, “if,” and then take the text as it should have been—“Then shall we know when we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning.”

I continually hear it said concerning those who have been converted, or profess to have been converted of late, “We hope they will hold on.” I wish people would speak what they mean and not veil their speech, for the plain English of that expression frequently is, “We do not believe that they will hold on.” “We *hope* they will,” means, “We do not expect it.” One thing is quite certain, however—those who are truly converted to God can be safely left in God’s hands. If they have, indeed, believed in Jesus Christ—in Jesus *only*, with all their hearts—their salvation is as sure as if they were already within the gates of Paradise! The Redeemer will not suffer any soul to perish trusting in Him—

***“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep,
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.
Nor death, nor Hell, shall ever remove
His favorites from His breast,
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest.”***

Question whether it is a work of Grace if you will, though I would much rather the questioning spirit were laid aside. But if it is the Lord’s work, it will stand, for neither time nor eternity, nor life nor death, shall ever cast down that which Divine Omnipotence builds up! Jehovah puts not His hands to a work which shall ultimately crumble into nothingness! My dear young Friends, if you have believed in Jesus and are tormented by these quibblers, with their pretended hopes as to your holding on, I beseech you, be in earnest to disappoint the fears of your friends and the expecta-

tions of your foes, by living near to God, by asking for persevering Grace, by watching carefully every step you take and by guarding jealously, by the aid of the blessed Spirit, your own hearts in private, lest by any means the enemy get an advantage over you.

Let it be the great object of your ambition that you may hold on and hold out to the end—and so prove that the Lord has, indeed, looked upon you with an eye of love. There is a sweet verse in one of our hymns which I commend to you who are beginners in the Divine Life—

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

The first part of the text meets all doubts about perseverance in Divine Grace and the second comforts souls distressed for another reason. While some young Christians are troubled about whether they shall hold on, others are very much exercised because of the slenderness of their *knowledge*. They compare themselves with older Christians and they say, “How can I be a child of God when I know so little?” They even contrast themselves with their teachers and because they, as they might naturally expect, are somewhat behind them, they conclude that surely they cannot have been taught of God at all!

I beseech these friends to remember that the green blade has not the ripeness of the full ear, nor can it expect to have as yet—that the child has not the experience nor the strength of the man, nor can he expect to have as yet—that the early morning has not the warmth of noon, nor can we expect it should have. It has its own peculiar beauties, though it has not yet the full glory of meridian splendor. There is a growth in the Divine Life. You do not know what you shall know, you are not what you shall be, you have not yet what you shall have, you do not enjoy what you shall enjoy. But these are among the things to come which are yours.

I begin, therefore, the handling of my text with this double remark—let not the fears of some that you will not hold on disturb you, rather let them excite you to lean more fully upon Christ. And let not your own consciousness of ignorance depress you—let *that*, also, lead you nearer to the Savior, who alone teaches us to profit. In our text there are three points. The first is, *our business*—“Follow on to know.” The second is, *God’s promise*—“Then shall you know.” And the third is, *the modes by which this promise is fulfilled*—“His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”

I. First, then, here is OUR BUSINESS. It is *to follow on to know the Lord*. And that implies, first, that *we begin with knowing the Lord*. You cannot follow on with that which you have not commenced. There is a religiousness which contains in it no knowledge of God whatever. Beware of it! The religion which consists only in the knowledge of outward rites and ceremonies, or the knowledge of orthodoxies, the knowledge of doctrinal distinctions, the knowledge of religious language and brogues and experi-

ences or the knowledge of popular hymns—that religion is vain. There must be a knowledge of God!

And, mark you, if you know God, you will think very little of yourself. He who knows not God thinks man a noble being—he who has seen God thinks man to be dust and ashes. He who knows not God’s holiness thinks himself to be a good creature, but when he sees a thrice-holy God he says, “I abhor myself.” He who knows not God thinks man to be a wonderful being, able to accomplish whatever he wills. But in the sight of God, human strength is burned up and man becomes lighter than vanity. Do you know God? O my dear Hearer, do you know God in the majesty of His Justice as condemning your sin and *you* for sin?

Do you know God in the splendor of His Love, as giving Jesus Christ to die for sinners, blending that Love with Justice—for Love gave Jesus and Justice slew Him? Do you know God in the fullness of His power to save, renewing the heart, changing the mind, subduing the will? Do you know Him, even, in this which is, comparatively, a slender branch of knowledge? If you do, you have begun to know Him and you have begun to know yourself, too, for he knows not himself who does not know something of God. Oh, to know the Father as my Father who has kissed me and put the best robe upon me! Oh, to know the Son as my Brother, in whose garments I am accepted and stand comely in the sight of God! Oh, to know the Spirit as the Quickener and the Divine Indweller and Illuminator, by whose light, alone, we see, and in whose life we live!

To know the Lord—that is true religion! And I say again, any religion, whatever it is—Churchianity or Nonconformity, or whatever you like—if it does not lead you to *know God*, it is of no use whatever. The knowledge of God is the basis of all saving experience. “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.” “Acquaint yourself, now, with Him and be at peace.” This is the one great business of human life—to know the Lord. And next, our business is to *advance in this knowledge*. We must shut out of our minds all ideas that we fully know the Lord, for the text says, “*Then* shall we know, if we follow on to know.” Now a man will never follow on if he judges that he has reached the end! If he comes to the conclusion, “I know the Lord. I know all about Him. I know all that is knowable”—that man will not follow on and, therefore, I am afraid that he will never know the Lord at all.

I trembled for a very beloved Brother the other day when I heard that he had declared that he could not sing “Nearer my God, to You,” for he was already as near to God as it was possible to be. Brothers and Sisters, my soul feels a horror creeping over it when such expressions are used! And more so when they fall from those I love. I know nothing about such talk as that—it seems to me to be sheer vanity! I think I know the Lord—no, I know that I know Him. I have been favored with His Presence and have enjoyed a very clear sense of my acceptance in the Beloved, but to suppose that I know all that is to be known, or that I possess, in myself, all the holiness that a creature can attain this side of the grave, is as far from me as the east is from the west!

I growingly feel my unworthiness—I sink lower and lower in my own judgement. I *was* nothing and now I *am* less than nothing. I do not know the Lord as I hope to know Him. I would have you remember that the Apostle Paul said that he desired to know Christ. If you look at the Epistle to the Philippians, which contains that wish, you will find that it was written by Paul at least 20 years after he had been converted! He had enjoyed 20 years of walking very near to God and of very marvelous Revelations—20 years of very successful working for God, such as, perhaps, were never accorded to any other man—and yet he still aspires, “That I *may* know Him.” What? Paul, do you not know Him? “Oh, yes,” he would reply, “I know Him so sweetly, so blessedly, but I would wish to know Him better still. The more I know Him, the more I find there is yet to be known. He is such a deep of Love! He is such a mountain of Mercy that as I dive deeper, a further deep opens up to me! And as I climb higher, a loftier peak towers above me.”

Dear Hearer, if you think you can never be better than you are, I do not think you ever will be. Self-contentment is the end of progress! When you have attained, why, what remains for you but to rest and be thankful, and do a little pious boasting? I do not believe you if you say you have got to the ultimatum. As long as you are this side of Heaven there will be room for progress and something yet beyond you after which you will labor. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know.” You will still have to press forward and the exhortation will still sound in your ears—

**“Forget the steps already trod,
And onward urge your way.”**

Not as though you had already attained, either were already perfect, this one thing you do, forgetting the things that are behind, press forward, still looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. Our business, then, is to begin with the knowledge of God, to press forward in the knowledge of God, and not to flatter ourselves into the idea that we have no more to learn.

Another thought. Our business is to *continue in what we know*. There are some persons who are everything by turns and nothing long. They say that they have begun to know the Lord in the right way, but very soon you find them following another route. A tree which is often transplanted is not likely to bring forth much fruit. The vessel which changes its course because its captain is full of caprice, is not likely to make headway to any desired haven. Brethren, in whatever you have attained, mind the same thing—rush not after novelties, as certain vagrant bands in this city are always doing. If you have begun in the Spirit, do not hope to be made perfect in the flesh! If all that you have already known concerning your Lord has come to you by *faith*, do not expect the rest of it to come by *feeling*.

Some Christians seem to live by jerks. They live as bankrupt sinners, dependent upon the mercy of God—and then they get encouraged, and set up to live as saints rolling in riches of realized sanctification. But before long they are insolvent again, and no wonder, for this sort of paper money generally leads to a collapse. Keep to the one point—“I am nothing. Christ

is everything. I am sin. He is my righteousness. I am death. He is my life. I look to Him for everything. I trust not in excitement or feeling, or attainments, or graces, or works—I rely on Jesus only.” Brothers and Sisters, that is the fight path to follow. Follow on! Turn not to the right hand or to the left. Your hope of knowing more of Divine things must lie in your persevering in this course.

But take care that you *persevere eagerly*. I find the Hebrew here is strong enough to bear to be translated, “Then shall you know if you *eagerly* follow on to know the Lord.” The knowledge of God is not to be attained, certainly no great proficiency in it is to be attained, without an intense *desire*. Even to obtain human knowledge, a man separates himself and engages in much study which is “a weariness of the flesh.” If we would know God it will not be by trifling over His Word, nor by neglecting the assembling of ourselves together, nor by slighting the Mercy Seat, or neglecting private meditation. There must be a keen scent and an eager pursuit, as when the hound pursues the stag, for we cannot know much of God so as to feel His going forth as the morning and His refreshing as the dew, except our heart thirsts after God as the hart thirsts for the water brooks.

Let me urge you, newly-converted ones, to be very diligent in searching the Word of God! Be much in attendance upon the means of Grace, but, especially, be much with God privately, holding personal communion alone with God. You may learn something of a person by reading his books. You may get a better idea of him by hearing him speak. But if you want to know him best, you must live with him. Even so you may know much of God from His Word and much from the speech of His servants. But if you want to really know Him, you must abide with Him in habitual communion. I urge this upon you—*then* shall you know Him, when, in this manner, you follow on to know the Lord.

Once more. Our business is *to be receptive*. If we are to know the Lord we must follow on to know the Lord by *being willing to learn*. Notice that the text says, “He shall come unto us as the rain.” Now, the earth drinks in the rain. That portion of the soil which repels the rain—the rock, which turns it off from its surface—cannot be blessed thereby. It is a great blessing to have a soul capable of receiving Divine Truth. Alas, there are some who have heard the Gospel so long that they have almost become Grace-resistant! I have seen a new tent, when a shower has come on, let in the wet in a hundred places. But, after a while, when the canvas has been well swollen with the rain, it has become waterproof and not a drop has come through.

Certain hearers seem to be so saturated with the rain of the Word that they are Gospelproof! The heavenly moisture does not penetrate them. They hear, but hear in vain—insensible as steel. Open your breasts to Christ whenever He comes! Let the gates of your heart be set wide open, that He may enter. Let him not knock, and knock, and knock again in vain! When Jesus of Nazareth passes by, let Him see that there is an open door to your house, so that if, today, He must abide in *your* house, He

may come in and welcome. The Lord opens the door of our hearts like that of Lydia, “whose heart the Lord opened.” Prejudice often shuts out the Word—some people do not know the Lord, or much about Him, because they do not *want* to know. Certain points of God’s Truth would disturb what they call their, “settled views,” and therefore they wear blinkers for fear of seeing too much.

Happy is that man who wants to find Truth wherever it may be and is glad to discover and amend his errors, because his heart is set upon being right before the Lord! He longs to follow the Lord fully, as Caleb did of old. Here, then, Beloved, is our business. May Grace be given to us to attend to it—to know the Lord to begin with, to exclude all idea that there is nothing further to know, to continue in what is known, to persevere eagerly in the endeavor to know more—and to daily be receptive of Divine influences.

II. Now, secondly, we have GOD’S PROMISE—“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.” You shall know, young Friend! *God* says that you shall know! What will you know? Why, you will know, when you follow on to know the Lord, *more about the past*. Take the text in its connection. You observe that it details the experience—the very perplexing experience—of a quickened soul. “He has torn and He will heal; He has smitten and He will heal us up; after two days He will revive us,” and so on.

Now, you do not know, perhaps, at this time, what your present experience means. You thought that as soon as you believed in Jesus you would have perfect peace and joy—and that your delight would never depart from you. You have heard others sing, “Oh, happy days,” and you have sung it yourself. But just now you do not feel at all as happy as you hoped to be. On the contrary, you feel very miserable because you have found out that the devil is not dead—and that your *sins* are not dead—and that outside in the world, people do not look upon you with any greater love because you are a Christian. In fact, on the contrary, they oppose you! Some of your dearest relatives even scoff at you for loving the name of Jesus! And you are a good deal staggered by their opposition.

Besides, you do not enjoy prayer as you did at first and the Bible, itself, scarcely seems to glitter before your eyes as in your first love. And even the sermons, which seemed to be so very sweet, appear somehow to have become sharp and cutting to you. Well, you will understand all this by-and-by. When we are very little, our mothers carry us in their arms. But when we get a little bigger they set us on our own feet. It is natural that the child that has to walk alone should, when weary, regret that the time is over when it lay so closely in its mother’s bosom. Yet it is good for the babe to try its own feet—good for it to tumble down and know its own weakness—or else it might always be helpless. Many things in the beginning of Christian life are very pleasant and delightful, but trials come in due time to exercise our graces that we may be no longer children.

We do not understand this at the time and to the raw recruit I would say, do not wish to understand it now! You shall understand it when you

follow on to know the Lord. Leave your experience to God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and hang on to that—and when you cannot comprehend your own feelings, and your religion all seems to be in a tangle, never mind—hold on to the Cross and sing—

***“I, the chief of sinners, am,
But Jesus died for me.”***

Stand to that! Rest in the precious blood once shed for many for the remission of sins and, by-and-by, you shall know all about the winding experiences through which you are now going. Then shall you know, when you follow on to know the Lord.

Beloved, the text means not only that we shall know about the past, but as we follow on to know the Lord *we shall know in the present the sweet things of the Gospel* and the enjoyments which are stored up for the Lord’s people. “Eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him; but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.” You will not know the choice things which God has prepared for His people except as, by degrees, the Spirit of God reveals them to you. Press on to know more of God!

I know it sometimes puzzles you to hear us talk of election. You cannot quite understand the Doctrine of Eternal Love which had no beginning and never shall have an end—of Immutable Love which neither shifts nor changes, of vital union to Christ—Justification through Imputed Righteousness, and the like. Very well, we will not trouble you with high sounding terms and theological phrases. But as you follow on to know the Lord you will know the deep things of God. Continue to follow on to know more about Christ. Stick to the one desire—to know more about Him—and you will find your way through difficulties.

As in a maze, if you follow the clue, you will get to the center of it. Christ is the clue to all Gospel mysteries—follow that silken clue stained with scarlet and you will arrive at all those precious Truths of God one by one and have the present enjoyment of them as God shall see that you are able to bear them. He deals with us in much prudence and according as our strength is, so does He reveal these choice things to us. “You cannot bear them now,” said Christ concerning certain Truths which He would gladly have taught to His disciples. So you beginners cannot bear the higher doctrines, now, and if we were to preach them to you we should stagger you, but you will bear them soon. No, you will *love* them soon and, whereas they may seem bugbears to you tonight, the day shall come when you shall bless God that ever He revealed them in Scripture and you will be prepared to die in defense of them!

Beloved Christian Friends, those of you who have gone to greater lengths than others in Divine knowledge may well take this promise to yourselves *as to the future*—“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.” We know something of our Lord’s love and faithfulness, and truth and power to save. We know the Covenant of Grace and we have seen something of its lengths and breadths and depths and heights. But

we are conscious that we have no more fully understood the boundless Love and Grace than the child who takes up a handful of water from the sea has held the Atlantic in his palm! But we shall know, we shall know! We shall know more and more and more, and especially we shall know more as we get nearer to Heaven.

That land Beulah teaches very much. Saints grow speedily wise in that region where the angels bring bundles of spices from the other side of the river—and stray notes from the harps of angels are borne on favoring breezes to the blessed ears of God's beloved ones who are waiting to be called away. We shall know. All that has been revealed to the saints shall be revealed to us when we follow on to know the Lord. Their rapturous enjoyments when they have been overcome with Divine Love—we shall drink of those wines on the lees, well refined. Their confident assurance when they were as certain of their interest in Divine Love as of their own existence—we shall climb to that and stand upon our high places, too. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, can you guess what yet is to be revealed to you? Could you have imagined at the outset of the Christian life that you would, or *could* have had such confidence and rest and peace as you have now? I ask those of you who have had many trials and have been rooted and established in the faith—could you have thought it possible that you would have had such a grip and hold on Christ as you now have? Perhaps you were, for many years, under a misty, cloudy ministry—and yourselves in a sort of semi-darkness, "not light, but darkness visible"—but the Lord has brought you out to see all things finished in Christ and to understand the Covenant of Grace! Oh, what brightness is before you now!

But—but the day comes, even before you get to Heaven, when the light of this day shall be as dimness compared with what you shall behold! For the light of one day shall then be as the light of several days, if you press forward in this knowledge as God shall help you. There are ascending rungs in the Ladder of Grace and stages each one above the other in the Divine climbing. The mount of the Lord is very high—he who stands, even, at the *base* is saved—but there are higher platforms and we ascend first to one and then to another! And from the elevations, gradually rising, the scene widens and the air grows clearer. Oh, to be higher, higher, higher and so near to light, nearer to perfection, nearer to God! Press on, O Climber, and you shall find that you shall know more and more of the Lord as you press towards Him!

III. The third and last point is THE FULFILMENT OF THIS PROMISE. I will not be very long over the two figures lest I should weary you, but they are both very suggestive. "*His going forth is prepared as the morning.*" That is to say, press on to know the Lord and you shall know the Lord more fully in the light and heat which He brings to men. The going forth of the morning is *peculiarly bright* because it stands in contrast with the night. There are countries in which the night suddenly gives place to the morning. Here we have long intervals of twilight, but in those lands, after the

eye has been in darkness all night, the sun suddenly seems to leap above the horizon and there is light.

Now, it has been so with you, already, who know the Lord, and it shall be more and more so with you. The contrast between your sorrow and your joy shall be very striking. As your tribulations abound, so, also, shall your consolations abound. Your broken bones shall rejoice! The place of your weeping, the valley of Achor, shall be the door of your hope! Now be joyous about this. Follow on to know the Lord and there shall be light for you—light out of darkness—your midnight shall blaze into day. The Lord will come as the morning as to His *freshness*, for every morning is a new morning. No second-hand morning has ever dawned upon the earth, yet. The dawn is always fresh with the sweet breath of the zephyrs and bright with the sparkling dews which hang like new jewels in the ears of nature.

The light is always as of newly minted gold and the air is as perfume fresh pressed from its spices. All the earth seems like a newly married bride in the early morning. Well, now, such shall you find true religion to be as you press forward—it will always be fresh for you—never flat and stale. I have wearied of a thousand things, but never of my Lord! Ask the saints whether they ever wearied of the sight of Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness who rises with healing beneath His wings! It is said of our Lord in “the Song” that His locks are black as a raven, that is to say, He is always young. Truly He wears the dew of His youth to our hearts. Never does our Lord grow old! Though He is so ancient that His locks are white as snow, yet He is still so new and fresh that the raven’s plume has not more joy. You shall find it so as you press forward, joy shall be given to you—and that joy shall be forever new.

This blessing shall come *irresistibly*, for when the morning comes to the earth, none can stop it. Can any human hand seize the reins of the horses of the sun and restrain them from passing through the gates of the morning? Impossible! God bids the sun rise and rise he does! So with you Christians, abiding in the knowledge of God and pressing forward, the light must come to you. Nothing can prevent it! The sun rejoices to run his race and defies all competitors. And even so shall the Lord, your Redeemer, scorn all who would restrain Him and come to you in the fullness of His love.

The blessing shall come *increasingly*, too, for the morning awakes, at first, with a few gray streaks. Then follow the redder hues which stain the sky, as though night, in retreating, hung out the banners of defeat. And soon succeed the brighter tints and then the sun, himself, is seen above the mountain’s height and all the earth is robed in splendor! So with your soul. At first there is a little light, then more, and more, and more till you come unto the perfect day and see Jehovah face to face and fear no ill! His coming forth shall be prepared as the morning. The text says, “*is prepared as the morning.*” I find that the word may be read, “is decreed”—determined, fixed, appointed, prepared.

Christ’s coming to gladden your soul, O you that know the Lord, is a fixed thing! It is not a perhaps, but is determined of God. You must have

it! It is a decree as powerful as that fiat which said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And therefore the blessing must come to you. It should be no small joy to the believer in God through Jesus Christ that the mercies he is to enjoy are measured out, fixed and determined by an unalterable will which has been framed of old by Eternal Love and Infinite Wisdom! Follow on to know the Lord and if all the devils in Hell try to keep you in the dark, they cannot, the sun must rise for you! Follow on to know the Lord and if all apparent Providences should seem to keep you back, they cannot, for the secret and Omnipotent decrees which rule the Providences shall carry the point. His going forth is prepared as the morning—and that going forth shall be for your joy and delight.

The second figure of the text has less to do with the light of the knowledge of Christ, and more to do with the inward power which comes of that knowledge. "*He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.*" This is the inward power. Dwell upon those words, "*unto us*"—not only, "shall He come as the rain," but, "shall come *unto us.*" I rejoice to feel the Gospel come home to me. It is very sweet to preach it, but when I get to hear it for myself, and it comes *unto me*, then I know its power to refresh my soul!

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has a way of coming unto us which is as the rain when it waters the earth. The earth is dry and dusty, parched, barren. The rain does not ask the earth for anything, but it looks down from the heights and sees the gaping mouths of the parched fields and the clods crumbling as they lie baking in the cruel sun, and the rain says, "I will go and bless that field." And down it comes, drop after drop, in plentiful refreshment. Each drop finds its way, until the rain enters the crevices and descends into the bosom of Mother Earth and the field is refreshed, the hidden seeds start up to life, and the green blades take another shoot.

Now, follow on to know the Lord, Beloved, and you shall find the Lord Jesus Christ not only giving you more light and knowledge like the sun, but giving you more life within yourself, more sap of Divine Grace, more vigor within your own soul so that you shall become fruitful and shall grow to perfection! As you drink in the rain of Grace from Heaven, you shall yield back to Heaven the fruits of righteousness to the honor and glory of God. Observe that it is written, "*He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and the former rain.*"

Now, these come in their season. The former rain came in Palestine at the end of autumn, when they had sown the corn. The latter rain came at the beginning of our spring, when corn in the east is getting nearly ripe. It is not so with us, of course, but it is so in Palestine. The latter rain came to plump out the ears. Now, God will give you Grace when you need it, Grace to help in time of need. A shower when you begin and another shower when you go on, and perhaps the heaviest shower just as you are ripening. Do not be frightened when you see a cloud of trouble. If we were to expect rain without clouds we should be very great fools! I sometimes

think that to expect a shower of blessing without trial is almost as great a folly—

***“You fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”***

God knows how to send a shower of rain when it is needed and to send Grace when it is needed—to give us the former rain and the latter rain in their season.

Notice, again, it is a *repeated* gift. He shall give the former rain and the latter rain. If you have had Grace once, the Lord has more for you. Did you have happy times when old Dr. So-and-So was your pastor? Well, the doctor is dead, but God is not! Were you very much delighted when you used to sit in such-and-such a Church, in years gone by, but have you moved into the country now? Yes, but God has not moved! He is in the country as well as in the town! You tell me you had such happy times when you were young. Yes, but God is neither younger nor older. Go to Him, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

Do you suppose that because He gave you the former rain, He has emptied the bottles of Heaven? It is not so! The clouds, “those wandering cisterns of the sky,” fill again and empty again, and fill again and empty again—and so is it with the mighty Grace of God! There is an exhaustless fullness in the Lord—however much you have had from Him you shall have more. Follow on to know the Lord and you shall have Grace upon Grace! The showers shall never cease to fall till you get to the land where you shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water and shall drink in un-failing supplies from the river itself.

One word more, only, and it is this—all this fulfillment of the promise that you shall know comes only to you through the Lord Himself. If we are to know, it must be by *His going forth* and because He shall come unto us. There is no knowing in any other way. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I know that your desire is like mine—to know more of the Lord by that deep, vital, practical knowledge which makes the soul like the God it knows! Never let us forget that our only way of knowing the Lord is through His coming to us! We may read the Bible—I trust we shall—but there is such a thing as resting in Bible reading and if we do so we shall fall short.

Our Lord denounced that in His day when He said, “You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And you will not come to Me that you might have life.” As much as if He had said, “Your searching the Scriptures is well enough, but coming to Me is the main business.” It is not the letter-god, but the Living God that we need. It is not the Book of God so much as the God of the Book that we must know! We must seek Christ Jesus, the *personal* Christ, really existent to *ourselves*! And falling at His feet, confessing our sins, looking up to His wounds, trusting and confiding in Him, we shall be, indeed, blessed.

You cannot know the Lord in any other way than by His coming to you in the reality of His Incarnation as the very Christ of God. I wish I knew how to put the matter so that everyone here would recognize to the full my meaning. You know the moment people begin to think about religion they say, "Well, yes, we must keep the Sabbath. We must attend a place of worship. We must have family prayer." Thus they dwell upon the many things that they "must do," all of which things are right enough, but they are only the shell!

What the sinner has to say is not, "I will arise and go—to Church." No, no! "I will arise and go to my closet and pray." No, that is not the first thing. "I will arise and go and read a chapter of the Bible." No, that is not it, good as that is! But, "I will arise and go *unto my Father*." That is where you have to go—to a real God! "How can I go?" Well, not with those feet, but He is not far from any of you. In Him you live and move and have your being—you are also His offspring. Let your hearts think of Him now. Let your hearts mourn that you have broken His Law. Let your hearts listen to His gracious Words, for He says, "Return unto Me, and I will return unto 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."

No turn will do but a turning unto the Lord. No new birth, but a birth by His Spirit. If you do not know the Lord, remember that He has revealed Himself very clearly in the Person of His only-begotten Son who took our nature and died in the place of His people upon the Cross. Whoever looks to Jesus, the Man, believing Him to be the Son of God, sees all of God that He needs to see in the Person of the crucified Redeemer! Look to Him, however weak and feeble your eyes may be! Trust Him, trust Him fully, trust Him only, trust Him now! God enable you to do so by His ever-blessed Spirit, and you are saved.

You know the Lord, and as you go on to know more about Him, you shall find Him to be as the sun in his brightness, and as the rain in its sweetness and life. God bless you. May we all meet in Heaven, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 6.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 670, 673.**

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

CONSTANCY AND INCONSTANCY— A CONTRAST NO. 852

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 24, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you? For your goodness is as a morning cloud and as the early dew it goes away.”
Hosea 6:3, 4.*

THESE two verses very fitly describe in very similar imagery the opposite characters of the true and persevering Believer and the fictitious and the transient professor. There are many things in this world which are very much alike and yet are totally dissimilar. The king who, after stern conflict and arduous struggles, has at last obtained the empire, shines not with greater pomp than yonder actor mimicking majesty upon the stage in borrowed robes and tinsel crown. How like each other that monarch and the player, and yet how wide the difference! The one rules with real power, the other with but fancied sway—the king has fought for many a day to earn the scepter—the other in a few minutes in the green room has attained his monarchy and, we may add, in a few minutes more he will lose it, too!

As in a glass, see here the true Christian and the base pretender to that royal name. Take into your hand this paste gem so skillfully manufactured, how exceedingly like a diamond! Yet this was made in almost the twinkling of an eye, while yonder sparkling gem of real adamant has taken years, even, to cut its facets on the wheel. Yet when that paste gem with other unconsidered trifles shall be resolved into the vile dust from where it sprang, that sparkling jewel shall shine with as clear a radiance of morning light within it as flashes from it now! Such is the true heir of Heaven and the hypocrite when seen by the eye of wisdom.

Look but a year or two ago at two houses of business, how like each other! How large their transactions, how respectable their names. Yet the one all hollow, its capital long spent, its reputation all a bubble. The other solid and substantial, with ample means and large connections—this last has outlived the storm of commercial panic—while its rival has long been stranded and left a total wreck. Even thus men trade with Heaven and such are the differing results.

We will inspect those two fine vessels upon the stocks and unless well educated in the art of shipbuilding, who shall give a preference to the one

or the other? But see them out at sea, let old Boreas blow, let the Atlantic rollers advance in their fury and you shall see how the flimsy ill-built ship opens at every timber, her bolts loosen, her entire hull is disjointed and shivered, she is blown down and sinks to her doom! But the other vessel, built of sterner stuff, well bolted, with seasoned timbers all fitted, staunch and sound, braves the fury of the tempest and reaches her desired haven.

After this sort does the sea of life try the sons of men and discern between the precious and the vile. As in the outer world things may be very like and yet have no likeness, so in the *spiritual* world there are persons so like Christians that even a seraph's judgment could not detect the imposter. There are characters so like to that which the renewed nature exhibits, that even if you lived with the man, you scarcely could tell him to be a counterfeit! And yet after a little time and trial the falsehood oozes through and the man is found out.

If some of the remarks of this morning should help us to test and try *ourselves* and so, incidentally, lead some into comfort and others into anxiety, I shall be very grateful and so will *you* who shall receive the blessing! The first verse seems to me to describe *the constancy of God to those who are really His people*, and the second, *the inconstancy of men in their dealings with their God*.

I. Let us commence with the third verse of our text and accept it as a description of THE CONSTANCY OF GOD TOWARDS THOSE WHO ARE HIS PEOPLE. It is our solemn conviction that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance—that wherever the Lord bestows spiritual life and salvation He *never* recalls the gift—that it is not His wish to play fast and loose with the sons of men, to give today and retract tomorrow. We enjoy the doctrine of final perseverance and cannot think how anyone can doubt it. Without doubt or fear we sing—

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

We are persuaded of the immutable love of God towards His children. But mark the connection of the text leads us to observe the fact, *the constancy of God to His people is not occasioned by their constancy to Him*. For Ephraim and Judah, of whom this text was written, were the most fickle and inconstant of people. They were unstable as water towards their God. He brings accusations such as these against them—“Israel slides back as a backsliding heifer.” “Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment”—that is, the *evil* commandment of heathen kings.

All through the book of Hosea there are exhortations to repentance and returning from backsliding. If, then, God remained faithful towards such a people, it was not because they remained faithful to Him! The fact is, that wherever there is in any Christian a holy patience and a diligent perseverance, this is the work of *God* in his soul, and is worked in him by the faithful Grace and abiding Presence of God. It is not *our* faithfulness which holds God to His promise, but it is *God's* faithfulness which holds

us near to Him. Ah, Lord, if Your love should hang on our poor love which is as a rusted nail driven into rotten wood, our salvation would soon fail! But when we hang upon Your faithfulness in Christ Jesus, how safe we are!

Ah, if one single stone of the entire fabric of our salvation had to be quarried out of our carnal nature, it could never be found, for our whole nature is as a miry place, a bog in which nothing stable can be discovered. Beloved, thought we believe not, God abides faithful! Though we twist and turn aside a thousand times, yet He brings His wandering servants back and restores them to His ways, out of the infinite love and compassion of His heart. I know some prostitute this doctrine into an excuse for sin. Oh, mean and sensual hearts! They are base-born pretenders to a Divine Grace they never knew! If they found not this excuse they would make another, for they are generations apt in lies and well skilled in perverting the Truth of God to their own purposes! They turn the Grace of God into licentiousness and their damnation is just!

But no converted man ever found an apology for sin in the immutability of Divine affection. No, but this is the greatest condemnation of our sin—that we transgress against a God who still loves us! That we dare to play the traitor to Him who never, for a moment, was inconstant in His love to us! If a husband were unstable in his marriage love, there were some excuse for the unfaithful wife—but the firmness of our Great Husband's love to our souls makes it the blackest treason and the most accursed unchastity if our hearts turn aside from our Best Beloved to follow after idols! The fountain does not depend on the stream, or the sun upon its beams, or the soil upon the flowers—effects depend on *causes*—not causes on effects! And so the attending love of God does not depend upon the constancy of His people.

Note next, that *the faithfulness of God to His people does not always show itself in the most pleasing ways*. The first verse tells us that God had torn and struck His people and the last verse of the former chapter represents the Lord as saying, "I will go and return to My place." A father's love does not always reveal itself in kisses and gifts of sweets. Love often has to force itself to blows and stripes—and those black love tokens which blossom upon the rod of chastisement are as true proofs of a father's kindness as the soft blandishment and sweet endearments which at other times he lavishly scatters. Our God does not indulge His people with constant prosperity, lest they drown in the river of worldliness. His beloved are often plunged in troubles—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous," and their troubles are not only outward—the iron enters into their soul, also.

We who have believed have our deep-sea sorrows and are downcast when we feel every wave and billow goes over us. We smart under dreadful desertions. Some of us have had to cry with the Master on the Cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" We *know* why He has forsaken us—it is because we have forsaken Him! And therefore He has hidden the light of His Countenance from us until we could scarcely believe ourselves

to be His children at all. We have turned to prayer and found words and even *desires* fail us when on our knees. We have searched the Scriptures with no consolatory result—every text of Scripture has looked black upon us! Every promise blockaded its ports against us! We have tried to raise a single thought heavenward, but have been so distracted under a sense of the Lord's wrath which lay heavy upon us, that we could not even aspire for a moment! We could only say, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? Why are you disquieted within me?"

Such suffering of soul will often be to the erring Christian the very best thing that could befall him. He has walked contrary to his God and if his God did *not* walk contrary to him he would be at peace in his sin. Remember, no condition can be more dangerous, not to say damnable, than for a man who is no longer agreed with his God to believe that all is well and go on softly and delicately in the way which tends to destruction. Brothers and Sisters, I have to thank God and I think you may join with me, for many a sharp pang which has gone through the soul, for many a sharp cut which has come from a stinging text of Scripture when that Word of God has searched us through and through and like a strong corrosive, or sharp acid, has burnt its way into our inmost soul, destroying and maiming in us much that we looked upon as precious and admirable!

The faithfulness of God does not always wear silken robes and is not always arrayed in scarlet and fine linen, but it puts on steel armor and comes out to us, sword in hand, cutting and wounding and making us bleed. It is very faithfulness which thus afflicts us! In love and tenderness God often seems to deal harshly with His children. He hurls them upon the ground and crushes them till they lie like a bleeding, helpless mass of wounds and faintness—ready to perish—and overwhelmed with anguish. "Their thoughts," as George Herbert says, "are all a case of knives," piercing their souls and not a ray of comfort, nor a word of promise succors them! It is clear, then, that God does not always show His immutable love to His people in the way which they might select. His wine is not sent to us always in golden flagons, nor His apples of love in baskets of gold. Good comes in a chariot of fire and mercy rides on the pale horse.

But, for all that, *God reveals Himself comfortably to His saints in proof of His faithfulness in a timely and sure manner.* Turn to the second verse and learn that we may be as if dead for two days, but no child of God can be dead eternally. We may lie buried in the sepulcher of our despair for two days and nights—nights cold and days black—but "the third day He will raise us up." We cannot raise *ourselves* up, but He will raise us up! God, who raises the dead, is our Savior. Glory be to His name, we may be as dead and lifeless and as far removed from right desires as the carcasses that rot beneath the sod, but He will raise us up and, "we shall live in His sight"!

What would we do when God leaves us to be cast down and to feel our spiritual death and emptiness, if it were not for such a promise as this which certifies the soul sepulchered in sorrow the Lord will raise up? If

your heart is right towards God and you are, indeed, trusting in none but Christ, it is no more possible for you to die of despair than for Christ Himself to return to the tomb! He *must* rise when the third morning comes, and so must *you*. Death cannot hold the immortal Son when once the hour of Resurrection dawns—and despair and darkness cannot hold the Believer in Jesus one moment longer in bondage when the decree of deliverance goes forth. The promise will yet come forth to meet you with tabouret and harp!

The Holy Spirit will yet shed abroad in your heart the love of God like the oil of joy! You shall be crowned with loving kindnesses as with sweet flowers, and with consolations as with wines on the lees shall you be refreshed. Not all the devils in Hell shall be able to stop you of your glorying, or imprison your quickened energy! You who are passing through the valley of the shadow of death may look for the sun rising! Angels' wings are bringing consolations for you! O Mourner, mourning dies at morning! Still cling to Jesus in your extremity and believe that He is able to save to the uttermost and you shall live to sing of judgment and of mercy in the great congregation of the faithful!

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” You shall pass through the gate of tears into the sea of pearls! You shall cross by the bridge of sighs to the palace of content! The bittern and the owl shall fly away and the lark and the nightingale shall sing of bliss! You may groan and sigh like a Jeremy, but you shall yet dance and feast like a David! The tents of Kedar shall no more enclose you, but you shall dwell between the curtains of Solomon! “All in good time when wisdom ordains the hour.” Mordecai, who sat in sackcloth at the gate, shall ride in triumph from the palace. And Job, penniless upon his dunghill, shall have twice as much as before!

This fact is, in the text, illustrated by *two metaphors*. It is said that the child of God who follows on in the path of faith, despite the wounding and the striking which he may suffer, shall without doubt know the faithfulness of God whose, “going forth is prepared as the morning.” Observe this figure, for it is very comforting and instructive. Note the preparation spoken of. The morning comes not unlooked for, like one in haste, with hair disheveled and garments in disarray. In the gloomiest watch of the night preparations are being made for the dawning of the day. The sun's flaming chariot is hastening with glowing axles along the celestial road to reach again that eastern clime from which he comes to us sowing the earth with orient pearls.

As soon as the earth, by its continued revolutions, has taken Great Britain away from the light of the sun, it begins at once to hasten its return. Every moment of the night this portion of our planet is moving on towards the light. The world is spinning round in the silent hours of night so as to bring our little island as speedily as possible once more under the morning rays. On the black wings of night the dawning is hastening. Even thus, at the worst period of our sorrows, there is a preparation being

made for a turn of the tide! Our winter is making ready for our summer! You tell me you do not see how this can be so, but even you might see it if you would consider, and, if you cannot see it, at any rate I pray you *believe* it, for surely it is so.

God you clearly see in Nature is bringing on the morning by allowing the passage of the night—and within your heart He is preparing you for joy, brightness and comfort by your present sorrows. Is He not teaching you to value His Presence by making you know how bitter it is to be without it? Is He not humbling you that it may be safe to exalt you? Emptying you that there may be more room for His fullness? Is He not now sharpening your spiritual desires and quickening your heavenly appetites to make the feast of His love the more welcome? Is He not now purging you, but not with silver—refining you in the furnace of affliction, that you may be made a vessel unto honor—fit for the Master's use? Oh, yes, the morning is prepared for you! Faith's eye can detect the first streaks of the light upon the horizon. Hope is already come to you like a John the Baptist, to foretell the coming of the Lord! Sing, for the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

But the text not only speaks of preparation—the figure evidently sets forth *certainty*. The Lord's goings forth of mercy are as sure as the return of day. No power known to us can put off tomorrow morning by so much as an hour. It is ordained that the sun shall rise at such a time and rise it will. The publication of an Act of Parliament by which the night should be prolonged would be an act of insanity. The gathering together of all the armies of the nations to hold back the sun, even for a single second, from his predestinated time of rising would be a monstrous freak of madness! Surely the sun, all blithely rising from his rest, would look upon the nations of the earth assembled to stay his course and scatter his laughing beams among them—darting his rays from his quiver as the swift-winged arrows of contempt!

Truly thus it is with the Presence of God in the regenerate soul. Saints have their times to mourn and mourn they must. But in their time of dancing they shall dance, let who will howl at their sacred mirth. If April has its showers, May shall have its flowers. When God appoints, none can alter it. The joy which is sown for the righteous shall grow into waving sheaves—and blight nor withering wind shall prevent the golden ears. When God's time comes to turn mourning into joy, none shall say no to Him! Neither shall cold death freeze the genial current of our soul, nor Hell obscure with rising smoke the landscape of our hope! Nor sin, with serpent's trail, defile our Eden's joys! Nor trouble, with its rough wind, sweep through the bowers of our bliss! The King shall walk with us in the quiet garden of meditation and our joy shall be full!

Rejoice in this, Believer! Your hope does not lie in what is in *you*. Your darkness is very dark, but the sun is bright—exceedingly bright—and God, at His own time shall bid the light come streaming into your soul! The figure brings before us not only the idea of preparation and certainty,

but that of *naturalness*. Art and science could not have done so well what Nature achieves with Divine simplicity. There is no light like that of the sun! God does gloriously what we could not do with all our toils. Brethren, I have tried, oftentimes, when I have lost the light of my Lord's Countenance, to set myself right by earnest efforts, but I have never succeeded. I have tried to make myself earnest, to make myself believing, to make myself spiritually-minded, but it is wretched work! It is an attempt to pump sweet water out of a sour soil!

But let the Lord Himself appear—and He *will* appear when we give up all our *own* attempts and cast ourselves wholly upon Him—then what we could not do in that we were weak through the flesh—is all accomplished at once, to the glory of our God and to the sweet solace of our soul! Observe that this metaphor of the morning sets forth the *glorious efficiency* of the Grace of God. The morning never fails to light up the land on which it smiles. The illumination is never half done—the light is bright, clear, effectual—no darkness visible, or mingled gloom and gleam! The sun, itself, wears an excess of brightness upon which no eye of mortal man may steadfastly gaze. And from that central orb, over hill and valley, rolls a flood of glory unrivalled in its splendor.

Thus let the Lord but once come into our poor dark souls, how bright they become! Let Him but visit us and the barren woman does keep house and becomes a joyous mother of children! We who were farthest off from God and thought ourselves to be withered branches and dead plants yielding not so much as a bud for the Master's Glory, even *we* begin to sprout and bring forth fruit! Yes, and fruit unto *perfection*, like Aaron's famous rod of old. We are made to wonder, as we see God's handiwork in such poor creatures as we are. Let no Christian despair! Let no child of God, in his long wintry nights, begin to mistrust his God! His coming forth is as the morning and it shall be such a coming! Oh, such a coming that your soul, now so empty, shall not merely be filled, but shall overflow! The Lord will not give a mere sip to you who are thirsty, but He has said it, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." All, and *more* than all your heart can desire, shall be furnished you at the coming of your Master!

The second figure is equally beautiful, "He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." There were two great rains in Palestine. One rain fell at the time when the seed was cast into the ground. Almost as soon as the farmer who watched the seasons had turned over the soil and dropped in his golden grain, there fell heavy showers which lasted for some time. Usually rain did not fall again for months, but it returned again when the ear was well formed and needed filling up.

The farmer was always thankful for the rain. It plumped out the seed and when the return of fair weather ripened it, the harvest was abundant. Now the Lord's Presence is to all His people as the two rains to the seed.

What a shower of Grace He gives us when first the seed is sown in our hearts!—

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

Well do we recollect the love of our espousals, the time of peace and of drawing near to God. Those first early years of our religion were very, very happy. We grew as the lily and we cast forth our roots like the cedars of Lebanon. All went well with us. But with many a Christian the lament is put up—

***“They have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.”***

Beloved, you should be looking out for the next rain. You have had *one*, you shall have another. God will give you a shower of blessings—it may be today. You are very barren. Well, it is to the barren and to the dry that God delights to give His mercy! If the Grace of God only came to those who *deserved* it, it would not be Grace at all! If it only visited those who could *claim* it, it would be a matter of debt and not a free gift! But since it is the wish of God to give His Grace to the most *unworthy*, why should He not give it to you and to me? Since He gives the riches of His love to those who need them most, then, my Heart, put up your claim, for none need it more than you do! If you can but look right out of yourself to your God and trust in Him, then be assured as the rain falls upon the thirsty pastures of the wilderness and fills the pools and makes the little hills rejoice on every side, so your God who visited you before will deal graciously with you again and turn your barrenness into verdure and all your drought into plenty! Lord, let it be so and we will bless Your name!

This is what our heavenly Father aims at to get praise from the lips of His children. Let us offer prayer in our inmost heart, today, that our Lord Jesus, the Beloved of our souls, may come down like rain upon the mown grass and that the result in us may bring to God a revenue of Glory from refreshed hearts. Beloved, the drift of all this is just this—earnest Christians, in toiling towards Heaven, often grow faint and in year after year of the pursuit of righteousness, human nature becomes weary of the daily watching unto prayer. But the Lord is faithful and He will strengthen His saints for the pilgrimage, lest they faint or turn aside. The Lord will renew the strength of those who wait on Him, so that they shall hold on their way.

Poor traveler to Mount Zion, the devil tells you that you will soon turn back unto perdition, but be of good courage, mighty is He that is *in* you! His Grace is sufficient for you! The Divine life within you will not stop its sacred impulse for the holy and the heavenly till it has brought you up from the wilderness and lodged you within the palace gate of Jehovah!

II. Now, with too short a time to deal rightly with it, let us take the second text. The second text speaks of THE INCONSTANCY OF MEN TO GOD. Though there are many illustrations of this sad fact, I shall only take one, namely, that which unconverted people so constantly furnish us

with. Not many days ago I thought I saw the Alps. I have stood on the platform at Berne and viewed with growing wonder that magnificent range of the snow-clad Alps. and the other day within a few miles of this spot, in our own county of Surrey, I saw upon the horizon clouds which were the very facsimile of Switzerland's glorious mountains!

To me there seemed no perceptible difference—the snowy masses of cloud were the exact counterpart of the Alps. Had I just risen from my sleep and not known where I was, I should have said, "I am at Berne, looking at the mountains which I saw years ago." Yet before some five minutes had passed, the fair vision had melted away and there were no peaks of granite there, but mere aggregations of vapor. How often have I seen Christians, as I have thought—and as all others have thought—and I have rejoiced and blessed God over what seemed converted men and women! But before long we have had clear proof that we have been grossly deceived.

There was goodness in them—the text calls it "goodness"—but it was only such nominal goodness as nature boasts of and it vanished "like the morning cloud." Observe the contrasting metaphor—God's love is the morning. Man's fair promise is but the morning cloud. A mist is often seen in Palestine early in the morning and the farmer hopes that the drought will come to an end. But it mocks his hopes and there is no rain—the cloud is exhaled in the sun and the earth is as parched as ever.

Early dew is also mentioned as a very fleeting thing. A child of the night, it is gone when the sun looks upon it. So is it with the religion of hundreds of people of whom we, in charity, judge hopefully, but concerning whom we are deceived. Many hear a sermon and are impressed, but their impression is soon gone. They remind one of the famous preacher who, while earnestly exciting the people by a description of the next world and the terrors of it, when he saw them all bursting into tears and using their handkerchiefs freely, stopped and said, "Dry your eyes, for I have something much more terrible to tell you than anything I have as yet spoken. It is this—you will, all of you, forget the impressions that are made today and go your way to live as you have done before."

This is the worst point of all, that after bearing a true report to our fellow men concerning most weighty matters, the messengers of the Truth of God are forced to cry, "Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Our hearers appear to believe, but having eyes they see not, and having ears they hear not so as to understand. Some cases are particularly painful to remember because their impressions continue—so continue that they reform their manners. They begin to pray. Spiritual life apparently visits them. They take a great delight in holy company. They are much in reading the Word.

And yet all is gone and the men become as before. We have seen so much about certain people that we thought admirable, that we were ready to think if *they* were not converted *we* were not! And yet they have gone back, and the House of God sees them no more—or if the House sees their

bodily presence, yet their heart is not in the worship. I fear we get a sad number of this sort into Church membership. Young people, impressed early when they have not known temptation, because they have not gone out from their parents' homes, too often disappoint us in later life. The seed springs up, but under the hot sun of temptation it withers away.

Ah, and this is sad. According to the text it is mournful to the heart of God Himself that there should be goodness enough to be comparable to a cloud and to dew, and yet, like both cloud and dew the goodness should utterly pass away. Brothers and Sisters, you see the case before us—you see how like the hopefulness of some is to the reality that is in others—how near akin the morning cloud is to the morning and how like that early dew is to the heavenly shower! What is the reason why so many thus deceive themselves and us? Is not it, in most cases, the lack of a deep perception of sin? Though I rejoice in sudden conversions, I entertain grave suspicions of those suddenly happy people who seem never to have sorrowed over their sin.

I am afraid that those who come by their religion so very lightly often lose it quite as lightly. Saul of Tarsus was converted on a sudden, but no man ever went through a greater horror of darkness than he did before Ananias came to him with the words of comfort. I like deep plowing—skimming topsoil is poor work! The tearing of the soil under surface is greatly needed. After all, the most lasting Christians appear to be those who have seen their inward disease to be very deeply seated and loathsome—and after awhile have been led to see the Glory of the healing hand of the Lord Jesus as He stretches it out in the Gospel. I am afraid that in much modern religion there is a lack of depth on all points—they neither deeply tremble nor greatly rejoice! They neither much despair nor much believe.

Oh, beware of pious veneering! Beware of the religion which consists in putting on a thin slice of godliness over a mass of carnality! We must have thorough work *within!* The Grace which reaches the *core* and affects the innermost spirit is the only Grace worth having! To put all in one word, *a lack of the Holy Spirit* is the great cause of religious instability. Beware of mistaking excitement for the Holy Spirit—or your own resolutions for the deep workings of the Spirit of God in the soul! All that ever Nature paints God will burn off with hot irons. All that Nature ever spins God will unravel and cast away with the rags.

You must be born from above! You must have a new Nature worked in you by the finger of God Himself! Of all His saints it is written, “You are His workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus.” Oh, but everywhere, I fear, there is a lack of the Holy Spirit! There is much getting up of a tawdry morality, barely skin deep, much crying, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace and very little deep heart-searching anxiety to be thoroughly purged from sin. Well-known and well-remembered Truths of God are believed without an accompanying impression of their weight! Hopes are

flimsily formed and confidences ill-founded—and it is this which makes deceivers so plentiful, and fair shows after the flesh so common.

According to the text—and I ask your solemn attention to this remark—such persons are the objects of Mercy's anxiety. Observe it—it looks as if Justice and Mercy held a dialogue. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you?" "Sweep him away," says Justice, "the man vows and promises, only to play the liar's part! He says he will repent, but turns again like a dog to his vomit! He declares he will be saved, but he goes back like a sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire." "Spare him," says Mercy, "spare him, O God! You can yet give him a new heart instead of that fickle heart and a right spirit in lieu of that wayward spirit! He is a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, but, Lord, You have broken others into Your service, break him in also!"

So Justice urges one thing and Mercy pleads another and therefore the conflict, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you?" The Lord has two courses open to Him. The first is He can leave you altogether. The man has heard the Gospel. He has had it preached to him affectionately and he has felt its power in a measure. He shall never hear it again—and if he goes down to Hell, he cannot say he had not an opportunity. He will not be able, amidst the fires of the pit, to say, "I never heard the Gospel and I never was impressed with it." "Mercy," says Justice, "you have had your turn, the man has had enough of you and he is not bettered by you. Come, put up your silver scepter, Mercy, I have a more potent weapon. Let me try my sharp, two-edged sword. They who will not bend shall break and he who will not stoop shall be dashed to the ground as with a rod of iron."

Our compassionate God has, however, another alternative and that is to try something more with you deceptive ones. I could wish that some of you unconverted people who have been hearing me a long while would not come to this Tabernacle again. I speak out of kindness. I wish, if God would be pleased to convert you by somebody else, that you might be led at once to attend that ministry which He will bless to your souls. Perhaps I am not adapted to your case. Perhaps the Lord will never make use of me as a net to take such a fish as you are. Well, try somebody else, but, oh, do not grow so used to my voice as to go to sleep under it and so sleep yourselves into Hell! May the Lord resolve, "I will send another preacher."

If my Master takes me away to my grave and sends another who will be blessed to you, I am well content. Perhaps, however, the Lord will try what Providence can do with you. You have lost your wife, what if He takes away the child? Or, good mother, you have buried a dear child and your *darling's* going to Heaven has not tempted *you* to the skies. What if the Lord takes away your husband? If He loves you, He will not give you up nor spare your feelings, but will bring you to repentance by any means, however severe! If the Lord does not give you up and you do not soon repent, it will come to this—He will strip every earthly comfort away from

you! He will hedge up your way with thorns and so will *compel* you to come to Himself!

It may be that some of you will never be saved while you are well-to-do in this world. Well, then, the very mercy of God will make you poor and, perhaps, when your belly is hungry like the prodigal's, you will cry, "I will arise and go to my Father." This I am sure of—if the Lord takes the alternative of not giving you up, but of saving you—if He tries gentle means and they succeed not, He will turn to rougher methods. You shall be beaten with many stripes! The fire shall burn up your comforts. The moth and rust shall consume your treasures. The light of your eyes shall be taken from you at a stroke. Your children shall die before your eyes, or the partner of your bosom shall be laid in the grave—for by any means God will bring you in. He has determined to save you and He will do it, let it cost what it may!

He spared not His own *Son* to save you and He will not spare *yours*. Nor will He spare your body. You shall be worn with disease and wasted with sickness. You shall have misery of soul and despair of heart—but He will save you if He so resolves upon it. And for this you shall one day bless His name and kiss the rod by which He chastened you to Himself! He seems to me to say this morning to those of you who are unsaved after many impressions, "What more can I do than I have done?" And the answer must be, "Lord, there is only one thing more. Send Your Divine Spirit this morning on dove-like wings and change my poor heart. Lord, You have tried the means, now come to me Yourself. O my God, I am undone, I am lost! I am hopeless! But there is one hope left! Your arm can save! Your eyes can pity and Your voice can comfort."

O God, this morning, in Your plenteous mercy, deal graciously with such souls and let Your mercy be extolled in the very highest as You lift up the beggar from the dunghill to set him among princes! I feel the hope in my own soul that to some of the most despairing and sad the true light has already come and from now on they shall rejoice! God make it so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Hosea 6 and Luke 8:4-13.**

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

THE ROUGH HEWER

NO. 2134

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 9, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away. Therefore have I hewed them by the Prophets; I have slain them by the Words of My mouth: and your judgments are as the light that goes forth.”
Hosea 6:4, 5.

VERY simple is the way of salvation—very plain is the road home. The chapter begins with it—“Come, and let us return unto the Lord.” By going away from the Lord we have lost our privileges, have become wounded and have lost ourselves. To find all these things again we must go back to the Lord, from Whom we have wandered. We must cry with the repenting prodigal, “I will arise and go to my Father”—and if we at once begin to carry out the resolve—the way home is not far to seek.

Concerning salvation we need only preach one sermon by way of explanation—but men need 10 sermons by way of exhortation. Turn to the right when you come to the Cross and keep straight on and you will get home, however much you have wandered from the right way. Alas, too many of our hearers complicate this sweet simplicity! They will not be content to take the plain way—they love more winding paths. They will not drink of the cool flowing waters—they look for a mingled cup of their own filling. They are waiting. For what are they waiting? They are looking about. For what are they looking?

They choose a thorny maze instead of a straight road. The Lord God, when He is resolved to save, sees it necessary to use peculiar methods with these who will not be satisfied to receive the kingdom of Heaven as a little child. Because they will not come when they are bidden, the Lord adds blows to His words. Because they will not come when they are gently drawn, they shall be roughly driven. Because the cords of love and the bonds of a man fail to bring them, they shall have the goad of the ox and the bit and bridle of the mule. If gentle breezes will not waft the ship, the tempestuous Euroclydon shall force it to the haven!

When the Lord resolves to save, He will lay on His chastisement until the whole head is sick and the whole heart faints. He will smite until, from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet, the body is all wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. By strong measures and strange methods He will bring back the stray sheep. “Yet does He devise means that His banished are not expelled from Him.” It is a great pity that there should be need for these unusual means, for the method of salvation is simple—and

if we are willing and obedient we shall find her ways to be ways of pleasantness.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” is a command which is plain as a pike-staff. The Gospel precept is such as a child can understand and its commandment is not grievous. Alas, men will not follow this path of peace—and even those whom God eternally ordains to save are, for many a day, most rebellious against His easy plan. Therefore does God go about and use all sorts of wise dealings with men, that He may hide pride from them and may make them willing to accept the humbling terms of salvation by Grace alone through Jesus Christ.

In the case before us, love seems to have reached its nonplus. Infinite Love and boundless Wisdom seem, in this instance, to be brought to a dead halt. God has been dealing with Judah and Ephraim in ways as wide as the poles asunder—He has been as a moth, which, without noise eats the garment—and thus He has caused them a grave disquiet in a gentle and secret manner. But as this sufficed not, He has also turned His lion upon them and by sharp afflictions and terrible visitations they have been torn and wounded—as when a wild beast rends his prey in pieces.

But neither the gentle nor the terrible has availed—they have remained hardened. What treatment can now be tried? The Lord asks the question. He appeals to those whom He would bless and puts it to them. Infinite Wisdom is pictured as crying in bewilderment, “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you?” What is the next thing? “O Judah, what shall I do unto you?” What else can be hopefully used after so many failures? In what terms shall I now address you? By what methods shall I now attempt to win you?

Ah, it is a thousand pities that the case should ever wear this complexion. Why should the line of Love be thrown into such a tangle? For, after all, today, at this very moment, the way of salvation is plain, open and simple to those of you whose cases are most perplexing! All else is intricate, but this is plain—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Since men will complicate it, the Lord pursues them in His infinite compassion and follows them, despite their devious ways, double dealings, inconstancies and falsehoods.

Our text tells us, first, of *the disappointments of Love*—“What shall I do unto you? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away.” Secondly, it mentions *the devices of Mercy*—“Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth.” When we have thought of these two things, we shall be led, very briefly, to notice *the declaration of Justice*. If all these ways of longsuffering are despised, God’s Justice will be abundantly vindicated—“Your judgments are as the light that goes forth.” The condemnation of those who disappoint Love and defy Wisdom will be richly deserved. In closing, we shall, in the fourth place, come back to where we began and remind you of *the direction of Wisdom* which stands before us in the first verse—“Come, and let us return unto the Lord.”

I. First, then, THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF LOVE. May the Holy Spirit aid us in this meditation! We have a number of persons about us of whose conversion we have been very hopeful. We know those who for years have presented cheering signs of a gracious work within them and yet, up to now, they have occasioned us grave disappointment. They bud, but they never fruit. Long have they disappointed us and our fear is that they will disappoint us even to the end.

These people give very speedy promise. We have hardly begun with them but we feel optimistic of success. Theirs is the religion of haste but it never speeds. They are as the morning cloud—we have not to wait until evening—and like the mists on the hills they are visible before the break of day. Some people are up early and yet do nothing—such are these. We reckon on them at once but we reckon wrongfully. We have not preached long before we see tears. We have not talked long before we perceive emotions. We feel sure that the Word of God will not return void from them—for they attend carefully and are moved by the Word as the boughs of the forest are swayed by the wind.

It all comes to nothing. These are the stony-ground hearers. That scanty soil with a hard piece of rock below it no sooner received the Seed than, because there was no depth of earth, the Seed began to spring up. The same cause which made them so easy come made them so easy go—because of the lack of root and soil they speedily withered away. Oh, these stony-ground hearers—what a fraud they are! These come by scores to the Penitent Form—but where are they afterwards? These throng the Inquiry Room but never unite with the Church.

They make a great display of emotion but it is all a flash in the pan. They are very impressionable, but they are as impetuous as they are impressionable! They never stop to think, but go for a matter blindly. They never look before they leap—they leap and *then* they look—and come to the conclusion to jump back again. They are quick to promise but slow performers. Thus they act treacherously with God. *These people give striking promises.* For the morning cloud was a very striking promise of rain. Looking out of his door in the morning, the Eastern farmer saw a heavy mist hanging over his fields and he said, “It will rain, and let the Lord be praised, who waters the hills from His chambers.” Very soon he perceived that the sign was not fulfilled, for the dew and the cloud were gone as quickly as they came. But at the time, the tokens were very impressive and full of hope.

So have some of you, my dear Hearers, greatly cheered us with a fair prospect of your conversion. You were so broken down under an address that we hoped you were about to display true repentance. You were so pleased to hear the Word of God that we thought you really had received Christ into your heart. You made some very plain and decided remarks and your life, for a while, appeared happily altered so that we and others said, “We trust it is a work of Divine Grace.” But you have deceived us! And, worse than that, you have dealt treacherously with *God* in this matter—for you have gone back to your old ways though you know them to be evil.

You yourself thought that you were converted and you openly avowed that you were so. You determined to be this, that and the other—and yet you are none of these beings. I will not go into detail about your promises but I would have you remember that these are so many bonds and notes-of-hand which you have not taken up and they will be brought out against you at the Last Great Day. We could stand and weep over you, for we know not what to do next. God Himself seems to enquire of you, “What shall I do to you? What shall I do to you? Your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away.”

These persons give repeated promises. Though they have failed once, they very freely promise again—though they have failed 20 times—they confidently resolve anew. They are always beginning, never going on. The work of a minister with such people is endless. A mason who is hewing stone has hard enough work—the chips fly in his face and his tool is often worn down—yet when he leaves off at night, he continues in the morning where he left off. But what would be his toil if what he took off in the day grew again at night? What would the hewer of trees do if the tree grew so fast as to fill up the gashes which his axe had made? This would be a case of labor in vain.

Such is my work with many of you, my Hearers. Practically, I have to deal with you as I began 30 years ago—if, indeed, you are not worse! If I were the hewer of timber, I should feel pleasure in the woodman’s craft. But if each time I had half felled a tree its wound would heal up, I think I should give up in despair. Yet how does this differ from my case with some of you? O my Hearers, it is heart-breaking work to seek your salvation! For the more eager we are, the more bitter are the disappointments with which you recompense our loving anxieties.

I have said, “Surely that tree will soon fall.” But, lo, every mark of the axe is effaced and the tree looks as if it had never seen a woodman! I wish you had a little consideration for pastors and teachers who desire your eternal welfare, for you send us home lamenting, “Their goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away.” After all, *these persons do but give us empty promises.* Their vow has no more substance in it than cloud or dew. Shall I show you how it is that they are so quick to promise and so ready to yield to our persuasions—and yet do not come up to the mark and carry out their resolves?

In some cases they have a very impressible nature. Many men seem made of hard, unworkable metal. I cannot say I am very fond of *them*, but others are made of very soft metal and I cannot say that I am any fonder of them! These are your men of willow, easy to bend. These are your lumps of unbaked clay—you can mark them at pleasure with your thumb or your little finger—they are easily affected by their surroundings. Hundreds of these people come to places of worship and are encouraging till they become disappointing. Better still, there are many who have a naturally tender conscience. Such are here now. When you were boys you could not do wrong without being troubled about it. You have wept yourselves to sleep when you have felt that you grieved your father or mother.

What a mercy it is to have a tender conscience! And yet a conscience which is only *naturally* tender, but has never been renewed by the Spirit of God may be very deceptive—for we may *think* we have spiritually repented when we have done nothing of the sort. These people weep about sin but go on sinning! They desire faith but remain unbelievers. They soon feel but they quickly leave off feeling. They are superficial and hence untrue. Many are affected by a strong tendency to imitate those about them. We all imitate one another more or less—but evidently many are not born to set examples, but to follow examples—these easily promise but as easily forget.

The love of approbation acts upon many with great force. Especially will young people follow each other and follow leaders if they are praised for it. Converts may easily be made by mutual admiration. If it happens to be a religious time and it is the fashion to profess conversion, many of all ages go with the rush and yet are by no means truly called into the kingdom of God. That religion which lives upon companionship is apt to die when the company is changed. Beware of the godliness which is carried off its feet by the crowd—true religion is the personal conviction of one who has repented and believed on his own account

No man can be carried to Heaven by the stream of outside influence—there must be a work *within*—“You must be born-again.” No doubt we have many who disappoint our hopes because they are moving in the right way—but they are not going there from a force within—but are being compelled to go by an influence from without. One person of great strength of mind may have a vast influence over others—but subjecting to the best influence can never take the place of personal conversion. We read, in the Word of God, of a young king who did that which was right in the sight of God all the days of the venerable high priest who had been his guardian—but when the gracious man was gone, the king went his own way—and that way was an evil one.

Many persons are under the holy influence of godly relatives and friends, but they are by no means gracious themselves—their real character is concealed by the godly one who overshadows them. Oh, how sad, to be going the right way openly and yet in heart to be treading the downward road! We are before *God* what we are in *heart* and not what our surroundings compel us to be. No doubt some give us early promise of better things because they are under temporary excitement and hardly know what they say. Or they are afraid because of prevailing sickness, or fear of death and judgment. They have no sense of sin but they feel a fear of Hell. They have no wish to escape from doing wrong, but they want to save their skins from the punishment which follows upon wrong-doing.

When they are ill they not only send for the doctor, but send for the Christian man to come and pray with them. They send for the doctor because they would be freed from pain and for the other because they would be freed from Hell. Every murderer would, of course, escape the gallows if he could—but this *desire* is no proof of *repentance* and no sign of reformation. In such cases their goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it passes away. *These people involve themselves in greater sin by*

breaking their promises for, according to the 7th verse, these breaches of contract are treacheries to God. “There have they dealt treacherously against Me.”

A man cannot have lived in this world year after year, vowing and promising, proposing and delaying without hardening his heart in the process. It is perilous to promise faith and remain in unbelief. I say a man cannot have lived in idle promises and vain resolves without the crimson dye of falsehood soaking into his inmost soul. His very heart and thoughts will become tintured with a practical untruthfulness and superficiality. Beware of violating your conscience—even once tampering with convictions is like once taking the leprosy. To put down conviction is a species of soul-stifling. To drive out a holy thought and crush a right desire is spiritual suicide.

If you have not carried it to the last degree of actually killing your soul, yet in its essence, every lie to one’s soul is a dagger at the heart of its best life. To resist the Spirit of God is a deadly sin and to quench the Spirit is a capital offense. I cannot, even if I forget his future, look upon any man who has disappointed our just hopes without a horror of soul that anyone should have acted in this fashion against Almighty God, the God of infinite long-suffering, who has borne with him so long.

II. But I must hasten now to notice, in the second place, with a view to the comfort of some here, THE DEVICES OF MERCY. “Therefore,” says the text—what? Therefore I gave them up? Therefore I left them to themselves? No, but, “Therefore have I hewed them by the Prophets; I have slain them by the Words of My mouth.” To many men whom God has predestinated unto eternal life it has happened that, after they have long resisted the drawings of Divine Grace, the Lord has dealt with them in quite another fashion, though with the same end and design.

In this case, according to the text, He hewed them by the Prophets—but I have seen the Lord *hew men with cutting Providences*. One man would not think till the Lord laid him on a bed of sickness. Even there he tried to brazen it out— but the sickness grew worse and a more painful disease followed upon the first. He began to be shaken in mind by his pains, especially when he had to lie awake night after night. Depression of spirit followed upon weakness of body and suddenly the curtain seemed to lift and the man was compelled to look into the eternal future—black and grim. He had always shunned that sight but now it haunted him. He who would not think nor care about *eternal* things began to be exceedingly thoughtful and careful about such matters! The Lord was hewing him with personal sickness and it was of no use for him to attempt to stand out against Him.

Or the hewing has been by bereavements. His wife, who was the delight of his eyes, suddenly sickened and died. A little child followed—the darling of the household was laid upon its mother’s coffin. When the second stroke came the man cried, “O God, I cannot bear this! What would You have me to do?” But he still held out and continued impenitent. He had one left—his daughter—the lone star of his life. On a sudden she was taken from him. Then he wept in the bitterness of his spirit, for he was a

heart-broken man. In my experience in dealing with anxious souls, I often meet with men and women who find life through the death of their beloved children.

An open grave has been God's doorway to their hearts. The arrows of the Lord have struck one after another and, when deprived of earthly lovers, they have turned to the heavenly Friend. They will have reason to bless God to all eternity for those sad days of bereavement wherein the pruning knife cut away from them the wild wood of worldliness and carelessness! There are many who can say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Your Word"! The rough hewing has often taken another shape and has come in the form of loss and impoverishment. The man was getting on wonderfully in business—everything prospered with him and his increasing wealth ministered to his presumption. He had an excursion for God's day, a jest for God's Word, a contempt for God's house and an ill word for God's people.

But suddenly there came a turn of the tide and he was carried down stream. He struggled against it but he found himself hastening to the lower reaches of the river of debt and drawing near to the sea of bankruptcy. He did not see that the hand of God had gone out against him. He cursed his bad luck and resolved to fight it out. He had to leave his comfortable house and live in a very reduced fashion. But he did not yield. He would find a situation—he would earn his living by harder work. But he could not find a situation—he tramped London in vain till his bare feet almost touched the stones of the pavement—and his clothes grew ragged about him.

Now, the prospect was grim, indeed, for no citizen of the far country would even send him into his fields to feed swine. Then it was that he said, "I will arise and go to my Father." The extremity of his need was the opportunity of the good Spirit. If you will not come to God while you have a good coat on your back, I could almost pray that you might come to rags! May a hungry belly bring you, if nothing else will! I am glad to see your worldly estate prosper—but if your soul is perishing you are in a sad case. Better far that the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stall than that you should be cut off from Christ and have no Grace in your heart!

If some of you are passing, just now, through very trying Providences, I pray with all my heart that they may be sanctified to you. It will be no ill wind which wrecks your ship if the tempest casts you upon the Rock of Ages. I trust that the Lord is laying you low that He may build you up upon a sure Foundation. With certain others, the Lord does not so much deal with cutting Providences as by sharp and convincing *ministries*. Do you not remember, some of you, before you found the Lord, how quietly you heard your minister and were comfortable and sleepy under him? But the Lord came forth by that ministry against you and you were sorely wounded by it!

You had amended your faults, rectified your life and you felt very much at ease. The evil spirit had gone out and the house was empty, swept and garnished—you were in a very hopeful and happy condition! Do you re-

member that dreadful sermon which, like a bombshell, broke through the roof of your house and set the whole place on fire? You were very angry, but the deed was done! Sometimes it has been my business, in the name of God, deliberately to break in pieces the choice ornaments of self-righteous men. This has made them feel ferocious! The special things wherein they delighted themselves have been destroyed before their eyes! The ministry has been as a hammer breaking their idols in pieces!

Do you not know that the Spirit of God is a destroyer? Is it not written, "The grass withers because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people are grass"? Everything that grows out of human nature is dried up when the Spirit of God blows upon it and reveals its imperfection. The Holy Spirit is to self-confidence a Spirit of judgment and a Spirit of burning. To many it is necessary that the Lord's servant should be a rough hewer. Then is a man famous according as he lifts up his axe upon the thick trees! The faithful preacher lops away many a goodly bough and as the man's natural state is made bare, he cries, "Why is all this? What sharp preaching is this?"

I have known hearers exclaim, "I will never hear that man again. He makes me miserable." Why not hear him again? Do you want him to flatter you? I have no such commission. O my Hearers, do you think that I come here on the Lord's-Day with an anxious heart aiming at your *gratification*? Do you think that I play a fiddle that you may dance to it? God forbid that I should so ruin both you and myself! A minister flings his soul away if he spends his energies in the attempt to please his congregation! It may not be well that some of you should be pleased. Sometimes when a man grows outrageously angry with a sermon, he is getting more good than when he retires saying, "What an eloquent discourse!"

I have never yet heard of a salmon that liked the hook which had taken sure hold of it—nor do men admire sermons which enter their souls. When the Word of God becomes as an arrow in a man's heart, he writhes—he would gladly tear it out—but it is a barbed shaft. He gnashes his teeth, he grows indignant—but he is wounded and the arrow is rankling. The preaching which *pleases* us may not be the Truth of God but the doctrine which *grieves* our heart and troubles our conscience, is, in all probability, true. At any rate, there are grave reasons for suspecting that it is so.

It is not the way of the Truth of God to flatter guilty men. I say the Lord uses ministries of a cutting kind to make men uneasy in their sins and cause them to flee to Christ for peace. It is well for the preacher to remind men that they are lost by nature and that in their flesh there dwells no good thing. It is well that sin should be made to appear sin and that self-righteousness should be made to look like filthy rags. Human inability and the need of the Holy Spirit must be set forth clearly and the Sovereignty of God must be proclaimed solemnly. The Lord has a right to pass over whom He pleases—and if mercy comes to any man it will be by the sovereign act of God—because God wills to do it and not because any man deserves it. We must preach the need of cleansing in the precious blood and the necessity of being born-again from above. While the preacher

thunders out the doctrine of death by sin and life in Christ, and other kindred truths, then it is that the Lord hews men by the Prophets and they fall slain by the Words of His mouth.

“I shall never hope again,” says one. “That sermon drove me to despair.” Self-despair is the beginning of true hope in Christ! Go and hear that man again! “Oh, but he hung up all my hopes like so many criminals on the gallows.” Go and hear him again! For more of that hanging needs to be done till your last carnal hope is executed. “But he hits so hard.” Thank God he does! There is no hewing stone without hard blows! Oh, it is well to be riddled by the Gospel, for God never heals those whom He has not struck and He never binds up those who have no wounds. Why should the physician come to those who are not sick? It is to you who are bleeding to death that Mercy flies on wings of wind! There shall be no delay when you are at Death’s door *spiritually*. Look unto the Lord and live! He waits to heal the wounds He has made.

Beyond this the Lord uses, with many men, *very cutting operations within their souls*. They feel spiritual hewing within which are most terrible. It is my lot almost every day in the week to meet with those who are pressed beneath the heavy hand of conviction of sin. By long experience of the Lord’s hewing I feel at home where the axe has made gaping gashes and the chips lie deep about me. But this is awful work in certain instances, for the tree seems cut down close by the roots.

The Holy Spirit comes to some men and makes a discovery to them of what their past lives have been and oh, the horror of it! They were most respectable people in their own esteem—if not Christians, they were quite as good as the most of those who are and far better than some—but how soon was this changed! When the Lord pulls back a shutter and lets a little light into the dark room of the soul, what filth and loathsomeness appear where all seemed clean! The Lord does more than that—He takes up the cellar flap and lets the man peer beneath the surface into the dark vault of his *heart*. What a sink of depravity! What an abyss of deceit!

No man’s reason would survive a full sight of his own inner self. A cage of unclean birds is nothing to it. The lusts and filthy imaginations, the pride, the wrath, the deceit, the meanness of our natures—who can know them? When we see these hidden evils revealed by the Scriptures we are, indeed, slain by the Words of the Lord’s mouth! I have known persons, under horror of sin, try to pray but prayer has died in their throats. They have read their Bibles and every chapter has thundered at them. The Word of the Lord has seemed like a red hot harrow full of burning spikes and it has been dragged up and down the field of their tender hearts.

Even the Gospel has forgotten its sweetness to their ears. The ambassador of peace has had no kind word for them. I have met with those who have even tried to believe in Christ but they have been so overloaded with fear that they failed to hope in His mercy. I spoke to one the other day who said, “Sir, I am spiritually dead.” I answered, “Jesus says, ‘He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.’” He replied that he was without hope and I reminded him that at one time we, also, were without Christ and without hope, and yet we were made near. “Alas,” he

said, "I have no strength for anything." I bade him remember that it is written, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

"O Sir," he said, "You are very skillful to turn things about. But I am lost." "Yes," I said, "And 'the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' If you will describe yourself as a pretty gentleman I shall find nothing in the Bible to comfort you. But as long as you have only black words and condemning words with which to daub yourself, I feel that you are Christ's man for you describe yourself just as the Scriptures describe those whom Jesus came to save." Painful as are God's strokes, I rejoice to hear His axe going—for those whom the Lord hews today He will help tomorrow!

When the Lord is hewing a man and making him feel that he is nothing and nobody, or worse than that—when He is making him feel that he is just a heap of sin and misery only fit to be shoveled into the bottomless pit—then I know that salvation is near! When God brings a man down there will soon be a lifting up. When the night is darkest, the dawn is nearest. When carnal hope is killed, spiritual hope begins to live. Thus have we seen the rough methods of tender Love and spied out the devices of effectual Grace.

III. And now I have to notice with deep solemnity, for a moment only, THE DECLARATION OF JUSTICE which is placed in the midst of this Revelation of mercy. What does the Word say? "Your judgments are as the light that goes forth." Perhaps I address one this morning who has promised fair for Heaven but has deceived everybody and now God has been dealing with him in another way and made him feel the axe of affliction—if, after all, he remains obstinate and will not yield to the love of God his condemnation will be just.

If, despite all this, he is determined to be lost, God's judgments will be as clear as the light of the morning, or as the flash of lightning in a storm. All you have suffered you have well deserved—you have been brought very low, but it is of the Lord's mercies that you are not consumed. It is true He seems to have struck you with cruel blows—but had He dealt with you after your sins and rewarded you according to your iniquities—you would have been where hope can never come. If God had not been longsuffering, you would long ago have been where they ask in vain for a drop of water to cool their tongue, tormented in the flame.

It is great mercy that has dealt so unmercifully with your temporal estate. It is great love that has taken away those you love. In any case you have deserved it all and God's dealings with you are clearly righteous. You cannot question His procedure. But if all this is in vain and you pass into another state unsaved, God's eternal judgment against you will be "as the light that goes forth." Who will plead for you? I think I see you in that Last Dread Day. Yes, here you come! This is the man who knew all about Christ and His precious blood and salvation by Grace through faith! This is he who knew, but did not act as he knew.

Who will be his advocate? Here he comes, the man who 52 Sundays in the year heard the Gospel faithfully preached and yet closed his ears to it.

What excuse has he? Here he comes—the man who was pleaded with but would not come—who will lament for him? Here he comes, the man that was the subject of many prayers and many anxious pleadings—the man that was so near to the kingdom as to be almost persuaded to be a Christian! What can be said for him? For this man so much was done that the Lord said, “What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it?” Mercy itself came to a pause and said, “What shall I do to you? What shall I do to you?”

Surely, it is now the turn for Justice to ask the same question. Here he comes, the man on whom the Gospel has exhausted all its pleadings and God’s ambassadors have spent all their arguments! Here he comes and, when the Judge asks him what he has to say in his own defense, what answer can he make? Will it not be another case of, “He stood speechless; and the King said, Bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”?

My God! Am I speaking to anyone this morning whose case this will be? I pray, of Your mercy, that it may not be so! If I had the misery of knowing that one soul here would be lost and if I was bidden to point out the one that should be cast away forever—how could I bear it? No, my Lord, blot my name out of Your book sooner than one of these should perish! I tremble as I stand before You! Yet there are those here who are as unaffected as the seats they sit upon. When such go down to destruction, who shall act as advocate for them? If one would plead for them, what could he say?—

**“How they deserve the deepest Hell
Who slight the joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel
That break such cords of love!”**

IV. So, then, I finish with my fourth head, which is not in the text and yet is the true drift of the text—consider THE PATH OF WISDOM. Leave all I have said, if you please, but listen to the voice which says, “Come, let us return unto the Lord!” Why should you be struck any more—you will only revolt more and more! Why should you be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle? Why should you be “like dumb driven cattle?” Listen to the voice of Wisdom and be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.”

This is very simple. So much the better for you. Think of it. No, practice it! What is the way back to God? The Lord Jesus answers—“I am the way.” Take Him to be your door of access to the great God on whom you have before turned your backs. Along the blood-sprinkled way of the atoning Sacrifice return unto the Lord your God. Not only are the words simple, but they are *encouraging*. It is put here in a way that ought to cheer you—for others invite you lest you be afraid to go alone—“Come, and let us return unto the Lord.” Let us go together. Here, take my hand. I, too, will go to Jesus as a sinner.

All of us who have gone to Him before will go to Him again with you. Come! Do you hesitate? Come, let us go at once. Let us go together. We will pray with you and *for* you—we know the road and will point it out to

you. You are sitting side by side with your wife this morning and you are, neither of you, saved. Oh, that the two of you would seize each other's hands and say, "Come and let us return unto the Lord!" And you, Brothers and Sisters, or you, Friends, who know each other well—would it not be a happy thing if, hand in hand, before you leave this place—you did return unto the Lord? Come! Come! Come! Let us return! Why do we linger?

Oh, that all here present who have not come back to God by Jesus Christ would come in a great company to the Lord! Does it seem too bold a thing for you to go back to God? Be not dismayed! Take heart because of the word of *promise*. You cry, "He has torn me! He has wounded me!" Yes, that is why you should come to Him, for it is written, "He has torn and He will heal us; He has smitten and He will bind us up." "Look!" cries the sick man, "see what a gash the surgeon made! He has gone away! Do you think he will come again to me?" Come again? Of course he will. He must come again. If he made that wound, he had a purpose in it and he will go through with his design. He has made the open wound because it was necessary to make it and he has thereby bound himself to attend to you till you are healed.

In conviction there is promise of consolation. It is not the nature of our good Lord to cause needless grief. His wounds intend a cure. The Lord, who has broken your heart, will bind it up! The Lord, who has made you tremble at His name, will yet make you rejoice in His salvation. He has said it—"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembles* at My Word." The Lord will come to you in the grave of despair and bid you live! Behold His gracious promise and believe it to be true—"After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight."

May we all live in His sight by faith in Christ Jesus. And to Him be glory forever! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Hosea 5:11-15; Hosea 6.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 570, 656.**

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

GRAY HAIRS

NO. 830

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not.”
Hosea 7:9.***

THE Prophet here testified that the kingdom of Israel had learned the way of the surrounding heathen, and had polluted itself with their vices, and consequently the strength of the kingdom had decayed. He declares that he could discern signs of this decay—signs as manifest and certain as gray hairs which mark the decline of life—yet the inhabitants of the realm of Israel had not observed their decline, but had boasted of their strength when all the while it was departing from them. We need not go into any particulars as to that little kingdom which after awhile was swept away by Assyria, but there is no doubt that what happened unto them happens unto many a nation—it may happen unto our own! Before we are aware of it the scepter may depart from Britain. A general laxity of commercial morality may, by degrees, sap and undermine the foundation of our commerce and before we are aware, our industry may be crippled, our trade withdrawn and our position among the nations debased. If so, we shall fall by our *sins*, and by our *sins* alone.

Certainly such has often been the case with churches. It was notoriously so with that presided over by the bishop of Rome. The sins of that modern Babylon came not all at once, but by slow degrees. First, it submitted itself to one vain dogma of man's invention. Then to a superstitious decree of a haughty council. Then to a third invention of a potent pontiff—and so by degrees the church apostatized until it ceased to be a church and became the persecutor of the saints!

Thus after their own fashion has it been with some of our churches at home. Zealous and active, prayerful and united, they grew every day like cedars which the Lord has planted and they were a blessing to the neighborhood in which they stood. But discord crept in, or worldliness, or pride—and by-and-by the Holy Spirit departed—the ministry became barren, the people looked up to the shepherd and they were not fed. Soon the church was scattered abroad, the light was blown out and the place that once was blessed by the Church knew it no more. May this never be written in the history of *this* church! May gray hairs never come upon its head at all, or if they should come may we have Divine Grace to perceive them at once, and resort unto the Holy Spirit for strength so that we may be saved from driveling into imbecility or apostatizing into error!

But I shall not discourse of nations this morning, nor yet of churches. To handle such extensive themes might rather interest than edify. I shall now speak of *individuals*. Brothers and Sisters, let us turn our thoughts to *ourselves*. It is an excellent rule for the hearer as well as the minister

concerning a text, to apply *himself* to the text, and then, secondly, to apply the *text* to himself. Keep your thoughts to the text, and then when you have drawn out its meaning, let all that it has to say be spoken in your own ears as addressed personally to you. I pray that God the Holy Spirit may stir us up to self-examination—that if any strange sin or evil passion may have devoured our strength—at any rate we may know it and drive out the traitor at once!

First, this morning, I shall endeavor to explain the reason for the ignorance mentioned in the text, “yet he knows not.” Secondly, I shall hold up the glass, that every Ephraim here may see his gray hairs. And then, thirdly, I shall recommend remedies for this gradual decay.

I. Let me EXPLAIN THE IGNORANCE here mentioned, or show how it is that many a man is backsliding and declining in Divine Grace and yet knows it not. I take it that this often is caused by a lack of acquaintance with one’s own soul. It is said that in London we do not know our next door neighbors but it is a stranger thing that we should not know ourselves—that the soul should be so closely allied to the body as to be even married to it—and yet man scarcely gives his nobler part a thought—but lives as if he were a horse or a cow!

You have never *seen* your soul, and yet it is yourself! How is it you have lived so long, O man, without giving to your immortal spirit some consideration, some hours of thought, some studious moments? And you, O Christian, how is it that you, saved as you profess to be by a price immense—you who have received quickening from the Holy Spirit—that you think so little of soul affairs? We open our eyes in the morning, and right on until we close them at night we scarcely look for anything but that which is external and of the body. Would it not be well if we could open our *spiritual* eyes, too, and gaze into ourselves and understand what business is going on in the world of souls—what vice increases or what virtue declines within our hearts?

I am afraid we give our thoughts so much to this *world* that the next world is neglected. If there is but a scratch on the hand, if there is but a pimple on the flesh, timid folks must need send for the surgeon! But ah, they can let the souls be wounded and a deadly gangrene come upon them—and they send not unto the Beloved Physician that He would come and heal them of their diseases. Everywhere we see among men a great lack of acquaintance with their souls, a great forgetfulness of the motto of the old Delphic oracle, “Man, know yourself!” And consequently it is that men decline almost unto spiritual death and yet scarcely know it!

Some there are, again, who do not *want* to know any evil thing of themselves. They had rather suppose themselves to be rich than actually know the true condition. “No,” they say, “bring not the day-book! Show me not the ledger! I am spending now as if I were a wealthy man and living at a lavish rate. I do not want to know that I am nearly a bankrupt—I had rather not perceive it.” Hear how these wounded ones dread to be dealt with honestly, and therefore cry, “Surgeon, film over the sore—it shall be enough for me—I want not the knife! I care not to have my wound radi-

cally healed.” Fools are they who talk thus, and yet how such fools abound!

My Hearer, are you one of this tribe? Are you content to have a fair name to live? Are you satisfied to dream that you are rich and increased in goods and in need of nothing, while you are in reality naked, and poor, and miserable? If so, the Lord have mercy upon you and make you enough your own friend to be willing to know the truth of your state! Many see not the gray hairs because they do not look into the glass to see them. We cannot very well perceive gray hairs without the use of the mirror, or our sins without the glass of the Word of God.

Many professors search not the Scriptures. They will never win the blessing of the first Psalm, for they are not day and night found reading God’s Word. They do not come unto this Book, which is God’s looking glass which He hangs up in the chambers of His people that they may see the *natural* face, and perceive what manner of men they are. Oh, these unread Bibles! These neglected Bibles—how they cry out against us! What swift witnesses will they be against many professors in the last heart-searching day! What? Does God give us a gauge by which we may measure ourselves, and will we not use it? Does He send us these detectors and tell-tales by which we may discover whether all is well with us or not, and will we close our eyes and refuse to see? Oh, then, if we die and utterly perish, surely our blood must be upon our own head! He that will not be saved must be damned! He that will not take the trouble to look into the glass shall have no one to blame if the undiscovered evil brings him into grievous ill and irretrievable mischief!

There are some, again, who look into the glass to see whether there are gray hairs coming, but they use a false mirror, one which does not truly reflect the image. I mean this—that multitudes of Christians use a standard, other than Holy Scripture, of what a Christian ought to be! They compare themselves among *themselves*, and they are not wise. They say, “I am as holy, I am as unworldly, I am as conscientious, I am as prayerful as So-and-So.” Perhaps they even boast that they have more spirituality of mind than such a one—and being content to have excelled their fellow creatures they cannot conceive that there can be gray hairs upon themselves—and so their pride is flattered and their soul is thus cankered through and through by a false conception of what they should be.

It is well for us, Beloved, all of us, to aim high. It is said that he who shoots at the moon, if he does not hit it, will at any rate shoot higher than he who aims at a bush. And so he that aims at absolute *perfection*, if he should not attain it, may, at any rate, be something better than he who takes some poor imperfect friend of his and makes *him* to be a standard. Break your false mirrors! Throw away your flattering looking glasses and take to the clear crystal of the Word of God! There see what Jesus was, and ask yourselves how near, or rather how *far*, you are from being like He! Look at the Son of God, the image of *perfection*, and hear Him say, “Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect,” and blush as you see your deformities, your sins, your gray hairs! And so blushing, may God bless you!

I am ashamed to have to say one more thing, namely, that some men who are decaying in strength do not see their spiritual gray hairs because they dye themselves so thoroughly. I mean that they color themselves with hypocrisy. There are men who, if every hair were gray, would still wear raven locks in their own judgment—and the judgment of others—for they are masters of deceit. There are some who, if we speak of private prayer, retire into their closets as regularly as others—but yet they never draw near to God in spirit and in truth. How many there are who are as apparently devout in the externals of religion as if they were the children of God—while all the while they are formalists, and Pharisees without the root of the matter in them?

It is the easiest thing in all the world to counterfeit the issues of the mint of Heaven! Yes, and to pass the spurious coin among your fellow creatures and to make them *think* that you are far richer than they in gracious things, while all the while your virtue is counterfeit and your profession a lie! O my Hearers, take care of putting formal prayer, sham holiness and imitation godliness into the place of the real fruits of the Spirit! You must be not merely washed and cleansed, but “born again!” You must undergo a radical change and you must serve the living God in the power of His Eternal Spirit—not with the tongue and with profession only, but with *heart*, and soul, and strength—or else your religion will be nothing but a funeral pall to cover your dead soul and help to increase the pomp with which you shall be carried to Hell.

God save us from hiding from ourselves our secret faults. Let us be willing to be spoken to by the rough preacher’s stern voice! Let us be greedy to read those passages of Scripture which try us most! Let it be our prayer, “Search me, O God, and try my heart.” Daily and hourly let us desire to feel the refining fire go through our soul. Come with the fan in Your hand, O Savior, and thoroughly purge my floor and let my chaff be driven away! And let nothing but the pure wheat remain!

Thus I have, as briefly as I could, shown you why it is that many, perhaps of ourselves, may have well-marked decay in our souls and yet we may not know it.

II. Secondly, I am to HOLD UP THE LOOKING GLASS. Remember, Brethren, that decays in Divine Grace and backsliding are usually very much like the fall of the autumn leaves. You are watching the trees, for now they are beginning to indicate the coming fall. They evidently know that their verdant robes are to be stripped from them for they are casting off their first loose vestments. How slowly the time of the brown leaf comes on! You notice here and there a tinge of the copper hue, and soon the gold leaf or the bronze is apparent. Week after week you observe that the general fall of the leaves is drawing nearer, but it is a matter that creeps slowly on.

And so with backsliders. They are not put out of the visible Church all at once. They do not become open offenders all at once. The heart, by slow degrees, turns aside from the living God and then, at last, comes the outward sin and the outward shame. God save us from falling by little and little! The devil’s little strokes have felled many great oaks. Constant

droppings of temptation have worn away many stones. God save us from it!

Some cities have been carried by storm. Brave soldiers have made the irons of the scaling ladder bite on the top of the wall, and up they have swarmed in defiance of death and carried the city by sudden force within a few hours. But many other cities have been taken by the slow process of the siege—the supplies have been cut off, warriors have been slain at the sally-ports, slowly. Entrenchments have been thrown up nearer and nearer to the wall. Mines have been dug under the bastions. Forts have been weakened, gates have been shaken—and at last the city has been subdued.

Where Satan captures one man by force of strong temptation, he captures ten by the gradual process of sapping and undermining the principles which should rule within. May God preserve us from this! The cunning fowler can adapt his arts to suit our case, and if some of us may be taken by a sudden surprise, he understands how to draw the bow and bring us down. But if others are to be entrapped by being accustomed to the lure, he will occupy weeks, and months, and years, for he counts no time lost so that he may bring a child of God to shame, and bring disgrace to the name of Jesus!

I will, then, hold up the glass to let those see their own hearts, in whom the evil is insinuating itself by degrees. One of the gray hairs which marks decay is a lack of holy grief for daily sin. Comes not this close to home for some of you? “Repentance? Why,” says one, “I repented when I was converted.” What, and not since then? Why, repentance and faith go hand in hand to Heaven! A Christian must never leave off repenting for I fear he never leaves off sinning. Where there is none of the dew of repentance, there is one sign of a curse.

Gilboa’s mountain was barren because on it there was no dew, and what shall I say of you who have lost the dew of repentance? What? Can you grieve your God and not grieve yourselves? What, Sirs? Can you go into your business and know that you have spoken and acted amiss, and when you come home at night are there no lamenting and confession? Have sin and you grown so friendly that you can carry this viper in your bosom? Your God is a jealous God! And if He sees that you treat sin so lightly, rest assured He will make you smart before long and withdraw His Holy Spirit from you—and leave you to grope in darkness. There is perhaps not a more common gray hair than this, and yet there is not one which more surely indicates that the constitution of the Christian is being secretly undermined. If you see this evil in the looking glass, God give you Grace to repent over your lack of repentance, and to weep that you do not weep for sin!

A second gray hair is the absence of lamentation in the soul when Jesus Christ is dishonored by others. Time was with some of us when, if we saw others sin, we could sit down and cry our heart out at our eyes—we could not bear the thought that thousands of our fellow creatures should be living in continual neglect of our precious Lord Jesus! We thought we could lay down our lives, or a hundred lives if we had them, if we might

but make Him a throne in men's hearts and write His name on the very skies so that everyone that ran might read it!

But now we hear of sin and it does not fill us with holy horror as it once did. Perhaps, dear Hearer, you can hear the precious name of Jesus dishonored and yet your soul is not pierced through and through as with a dart. Ah, if you loved the Master it would be a painful thing to live in such a wicked world as this! If you loved the sweet Lord Jesus your heart would yearn over those who see not His beauty, and to whom He is as "a root out of a dry ground." Shame on us! Shame most of all on *myself* that I can walk through these streets of London without tears!

Jesus saw Jerusalem and wept, but what was Jerusalem? A petty village compared with London! And yet He wept over it! Have we no tears for a city with equal light, and with equal sin, and with a population multiplied so many times?—

***"Did Christ over sinners weep,
And can our cheeks be dry?"***

Yes, they are dry—dry from year in to year out—and scarcely a sigh or cry for poor dying souls is heard from some of us! We can be satisfied to have our friends saved, and our children and a few neighbors saved—but as for the rest we talk as if they were delivered over to ruin by God's decree—and we satisfy ourselves with vain drivel about *sovereignty*, or some other idle conjecture! And we do not mourn or lament, though Hell is filling and Christ's name is blasphemed, and the Lord's Day disregarded and I know not what of infamy committed beneath the light of the moon! It is a sure sign that our Divine Grace is not at flood tide, but sadly at the ebb, when there is no grieving over the sins of others.

A third gray hair in the Christian, a very plain one, and marking that the disease is gone far, is the indulgence of certain minor sins. I call them *minor* only because they are supposed to be so. When a thief finds that he cannot enter the door of a good man's house and that the windows are so barred up that there is no entrance for him, what does he do, but, finding that there is a little window through which a child might creep, he fetches a boy and passes him through the narrow opening. And then the child opens the door to the man, and the house is plundered.

Even so, when Satan cannot overthrow a Believer with the gross sins of the flesh, he is certain to find some lesser evil which he introduces through an unguarded place—and then the lesser sin opens the door for the next. You know the process of the wedge. Try to put the blunt end of the wedge into the timber and how useless it would be! But put in the thin edge first—give it but a gentle stroke with the hammer and then again, and again, and again—and see how it cleaves its way, widening little by little.

So some professors begin with a little conformity to the world. "Oh!" they say, "I cannot see the harm of it," though others of their fellow Christians are grieved. Then they come to the next, and the next, and the next—and so by slow degrees they give up virtually all the truthfulness of their profession and make shipwreck of faith and are castaways—because the Grace of God was not truly in them, but only notionally so. While oth-

ers who go a certain distance in the road to apostasy are met by Divine Grace and turned back—not without many broken bones and much sore lamentation all the after days of their life.

Covetousness, which few men will confess, is yet a very common gray hair upon the heads of professors. Beware of a growing covetousness, for covetousness is, of all sins, one of the most insidious. It is like the silting up of a river. As the river comes down from the land it brings with it sand and earth and it deposits all these at its mouth. And by degrees, unless the conservators watch it carefully, it will block itself up and it will be difficult to find a channel for ships of great tonnage. You cannot see when the river closes its own mouth, but so it is—by daily deposit it creates a bar which is dangerous to navigation.

Many a man, when he begins to accumulate wealth, begins, also, to ruin his soul—and the more he deposits the more he stops up his liberal spirit, which is, so to speak, the very mouth of his life. Instead of doing *more* for God, he does less. The more he saves the more he needs, and the more he needs of this world the less he craves for the world to come. This disease creeps upon men as slowly as certain disorders which slumber in the blood for months until they find occasion to develop themselves. Watch against a grasping spirit, dear Friends. If you find money sticks to your hands, mind what you are doing! It is all well enough for you to seek to make all you can rightly—you are bound to do so, and to use it properly—but when the gold begins to cleave to you, it will eat as does a canker—and will soon prove your ruin unless God prevents it.

With some it is not quite so much what we call covetousness, though it is the same sin, as it is *worldliness*. They are as much taken up with the little they have as some would be with their much—and as much drawn away from God by their losses as others would be by their gains. They are, from morning to night, always fretting and worrying about the things of this life. Our Lord's great text, "Be careful for nothing," they have never understood. The first, last, and middle thoughts of their life are, "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and how shall we be clothed?" They rise up early and sit up late—they eat the bread of carefulness, but forget the Lord who alone can build the house. Do not some of you find yourselves falling into this fretful way?

There was a time when it was not so. Oh, that hour of prayer—how you enjoyed it, but you clip it very short, now! You say you cannot afford the time. Ah, that Thursday night lecture, that evening Prayer Meeting—how sweet those used to be! How you went home thanking God that there were such wells in the desert! But you cannot come out to them now—you are to pestered with cares—and even on the Sabbath your business intrudes itself into your thoughts! You have been making calculations in the pew this morning! You have been worrying yourself about interest and discount, and mortgage and commission. The stockbroker's din and the rate collector's knock have sounded in your ears!

The fact is, my Friend, you are growing worldly. Take a bright knife from your table and dig with it into the earth in your garden—and leave it there—see how it will rust. This is what will become of your soul—put it

into the earth, and keep it there—it must corrode. A man can do as much business as the wealthiest merchant in the world, and if he lives near to God it will not hurt him! But a man can do a tin-pot business, as they say, and yet for all that, because he puts his soul into it, cares about it, worries over it, and departs from the living God—it will consume the graciousness of his soul and take away all the sharpness of his Christian zeal and all the brightness of the holy communion which he once had with his God. Beware of that gray hair! O my beloved Brothers and Sisters, I have held the glass up! You can see the evil! Avoid it for the Lord's sake and your own!

In some professors the gray hair of *envy* is very visible—yes, in some of the best, too. Some of God's servants are not satisfied to serve God in their own way, but they must make it their aim to excel some other Brother, and if that Brother should happen to be more successful, or to be thought to be so, straightaway they feel aggrieved and are apt to try and pick a hole in his coat, or pull a feather from his cap lest he should out-shine them. This is the sin of some of the hardest workers in Christian Churches!

I wish we could all get the spirit of dear Mr. Dodd, the Puritan, who said, "I wish that I were the worst preacher in all England," by which he meant, "I wish they were all better than myself." He did not mean that he would like to be any worse than he was—but he desired that all his Brothers might be better than himself. We ought to be like the old Roman, who, when another was elected to an office in preference to himself, thanked God that his country had better men than himself! So should we.

But the spirit that was evinced in the days of Luther is often seen even in our churches—many confessed that Luther had proposed many excellent reforms—but they could not endure them because they were proposed, as they said, by a beggarly monk. At this time many would confess to the notable deed of a zealous Brother, but then they must find fault because the man is so young, "How shall he be allowed to outstrip venerable sires?" Or, "He is such a poor man, who is he that he should be making such a to-do?" Or, "The man has never had an education, how dare he pretend to be useful?" This is very mean and despicable, and yet, alas, most common! Let us give no quarter to the foul spirit of envy. It is a devil with as many lives as a cat, and you will have to kill it a great many times over to get rid of it—and it must be slain. It is a gray hair of the most pernicious kind, for it marks a sad declension of soul from right walking with God.

Another gray hair is *pride*. When we think ourselves to be something, then we are nothing. When we boast within ourselves, "I have none of these gray hairs," we are then snow-white with them. When we conceive that others might well take a pattern from us, we may soon be beacons to them. Rocks always lie in the way of the ship of pride. When we write fine things *about* ourselves, we shall soon write bitter things *against* ourselves. A professor is never lower in the sight of God than when he is high in his own esteem.

Neglect of prayer, again, is another gray hair. When a town begins to decay in its commerce, its decline may come by slow degrees—careful watchers observe it because they perceive that the ships in the harbor grow fewer and fewer. Our soul is the harbor, and our prayers are the vessels by which we trade between our souls and Heaven—and when these prayers begin to be fewer, or are of lighter tonnage—when they make fewer voyages to the celestial haven, then be sure that our soul’s spiritual trade is under a sad decay.

It is a gray hair, too, when we have no delight in listening to the Word of God, or reading it. Time was with some of you when you would cheerfully stand in the aisles with the crowd to listen and were glad, though you had not a place to lean against, if you might catch a good Word from the Master. But now it must be a soft cushion so you may sit easy, and the preacher must mind that he choose out goodly similes and choice words if he would hold your ear. You are dainty now. When you were hungry, you could eat Gospel meat from the bone, cut how it might be! But now it must be daintily carved, or your stomach turns against it. When the appetite fails, the man’s health is wrong and he needs a tonic, and perhaps the great Physician will before long send him a bitter draught which will bring him right.

Another gray hair is lack of love to God—when we think hard thoughts of Him because we are in trouble. When we do not seek His honor. When we can hear His name blasphemed without a feel of horror. When we do not, in fact, love Him as a tender child loves a parent. O Beloved, it is a sweet thing to love God! It is the true life of man, this love of God in the soul! It is a sweet thing when you can talk with Him, walk with Him, rejoice in Him, bless Him, praise Him and hold Him to be good even in the darkest of His dispensations!

But we do not love God as we should. O our dear God, our blessed Father, our tender Parent, whose truthfulness we have proved 10,000 times, and whose loving kindnesses every day are innumerable—how little do we praise Him, how often do we complain of Him, how few good words do we speak to others concerning Him—and how ready are we, at the very first rebuff from Him, to murmur against Him! May our souls get to love God better, and this will be a sign that we are in a holy and happy state.

A lack of love to *Believers* is another gray hair. They who love not the Father are not likely to love the children. Many professors seem to be entirely wrapped up in *themselves*. Their notion of religion is their own salvation, and their idea of zeal is simply seeing after their own prosperity. Brothers and Sisters, see that you love one another! “Little children, love one another,” said John, “for love is of God.” And if you do not love the poor and needy of Christ’s Church, and the feeble and the suffering—yes, if your heart does not go out towards all in whom there is anything of Christ Jesus—depend upon it, you are not living so near to God as you should!

Again, lack of love to perishing sinners is a sad gray hair to be found, I fear, in some of us ministers, as well as in the people—would God it were not so! Ah, when we can think of the perishing and yet be not dismayed

on their account. When we refuse to speak the Gospel to them. When we do not warn them. When we never pray for them. When our closets never witness to our sighs and cries for these poor souls that will so soon be damned and cast away from all hope. When we can even think of neighbors, children, friends perishing, and not feel any brokenness of spirit, nor pour out any lamentations over them—oh then, indeed, we must have forgotten the compassion of Jesus and our heart must be terribly diseased!

Look at the gray hair and ask God to deliver you from what it indicates. One other gray hair is the suspension of communion with God. We sang of it just now—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?”***

How wretched is it to follow Jesus afar off and to be unable to say, “He brought me into His banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.” When we can no more rejoice with the joy of them that make merry in His name, nor can weep at His feet—then have we turned aside and may God in mercy bring us back again!

III. Two or three words shall suffice for the third point, namely, to recommend to you CERTAIN REMEDIES. I would press it home upon any professor here who has seen gray hairs in the glass I have held up, to make an enquiry as to whether he is a child of God or not, for these things go far to make us doubt whether we ever were born again. And if this is a question, then all is at stake.

Oh, I pray you make the trial, for it would be better for you to doubt and fear than to go to Hell blindfolded with carnal security! Young people, you joined the Church some years ago and you thought then you felt deep repentance, conviction of sin, and a true faith in Christ. You have had two or three years to try yourself—how is it with you now? Is not the world getting the upper hand with you? Does not that tempting offer of marriage almost persuade you to break the Lord’s command not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers? Do not the pleasures of the world, which are so congenial to poor evil flesh and blood—do not they begin to fascinate you?

Then ask yourselves, “Am I built on the rock, or is it a sandy foundation? Have I received the Grace of God in truth, or am I under some fond delusion which is lulling my conscience for awhile, and stupefying my reason? I beg you by the blessed God, by death and by eternity—make sure work of it—see that you get to Christ and not to a fancied peace! See that you possess true and living faith in a living Savior and not a confidence based on mere excitement! I ask you that, because I believe the answer to that question may very much help you to get rid of these gray hairs.

Next, I beseech you *professors* who can honestly feel that you are converted, to remember what will be the result of decays in Divine Grace. You cannot always keep those decays inward—even if you could they would be mischievous. They will lose you the company of Christ! They will deprive

you of the joy of the Lord! They will mar your prevalence in prayer! They will take away from you much of your usefulness in outward life—and do you know what it will come to in the long run, unless Divine Grace prevents? Why, these decays will begin to tell upon your outward conduct and conversation!

Say not, “I shall never be an open sinner.” Little do you know what you will be! That lip which vows today, “I will never deny Him,” may yet deny Christ with oaths and curses. Who are you that you should be better than Peter? Do not you start at the thought of it? Then start at the sight of these gray hairs! Amend, I pray you, and return to God with grieving and repentance, to think you should already have so much departed from Him—or else your last end may be worse than the first!

I recommend to every *Believer* here a daily self-examination. Pythagoras commanded his disciples three times every night, before they went to sleep, to go over the errors of the day that they might see them and avoid them in the future. Repentance is a blessed Grace. Mr. Rowland Hill used to say it was one of his regrets that he could not take repentance into Heaven with him. It is so blessed a thing to weep under a sense of sin, that we may say in the words of our hymn writer—

**“Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but You.
And then I would, O that I might,
A constant weeper be.”**

Look at the great heinousness of the sin of departing from God! See sin in its true deformity and blackness, and repent of it!

Then with repentance join much supplication, especially supplication for the power of the Holy Spirit to be shed abroad in you. I do feel, Brothers and Sisters, as if few of us have ever entered into the power of religion. We are living in the *weakness* of it. We live on the outskirts! We have not pierced into the metropolitan city of intense vital godliness. We are like those poor Eskimos far away at the poles. O that we could reach the tropics of true godliness where the sun of Divine Grace should be vertical all the day long, and its Divine heat should bring forth in our hearts all the tropical luxuriance of which renewed nature can be capable! We need to yield sweet fruits for Christ, delicious flowers and all that human nature can produce when sanctified by the blessed Spirit! Oh, by supplication, seek to get more power from on high that you may get rid of these gray hairs!

Brethren, to our supplications let us add renewed faith. Let us go to Jesus as we went at the first. Living waters from that sacred well we may draw—waters which shall refresh us still! Let us go with the penitent’s cry, beating on our breast because of our wanderings, and ask for restoration and a fresh cleansing in the fountain which Jesus filled! Jesus is not slow to be entreated. He will bind up that which is broken. He will restore that which has gone astray. And then to this prayer of faith, let us add a daily watchful *activity*. Let us guard ourselves that we slide not down the glassy precipice of declension. Let us keep our feet with all diligence and cry to the great Keeper who alone can hold us up and make us safe.

And let us see to it, Brothers and Sisters, that we are not deluded into the idea that we can get to Heaven safely and yet live at a distance from God—that so long as we are just saved, it will suffice. I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, rise! Let your motto be, “Superior,” higher yet! Rise like eagles that God has trained to face the sun! Rise like angels whose abode is Heaven! Get up! Get up, you lingerers in the valley! Ascend to clearer atmospheres, to do yet better service for your God! I long heavily for more Divine Grace to serve my Master, and more consecration to His service! And I wish the like for all of you. Let none of us be content to tarry down below in the marshland of the poor poverty-stricken religion of this present day—but let us climb the high mountains where the sun of God’s Grace is shining brightest—and stand there enjoying communion with Him, leaving the world.

So shall gray hairs vanish, and so shall we, like the eagle, renew our youth. Beloved, there is much that may strike the ungodly in this sermon as well as the Believer—and I pray God to make it a two-edged sword to wound and to heal both. “Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” There is the Gospel! Receive it and live in the power of it! Amen.

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

A SILLY DOVE

NO. 2984

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.

“Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart.”
Hosea 7:11.

THE race of Ephraim is not extinct. Men are to this very day very much like what they were in the days of the Prophets. The same rebukes are still suitable, as well as the same comforts. As man has altered very little, if at all, in his outward bodily conformation, so has he not varied in the inner constitution—he is much the same today as he was in the time of Hosea. In this congregation, in the midst of the city of London, we have too large a company of those who are “like a silly dove without heart.”

To proceed at once with the text, I want you to notice four things. First—a *saintly similitude*. Secondly—a *secret distinction*. Thirdly—a *severe description*. And lastly, a *serious consideration*.

I. Here we have A SAINTLY SIMILITUDE—“Ephraim is like a dove!”

The people are not compared here to the eagle that soars aloft and scents its prey from afar, nor to the vulture which delights to gorge itself with carrion. They are not likened to any foul and unclean bird which was put aside under the Law of God, but the very figure which is constantly chosen to set forth the beauty of holiness, to describe the Believer, and to picture the whole Church—no, that very emblem by which we set forth Him who is Holiness, itself, God the Holy Spirit—that same comparison to a dove is here used to describe those who were without heart. “Ephraim is like a dove”—it is a *saintly similitude*.

Let me remind you that in all congregations there are those who are *like* doves, but not Christ’s doves, who never build their nests in the clefts of the rock, in the bosom of the Savior. They are *like* doves—you can never tell them from genuine Believers and, *like* doves, they are *perfectly harmless*. They do no mischief to others in all their lives. Track them, if you will, you will never find them in the alehouse. They sing not the song of the drunkard. No man ever lost anything in business by them. Men may have their pockets picked in the streets, but never by them. Persons may go staggering home under a wound, but that wound never comes from their hands—there is no uncleanness in their heart and no slander on their tongue—they are amiable, admirable. We might almost hold them up for examples of propriety. Alas, alas, that we have only to look *within* to find that they are not what they seem!

Moreover, being like doves for harmlessness, *they are also like them for loving good company*. We find not the dove flying with a host of eagles, but it consorts with its own kind. Some of you are never happier than

when you are either in the Tabernacle or else in some of the classes formed by various members of the congregation. You also find such a pleasant excitement in the Prayer Meeting that you are not absent from it except when you are prevented by business. You love being where God's people go—their hymns are sweet to your ears. In their prayers you find some sort of comfort and in the ministry of the Word you take delight. You fly like a cloud and like doves to their windows, and it is a joy to us to see you do it. And yet it may be that although you know how to congregate like doves, you are simply "like a silly dove without heart."

Moreover, these persons are still more like the dove in that *they have the same meekness, apparently, as distinguishes the dove*. They hear as God's people hear and sit as His people sit. They are not skeptics. They never object to the exposition of the Doctrines to which they listen. They pick no holes in the preacher's coat—they have no particular fault to find either with the style or the matter of his discourse. They decorously frequent the House of God and behave themselves in a seemly manner when there. No, more than that, they seem with meekness to receive the Word, though they do not receive it as engrafted into their own hearts. They even receive it with joy when the Seed is scattered on them, but having no root in themselves, the good Seed comes to nothing. O my dear Hearers, it is a great subject for thanksgiving that so many of you are ready and willing to listen to the Word with deep and profound respect! But I do beseech you to remember that you may, in this, be like the dove, and yet, after all, you may be taken in the same net and destroyed with the same destruction as that which fell upon the Ephraimites who were "like a silly dove without heart!"

The dove, you know, is *a clean feeder*, and so we have many who get as far as that. They know the distinction between the precious and the vile—they will not feed on Law—they can only live on Grace. They have come to know the Doctrines of the Gospel and they feed on them—upon pure corn, well winnowed. You have only to bring in a little free will and straightway they know the chaff from the wheat and refuse to receive it! They cast it away as refuse metal which is of no value to them. But, while they have an orthodox head, they have a heterodox heart—while they know the Truth of God and feel it, yet it is still not the right kind of feeling—they have never so received it as to incorporate it into their very being. They have accepted it with the same sort of belief and in somewhat the same manner as Simon did in Samaria. But, after a while, when trouble and persecution shall come, and waxes too hot, they will turn aside.

But I have to add yet further that there are some of these persons who are like doves in another respect still more singular—as *a dove is molested by all sorts of birds of prey*, so these persons do, for a time, share the lot which befalls the people of God! Why, there are some who for the mere coming to the House of God, get nicknamed, "saints." They are not saints, but they have to bear the scoffing which is given to saints. And I know some who have turned out to be great sinners, who have, for a time, put up with much scoffing and rebuke for the sake of Christ! When pointed at in the street, it has been part of the manliness of their

character to acknowledge that they did frequent such a place of worship. Though their soul has never been stricken by the Divine Word, yet it has become so sweet in their ears that they are willing to bear some degree of reproach for the sake of it! I should not like to be compelled to say precisely wherein the saint is to be distinguished by outward signs, for really, the counterfeits nowadays are so much like the genuine that it needs the Wisdom of the Infallible God, Himself, to discern between the one and the other! We can have false faith, false repentance, false hope and false good works. We have all sorts of things—paint, varnish, tinsel—and we may so grain that a skillful eye will scarcely know whether it is the genuine wood or the artist's skill. There are many ways of preparing metals and sometimes the alloy seems to have in it, for some purpose, qualities which the unalloyed metal lacks. O Lord, the great Searcher of hearts, do search us lest we should have applied to us saintly names and pass the saintly reputation and character—and hold saintly offices—and after all be cast away with the rubbish over the wall and left to be consumed forever and ever! But, enough on that point.

II. I have now to call your attention to A SECRET DISTINCTION—“Ephraim is like a dove *without heart*.”

This implies *a lack of understanding*. The dove knows but little and experience scarcely teaches it anything. We may almost spread the snare in the flight of that bird and yet it will fly to it, it is so silly. It does not seem to possess, at least to the outward eye, the wits and sense of some others of the feathered tribe. It has little or no understanding. And oh, how many there are who are, spiritually, like the dove! They have no real knowledge of the Truth of God! They rest in the letter and think that is enough. I solemnly believe that there are those who have not the shadow of an idea of the meaning of the words which they hear every Sabbath in a form of prayer! They repeat those prayers without any appreciation of the sense of them. They would probably not notice if the words were put in any other way. Doubtless they would get as much good out of them if they were thrown together in wild disorder, as they do out of the beautiful and magnificent array in which they are marshaled! Many who come and hear the most simple Truths, go away and say, “It is a riddle to us. We cannot understand how people can sit and listen to that.” Either they condemn the preacher's words as trite or else as fanatical—they cannot understand them.

You may fetch a clodhopper and set before him the masterpiece of an eminent old painter and tell him, “That picture is worth sixty thousand pounds.” He looks, opens his mouth, starts again and says he can't make anything of it. He can't see where the money could go. He'd sooner have carts, and horses, and pigs, and cows, and sheep. Well, now, to some extent we might almost sympathize with him, but the high-art critics despise the man at once for having no soul above his clod. And it is just the same in spiritual things! Exhibit the glories of the Person of Christ and the matchless wisdom of the plan of salvation—that man can see nothing in it. “It is, no doubt, a very good and very proper thing.” He will attend to it and so on—and then he goes to church and thinks he is

pious, sits in his seat and goes through the routine—and then supposes he is reconciled to God! Oh, how many such silly doves we have fluttering in and out of our places of worship! As a quaint old preacher said, there were scarcely seats enough for the saints on account of the number of simpletons that came to listen!

But, again, they were silly doves without heart, because, lacking an understanding heart, *they also lacked a decided heart*. Sometimes, however, the dove would be slandered if we should use her as a metaphor in this respect. Have you not seen the dove when, from afar, with her quick eyes she has seen her cot, fly straight away, over miles of sea and land, straight to her beloved home? There, she could not be used as a metaphor of the ungodly—but of a child of Jesus who thus flies to Him over the wild waves of sin. But, perhaps, you have seen the dove as first she rises in the air and then flies round and round. She deliberates in order to find out which is the right direction and, when she has made up her mind, away she flies straight as an arrow to the goal. But, while she is fluttering about, she is an apt emblem of some men. They are undecided whether for God or Baal. They halt, to use Elijah's figure, between two opinions. "How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." On Sundays, they go to church, but on Mondays, they put off their religious habits—the weather is too rough, or something else prevents them from going to the Prayer Meeting. On Sunday, they say—

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

but, on Monday or Tuesday, the sound of the wheels in the street and the noise of them that buy and sell put the music of Jerusalem out of their ears and they would gladly go back to the world again! Ah, they are silly doves without understanding and without decision!

No, there are some who may be said to have a sort of decision for a time, but they are like the dove in that *they are without resolution*. The doves seeks to fly in one direction. Somebody claps his hands and she changes in a moment. Or else he sprinkles a handful of barley on the ground and, though she was flying yonder, she is over here again! How many persons there are of that kind, setting their faces to Zion, intending to join the church—perhaps they have seen the elders and the pastor and been accepted—but, after a little time, they say, "Well, they did not know all about it. There are more frightful things than they dreamt of in it!" Like Pliable, they would go to Heaven, but they get into the Slough of Despond and there is strange stuff there that gets into the ears and mouth—and so they get out on the side nearest home and tell Christian he may have the brave country all to himself, for they don't like the miry places on the way. Or, it may be that some old companion comes up from the country and he will treat them to some place of amusement. Or, perhaps, it may be that there is a prospect of gain to be got in some branch of business that is not quite as honest as it might be. But does not the money count as well? Isn't it as good to spend? Will not other men think it worth twenty shillings to the pound, however it may have

been gained? These people who seemed so true and warm-hearted are like the silly dove without resolution—and fly away again to their old haunts and become just what they used to be.

So likewise there are many, like a dove, *without bold hearts*. They never turn upon a persecutor. They never stood in the gap with Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, holding the sword in their hand. They cannot open their mouth to speak for Jesus, but they run away when they ought to stand out like a lion against their foes. They never give a reason for the hope that is in them. We have plenty of Baptist churches educating cowards by the score! They never come out before the whole church—that would be too trying for their nerves! They are never expected to come out boldly on the Lord's side. Too often, Baptism is administered somewhere in a corner, when as few as possible are present and, in that way, where we ought to have lion-like men, we breed those who hide their principles and are ready to amalgamate with any sect of people so long as they can but bear the name of Christians! I would to God, dear Friends, we had bolder men for our Lord and Master! Be as full of love as you can, but take care that you mix iron with your constitution! Silly are the doves that have no bold heart for God. The day will come when only the bold heart shall win, for the fearful and unbelieving are to have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone!

Too many, also, there are like a silly dove, in that they *have a powerless heart*. If you visit a great factory where there is a large engine, you will notice that the amount of power used in the factory is proportionate to the capacity of the steam-engine. If that should work but feebly, then the wheels cannot revolve beyond a proportionate rate—and every part soon discovers that there is some lack of motive force. Now, man's heart is the great steam-engine of his whole being—and if he has a heart that palpitates with swift strokes, it will put his whole nature in motion and that man will be mighty for his Lord and Master! But if he has a little, insignificant heart that never did glow, and never did burn, and never did know anything about the warmth, life, heat, power and benediction of God's Love, then his will fritter away his time, knowing the right and doing the wrong, loving in some sort the thing that is beautiful, but still following that which is deformed, giving his name to God and giving what little strength he has to the other side! Brothers and Sisters, I would to God there were not so many in all our communities that have but a pigeon's heart, or a dove's heart, or no heart at all!

The root of the master lies here—*these Ephraimites have not renewed hearts* and so they fail. Verily, verily, it is true to this hour, as in Jesus' day, "except a man be born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Many strive to see it in their own way, but, until the effectual Grace of God comes down to turn their hearts from the great and extraordinary confidence which their proud flesh has in their own works, they never will see, they never *can* see, the Kingdom of God! How many like Ephraim, then, have the heart altogether wrong because it is not renewed? Therefore it has none of those qualifications which tend to make the man what he should be.

III. With great brevity, we notice, in the third place, A SEVERE DESCRIPTION—“Ephraim is like a *silly* dove.”

It is a fine word, that word, “*silly*.” Hardly do I know another that is so eminently descriptive. There may be some sort of dignity in being a fool—but to be *silly*—to attract no attention except ridicule—is so utterly contemptible that I do not know how a more sarcastic epithet could be applied!

“Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart.” And why silly? Why, *it is silly, of course, to profess to be a dove at all, unless a dove at heart!* Silly of you to enslave yourselves with the customs of a country of which you are not a citizen—to bind yourselves with the rules of a family of which you are not a member! We find men, when they go to another country, if there is a conscription there, only too willing to plead their own nationality in order to escape it! And yet we have persons who will serve in the Christian conscription, who give as God’s people give and outwardly do what God’s people do—and yet they are not of the godly nation, but are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel! Is not this silly—to take the irksome toil and not to get the joy and the benefit of it? You are silly to go and work in the vineyard, though you have never eaten of the clusters, and never can unless your heart is right in the sight of God.

Isn’t it silly, then, to profess to be a dove at all, and yet not to be a dove? Isn’t it silly, again, to think you can pass muster when your heart is wrong—to fancy that if you go with the crowd, you shall enter Heaven without being seen? Do you think to deceive Omniscience? Do you think Infallible Wisdom will not discern you? Do you think to enter Heaven while your soul is estranged from God? Then, indeed, you are worse than a fool! You are “silly” to think such a thing! How can you thus hope to deceive your God? What is more silly than to play fast and loose in this way—first, to sing the song of Zion, and then the song of lasciviousness! There is something dignified even in the devil, himself—there is something awful about the grandeur of his wickedness because he is consistent in it! But there is nothing of that consistency in you because you are here and there, everywhere and nowhere—everything by turns, and nothing long.

Some of you are so *silly as to hasten your own condemnation*. You know that to be without God and without Christ will ruin you, and yet you do that which keeps you from going to Christ! You hug the sins that prevent your laying hold on Him and still dandle upon your knee the lusts which you know will shut the gates of Heaven against you! Like Ephraim, you are silly enough to trust in that which will be your ruin. Some of you rest upon good works, or hope to be saved by good feelings. The two powers which had oppressed Ephraim—Egypt and Assyria—were still the powers in which he trusted. Do not imitate his folly by trusting to that which will ruin you!

You are silly, again, because *when there is so much danger, you do not fly to the place of shelter*. O silly dove, when the hawk is abroad, not to seek the clefts of the rock to hide yourself! And how silly are some of you! Day after day, year after year, Satan is hawking after you! The great fowler is seeking your destruction, but the wounds of Christ are open to

you and the invitation of the Gospel is freely given to you—and yet, you are so silly that though you know better, you prefer the pleasures of the day to the joys of eternity! Yet I know not that you do prefer them, only somehow or other you are too silly to prove your preference and go on, like a child that is playing on the hole of the cockatrice, making mirth over your damnation—too silly to make up your minds to choose either Heaven or Hell! I know there are some such people in this house—would God that the arrow might find out the right persons, but, too often, these doves are so silly, in another respect, that they will not let the appeal of the Gospel come home to them. They say, “it cannot be for me, for I go to Mr. A’s or Mr. B’s class! It cannot be for me, for I go to the Prayer Meeting, I contribute to the College and every good work!” Yet all the while it means just you who act upon your own whims, but not for God, who give God anything but your heart, who are ready to make a sacrifice of all, except that you refuse that which He asks of you! “My son, give Me your heart.” It was considered to be a sign of great calamity when the Roman prophet slew a bull and found no heart—and it is the worst of all calamities when a man has no heart to give to God! “This people draws near unto Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me,” is one of the complaints against Israel of old, and one of the sins which made the Prophets weep and caused Jerusalem to be plowed like a field.

IV. I close with just a few words upon the fourth point, and that is, A SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. There are one or two things I would say solemnly, softly and hopefully. Oh, that they may stick in the memory and the conscience of many of you!

Those of you, my Hearers, who have been long sitting in this Tabernacle—some of you ever since it was built and before then in other places under our ministry—yet are just the same as you used to be, ought to recollect how sadly we look on those who are not saved. It is no rare thing to find the attendant of the sanctuary an unbeliever. It is a common thing to find the child of converted parents, the lad educated at the Sunday school, the man who has always had a seat in God’s House, still having no hope and without God in the world. Think of that! Be not deceived—the Gospel will harden such people as you are! Speaking after the manner of men, (for with God, all things are possible, and a Sovereign God does as He wills), it does seem less and less probable that you ever should be called by Grace after you have sat and listened to the Word so long. The voice that once startled you now soothes you! The manner that once attracted the eyes, and sometimes seemed to touch the heart, fails to do either! And the very Truths of God that once went over your heads like a crash of thunder has so little force in them now that you even sleep under the sound of them! Think of that, you who are like a silly dove without heart!

Remember, too, that *some of the vilest sinners that have ever lived have been manufactured out of this raw material.* Some of the worst men were once, apparently, meek-hearted hearers of the Word, but they sat under the preaching of the Gospel till they grew ripe enough to deny God

and curse Him. The unsanctified hearing of the Gospel has sometimes produced more gigantic specimens of sin than the deaf ear of the adder. Beware, my Hearer! I know that you will say with Hazael, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Yes, there is dog and devil enough in you unless you have been changed by Grace, to do that thing and 20 other things that you have never dreamt of yet! Think what multitudes of souls in Hell there are like you—silly doves without hearts! Many of the population of that place of wailing once heard the Gospel, heard it with gladness and appeared to receive it for a time—but they had no root, and so the impression withered away. They never had been called effectually by Grace and never had been renewed in heart, although they had all the outward semblance of holiness! They are gone! Even now, your soul may listen to their groans and moans, the lesson of all which would be, "Make your calling and election sure, and be not satisfied with the name to live while you are dead."

May the Spirit of the living God stir you up to this, for, if not, I have one more consideration to urge upon you. *Remember how soon you may be in Hell.* And they who go there, if they have been such as you are, go there with a vengeance. To go from under the shadow of the pulpit to the Pit is terrible. To go from the Communion Cup, to drink the cup of devils—from the song of saints to the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth of lost souls—from all the hallowed joys of God's Sabbath, of God's House and of His Word, down to the unutterable infamy of spirits that have no love of God, but curse Him day and night—my Hearers, that may be your lot within an hour, a week, a year! It matters not what the period may be, for if it ever is your lot, the time past shall seem to have been but the twinkling of an eye for its joy, though it may appear to you to have been ages for the awful responsibility which the day of mercy will have entailed upon you. Repent and be baptized, everyone of you!" As Peter said, so say I! If you have not as yet received Christ, lay hold on eternal life and oh, that the Spirit of the living God, while I preach the Word generally, may apply it particularly, finding out His own chosen and gathering them out of the ruins of the Fall, that they may be jewels in the crown of the Redeemer! The Lord make us doves, but God forbid that we should be "silly doves without heart."

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 88:10-61; 1 PETER 4:1-13.**

The story of how the children of Israel behaved themselves towards their gracious God.

Psalm 88:10-16. *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. 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 a heap. In the daytime also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He clave 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. In such a scene of miracles, surrounded by such prodigies of goodness, what did they do?

17. *And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking the most High in the wilderness.* What a fierce fire must sin be that it is even fed by the rivers of God's goodness and burns by means of that which ought to have quenched every spark of it! Yet there is such a fire as that raging in our hearts and even God's mercies will make us more sinful unless His abounding Grace comes with them to teach us how to use them rightly.

18. *And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.* Not for their needs, but "for their lust." It is a dreadful thing when prayer, itself, is prostituted and the Mercy Seat becomes a place for the expression of sinful desires which ought never to have been in our hearts. It was so, however, with these children of Israel.

19. *Yes, they spoke against God.* As you read that "they spoke against God," you naturally suppose that they uttered some blasphemy, or some denial of His Deity. Listen and learn!

19. *They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* That is speaking against Him—to speak unbelievably—to speak in a questioning way concerning His power. I am afraid that there are very few of us who can plead innocence on this score.

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?* These things, which they lusted after, they also turned into subjects for unbelief. And they even misused the miracle which they dared not deny.

21, 22. *Therefore the LORD heard this, and was angry: 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.* This was the provoking sin. The Lord would not endure such wanton and wicked unbelief as this. After He had turned the rocks into rivers, could He not turn the stones into bread, and the dust of the desert into flesh if He chose to do so?

23-32. *Though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of Heaven, and had 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 full. 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; they were not estranged from their lust. 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. For all this they still sinned. Mercy failed to move them, and judgment failed too. The right hand of God's gifts and the left hand of His chastisement were equally ignored.*

32-34. *And believed not for His wondrous works. Therefore their days did He consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and inquired early after God.*

Perhaps some of them fought Him even while they were dying and the remnant that survived trembled and, “returned and inquired early after God.”

35, 36. *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. Oh, this is terrible! One would have thought that they would have been sincere when they were broken down with sorrow, but it was not so. And I fear that the kind of religion which has to be whipped into us is never good for much. It must have in it the element of spontaneity if it is to be sincere. It was not so with these people.*

37-41. *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 He turned 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 often 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. In their unbelieving imagination, they circumscribed His power. They thought that He could do something, but not everything. They believed Him one day and doubted Him the next.*

42-45. *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. All these judgments fell upon their enemies, but they failed to remember them.*

46-56. *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 the 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 first-born in Egypt, the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: but made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like 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. Oh, these terrible “yets”! Though God was faithful to the end and kept His Covenant, and brought them into the land which He swore to their fathers that He would give them, yet they tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not His testimonies.”*

57-61. *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 hand.

1 Peter 4:1. *Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for He that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.* Brethren, we have a Savior who suffered for us. As the Head was, such must the members expect to be. Let us, then, be resolutely determined that, suffer as we may, we will never turn aside from our Lord, for, inasmuch as we suffered in Him, yes, and died in Him, we ought to reckon that we are henceforth dead to sin and that we have ceased from it, and can no longer be drawn into it. "He that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin."

2. *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.* The doctrine of Substitution is the strongest possible argument for holiness. You lived in sin once, but Christ died for your sin, so you must reckon that, in Him, you died to sin, seeing that He died in your place. And the argument is that, henceforth, your life is to be a life in Him, a life of holiness, to the praise and glory of God.

3. *For the time past of our life may suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles.* Suffice? O Brothers and Sisters, let it do much more than that! Let it make us cry, "Would God that we had never worked the will of the Gentiles at all!" Some young people foolishly say that they must have a little space in which they can "see life." Ah, those of you who have been converted in later years regret that you ever saw what men call, "life," which is but the alias for corruption and death! "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles."

3, 4. *When we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excesses of wine, revellings, banquets and abominable idolatries. Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.* What a strange world this world is! It speaks evil of men because they will not do evil! Yet it has always been so. The men, "of whom the world was not worthy," have been the very people of whom worldlings have said, "Away with such fellows from the earth! It is not fit that they should live." The world's verdict concerning Christians is of little value.

5, 6. *Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.* This is a very difficult passage to expound, but I suppose the meaning is that the Gospel was preached to those departed saints who had been called to die for Christ's sake and that it was preached to them for this very reason, that while they were judged by wicked men, and were by them condemned to die, they still live a far more glorious life than they lived here, because they were thus enabled, by their martyr death, to consummate their consecration to God.

7, 8. *But the end of all things is at hand; be you therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.* It covers them sometimes by not seeing them, for, where there is much love, we are blind to many faults which, otherwise we might see. We do not exercise the sharpness of criticism which malice would be sure to exercise. Besides that, when love applies herself to prayer, and when, in addition to prayer, she kindly gives admonition to a beloved friend, it often happens that true Christian love does really prevent a multitude of sins. The Apostle does not mean that by loving another person I shall cover my own sin; nor does he mean that the exercise of charity, in the common acceptation of that word, can cover my sin! But if I have much love to others, I may be the instrument, in the hand of God, for covering many of their sins in one or other of the senses I have mentioned.

9, 10. *Use hospitality, one to another, without grudging. As every man has received a gift, even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God.* Whatever “the gift” is, whether it be money, or talent, or Divine Grace, “even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God.” God gives much to you that you may give it to others—it is only meant to run through you as through a pipe. You are a steward and if a steward should receive his lord’s goods, and keep them for himself, he would be an unfaithful steward. Child of God, see to it that you faithfully discharge your responsibility as one of the “good stewards of the manifold Grace of God.”

11-13. *If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man ministers, let him do it as of the ability which God gives: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad, also, with exceeding joy.* If you do not share in Christ’s humiliation, how can you expect to share in His exaltation? But if worldlings begin to rebuke and reproach you, take it for granted that they can discern something of Christ in you. Dogs do not usually bark at those who live in the same village with them—it is only at strangers that they bark. And when ribald tongues are lifted up against you, you have reason to hope that you are a stranger and a foreigner to the citizens of this world, for they love their own, as our Savior reminded His disciples, “If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you”

—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 MINISTER'S TRUMPET BLAST AND CHURCH MEMBER'S WARNING NO. 2772

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 30, 1902.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1859-1860.**

***“Set the trumpet to your mouth. He shall come as an eagle against
the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed My
Covenant, and trespassed against My Law. Israel shall
cry unto Me, My God, we know You!”
Hosea 8:1, 2.***

WE do not use instrumental music in the worship of God because we consider that it would be a violation of the simplicity of our worship. We think it far better to hear the voices of Christian men and women than all the sounds which can be made by instruments. Yet I am sure there is no Christian here who would object to a minister who can play well upon an instrument and, indeed, a minister is good for nothing if he does not know how, spiritually, to give forth instrumental music! A true minister of Christ should know how to blow the ram's horn so that the walls of Jericho may be made to tremble and fall. He should understand how to play the harp, so that when any of you are disquieted, he may be to you as David was to Saul, and may drive away the evil spirits that trouble you. He should be able, also, to play upon the timbrel, and to lead you forth, sometimes, in the sacred song of joy and thanksgiving. He should be able to go forth like Miriam and cry aloud to you, and ask you to follow him while he says, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.”

His sermons should often seem to you to fulfill that exhortation of David, “Praise you the Lord. Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals.” The minister of the Gospel should also understand how to blow the silver trumpet to proclaim that the year of jubilee is come and that the ransomed debtors may once more receive their lost inheritance. And there is one instrument upon which he should be well skilled and which he should often use, namely, the trumpet. I do not mean the silver trumpet, but the war trumpet—that clear, shrill-sounding instrument that gives the certain sound whereby men prepare themselves for the battle.

I have to use that trumpet tonight and, in explaining my text, I will speak of several things that are hinted at here. First, there *is a command to the Gospel minister*—"Set the trumpet to your mouth." There is, secondly, *the particular reason for this command*, in order that he may warn God's people—"Because they have transgressed My Covenant, and trespassed against My Law." Then, thirdly, there *is another special reason appended*, because God was about to execute judgment upon these sinners—"He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord." In the second verse we find our fourth point—*the blessed result of the blowing of this trumpet*—"Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!"

I. First, then, here is A COMMAND TO THE GOSPEL MINISTER—"Set the trumpet to your mouth." The Hebrew has it, "Set the trumpet to the roof of your mouth." Set it to your mouth. Keep it there—do not put it up sometimes and then take it down again—but have it always in readiness, so as to sound the note of alarm. Set it to the roof of your mouth—blow with all your might and let men hear that the alarm comes not merely from your lips, but from within your mouth—from your very heart! With such earnestness shall you sound the trumpet of warning.

What is meant by the minister setting the trumpet to his mouth? I think just this. In the first place, that when the minister is dealing with the souls of men, the tone which he uses should be very decisive. He should not set some little Jew's harp to his mouth, so that people hardly know whether he is making a noise or not—he should blow a trumpet and produce a decisive sound so that men may know what sin is reprobated—what virtue is commended. They should never have to ask themselves, "What does the minister mean? Does he really intend to condemn sin, or does he palliate it?" The declaration should be decisive, as the sound of the war trumpet is. When men hear that trumpet sounded in the East, they do not ask themselves, "Does that mean dancing? Is that the sound of them that make merry?" But they say at once, "That means war! We are sure it does. Let us prepare ourselves for the battle." So should it be with the message of God's servant. He has not to say, "If this," or, "if that," but to set the trumpet of Gospel warning to the roof of his mouth and give out a note that none can mistake.

For the text means not only a decisive sound, but a clear sound. Of all sounds, perhaps that of the trumpet is the clearest and so should it be with the message of Christ's servant. It should not be indistinct and full of hard words that cannot be understood. It should not be a piece of music, the tune of which is so difficult that no man can possibly follow it or even know what is meant by it, but it should be the one, two, three notes of, "Awake! Awake you sleepers! What are you doing?" Or this yet more solemn note, "Awake, you dead, and come to judgment!" "Prepare to meet your God!" There should be something so clear that the moment the minister's statement is heard, those who are willing to understand it should have no difficulty in knowing its meaning.

Again, in setting the trumpet to his mouth, the minister should not only give a decisive and clear testimony in all his ministrations, but it should also be a loud and startling testimony! You know some preachers who send their congregations to sleep—not only because of their monotonous style of address, but because their matter, itself, is sleepy! The people seem to say, “Well, if that is all the man has to talk about, we may as well be asleep as awake.” Sometimes they preach the doctrines which teach men to sit still and do nothing. And then the people say, “Well, let us sit still and do nothing—only let us sleep by the way and enjoy ourselves.” There are too many droning preachers that Satan employs to rock the cradle of immortal souls while he is standing by waiting till the time shall come for him to carry them off. “You play,” says Satan to the minister, “and I will dance to them. And between the two of us, we will lead them to Hell.”

There will be a fearful amount of blood upon the skirts of a man whose ministry has startled nobody. When a trumpet is blown in a besieged city, there are many persons with weak nerves who are quite frightened and many children, too, and many timid souls that are greatly alarmed. And someone might come to the trumpeter and say, “Why did you sound the clarion? Weak women are made to tremble.” “Yes,” he says, “but better that weak minds should be made to tremble than that stout-hearted ones should perish! It is better these should be alarmed, now, than go quietly on until the enemy infests the city and puts them all to the sword.” A startling time is often to come to the minister—he is not to be content to keep to ordinary subjects and deal with them in an ordinary manner. He must go out with a, “Thus says the Lord” and, like a new Elijah, he must speak with fire from Heaven hanging on his lips and the thunders of God rolling around his brow! He will never fully discharge his office if he is always playing on the harp with its soft dulcet notes—he must take down the war trumpet and sound an alarm—that all men may be warned!

I think I may add that *when the minister of Christ blows this trumpet aright, it is one that is pretty sure to be heard further than he, himself, is seen.* Men do not always see a trumpeter when they hear the sound of his trumpet—and let the minister of Christ fearlessly proclaim his Master's Word and his line shall go out through all the earth. Let him be honest and faithful, and he need not fear that he shall lack hearers. That trumpet sound, it may be, shall be heard all over England—across the Channel shall it be heard upon the Continent—it shall go beyond the Alleghenies and make the Rocky Mountains echo with the sound! Let him but preach the whole Gospel and set the trumpet to the roof of his mouth, and all the world shall hear or, at least, if they hear it not, he shall have performed his duty—but many will hear it, for God will always find ears willing to listen to the sound that comes from an honest mouth!

II. “Set the trumpet to your mouth.” That is the command to the Gospel minister and I mean to obey it while I deal with the second head, THE

PARTICULAR REASON ASSIGNED FOR IT. The reason why Hosea was to become a trumpeter at this particular time was this—the children of Israel had broken God's Covenant—they had gone astray and transgressed His Law. Therefore God was angry with them and was about to smite them with sore judgments. Before, however, He smote them, He warned them. God does not usually give a word and a blow, but He gives a word and another word, and another word and then yet another word and, after all that, there comes the blow! He warns before He strikes. The axe of God, like the axe of the Roman dictator, is bound up in a bundle of rods—He smites first with the rod and if that suffices not, then He draws out the axe and smites with it—and its strokes are enough to destroy the soul.

Now, with regard to this Church—God, I think, has put it into my heart to speak to you about your transgressions and your sins. And, in this matter, the trumpeter includes himself—and while he addresses the Church and congregation, he intends, thereby, not to exempt a single person unless there is one, indeed, who can claim exemption. Well, my Brothers and Sisters, to begin with ourselves—the members of this Church—is there no good reason that the minister should always have the trumpet to his mouth to warn us of our particular sins? God has blessed us very greatly as a people. We have lived in the sunshine of His Countenance. He has been pleased to give us success in our labors beyond our most sanguine anticipations. Whatever way we turn our hands, God seems to prosper us—if not in our worldly business, yet certainly in our business for Him. There is nothing that I am aware of which this Church has undertaken but God has been pleased to give us success in it. But have we not, with all this blessing, very great sins to confess before God?

When I sit down and think of myself, I am, to my own self, a wonder and a marvel that God has not cast me off—that He has not said to me, “I will no more speak My Word through you. I will leave you to yourself. You shall be like Samson when his hair was gone.” And, oh, if He should say that to any of us, where should we be? Brothers and Sisters in the Church, may you not, personally and collectively, cover your faces and mourn and weep by reason of your own private and individual sins? Are you perfect? Are you quite clear of guilt? Are your garments unspotted and unsullied? God forbid that you should say they are, for this were, indeed, to vaunt yourselves in pride! No, every man may weep apart, and his wife apart, and his children apart, for, with us, even with us, there are sins against the Lord our God! I sometimes fear lest, as a people, we should be tempted to pride. Lest we should conceive that the success with which God favors us is owing to something in ourselves—lest we should begin to say, “We are the men, and wisdom shall die with us.” We stand in a position in which God has made us eminent by His blessing, but let us take heed lest, by exalting ourselves, we become like Capernaum, once lifted to Heaven, but afterwards brought down to Hell!

There have been many churches which God has left because of their sin. Riding through the country, we can see, every now and then, a chapel, and when we enquire how the cause prospers, we are told that it is in the worst position possible. "But was it always so?" "No," it is said, "there was once a servant of God there and the people gathered round him—and they walked well for a time and there were many conversions." But, alas, they fell into sin, and God left them—and there is "Ichabod" written on every piece of mortar in the walls! If you could see it, there is the great "Tekel" of Belshazzar put upon the pulpit and upon the pew! Pastor and people alike have been weighed in the balances and they have been found lacking! Shall it be so with us as a Church? Shall we be found lacking in the time of testing?

Shall I tell you—and here I speak without the slightest tone of severity—one thing in which some of our friends are lacking? *A conscientious regard to social prayer.* There are some who are always at the meetings for prayer, but I cannot conceal from myself the fact that there are many whose faces I never see there. Or, if I see them once a year, it is indeed a treat. I doubt not but that their business is so urgent that they could not constantly attend, but then I know there are others, who regularly attend, who have business that seems to me to be equally as urgent and I think these absentees might come *sometimes*, at any rate. Now, if we begin by some of us neglecting the meetings for prayer, and if our neglect should increase, we shall then be on the high road to the loss of God's favor and to the prevention of all future prosperity!

Besides, may I not also say that *there are some, I fear, in the Church, who have lost their first love?* It is remarkable to me that there are so few in this church who have turned out to be deceivers. Sorrowful are the meetings when we have to excommunicate, here and there, one. But out of so vast a number we have great reason to thank God that they are comparatively few. But, oh, may there not be many among us who, if they cannot be made amenable to church discipline, are nevertheless rotten at the core? Have we not some that are like trees, fair on the outside, but inwardly their hearts are but fit to be tinder for the devil's tinderbox? Have we not too many among us who are secretly living in sin, whose practice in trade would not bear strict investigation, but who, nevertheless, cannot be laid hold of because there is no gross vice, no open, public and flagrant sin? And, oh, Brothers and Sisters, if these things increase, if this leprosy breaks out in the garments, it will spread and God will come to abhor His own inheritance and will say of this Church, "I will leave this place—I will abide here no longer—I will find a people who shall be more faithful to My Word, who shall live more true to the promises and vows which they have made."

I will set the trumpet to my mouth tonight, on behalf of every member of the Church, and on behalf of myself, also. O Brothers and Sisters, the time past should suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles! Let us seek Divine Grace that we may be purged from all our former conversa-

tion in the days of our flesh, that we may come out from the world, that we may be more and more separate from it, that there may be a greater distinction between us and the ungodly sons of men, that we may prove to be what we profess to be—Israelites, indeed, in whom is no guile! O Christian Church, if you shall fall from your integrity, you will soon fall from your prosperity! Suspend prayer and you will suspend success! Break down our hedges, let in the hypocrites—or let them even come in by stealth—and the wild boar out of the forest will soon waste this Church! And where are the goodly clusters now? Where are the grapes of Eschol and where are the winepresses gushing with new wine? Famine has devastated the land! Black death has covered all the vineyards and the vines lament and are burned up with fire. If God forsakes us—and He will do so if we turn aside from Him as a Church—then this must be the result. The lamentation that I have taken up must be the lamentation of this Church unless God shall keep us true to Him in prayer, diligence and holiness. God does not cast away His people forever, but He often casts away a separate Church from its degree of usefulness. He does not put out His lamps, but He does let them burn very low, indeed, so that there is scarcely anything but a smoking wick left. May it never be so with us!

Having set the trumpet to my mouth for the members of the Church, I blow another blast of it to every one of you. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in the days of Jesus, there was found a Judas in the midst of His twelve Apostles. “I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.” Is there not reason to fear that among the many hundreds in this Church there are to be found some who are like Judas? O traitor, if you are still in the ranks, tremble to hear your doom! O you deceiver, the day is coming when judgment must begin at the house of God! Though chaff is mingled with the wheat, the rushing, mighty wind is rising now! I hear it—I hear it in the distance and soon it will come and winnow this Church and then, where will you be? Where will you be when Christ shall take His fan in His hand and thoroughly purge His floor? Do not think, my dear Friends, members of the Church, that you will be saved if you are out of Christ because you are members of the Church. Remember what happened to Joab—he ran right into the tabernacle and caught hold of the horns of the altar. Solomon said to Benaiah, “Fetch him forth.” And Benaiah said, “Come forth from there,” and he said, “No, but I will die here.” And Benaiah told Solomon what he said—but did the king spare Joab because he had his hands on the horns of the altar? No! He said, “Go and slay him there,” and Benaiah thrust his sword through him even while he had his hands upon God’s own altar! So will it be with you. You may put your lips to the communion cup, you may come and sit round this table—you may be a deacon, you may even enter this pulpit as a preacher—but, unless your heart is right with God, even with your hands upon the horns of God’s altar, you must be damned! From the pulpit you must go to the Pit! You must descend from the table to

commune at the feast of fiends! Go from the general assembly and Church of the first-born, to the general assembly and congregation of the lost in Hell! I can blow my trumpet no louder than this to each one of you. Oh, hear it, hear it, hear it, Church members! Listen to it and regard it—and search and try yourselves, and see whether you are in Christ or not!

Yet one more blast from my trumpet and this is for those who are not members of the Church, but who constantly attend the ministry of the Gospel. O ungodly Hearers, the day is coming when you shall have no man to warn you, when you shall have no one to invite you to come to Christ! Sabbaths will not last forever. Eternity is drawing near and bears in its hand the stamp that must seal your doom. I remember a sermon of William Dawson's on Death—the three heads of which were, "First, Death is following after us. Secondly, he will certainly catch us. Thirdly, we don't know when." That third head is a very solemn one—we don't know when. And what if it should be tonight? Hear the blast of my trumpet—"Consider your ways!" "Prepare to meet your God!" "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still." "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

Sinner, while the lamp holds out to burn, turn to Christ and live! Otherwise know that when that lamp is quenched, God's mercy will be quenched, too, for you, and you will be cast away into the outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! Remember that ancient message, "He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon his own head." If all that is said is of no avail to you, then shall he that blew the trumpet be clear, but on your own head shall be your doom forever and ever!

I have to mourn because I cannot sound this trumpet as I should. Oh, that I had a voice powerful enough to find its way into the poor, dead, stony hearts of sinners dead in trespasses and sins! It were easy work to preach if we preached to none but the living in Zion, but to have to talk to hard stones that will not break, and to speak to icebergs that will not melt—that is a work that requires large faith and often depresses our spirit! Yet must we come back to it again, for the thought of eternity rises upon us. We see sinners plunging down to Hell in one awful stream! We see the grave glutted with their corpses and Hell swollen with their blood! We mark how every night sucks in its prey and how every day shuts its devouring jaws upon the helpless thousands of our race—and we cannot be still—especially when we have before us some who will go from these galleries and from these pews to help to feed the everlasting burnings!

Did I say there would be some such? I mean, "Except they repent, they shall *all* likewise perish." If we could but look any one man in the face and know that he would be in torment within a year, oh, what pity we should feel for him! We could scarcely rest under such a burden. I am quite sure I should not sleep tonight—I should lie tossing on my bed, cry-

ing to God for mercy on that poor man—and I would not stop a moment before I would go to him and tell him the way of salvation. Ah, but there is not only one, but scores, perhaps hundreds, in this place of worship who have no hope! They are prayerless men and women—those whose knees never bend in prayer before their Maker—hard-hearted people who have never trembled under conviction of sin, and who have never sought and never found Christ as their Savior. Ah, poor Friends, poor Friends, we may well weep for you, and sigh for you, and all the more because you will not weep and will not sigh for yourselves!

To be on the high road to Hell and yet to be trifling with eternal things—to be on the brink of Perdition and yet to be jesting at religion! To be nearing the everlasting burnings and yet to be breaking the Sabbath and treading the blood of Christ beneath your feet—oh, this is mad work! Bedlam has not within its walls a man more insane—a more mad, manacled wretch—than the man who knows that the wrath of God abides on him and yet makes merry and dances to the sound of his own funeral knell—who goes leaping to the gallows and, chanting a song, bows his neck to the death-block and the gleaming axe! O Spirit of God, it is Yours to wake the dead and Yours to change the heart! Do it, we pray You, for all the blasts of our trumpet cannot do it unless You take the work in hand.

III. Having gone through two parts of the text—the command to the minister and the reason found among his people—I shall next ask your attention to the third point, THE REASON WHY HOSEA SHOULD, AT THAT TIME, ESPECIALLY SET THE TRUMPET TO HIS MOUTH, NAMELY, THAT JUDGMENT WAS IMPENDING UPON THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL—“He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord.”

Different expositors have given various interpretations of this verse and applied it to the peculiar plague which was, at that time, about to fall upon the Israelite people. Some say it was one thing and some, another. I do not care to enter into these diverse interpretations—it is enough for me to believe that there is a visitation threatened here against the Church of God. What does it say? Look at the text again. “He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord.” But will the Lord let anything come against His own house? It cannot be so, surely! Ah, but it *is* so—and the emphatic name of God, Jehovah, is used, for you see the word, LORD, is in capitals—“He shall come as an eagle against the house of Jehovah.” If sin gets into God’s house, He will no more spare sin in His house than He will spare it in the devil’s house. God hates sin everywhere and if sin gets into His own Church, He will flog it out. It is of no use at all for this traitor to go and hide himself in the house of God’s children—the Lord will drag him out to execution, even though he creeps into our bedchambers! There shall be no sparing him! He may hide under the camel’s furniture, but every Rachel shall be made to stand up and God will turn out our bronze images and cast them away from us!

It seems, then, that a visitation is threatened against the Church of God—against God's own house. Notice the form of this visitation—"He shall come *as an eagle*." Now, an eagle comes in two ways. First, it comes *all of a sudden*. Poised high in the air, so far aloft that you cannot see it, it keeps its wings fluttering as birds of prey are known to do and, with its sharp eyes so powerful that at that tremendous height it can see the smallest fish in the water, it marks its prey and all of a sudden down it dashes, as if it had fallen from Heaven like a meteorite, or like the lightning flash! It is up there where we cannot see it and suddenly it swoops down and bears away its prey! Now, such is often God's visitation upon His Church—He comes suddenly, like an eagle, and chastens His children.

Besides, here is an allusion to the strong flight of the eagle. When the eagle once stretches his wings to fly, who can stop his wings? He bears up against the wind. He buffets the storm. He cuts through it as a ship sails through the billows or a fish swims through the sea! On, on, like an arrow from the bow, he shoots to his desired target. So shall God's judgments be to His Church—they shall come on His Church irresistibly—and there shall be no escape, there shall be no deliverance! The eagle shall come with such force that none shall stay his might!

How true this has been of the Church of Christ in many ages! As I have said before, God has never left His chosen people, but He has often left separate churches, when those churches have become mixed with the world. Look at the Seven Churches of Asia. It would be an interesting and an instructive journey for any of us to make, to go to Sardis and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to the other spots where there once were the Churches to which John the Divine wrote a part of the Book of Revelation. We would see that some of them have no inhabitants whatever—only the bittern and the owl, and the ruins of a long-past grandeur. In others a few huts, and Bedouin Arabs pasturing their flocks, with, perhaps, not a dozen Christians to be found within a circuit of a dozen miles! God has taken the candlestick out of its place and quenched His Light in darkness. Just so is it with the Church of Rome. What prosperity there was there once! Paul had, doubtless, a large number who used to gather together in his hired room to listen to him. And if Peter ever went to Rome, and he may have done so, he would, doubtless, have gathered a goodly band around him.

We have good evidence that there was a very large number of Christians there, for, in the catacombs under Rome, all along the corridors, many miles in length, there are inscriptions to the memory of Christians. You look on one and another, and there you see the name—one man with an anchor to show his hope, or another with a dove—and on most of them are these words, "He rests in peace," or, "She rests in peace." And there are thousands of these! The Church in the catacombs must have numbered a great many members, and there they flourished, down there in the darkness of the earth, worshipping God by candlelight when the

sun was shining above them and his brightest rays could never reach them in those gloomy caverns. That Church seems to have been a very eminent one—the inscriptions bear the proofs of the very highest and most spiritual forms of piety. And now, the mother of harlots sits upon her seven hills and the ancient candlestick is taken out of its place.

Again, to give you another picture, which will, perhaps, strike you still more forcibly, look at Germany. In the days of Luther it was the stronghold of the Gospel! You know how Luther used to preach the Word and what crowds gathered to hear that mighty thunderer, while in simple language he proclaimed the Truth of God and defied the Pope and the devil, too! Things are improving now, I hope, but it might have been said, some years ago, “How are the mighty fallen!” The Lutheran churches had become nearly all Unitarian or Rationalist. They had forsaken the fountain of living waters. They forgot the Lord who bought them and turned aside to damnable heresy. And why should it not be so here! Unless the Lord will continually preserve unto us a remnant, we will become like Sodom and be made like Gomorrah! That descent may come in an instant—the eagle may even now be watching in the air—and his swoop may be without any warning. There may come sudden destruction, as pain upon a woman in travail, and we may not escape!

As long as we walk with God, as long as we are true to the faith, as long as we labor for the salvation of souls, so long we are secure. But as surely as sin is permitted to spread among us—if the spirit of lukewarmness, of laxity of doctrine, of prayerlessness should creep in here, it will be all over with us. The Lord will say, “Let me go from there.” There will be heard, in this place, what was heard in the Temple just before the time of its destruction by Titus. It is said that there was heard within the veil a rushing of wind and the high priest who was officiating declared that he heard a Voice say, “Arise, let Us go from here.” That Voice has been heard in many places. I could point to chapels where that Voice must have been heard—houses of prayer where once there were crowds of hearers but which are now covered with dust and cobwebs, where scarcely anybody cares to enter—and where those who enter are cold, dead, dull and careless. Shall it ever be so with this Church? God forbid!

O God of Benjamin Keach, Your suffering servant! O God of Gill, Your servant who declared Your Truth in all its fullness! O God of the sainted Rippon, whom You have taken to Yourself—You who has been the God of this Church for, lo, these many years! You who has kept us beneath the shadow of Your wings and brought us into a position of high privileges and responsibilities—be You our God even until the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—and then forever and ever!

IV. I think I need not say any more with regard to this great and solemn reason why the trumpet is to be blown. Let me, in closing, just dwell for a minute or two upon THE VERY BEAUTIFUL AND BLESSED EFFECT OF THIS BLAST OF THE TRUMPET—“Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!”

In the Hebrew, this expression is very remarkable, indeed, it runs thus—"They shall cry unto Me, My God, we know you—Israel." I do not know whether you perceive the meaning of this expression. It is, perhaps, difficult for me to say it so as for you to perceive the pith of it. They say, "My God, we know You"—then, as if God did not know who they were, they say, "Israel." "My God, we know You—Israel." They mention their name and plead it before Him. Or else it may be, as another excellent translator says, that they thought perhaps the Lord would not remember them, but He would remember the man with whom He had made a Covenant, namely, Jacob, Israel, for they say in the Hebrew, "My God, we know You—Israel." Remember Israel. Think of him who wrestled with You and became a prevailing prince.

We will be content, however, to take the passage as it stands. "Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!" Can you sincerely utter that cry, Brothers and Sisters? If so, a blast of the trumpet will have had a blessed effect if you can say, "Lord, we know You!" What do you know about Him? There is one point in His Character I want you especially to remember. If you know God aright, you will know that He is a jealous God. That is one of the first things which He said when He spoke to His people in the wilderness, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." I do not know that we fully understand the meaning of that word, "jealous." You know what it means in common life—how, if there is one who has a right to another's love, if that person suspects that the other's heart is given away, there is jealousy. Well, now, there is jealousy in God's heart if His people give to others love that is due to Him. And do you know when we are most jealous? It is an object of utter indifference to me who certain people may love, because I have no affection for them—but if there is one on whom my whole heart is set, if that person's heart were given to someone else, I should feel jealousy.

Now, God is not jealous of sinners—He is jealous of saints, of His own people, especially the people He loves best. I remember that an old Divine says, "It is an awful thing to be one of God's favorites"—I have turned that over in my mind many times and shuddered at the thought—"for," he says, "God does not deal with all His children on precisely the same rule. There are some of His people whom He makes more His favorite's than others. He takes them out and makes them His eminent servants, puts them in the first rank of the battle, and makes them very useful and very serviceable. He is more jealous of them than He is of any others. He is jealous of all His children, but especially of those children upon whom He has bestowed most of His favors."

You remember the story of the poor king of England? When there had been a rebellion against him and he had put it down, He promised that he would give pardon to all who were concerned in it. He had brought to him the list which contained the names of those whom he was to pardon. He read the name of his son, Richard, and he wept—"Is Richard a rebel?" He read the name of his son, Henry, and he wept again—"Is he a rebel?"

But he had one favorite son, his son, John, and he saw in the midst of the paper the name of his son John as one whom he had to forgive. He forgave him, but it broke his heart and he died. The more favor there is, the more jealousy there will be. Now, as a Church, we may truly say, not in pride, but in thankfulness, that God has been very gracious to us. He has distinguished us by His Grace. He has caused our candle to shine brightly. He has heard our prayers, but He will be very jealous of us if we begin to ascribe the good work to ourselves. If we take any honor to ourselves and leave off praying to Him. If our zeal diminishes, if we become lax in our lives, if immoral characters are tolerated among us, God will be very angry with us and we must expect that though He will not cast away His own people, yet, as a Church, He will take away our beauty and cause it to fade away like the moth! And the fine gold shall become dim, and the Glory shall depart from this portion of His Israel.

Now what is the lesson of all this? It is just this, Brothers and Sisters, that I would stir you up to continue in prayer! To some of you, perhaps, the exhortation is not needed, but to others I am sure it is. Thank God we have many in the church who know how to wrestle with God, but, oh, we need more of these! We want not merely to have the few like Gideon's men that lapped, but we want to have you all among the lappers—to have you all wrestlers with God, all diligent in His service and seeking to extend His Kingdom! Let us be, from this day forward, more prayerful than we have ever been before.

—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.**

“WHAT SHALL THE HARVEST BE?”

NO. 2632

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 23, 1899.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 14, 1882.**

***“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind:
it has no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if it should
produce, strangers shall swallow it up.”
Hosea 8:7.***

PRUDENT men look before them to see the result of their actions. Their eyes look beyond the present to the future. They look before they leap. It is only the foolish man who goes blindly on till, at last, he stumbles and has a desperate and probably fatal fall. Brothers and Sisters, I hope that I am addressing those who have enough wit and wisdom to look at the consequences of what they are doing. This is how I wish to live—not merely doing what may give me today’s temporary pleasure, but asking myself what will be the result of those actions, by-and-by. How will they appear to me when I come to be old? What aspect will they wear when my eyes are failing me in death? What will be the result in that life after death—that endless future which is so sure to come to me, let me live as I may? I say that I hope I am speaking to those who look a little ahead, and are not, “like dumb driven cattle,” satisfied if there is grass enough within the reach of their mouths, but who look before them to see the consequences on the morrow and especially on that Last Great Day for which all other days were made—“the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

We are all sowing, Brothers—we cannot help it. You Sisters, too, are sowing—perhaps but a little garden plot, or possibly a broader acreage in public life—but you are all sowing. And every day there is a sowing. No man goes forth in the morning without a seed-basket. What may be in it is not so easily told. There may be nothing in it but the wind. There may be chaff in it. There may be in it curses which shall grow up to plague yourself and others, but it is certain that we do not move an inch along the furrows of life without scattering some kind of seed. He that does least is seeding his idleness and, like the thistle that stands still, and offers its downy seed to be carried by every wandering wind, so does the sluggard—he does mischief by doing nothing.

As we are all sowing, the great question we have to consider is, “what will the harvest be?” Every wise man will ask himself that question. I may have sown very little in my small plot, or I may have walked far and

scattered the seed broadcast over the wider field committed to my charge—but what have I sown and what shall I reap? What sheaves shall I gather into the garner? Sheaves of fire that shall burn into my soul forever, or sheaves of glory that I shall bring with rejoicing in the Last Great Day? Brothers and Sisters, if it is rightly examined, this matter of the harvest from our sowing will be found to be full of very rich encouragement to those who are seeking to serve God. If you have believed in Christ and received eternal life by faith in Him, and if now you are trying to labor for Him, you are sowing blessed seed—and if it comes not up today, or tomorrow, yet Divine Grace ensures a crop and you shall have precious sheaves which you shall gather in one of these days! Therefore, be encouraged to labor on! The farmer waits for the precious fruits of the earth through the long and dreary winter, through the checkered days of spring, through March winds and April showers he waits, until, at last, the golden harvest rewards him for all his toil. Labor on, then, Beloved, “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” That which you sow, you shall also reap! Your Lord has told you so. Therefore, be not dismayed by the long waiting but—

**“Sow and faint not,
Till the seed a harvest bears.”**

But, while this Truth of God is full of encouragement to God’s people, it ought to be a very strong and powerful check to those who are living in sin. As you sow, you will have to reap! Those “wild oats” about which you laugh are easily sown, but they will make hard and sorrowful reaping! That act of iniquity, that indulgence in lust, that lie, that blasphemy, that revolt against God in stifling your conscience and refusing to yield to Christ—all these will produce a harvest in due season! It is easy to toss these pigeons up into the air, but they will all come home to roost. At nightfall you shall see every one of them—and they will have grown greater than when you set them flying. And they will be bearers of messages of misery to the rash hand that sent them flying abroad. It is a dreadful thing to be so living that you would not wish the result of your actions to come home to you! And if any of you are so living, I pray God, the Holy Spirit, now to give me something to say which shall, like a strong hand, lay hold of your bridle and compel you to stand still and race no longer in the downward course to Hell!

My text naturally divides itself into two parts and, at first sight, they do not seem to be very closely connected. But I think that I shall be able to show that they are. From the first part of the text we may learn that *some sowings will have a horrible harvest*. “They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” Then the rest of the text will teach us that *some sowing must end in failure*. They are such poor, windy things, that they shall never come to anything that is good. If a blade shall come up, yet “it has no stalk.” And, if it should seem to come to a stalk, “the bud shall yield no meal.” It shall be like the devil’s meal—all bran—there shall be no good flour in it. Or, if it should yield meal, “if it should produce, strangers shall swallow it up.” The old proverb says, “There’s many

a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip,” and these sowers find it to be so with their sowing! Strangers come in and steal away the fruit out of the very mouth that hoped to be fed by it so that no good result comes of the sowing as far as he is concerned.

I. The first part of our text teaches us that some sowings will PRODUCE A HORRIBLE HARVEST.

Some have a horrible harvest even in this world, as, for example, *the sowing of oppression which leads to revolt and revenge*. I do not know a better instance of this than France. Some two hundred years ago, or even less than that, the owners of the land in that country treated the peasantry worse than they treated their cattle. Poor and almost naked men might have been seen dragging the plow over the soil, themselves, because they were reduced to such poverty by excessive rents that they could not afford to keep animals to do the hard work. Kings, princes and the great ones of the land cared for nothing but their own pleasures—and those pleasures were often of the most vicious kind. Read the first chapters of Carlyle’s *French Revolution* and see in what a state France was. Yet, for a time, everything seemed to go on favorably for the oppressors. If the peasantry revolted, they were put down with an iron hand.

The mighty rulers thought that their empire would never come to an end and, as for the Grand Monarch, himself—was there ever such another mortal as he thought himself to be, and as his courtiers spoke of him? Might not his kingdom last forever—at least, in the hands of his successors? Yet, one after another, those kings and nobles sowed the wind and, at the end of the last century, they reaped the whirlwind! Having, themselves, defied all law and justice, they had taught the people to do the same—and when the masses once rose in rebellion and got the upper hand—you know how they worked the terrible guillotine and how the streets, not only of Paris, but of many another city and town, were deluged with blood! And, at last, the oppressors were made to realize that their cruelty and oppression had come home to them.

It is always so, sooner or later, according to the rule of God’s righteous government. Men may stretch the cord for a long while, but at length it snaps and woe be to those that are holding it when it gives way! The people may be, for a time, trodden down beneath the tyrant’s hoof, but, in the long run, the tyrant gets the worst of it. France has more than once furnished an awful instance of the retribution that comes upon those who do not regard the dignity of man and who treat him as if he were merely a beast, or something worse! They have sown the wind and they have reaped the whirlwind.

Now take another view of the picture presented by our text. We have lately had, over in Ireland, a terrible proof that *the justification of outrage leads to murder*. Certain persons say, “We never meant to urge our countrymen to commit the crime of murder and we are shocked at the Phoenix Park tragedy. We wash our hands in innocence, for we are clear of guilt in this matter! We denounce it, we have no part in it, we abhor it.” So they say, but what led up to that awful deed of blood? When men have used expressions in which they have not condemned, but have al-

most justified outrage and murder in *other* cases, what could come of it but that their disciples should go a little beyond what their masters may have intended? You cannot scatter fire and then when, at last, the city burns, say, “Oh, we never meant it to spread like that! We only intended to burn down that cottage, or that wretched shanty! We never thought of burning down the city! We are as innocent of the crime as newborn babes—we never meant to do anything of the kind.” Yes, but you cannot say to fire, “Thus far shall you go and no further.” And in like manner, if you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind.

There is a whole province of Holland protected from the sea by a dyke and there is a man who wants to let in a little water to the other side for a certain purpose. He says he is only going to let a little stream run through, so he takes his pickaxe and he works away till he has made a passage through the dyke. And then, of course, the whole dyke is swept away and the province gets drowned! The foolish fellow says, “God forbid that I should have the blame of this catastrophe! I never meant to do anything of the sort.” Of course he did not—he intended something far less than that, but his action naturally produced the result that followed and, therefore, he is rightly regarded as responsible for it! Beware, I pray you, of trifling with the eternal principles of justice and of right and wrong! Beware of ever sanctioning what you consider to be only a little evil, for, if you do, the greater evil is sure to follow at its heels! It is like the boy that the burglar takes and pushes through a little window, that he may open the door and let in those who commit robbery and murder. So, if any of us begin to advocate principles which sap and undermine the foundations of law and order, we cannot tell to what mischief our talk will lead—it is well for us to always be careful not to sow the wind, lest we should, by-and-by, reap the whirlwind!

Passing from those great instances which prove the rule, I want you, next, to notice that there are many persons who fall into this same fault. Take, for instance, *the teacher of error*. He is, perhaps, in other respects, an excellent minister, but he is unsound on one important point. Just so and, before long, his unsoundness on one point will lead to unsoundness all round! It is like a single speck of decay in fruit—it is very apt to cause the whole to go rotten. Have you ever heard the story which was told by Augustine concerning a young man who had been, at one time, a professed Believer in God, but who had given up all trust in Him? It occurred to him, when he was very much tried by the buzzing and biting of flies, that God could not have created such troublesome little creatures. They were such a nuisance to him that he concluded that the devil had made them and, having once gone the length of believing that the devil made flies, he thought it highly probable that Satan created some other nuisances. And he went on till, at last, he actually came to believe that the devil made *everything*—and he did not believe in God at all. “Ah!” remarks Augustine, as he relates the story, “he that errs about a fly soon errs about all things.”

Look at the progress of Romanism in our own country. When the most of us were boys, we used to hear our fathers talking of a Mr. Pusey and

of baptismal regeneration—and it was thought, then, to be a strange thing if a man wore a cross around his neck. All England was stirred about the matter and everybody was horrified! But look at the so-called “priests” now—they have gone all the length of Rome. “Where?” you ask. Well, where are they not? They seem to be everywhere now, swarming over the land, and they have brought back rank Popery into what used to be called “the Protestant Church of England!” How has that come to pass? Well, first of all, there was a little of it tolerated and then a little more of it was needed and, gradually, more was sucked down until now I believe that many of the Ritualists would be prepared to receive the Pope and all his cardinals, red hats and all! I really cannot see why they should not, for, if they did, they could scarcely be more Popish than they are, already! Only go a little way in the course of error and it is like sliding down an inclined plane—there is no telling where you will stop. Go to the top of St. Paul’s Cathedral and throw a stone down from that height. You say that you only mean to throw it a yard. Ah, but it will never rest until it gets to the ground—and perhaps it will kill someone before it reaches the earth!

So, when once you start in the way of error, there is no possibility of stopping unless Divine Grace shall interpose to save you from the consequences of the first false step! You sow the wind and you reap the whirlwind. A little error leads to more, and that to still more until the very idea of God is given up! I, therefore, love to meet a man who is stiff-backed in his orthodoxy and, in this age of laxness and looseness, I am prepared to clap my hands even when I see a little bigotry! I like a man to believe *something*—to stick to it, to know that it is true and not to be ashamed to avow it in the teeth of his fellow men—let them oppose as they will, for there must be *something* true and, oh, that God’s gracious Spirit may teach us what it is! And when we once know it, may we hold it fast, come life or come death—for if we do not, we shall sow the wind and reap the whirlwind!

Here is another instance of the same Truth of God—*an ill example at home*. I will confine it to that one point, though it is of general application. You probably know a man who is very lax in the management of his family. He professes to be a Christian, perhaps, but his sons and daughters are allowed to plunge into every frivolity and every vanity. Yes, and they may even go into open sin and all that they will hear will be some gentle word like that which fell from the lips of soft-hearted Eli when he did but hint that his sons were not doing well when they were doing much that was terribly evil! The man even hears that such-and-such a vice has been committed by his son, yet he scarcely upbraids him. He is so easy-tempered that he says nothing, though he sorrows within his own heart. Perhaps his own example and the example of his wife are not such as could be desired. Family prayer is neglected and holy living is not known in the house. He gets prematurely old—his son has died very early—he has drunk himself to death, or destroyed himself by vice. His daughters, too, are unhappy in their marriages. The whole family has virtually gone to ruin as to any connection with the Christian Church.

What shall I say of the old gentleman? He will not say it, himself, but I must say it for him—he sowed the wind and he has reaped the whirlwind! The father’s character is usually seen in his sons. It has been said that ministers’ sons often turn out badly—if it is so and I am not sure that it is—it must be because the ministers have not kept their own vineyards, for the rule still holds good, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Generally, though not always, if he does depart from it, it is because there has been some fatal neglect in his training—and there are some Christian parents who are acting thus. They are so indulgent, not only to their children, but to themselves, that they do not like to give themselves the trouble that ought to be taken in all such cases. They are sowing the wind and they will reap the whirlwind!

Let me give another illustration of the truth of the text with reference to *persons who fall into evil habits*. At first those evil habits are under restraint. They admit that they drink, but they say that they cannot be called “drunks.” They may, now and then, take more than is good for them but, still, it is not very often. That is the beginning of the evil! And, by-and-by, where are they? They have sown the wind and they reap the whirlwind! Did you ever hear the story of the Persian prince who dreamed that he was drinking from a cup and a fly came and tried to sip from it? He drove it away, but, as he kept on drinking from his cup, it came back—and it had grown as large as a bird! He drove the creature away, but it returned as large as an eagle—the largest kind of bird! He tried to chase that away, but it soon came back in the form of a man who grinned at him most horribly. He strove to get that man away, but soon he was back in the form of a giant who trod on him and crushed him to death! That is just the picture of the growth of an evil habit! At first you say, “Is it not a little one?” But it grows and increases till it becomes unconquerable. That parable illustrates our text—if you sow the wind you will reap the whirlwind! You cannot live in sin, you cannot do wrong of any kind, or in any form, but it will come back to you, not merely as wind, as you sowed it, but as a whirlwind, as a horrible tempest, as a rushing tornado, carrying everything before it!

I will not tarry to give more illustrations of this solemn Truth of God because I want to leave a few minutes for the consideration of the second part of the subject. Only I pray that God may write on the memory and heart of any of you who are living as you should not live, the great fact that as surely as you so live, “That which a man sows, that shall he also reap.” And he will reap even worse than he sows, for if he sows the wind he will reap the whirlwind.

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject which is that **SOME SOWINGS MUST END IN FAILURE.**

There are some people who do not think that they are doing any hurt, yet they are *living an aimless life*. Go to them and ask what they are sowing? “Nothing,” they answer. They say that they are doing no hurt to anybody, for they are not doing anything at all—but is not that kind of life an injury to themselves and to others? If you have no aim in life, no

high ambition, no objective, no noble purpose—does anything ever come of it? People talk of what they call, “chance,” but I never found any chance of a man’s getting to be holy without intending to be so! I never yet heard of a man doing any great good in the world if he did not mean to do it! I never heard of a man glorifying God by accident, nor of anyone getting to Heaven, as it were, by the throw of the dice, somehow finding himself there, but not knowing how it all happened. No, if you lead an aimless life, what will come of it will be just what the text says—“It has no stalk” There will be no plant from it and even if there should be some kind of stalk to the seed that you have sown, yet when it springs up, “there shall be no meal.” It cannot be any comfort to you, even if things should go pretty well without your intending that they should, for the comfort, after all, lies in the motive and in the intention. And even if your life should somehow turn out to be better than that of other aimless persons, though you never intended it to be so, “if it should produce, the strangers shall swallow it up.” If you meant it to be nothing, it will be nothing.

I daresay that I am speaking to a large number of people who do not know what they are living for. You have come into the world and here you are and, in due time, you will go out of it—but that is all that can be said of you. You are doing nothing. You have no noble end in view, no glorious purpose to accomplish, no sublime aspiration to realize. Then take it for granted that if all you sow is the wind, you will reap nothing but wind—only it will come to you in a fiercer form—as a whirlwind, for God will say to you, “I made you for My Glory. I sent you into the world with a purpose. I entrusted you with talents. I made you a steward of My goods and now you are accused of having wasted My goods. Give an account of your stewardship.” What will you say? Alas, in that day the trifler, the idler, the mere butterfly in the garden of the world will find things going hard, indeed, with him! God save you all from leading an aimless life!

But there are some who are sowing the wind in another form. They are *leading a selfish life*. Self is the beginning and the end of their life. They open a shop simply to make money. They live at home to be comfortable. Perhaps they enlarge themselves a little by taking the wife and the children into the circle of self, but still, that is all—they have no care for God, no love for Christ, no wish to help the poor, no thought about eternity. That is a life of sowing the wind and it will end, sooner or later, in reaping the whirlwind, for no man lives unto himself without earning for himself a fearful reward! Selfishness is often like the serpent that stings itself to death. It is not possible, within the compass of a man’s own soul, that he should satisfy the cravings and desires of that soul. When he loves God and loves his neighbor—he is really most of all blessing himself—for then is he living to true purpose.

But when self is everything to a man, he confines his soul within the morgue of his own ribs—his spirit dies within him and becomes like a stone. In the case of the man who lives only for self, it may be said of his life, in the words of the text, “It has no stalk: the bud shall yield no

meal.” He gathers riches, but has no happiness or contentment in them. He is like Solomon, who, with all his possessions, had to cry, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!” Or if he gets to be rich and seems to enjoy himself a little, he suddenly dies and strangers swallow up his estate! All that is left of him is a massive tomb and the notice in the newspapers that he died worth so many thousands of pounds—which is not true, for he never was really worth a farthing all his life! He was a worthless man whose only value consisted in the money he possessed.

O my dear Hearers, I implore you, with all my soul, not to live unto yourselves! If you desire the highest, grandest selfishness that can ever be attained, I charge you, throw selfishness away, remembering our Savior’s Words, “He that loses his life for My sake, shall find it.” He who casts his life away for the sake of Christ and for love of the Truth of God, shall be the man who shall really save his life and find true joy and blessedness! But for anyone to live for self is to sow the wind and to reap the whirlwind.

So, once again, will it be if a man *lives a self-righteous life*. A self-righteous man is generally very great at sowing—so many prayers—so many almsgivings—so many sermons—so many ceremonies. Yes, wind, wind, wind! He is sowing wind, but what will come of it all? This very good religious man—I forget whether his name is Good Enough, or Too-Good, but I believe the families are cousins—is, in his own opinion, so very excellent that he does all he ought to do and perhaps a little more. Yet he is only sowing the wind! And what will he reap from it? Well, if God is very gracious to him, he will soon reap the whirlwind, for he will find, to his confusion, that all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags and they shall be like the sere leaves of the forest borne away by the wind! I pray that he may, in this sense, reap the whirlwind very soon, for, if not, he will do so in the next world when all his pretended good works and all his formal observances of external religion will be nothing but so much whirlwind to blow in his face, and to fan the flames of Hell forever! O dear Friends, shun self-righteousness and trust, alone, to the righteousness of Christ! May the Spirit of God lead you to wash in the atoning blood and then cover you with the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ! Then it will be well with your soul—but all self-righteousness shall end in delusion and confusion forever and ever. May God grant that none of us may, in this sense, sow the wind!

The text is pre-eminently true of every man who *leads a deceitful life*. Oh, have I the misery of speaking to one who makes a profession of religion and who wishes to be thought to be a Christian, but yet is not really so? It is hard for a true Believer to maintain a Christian character, but it is very much harder to keep up that character when there is nothing at the back of it! Oh, how desperately does the man who is a hypocrite have to labor! He has to patch up here, and patch up there—daub with untempered mortar here, and whitewash there, and he never has any peace. And all the while he is only sowing the wind! There is nothing real in his religion—what will come of it when that hypocrisy is discovered, when he stands revealed before the bar of God? Will his hypocritical re-

ligion do him any good? No, “it has no stalk” even now! It cannot yield him even present comfort! If there is a “bud” that looks a little like self-respect, it “shall yield no meal.” I have already quoted the old proverb, “The devil’s meal is all bran,” and I may add that the hypocrite’s meal is all bran. There is nothing substantial in it. And even if he should seem to die in the odor of sanctity, yet the stranger shall come in and devour his supposed religiousness, for somebody shall tell the truth about him and so his fine reputation shall be utterly blasted.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I have come to the end of this discourse. And what should be the practical result of it but that if we have been sowing anything that we ought not to sow, we should pray God to come and plow it all up! Lord, drive the plow straight through every life that is not according to Your Word! Oh, to have all the evil obliterated—every seed of sin crushed and destroyed! Would God that it might be so with all of us!

What next? Well, let us then go—oh, may the Divine Spirit lead us!—to Jesus Christ and ask Him to give us the good seed! Let us have our hands washed from the evil in which we formerly delighted and He, alone, can cleanse us. Then let us take the clean good wheat which He will give us out of His own granary and let us go and sow it. God help us to sow it right and left, from morn to eve, without weariness, that, at the last, we may gather in a glorious harvest, not to our own glory, but to the praise of Him by whose rich, Free and Sovereign Grace we were enabled to sow to the Spirit, and of the Spirit to reap life everlasting! Amen.

Before we go, we will sing that very solemn hymn in Mr. Sankey’s book, “What Shall the Harvest Be?” It will help to impress the subject upon our memories and hearts—

*“Sowing the seed by the dawn-light fair,
Sowing the seed by the noon-day glare.
Sowing the seed by the fading light,
Sowing the seed in the solemn night—
Oh, what shall the harvest be?
Sowing the seed with an aching heart,
Sowing the seed while the teardrops start,
Sowing in hope till the reapers come,
Gladly to gather the harvest home—
Oh, what shall the harvest be?
Sown in the darkness, or sown in the light,
Sown in our weakness, or sown in our might,
Gathered in time, or eternity,
Sure, ah, sure, will the harvest be!”*

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 5:13-26; GALATIANS 6:1-10.**

Remember, beloved Brothers and Sisters, that the Epistle to the Galatians is one in which Paul, with especial clearness, proves the Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone. So much is this the case that the famous Commentary of Martin Luther upon this Epistle is, perhaps, the strongest work extant upon the Doctrine of salvation by Grace through faith.

But that doctrine was never intended to be separated from the Scriptural teaching concerning the fruit of faith, namely, good works and, therefore, we find, in the close of this very Epistle, the strongest possible declaration that if men live in sin, they will reap the result of sin—and that only if, by Grace, they are brought to walk in holiness, will they win the rewards of Grace.

Galatians 5:13. *For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.* “Do not make license out of your liberty. Remember that liberty from sin is not liberty to sin.”

13, 14. *But by love serve one another. For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* The condensation of the whole Law of God is contained in that one word, “love.” In the First Table we are taught to love God. And the Commandments of the Second Table teach us to love our neighbor.

15. *But if you bite and devour one another.* Finding fault, slandering, injuring, bearing malice and so on—“If you bite and devour one another.”

15. *Take heed that you are not consumed, one of another.* “You will eat one another up. You will, each one, condemn his neighbor.” Paul represents the great Judge coming and waiting outside the door. And when He hears two men condemning one another, He says to Himself, “I will confirm their verdict. They have mutually condemned each other, I will say ‘Amen’ to it.” What a sad thing it is if professed Christians are found thus condemning one another!

16. *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.* Walk under the Spirit’s power, following His guidance. The Spirit never leads a man into sin. He never conducts him into self-indulgence and excess.

17. *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary, the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would.* How often that is the case! You would be perfect, but, “you cannot do the things that you would.” We would, if possible, escape from every evil thought—we would not even *hear* of anything sinful if we could help it.

18, 19. *But if you are led of the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness.* Any kind of sensual indulgence—whatever it may be—a lustful glance, the cherishing of an unclean desire—the utterance of a foul expression—all this is condemned, as well as the overt acts of adultery and fornication.

20, 21. *Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness.* Is drunkenness actually put by the Apostle *after* murder, as though it were something worse than that terrible crime? Or is it not, oftentimes, the case that drunkenness lies at the bottom of the murder?

21. *Reveling and such like: of the which I told you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Paul never said, nor ever thought of saying, that a man might live in sin that Grace might abound. No, no—these evil things

must be given up! Christ has come to save us from every evil work. And this is the salvation that we preach—not simply salvation from Hell, but salvation from sin—which is the very fire that has kindled the infernal flame. But how different from all this evil is the fruit of the Spirit!

22. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love.* Universal love, first, to God. Next, to His people and, then, to all mankind. Have we that fruit of the Spirit? If so, it will make us of a very amiable disposition. It will dethrone selfishness and set up holy affections within our heart.

22, 23. *Joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.* Joy and peace seem to blossom and ripen out of love. Long-suffering, too, is part of the fruit of the Spirit. You will be hourly tried, but the Spirit of God will give you patience to suffer long and to endure much. You will also have gentleness. Some people are very hard, stern, severe, quick-tempered, passionate—but the true follower of Christ will be gentle and tender, even as He was.

23. *Against such there is no law.* Neither God nor man has ever made a law against these things—the more there is of them, the better will it be for everybody. Oh, that they prevailed all over the world!

24. *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* A crucified Christ is the leader of a crucified people! Oh, to have all the affections and lusts of the flesh nailed up! They may not be actually dead, for those who are crucified may still live on for some hours, but they are doomed to die. Their life is a very painful one and it is hastening to a close. A man who is crucified cannot get down from the cross to do what he wills and, oh, it is a great blessing to have our sinful self thus nailed up! Ah, Sir, you may struggle, but you cannot get down! You may strive and cry, but your hands and feet are nailed—you cannot go into active, actual sin. The Lord grant that the nails may hold very fast, that none of the struggling of our old nature may be able to pull out those nails that have fastened it up to the cross!

25. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* If that is our real life, let it also be our course of action.

26. *Let us not be desirous of vain-glory.* Do not let us want to be accounted as somebody, for, if we do, we prove that we are really nobody! Nobody is anybody till he is willing to be nobody—as long as he wants to be somebody, he is nobody and nothing!

26. *Provoking one another, envying one another.* God save us from that and every other form of evil!

Galatians 6:1. *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault.* He is a slow traveler. He is not speeding swiftly on the way to Heaven, so the fault overtakes him. Had he been quicker of pace, he might have outstripped it, but he is “overtaken in a fault.” What then? Throw him out of the Church? Have done with him? No. “If a man is overtaken in a fault”—

1. *You which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.* Pick him up, help him to run better than he did before.

1. *Considering yourself, lest you, also, are tempted.* Paul does not say, “Lest you also fall,” but, “Lest you, also, are tempted”—as much as to say, “You will be sure to fall if you are tempted,” and that man who

thinks that other people ought to be cast off because they have committed a fault is so proud in his own heart that he only needs to be tempted and he would fall, too! This is a very expressive way of putting the matter! “Considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.”

2. *Bear you one another’s burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ.* Help your Brothers and Sisters. If you see that they have more to do than they can accomplish, take a share of their labor. If they have a heavier burden than they can bear, try to put your shoulder beneath their load and so lighten it for them.

3. *For if a man thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* Paul does not say, “He deceives other people.” No, “he deceives himself.” As a general rule, other people find him out, they learn what he really is, but, “he deceives himself.”

4, 5. *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.* There is, after all, a burden which we cannot carry for others and which we cannot shift upon others. There are burdens of care, sorrow and trouble which we can take from other men’s shoulders, but the great burden of responsibility before God, each man must carry for himself.

6. *Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things.* Those who are taught and so receive spiritual things, should maintain those who are their teachers as far as they are able to do so.

7. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.* That is true under the Gospel as well as under the Law.

8. *For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.* That is what always comes to the flesh—it decays and corrupts.

8. *But he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* No corruption shall come to that which belongs to the Spirit! “He that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

9, 10. *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—416, 95 (SONG I), 654—
AND FROM “SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS”—42,
“WHAT SHALL THE HARVEST BE?”**

—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 BIBLE

NO. 15

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MARCH 18, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND**

***“I have written to him the great things of My Law,
but they were counted as a strange thing.”
Hosea 8:12.***

This is God’s complaint against Ephraim. It is no mean proof of His goodness, that He stoops to rebuke His erring creatures. It is a great argument of His gracious disposition that He bows His head to notice terrestrial affairs. He might, if He pleased, wrap Himself with night as with a garment. He might put the stars around His wrist for bracelets and bind the suns around His brow for a coronet. He might dwell alone, far, far above this world, up in the seventh Heaven and look down with calm and silent indifference upon all the doings of His creatures. He might do as the heathens supposed their Jove did, sit in perpetual silence, sometimes nodding his awful head to make the Fates move as he pleased. But Jove never thought of the little things of earth, disposing of them as beneath his notice, engrossed within his own being, swallowed up within himself. He lived alone and retired. And I, as one of Jove’s creatures might stand by night upon a mountaintop and look upon the silent stars and say, “you are the eyes of god, but you look not down on me. Your light is the gift of his omnipotence, but your rays are not smiles of love to me. God, the mighty creator, has forgotten me, I am a despicable drop in the ocean of Creation, a sear leaf in the forest of beings, an atom in the mountain of existence. He knows me not. I am alone, alone, alone!” But it is not so, Beloved. *Our* God is of another order. He notices every one of us! There is not a sparrow or a worm but is found in His decrees. There is not a person upon whom His eyes are not fixed. Our most secret acts are known to Him. Whatever we do, or bear, or suffer, the eye of God still rest upon us and we are beneath His smile—for we are His people. Or beneath His frown—for we have erred from Him.

Oh, how ten-thousand-fold merciful is God, that, looking down upon the race of man, He does not smile it out of existence! We see from our text that God looks upon man, for He says of Ephraim, “I have written to him the great things of My Law, but they were counted as a strange thing.” But see how when He observes the sin of man, He does not dash him away and spurn him with His foot? He does not shake him by the neck over the gulf of Hell, until his brain does reel and then drop him forever. But rather, He comes down from Heaven to plead with His creatures! He argues with them, He puts Himself, as it were, upon a level with the sinner, states His grievances and pleads His claim. “O Ephraim,

I have written unto you the great things of My Law, but they have been unto you as a strange thing"! I come here tonight in God's stead, my Friends, to plead with you as God's ambassador, to charge many of you with a sin. To lay it to your hearts by the power of the Spirit, so that you may be convinced of sin, of righteousness and of a judgment to come. The crime I charge you with is the sin of the text. God has written to you the great things of His Law, but they have been unto you as a strange thing! It is concerning this blessed Book, the Bible, that I mean to speak tonight. Here lies my text—this Word of God. Here is the theme of my discourse, a theme which demands more eloquence than I possess. A subject upon which a thousand orators might speak at once. A mighty, vast, incomprehensive theme which might engross all eloquence throughout eternity and still it would remain unexhausted!

Concerning the Bible, I have three things to say tonight and they are all in my text. First, its Author, "I have written." Secondly, its subjects—the great things of God's Law. And thirdly, its common treatment—It has been accounted by most men a strange thing.

1. First, then, concerning this book, who is THE AUTHOR? The text says that it is God. "I have written to him the great things of My Law." Here lies my Bible—who wrote it? I open it and I find it consists of a series of tracts. The first five tracts were written by a man called Moses. I turn on and I find others. Sometimes I see David is the penman, at other times, Solomon. Here I read Micah, then Amos, then Hosea. As I turn further on, to the more luminous pages of the New Testament, I see Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Paul, Peter, James and others, but when I shut up the book, I ask myself who is the Author of it? Do these men jointly claim the authorship? Are they the compositors of this massive volume? Do they, between themselves, divide the honor? Our holy religion answers, No! This volume is the writing of the living God—each letter was penned with an Almighty finger. Each Word in it dropped from the everlasting lips, each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit. Albeit that Moses was employed to write his histories with his fiery pen, God guided that pen. It may be that David touched his harp and let sweet Psalms of melody drop from his fingers, but God moved his hands over the living strings of his golden harp. It may be that Solomon sang Canticles of love, or gave forth words of consummate wisdom, but God directed his lips and made the Preacher eloquent. If I follow the thundering Nahum when his horses plow the waters or Habakkuk when he sees the tents of Cushan in affliction. If I read Malachi, when the earth is burning like an oven. If I turn to the smooth page of John, who tells of love, or the rugged, fiery chapters of Peter who speaks of the fire devouring God's enemies. If I turn to Jude, who launches forth anathemas upon the foes of God—everywhere I find God speaking—it is God's voice, not man's! The Words are God's Words, the Words of the Eternal, the Invisible, the Almighty, the Jehovah of this earth. This Bible is God's Bible. And when I see it, I seem to hear a voice springing up from it, saying, "I am the Book

of God—Man, read me. I am God’s writing—open my leaf, for I was penned by God. Read it, for He is my Author and you will see Him visible and manifest everywhere.” “I have written to him the great things of My Law.”

How do you know that God wrote the book? That is just what I shall not try to prove to you. I could, if I pleased, to a demonstration—for there are arguments enough, there are reasons enough—did I care to occupy your time tonight in bringing them before you—but I shall do no such thing. I might tell you, if I pleased, that the grandeur of the style is above that of any mortal writing and that all the poets who have ever existed, could not, with all their works united, give us such sublime poetry and such mighty language as is to be found in the Scriptures! I might insist upon it, that the subjects of which it treats are beyond the human intellect. That man could never have invented the grand Doctrines of a Trinity in the Godhead. Man could not have told us anything of the creation of the universe. He could never have been the author of the majestic idea of Providence, that all things are ordered according to the will of one great Supreme Being and work together for good. I might enlarge upon its honesty, since it tells the faults of its writers. Its unity, since it never belies itself. Its master simplicity, that he who runs may read it. And I might mention a hundred more things which would all prove to a demonstration, that the book is of God! But I come not here to prove it. I am a Christian minister and you are Christians, or profess to be so and there is never any necessity for Christian ministers to make a point of bringing forth infidel arguments in order to answer them. It is the greatest folly in the world. Infidels, poor creatures, do not know their own arguments till we tell them and then they glean their blunted shafts to shoot them at the shield of Truth again. It is folly to bring forward these firebrands of Hell, even if we are well prepared to quench them. Let men of the world learn error of themselves—do not let us be propagators of their lies!

True, there are some preachers who are short of stock and want them to fill up! But God’s own chosen men need not do that. They are taught of God and God supplies them with matter, with language and with power. There may be someone here, tonight, who has come without faith, a man of reason, a freethinker. With him I have no argument at all. I profess not to stand here as a controversialist, but as a preacher of things that I know and feel. But I, too, have been like he. There was an evil hour when once I slipped the anchor of my faith, I cut the cable of my belief. I no longer moored myself hard by the coasts of Revelation. I allowed my vessel to drift before the wind. I said to reason, “Be you my captain.” I said to my own brain, “Be you my rudder.” And I started on my mad voyage. Thank God it is all over, now, but I will tell you its brief history. It was one hurried sailing over the tempestuous ocean of free thought. I went on and as I went, the skies began to darken. But to make up for that deficiency, the waters were brilliant with flashes of light. I saw sparks flying upwards that pleased me and I thought, “If this is free

thought, it is a happy thing.” My thoughts seemed gems and I scattered stars with both my hands. But soon, instead of these flashes of glory, I saw grim fiends, fierce and horrible start up from the waters. And as I dashed on, they gnashed their teeth and grinned upon me. They seized the prow of my ship and dragged me on, while I, in part, gloried at the rapidity of my motion, but yet shuddered at the terrific rate with which I passed the old landmarks of my faith. As I hurried forward with an awful speed, I began to doubt my very existence. I doubted if there were a world, I doubted if there were such a thing as myself! I went to the very verge of the dreary realms of unbelief. I went to the very bottom of the sea of infidelity. I doubted everything. But here the devil foiled himself. For the very extravagance of the doubt proved its absurdity. Just when I saw the bottom of that sea, there came a voice which said, “And can this doubt be true?” At this very thought I awoke. I started from that death-dream, which, God knows might have damned my soul and ruined this, my body, if I had not awakened. When I arose faith took the helm. From that moment I doubted not. Faith steered me back. Faith cried, “Away, away!” I cast my anchor on Calvary. I lifted my eyes to God—and here I am alive and out of Hell. Therefore I speak what I know. I have sailed that perilous voyage. I have come safe to land. Ask me again to be an infidel! No, I have tried it, it was sweet at first, but bitter afterwards. Now, lashed to God’s Gospel more firmly than ever, standing as on a rock of adamant, I defy the arguments of Hell to move me, for “I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.” But I shall neither plead nor argue this night. You profess to be Christian men and women, or else you would not be here. Your profession may be lies. What you *say* you are may be the very opposite of what you *really* are, but still, I suppose you all admit that this is the Word of God. A thought or two, then, upon it. “I have written to him the great things of My Law.”

First, my Friends, stand over this volume and *admire its authority*. This is no Solomon book. It is not the sayings of the sages of Greece. Here are not the utterances of philosophers of past ages. If these words were written by man, we might reject them, but oh, let me think the solemn thought—that this book is God’s handwriting—that these words are God’s. Let me look at its date—it is dated from the hills of Heaven. Let me look at its letters—they flash glory on my eyes. Let me read the chapters—they are big with meaning and mysteries unknown. Let me turn over the prophecies—they are pregnant with unthought-of orders. Oh, Book of books! And were you written by my God? Then will I bow before you. Book of vast authority, you are a proclamation from the Emperor of Heaven! Far be it from me to exercise my reason in contradicting you. Reason! Your place is to stand and find out what this volume means, not to tell what this Book *ought* to say. Come my reason, my intellect, sit down and listen, for these words are the Words of God. I do not know how to enlarge on this thought. Oh, if you could ever remember that this

Bible was actually and really written by God! Oh, if you had been let into the secret chambers of Heaven, if you had beheld God grasping His pen and writing down these letters, then surely you would respect them. But they are just as much God's handwriting as if you had seen God write them. This Bible is a book of authority, it is an authorized book, for God has written it. Oh, tremble, tremble, lest any of you despise it. Mark its authority, for it is the Word of God!

Then, since God wrote it, mark its *truthfulness*. If I had written it there would be worms of critics who would at once swarm on it and would cover it with their evil spawn. Had I written it, there would be men who would pull it to pieces at once and perhaps quite right, too. But this is the Word of God. Come, search, you critics and find a flaw! Examine it from its Genesis to its Revelations and find an error. This is a vein of pure gold, unalloyed by quartz or any earthy substance. This is a star without a speck, a sun without a blot! A light without darkness. A moon without its paleness. A glory without a dimness. O Bible! It cannot be said of any other book that it is perfect and pure, but of you we can declare all wisdom is gathered up in you, without a particle of folly! This is the judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail. This is the book untainted by any error—it is pure, unalloyed, perfect Truth. Why? Because God wrote it. Ah, charge God with error if you please. Tell Him that His book is not what it ought to be. I have heard men with prudish and mock-modesty, who would like to alter the Bible. And (I almost blush to say it) I have heard minister's alter God's Bible because they were afraid of it. Have you ever heard a man say, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. But He that believes not,"—what does the Bible say?—"shall be *damned*." But that does not happen to be polite enough, so they say, "shall be *condemned*."

Gentlemen! Pull the velvet out of your mouths. Speak God's Word. We want none of your alterations. I have heard men in prayer, instead of saying, "Make your calling and *election* sure," say "Make your calling and *salvation* sure." Pity they were not born when God lived, far-far back, that they might have taught God how to write! Oh, impudence beyond all bounds! Oh, full-blown self-conceit! To attempt to dictate to the All-Wise—to teach the Omniscient and instruct the Eternal! Strange that there should be men so vile as to use the penknife of Jehoiachin to cut passages of the Word, because they are unpalatable. Oh you who dislike certain portions of the Holy Writ rest assured that your taste is corrupt and that God will not stay for your little opinion. Your dislike is the very reason why God wrote it, because you ought not to be suited. You have no right to be pleased. God wrote what you do not like. He wrote the Truth. Oh, let us bend in reverence before it, for God inspired it. It is pure Truth. Here from this fountain gushes *aqua vitae*—"the water of life," without a single particle of earth. Here from this sun there comes forth rays of radiance, without the mixture of darkness. Blessed Bible, you are all Truth!

Yet once more, before we leave this point let us stop and consider *the merciful nature of God*, in having written us a Bible at all. Ah, He might have left us without it, to grope our dark way, as blind men seek the wall. He might have allowed us to wander on with the star of reason as our only guide. I recollect a story of Mr. Hume, who so constantly affirmed that the light of reason is abundantly sufficient. Being at a good minister's house one evening, he had been discussing the question and declaring his firm belief in the sufficiency of the light of nature. On leaving, the minister offered to hold him a candle, to light him down the steps. He said, "No, the light of Nature would be enough, the moon would do." It so happened that the moon was covered with a cloud and he fell down the steps. "Ah," said the minister, "you had better have had a little light from above, after all, Mr. Hume." So, supposing the light of Nature to be sufficient, we had better have a little light from above, too, and then we shall be sure to be right! Better have two lights than only one. The light of Creation is a bright light. God may be seen in the stars, His name is written in gilt letters on the brow of night. You may discover His Glory in the ocean waves, yes, in the trees of the field. But it is better to read it in two books than in one. You will find it here more clearly revealed, for He has written this Book, Himself, and He has given you the key to understand it, if you have the Holy Spirit. Ah, Beloved, let us thank God for this Bible. Let us love it. Let us count it more precious than much fine gold!

But let me say one thing before I pass on to the second point. If this is the Word of God, what will become of some of you who have not read it for the last month? "Month, Sir! I have not read it for this year!" Yes, there are some of you who have not read it at all. Most people treat the Bible very politely. They have a small pocket volume, neatly bound—they put a white pocket handkerchief around it—and carry it to their places of worship. When they get home, they lay it up in a drawer till next Sunday morning. Then it comes out again for a little bit of a treat and goes to Chapel. That is all the poor Bible gets in the way of an airing! That is your style of entertaining this heavenly Messenger. There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write "damnation" with your fingers. There are some of you who have not turned over your Bibles for a long, long, long while and what do you think? I tell you blunt words, but true words. What will God say at last? When you shall come before Him, He shall say, "Did you read My Bible?" "No." I wrote you a letter of mercy. Did you read it?" "No." "Rebel! I have sent you a letter inviting you to Me—did you ever read it?" "*Lord I never broke the seal. I kept it shut up.*" "Wretch!" says God, "then you deserve Hell. If I sent you a loving Epistle and you would not even break the seal—what shall I do with you?" Oh, let it not be so with you. Be Bible readers. Be Bible searchers.

II. Our second point is, THE SUBJECTS ON WHICH THE BIBLE TREATS. The words of the text are these—"I have written to him the great things of My Law." The Bible treats of great things and of great things,

only. There is nothing in this Bible which is unimportant. Every verse in it has a solemn meaning and if we have not found it out yet, we hope yet to do it. You have seen mummies wrapped round and round with folds of linen. Well, God's Bible is like that. It is a vast roll of white linen, woven in the loom of Truth. You will have to continue unwinding it, roll after roll, before you get the real meaning of it from the very depth! And when you have found, as you think, a part of the meaning, you will still need to keep on unwinding, unwinding and all eternity you will be unwinding the words of this wondrous volume! Yet there is nothing in the Bible but great things. Let me divide, so as to be more brief. First, all things in this Bible are great—but secondly, some things are the greatest of all.

All things in the Bible are great. Some people think it does not matter what Doctrines you believe—that it is immaterial what Church you attend—that all denominations are alike. Well, I dislike Mrs. Bigotry above almost all people in the world and I never give her any compliment or praise—but there is another woman I hate equally as much and that is Mrs. Latitudinarianism, a well-known character, who has made the discovery that all of us are alike. Now I believe that a man may be *saved* in any church. Some have been saved in the Church of Rome—a few blessed men, whose names I could mention here. I know, blessed be God, that multitudes are saved in the Church of England—she has a host of pious, praying men in her midst. I think that all sections of Protestant Christians have a remnant according to the election of Grace and they had need to have, some of them, a little salt, for otherwise they would go to corruption. But when I say that, do you imagine that I think them all on a level? Are they all alike truthful? One set says infant Baptism is right, another says it is wrong, yet you say they are both right? I cannot see that. One teaches we are saved by free Grace, another says that we are not, but are saved by free will. And yet you believe they are both right? I do not understand that. One says that God loves His people and never leaves off loving them. Another says that He did not love His people before they loved Him—that He often loves them and then ceases to love them and turns them away! They may be both right in the main. But can they be both right when one says “Yes,” and the other says “No”? I must have a pair of spectacles to enable me to look backwards and forwards at the same time, before I can see that! It cannot be, Sirs, that they are both right! But some say they differ upon non-essentials. This text says, “I have written to him the *great* things of My Law.” There is nothing in God's Bible which is not great. Did any of you ever sit down to see which was the purest religion? “Oh,” you say, “we never took the trouble. We went just where our father and mother went.” Ah, that is a profound reason, indeed! You went where your father and mother did. I thought you were sensible people. I didn't think you went where other people pulled you, but went of your own selves. I love my parents above all that breathe and the very thought that they believed a thing to be true, helps me to think it is correct. But I have not followed them—I belong to a dif-

ferent denomination—and I thank God I do. I can receive them as Christian Brothers and Sisters, but I never thought that because they happened to be one thing, I was to be the same. No such thing. God gave me brains and I will use them. And if you have any intellect, use it too. Never say it doesn't matter. It *does* matter. Whatever God has put here is of eminent importance—He would not have written a thing that was indifferent. Whatever is here is of some value, therefore search all questions, try all by the Word of God. I am not afraid to have what I preach tried by this Bible. Only give me a fair field and no favor and this Bible. If I say anything contrary to it, I will withdraw it the next Sunday. By this I stand, by this I fall. Search and see but don't say, "It does not matter." If God says a thing, it must always be of importance.

But while all things in God's Word are important, *all are not equally important*. There are certain fundamental and vital Truths which must be believed, or otherwise no man would be saved. If you want to know what you must believe if you would be saved, you will find the great things of God's Law between these two covers—they are all contained here. As a sort of digest or summary of the great things of the Law, I remember an old friend of mine once saying, "Ah, you preach the three R's and God will always bless you." I said, "What are the three R's?" And He answered, "Ruin, Redemption and Regeneration." They contain the sum and substance of Divinity and of ruin. We were all ruined in the Fall. We were all lost when Adam sinned and we are all ruined by our own transgressions. We are all ruined by our own evil hearts and our own wicked wills. And we all shall be ruined unless Grace saves us. Then there is a second R for Redemption. We are ransomed by the blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish and without spot. We are rescued by His power. We are ransomed by His merits. We are redeemed by His strength. Then there is R for Regeneration. If we have been pardoned, we must also be regenerated. For no man can partake of redemption unless he is regenerate. Let him be as good as he pleases. Let him serve God as he imagines, as much as he likes—unless he is regenerate and has a new heart, a new birth, he will still be in the first R, that is ruin! These things contain an epitome of the Gospel. I believe there is a better epitome in the five points of Calvinism—Election according to the foreknowledge of God. The natural depravity and sinfulness of man. Particular redemption by the blood of Christ. Effectual calling [Irresistible Grace] by the power of the Spirit—and ultimate perseverance of the saints by the efforts of God's might. I think all those need to be believed, in order to salvation. But I should not like to write a creed like the Athanasian, beginning with, "Whoever should be saved, before all things it is necessary that he should deny the Catholic faith, which faith is this"—when I got so far, I should stop, because I should not know what to write. I hold the Catholic faith of the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible. It is not for me to draw up creeds. But I ask you to search the Scriptures, for this is the Word of Life.

God says, "I have written to him the great things of My Law." Do you doubt their greatness? Do you think they are not worth your attention? Reflect a moment, Man. Where are you standing now?

***"Lo, on a narrow neck of land
Twixt two unbounded seas I stand!
An inch of time, a moment's space
May lodge me in yon heavenly place—
Or shut me up in Hell."***

I recollect standing on a seashore once, upon a narrow neck of land, thoughtless that the tide might come up. The tide kept continually washing up on either side. But wrapped in thoughts I still stood there until at last there was the greatest difficulty in getting on shore. The waves had washed between me and the shore. You and I stand each day on a narrow neck and there is one wave coming up there. See how near it is to your feet! Lo, another throws at every tick of the clock—"our hearts, like muffled drums, are beating funeral marches to the tomb." We are always tending downwards to the grave each moment that we live. *This Bible* tells me that if I am converted, when I die there is a Heaven of joy and love to receive me. It tells me that angels' pinions shall be stretched and I, borne by strong cherubic wings, shall out-soar the lightning and mount beyond the stars, up to the Throne of God, to dwell forever—

***"Far from a world of grief and sin
With God eternally shut in."***

Oh, it makes the hot tears start from my eyes! It makes my heart too big for this, my body and my brain whines at the thought of—

***"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me."***

Oh, that sweet scene beyond the clouds. Sweet fields arrayed in living green and rivers of delight. Are not these great things? But then, poor unregenerate soul! The Bible says if you are lost, you are lost forever. It tells you that if you die without Christ, without God, there is no hope for you, that there is a place without a gleam of hope where you shall read in burning letters, "you knew your duty, but you did it not." It tells you that you shall be driven from His Presence with a, "depart you cursed." Are not these great things? Yes, Sirs, as Heaven is desirable, as Hell is terrible, as time is short, as eternity is infinite, as the soul is precious, as pains are to be shunned, as Heaven is to be sought, as God is eternal and as His Words are sure—these are great things—things you ought to listen to.

III. Our last point is THE TREATMENT WHICH THE POOR BIBLE RECEIVES IN THIS WORLD. It is accounted a strange thing. What does that mean—the Bible accounted a strange thing? In the first place, it means that it is very strange to some people, because *they never read it*. I remember reading, on one occasion, the sacred story of David and Goliath and there was a person present, positively grown up to years of maturity, who said to me, "Dear me! What an interesting story! What book is that in?" And I remember a person once coming to me in private—I spoke to

her about her soul—she told me how deeply she felt, how she had a desire to serve God. But she found another law in her members. I turned to a passage in Romans and read to her, “The good that I would I do not. And the evil which I would not, that I do!” She said, “Is that in the Bible? I did not know it.” I did not blame her because she had no interest in the Bible till then. But I did wonder that there could be found persons who knew nothing about such a passage! Ah, you know more about your ledgers than your Bible. You know more about your day-books than what God has written. Many of you will read a novel from beginning to end and what have you got? A mouthful of froth when you have done. But you cannot read the Bible—that solid, lasting, substantial and satisfying food goes uneaten, locked up in the cupboard of neglect—while anything that man writes—as a catch of the day, is greedily devoured. “I have written unto him the great things of My Law, *but they were counted as a strange thing.*”

You have never read it. I bring the broad charge against you. Perhaps you say I ought not to charge you with any such thing. I always think it better to have a worse opinion of you than too good an one. I charge you with this—you do not read your Bibles. Some of you never have read it through. I know I speak what your heart must say, is honest truth. You are not Bible readers. You say you have the Bible in your houses—do I think you are such heathens as not to have a Bible? But when did you last read it? How do you know that your spectacles, which you have lost, have not been there for the last three years? Many people have not turned over its pages for a long time and God might say unto them, “I have written unto you the great things of My Law, but they have been accounted unto you a strange thing.”

There are others who read the Bible, but when they read it, *they say it is so horribly dry*. That young man over there says it is a “bore.” That is the word he uses. He says, “My mother said to me when you go up to town, read a chapter every day. Well, I thought I would please her and I said I would. I am sure I wish I had not. I did not read a chapter yesterday or the day before. We were so busy. I could not help it.” You do not love the Bible, do you? “No, there is nothing in it which is interesting.” Ah, I thought so. But a little while ago *I could not see anything in it*. Do you know why? Blind men cannot see, can they? But when the Spirit touches the scales of the eyes they fall off. And when He puts eye-salve on, then the Bible becomes precious. I remember a minister who went to see an old lady and he thought he would give her some precious promises out of the Word of God. Turning to one he saw written in the margin, “P,” and he asked, “What does this mean?” “That means precious, Sir.” Further down He saw “T and P,” and he asked what the letters meant. “That,” she said, “means tried and proved, for I have tried and proved it.” If you have tried God’s Word and proved it. If it is precious to your souls, then you are Christians. But those persons who despise the Bible have “neither part nor lot in the matter.” If it is dry to you, you will be dry at

last in Hell. If you do not esteem it as better than your necessary food, there is no hope for you, for you lack the greatest evidence of your Christianity.

Alas, Alas, The worst case is to come. *There are some people who hate the Bible*, as well as despise it. Is there such an one stepped in here? Some of you said, "Let us go and hear what the young preacher has to say to us." This is what he has to say to you—"Behold you despisers and wonder and perish." This is what he has to say to you—"The wicked shall be turned into Hell and all that forget God." And this, again, he has to say to you—"Behold there shall come in the last days, mockers like yourselves, walking after your own lusts." But more—he tells you tonight that if you are not saved, you must find salvation here. Therefore, despise not the Bible, but search it, read it and come unto it. Rest you well assured, O Scorners, that your laughs cannot alter the Truth of God, your jests cannot avert your inevitable doom! Though in your hardihood you should make a league with death and sign a covenant with Hell—yet swift justice shall overtake you and strong vengeance strike you low. In vain do you jeer and mock, for eternal verities are mightier than your sophistries—nor can your smart sayings alter the Divine Truth of a single word of this volume of Revelation! Oh, why do you quarrel with your best Friend and ill-treat your only Refuge? There yet remains hope even for the scorner. Hope in a Savior's veins. Hope in the Father's mercy. Hope in the Holy Spirit's Omnipotent agency!

I have done when I have said one word. My Friend, the philosopher says it may be very well for me to urge people to read the Bible. But he thinks there are a great many sciences far more interesting and useful than theology! *Extremely obliged to you for your opinion, Sir*. What science do you mean? The science of dissecting beetles and arranging butterflies? "No," you say, "certainly not." The science, then, of arranging stones and telling us of the strata of the earth? "No, not exactly that." Which science then? "Oh, all sciences," you say, "are better than the science of the Bible." Ah, Sir, that is your opinion and it is because you are far from God that you say so! But the science of Jesus Christ is the most excellent of sciences! Let no one turn away from the Bible because it is not a book of learning and wisdom. It is! Would you know astronomy? It is here—it tells you of the Sun of Righteousness and the Star of Bethlehem. Would you know botany? It is here—it tells you of the plant of renown—the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon. Would you know geology and mineralogy? You shall learn it here—for you may read of the Rock of Ages and the White Stone with a name engraved thereon, which no man knows. Would you study history? Here is the most ancient of all the records of the history of the human race. Whatever your science is, come and bend over this Book. Your science is here. Come and drink out of this fair fount of knowledge and wisdom and you shall find yourselves made wise unto salvation. Wise and foolish, babes and men, gray-headed sires, youths and maidens—I speak to you, I plead with you, I

beg of you, respect your Bibles and search them out—for in them you think you have eternal life and these are they which testify of Christ!

I have done. Let us go home and practice what we have heard. I have heard of a woman, who, when she was asked what she remembered of the minister's sermon, said, "I don't recollect anything of it. It was about short weights and bad measures and I didn't recollect anything but to go home and burn the bushel." So if you will remember to go home and burn the bushel, if you will recollect to go home and read your Bibles, I shall have said enough! And may God, in His infinite mercy, when you read your Bibles, pour into your soul the illuminating rays of the Sun of Righteousness by the agency of the ever-adorable Spirit. Then you will, by God's Grace, read to your profit and to your soul's salvation.

We may say of THE BIBLE—

***"God's cabinet of revealed counsel 'tis!
Where weal and woe, are ordered so
That every man may know which shall be his.
Unless his own mistake, false application make
It is the index to eternity!
He cannot miss of endless bliss
Who takes this chart to steer by
Nor can he be mistook, that speaks by this Book.
It is the Book of God!
What if I should say, God of Books? Let him who looks
Angry at that expression, as too bold,
His thoughts in silence smother, till he find such
another."***

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.**

A DIVIDED HEART

NO. 276

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.”
Hosea 10:2.***

THIS passage may be taken as referring to the people of Israel as a nation and it is not less applicable to the Church of God. It is one grand and grievous fault with the Church of Christ at the present day that it is not merely divided somewhat in its creed and somewhat also in its practice of the ordinances, but alas, it is also somewhat divided in heart. When the differences are of such a character, that as people of God we can still love each other and still unite in the common battle against the cause of evil and in the common end of building up the Church, then there is but little that is faulty. But when our doctrinal divisions grow to so great a head that we cease to co-operate. When our opinions upon mere ordinances become so acid towards each other that we can no longer extend the right hand of fellowship to those who differ from us, then indeed is the Church of God found faulty.

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” Even Beelzebub with all his craft cannot stand when once his hosts are divided. If Beelzebub is divided against himself, even he must fall and assuredly this must be the case with those who lack that craft which might tend to overcome disunion. Oh, my Brethren, nothing can so soon cast down the Church from its high place, mar its glories and diminish its opportunities of success, as divisions among the hearts of God’s people. If we would grieve the Holy Spirit and cause Him to depart—if we would provoke the anger of the Most High and bring down trying Providences on the Churches, we have nothing to do but to be divided in our hearts and all will be accomplished. If we wish that every vial may empty out its ill and that every vessel may withhold its oil, we have but to cherish our bickering till they become animosities. We have but to nurse our animosities till they become hatreds and all the work will be fully completed.

And if this is the case in the Church at large, it is peculiarly true in those various sections of it which we now call Apostolic Churches. Oh, my Brethren, the smallest Church in the world is potent for good when it has but one heart and one soul. When pastor, elders, deacons and members are bound together by a threefold cord that cannot be broken—then are they mighty against every attack. But however great their numbers, however enormous their wealth, however splendid may be the talents with which they are gifted, they are powerless for good the moment that they become divided among themselves. Union is strength. Blessed is the army

of the living God in that day when it goes forth to battle with one mind and its soldiers as with the tramp of one man—in undivided march—go onwards towards the attack.

But a curse awaits that Church which runs here and there and which, divided in itself, has lost the main stay of its strength with which it should battle against the enemy. Division cuts our bowstrings, snaps our spears, hobble our horses and burns our chariots in the fire. We are undone the moment the link of love is snapped. Let this perfect bond be once cut in two and we fall down and our strength is departed. By union we live and by disunion we expire.

I intend, however, to take the text this morning specially with reference to our individual condition. We shall look at the separate individual heart of each man. If divisions in the great main body—if separation among the distinct classes of that body should each promote disasters, how much more disastrous must be a division in that better kingdom—the heart of man. If there is civil tumult in the town of Mansoul, even when no enemy attacks its walls, it will be in a sufficiently dangerous position. If the isle of man be governed by two kings, then is it disorganized and it will soon be destroyed. I address myself this morning to some of whom it can be said, “their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty.” And thus shall I address you, first of all noticing a fearful disease. Secondly, its usual symptoms. Thirdly, its sad effects and fourthly, its future consequences.

I. Observe, then, that our text describes a FEARFUL DISEASE. Their heart is divided. I have called it a fearful disease and this will very readily appear if you observe, first of all, the seat of it. It affects a vital part, it is not merely a disease of the hand—that reformation might cure. It is not merely a disease of the foot—that restraint might sometimes mollify. It is not merely a disease of the eye which has but to be couched to let the light stream in upon it. It is a disease of a vital region—of the heart. A disease in a part so vital that it affects the whole man. The utmost extremity of the frame suffers when once the heart becomes affected and especially so affected as to be divided. There is no power, no passion, there is no motive, no principle, which does not become vitiated, when once the heart is diseased.

Hence it is that Satan, who is always crafty, endeavors to strike at the heart. He will give you the hand if you please. You may be honest. He will give you the eye if you please. You shall be outwardly chaste. He will give you the foot, if you please. You shall appear to run in the way of righteousness. Only let him keep the heart, only let him rule in the citadel and he will be well content to give up all the rest. John Bunyan describes this as being one of the terms which old Diabolus was said to make with King Shaddai—“Oh,” said he, “I will give up all the city of Mansoul, if you will but permit me to live in the citadel of the heart.” Surely there was but little in his terms and conditions. Yes but give up everything else. If you retain the heart, you retain all, O, Fiend—for out of the heart are the issues of life.

Thus the disease of our text is one that touches a vital part, a part which if once affected, tends to vitiate the whole frame. But you will observe the disease here described not only deals with a vital part, but touches it after a most serious fashion. It does not simply say the heart palpitates. It does not declare that the life-floods that issue from it have become more shallow and less rapid, but it declares something worse than all these, namely, that the heart was cleft in two and utterly divided. A stony heart may be turned to flesh but turn a divided heart into whatsoever you please, so long as it is divided, all is ill. Nothing can go right when that which should be one organ becomes two. When the one motive power begins to send forth its life-floods into two diverse channels, it creates intestine strife and war. A united heart is life to a man, but if the heart is cut in two, in the highest, deepest and most spiritual sense, he dies. It is a disease which is not only affecting a vital part, but affecting it after the most deadly fashion.

But we must observe again of this divided heart, that it is a division in itself peculiarly loathsome. Men who are possessed of it do not feel themselves to be unclean. In fact they will visit all society—they will venture into the Church, they will propose to receive her communion and to be numbered with her members and they will afterwards go and mingle with the world—and they do not feel that they have become dishonest. They think themselves fit to mingle with honest worldlings and with sincere Christians, too. If a man had spots upon his countenance or some disease that stared everyone else in the face as often as he was beheld surely he would retire from society and endeavor to keep himself a recluse.

But not so the man with a divided heart. He goes everywhere, utterly unconscious that his disease is of the most loathsome character. Shall I show you how it is so? Take the glass and look at the man's heart and you will discern that it is loathsome—because Satan and sin reigns there. Although the man goes about and has sufficient of what is right and what is wrong to be uneasy in his sin, yet has he such an intense love of all manner of iniquity that he allows the loathsome demons to come and dwell in his heart. But his loathsomeness is worse than this, because all the while that he is really living in sin, he is a loathsome hypocrite, pretending that he is a child of God.

Of all the things in the world that stink in the nostrils of an honest man, hypocrisy is the worst. If you are a worldling, be a worldling. If you serve Satan, serve him. If Baal is god, serve him, but mask not your service of self and sin by a pretended service of God. Appear to be what you are, tear off your masks. The Church was never meant to be a masquerade. Stand out in your true colors. If you prefer Satan's shrine, say so and let men know it. But if you will serve God, serve Him and do it heartily, as knowing Him who is a jealous God and searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men. It is a terribly loathsome disease, this of a divided heart. If the man were but known, his disease is so loathsome that the most wicked men in the world would have nothing to do with him.

I have known sometimes instances of this. A man who pretended to be religious and regularly attended his place of worship is seen on one occasion entering into a ballroom of the very lowest class. He begins at once to plunge into its gaities, with the most evil intentions. He is at once observed. The right senses even of the wicked themselves are awakened. "Kick that man downstairs," is the unanimous verdict and he receives it and he deserved it right well. When a man has a divided heart—tries to do right and to do wrong, to serve God and to serve Satan at the same time—I say his disease is of so loathsome and degraded a character, that the very worldling, whose leprosy is on his brow, despises, hates him and avoids him.

And yet again, not merely is the disease loathsome, but I must observe it is one always difficult to cure, because it is chronic. It is not an acute disease, which brings pain and suffering and sorrow with it, but it is chronic—it has got into the very nature of the man. A divided heart, how are you to get at that? If it were a disease in any other part, the lancet might find it out, or some medicine might heal it. But what physician can join together a divided heart? What skillful surgeon can set together the disrupted members of a soul that has been divided between God and mammon? This is a disease which enters into the very nature and will lie in the blood, though the most powerful medicines search it out. This is a disease, in fact, which nothing but Omnipotent Grace can ever overcome. But he has no grace whose heart is divided between God and mammon. He is an enemy to God, he is an injury to the Church, he is a despiser of God's Word, he is a sheaf ripening for the harvest of eternal fire. His disease is deeply rooted within him and if left alone it will come to a most dreadful end—its end is sure destruction.

I must observe once more and then I will leave this point of the disease, that, according to the Hebrew of my text, this disease is a very difficult one to deal with, from the fact that it is a flattering disease. The text might be rendered—"Their heart flatters them. Now are they found faulty." There are many cunning flatterers in the world, but the most cunning is man's own heart. A man's own heart will flatter him even about his sins. A man is a grasping miser—his heart flatters him that he is only exercising proper business habits. A man on the other hand is extravagant and spends the good gifts of God upon his own evil passions. Then his heart tells him that he is a liberal soul. The heart turns "sweet into bitter and bitter into sweet." It is so "deceitful above all things," and so "desperately wicked," that it has the impudence to "put darkness for light and light for darkness."

Now when a man has a divided heart, he generally flatters himself. "Well," says he, "it is true I drink too much, but then there is never a time that I refuse a guinea towards a charity. It is true," says he "I am not certainly what I should be in my moral character, but still, see how regularly I keep to my Church or Chapel. It is true," says he, "I don't now and then mind a trick or two in my trade, but I am always ready to help the poor." And so he imagines that he blots out an evil trait in his character with a

good one and thus flatters his heart. And see how self-contented and satisfied he is. The poor child of God is trying his own heart with the deepest possible anxiety—this man knows of no such thing—he is always fully assured that he is right.

The true Believer is sitting down and turning over his accounts day by day to see whether he is really on the road to Heaven or whether he has mistaken his evidence and has been deceived. But this man, self-satisfied, bandages his own eyes and walks deliberately on, singing at every step, straight to his own destruction. I know of some such now. It will not suffice for me simply to state what their character is unless God the Holy Spirit opens their eyes. They will be sure not to know their own likeness, even though I should paint it to the very life and put in every touch and stroke, yet they will say, “Ah he could not refer to *me*. I am so good and so godly, there could have been no reference to me in anything that he said.”

Do you know a class of people that pull the most tremendously long faces, that always look so serious, that talk the English language with a kind of unctuous twang, that give a savory pronunciation to every word they utter? Beware of them! When a man wears all his religion in his face, he has generally but a very small stock in his heart. Those tradesmen that put such a great display in their windows, frequently have very little behind. So with these professors—no one would know they were religious, so they label themselves that you may not make a mistake. You would think they were worldlings, if it were not for their sanctimonious appearance. But by putting that on, they think to glide through the world with credit. I hope they are not imagining that they shall stand accepted before the bar of God and deceive the Omniscient.

Alas for them! Their heart is divided. This is no uncommon disease, despite its loathsomeness and its terrible fatality. Rife is it in this day. Tens of thousands of Englishmen who are reckoned good and honorable are afflicted with it. Their whole head is sick and their whole heart faint from the fact that their heart is divided. They lack the courage to be thorough-going sinners and they have not sincerity enough to be truly-devoted people of God.

II. Having thus described the disease, I proceed to notice its USUAL SYMPTOMS. When a man’s heart is divided, one of the most frequent symptoms is formality in his religious worship. You know some men, perhaps, who are very stringent Believers of a certain form of doctrine and very great admirers of a certain shape of Church rule and government. You will observe them utterly despising and abhorring and hating all who differ from their predilections. Albeit the difference is but as a jot or a tittle, they will stand up and fight for every rubric, defend every old rusty nail in the Church door and think every syllable of their peculiar creed should be accepted without challenge.

“As it was in the beginning, so must it be now and so must it ever be even unto the end.” Now it is an observation which your experience will probably warrant, as certainly mine does, that mostly these people stand up so fiercely for the form, because, lacking the power, that is all they

have to boast of. They have no *faith*, though they have a *creed*. They have no life within and they supply its place with outward ceremony. What wonder therefore that they fiercely defend that?

The man who knows how precious the life of godliness is, the man who understands its vitality, its deep-seated, deeply-rooted heart power—he also loves the form, but not as he loves the Spirit. He approves the letter, but he likes the pith and marrow better. He is apt, perhaps, to think less of forms than he should do, for he will mingle first with one body of sincere Christians and then with another and he will say, “If I can enjoy my Master’s presence it is but little matter to me where I am found. If I can but find the name of Christ extolled and His simple Gospel preached, this is all I desire.” Not so the man whose heart is divided—who has no soul in godliness. He is bigoted to the extreme and well—I repeat it—he may be, poor man. All he has is the empty shell. What wonder, therefore, that he should be ready to fight for it?

You will notice many persons punctilious with regard even to the form of our own simple worship. They will have it that there must always be observed, not simply reverent behavior in the House of God, but something more than mere reverence, there must be an abject slavish, tyrannical fear upon the hearts of all who are gathered. They will have it that every jot and tittle of our worship must always be conducted with a certain traditional decorum. Now these people, as frequently as not, know nothing whatever of the power of godliness and only contend for these little shells because they have not the kernel. They fight for the surface albeit they have never discovered “the deep that couches beneath.” They know not the precious ores that lie in the rich mines of the Gospel and therefore the surface, covered though it is with weeds and thistles, is quite enough for them.

Formality in religion is very often a trait in the character of a man who has a divided heart. But this, perhaps, is not the most prominent symptom. Another mark in such a man’s character is his inconsistency. You must not see him always, if you would have a good opinion of him. You must be guarded as to the days on which you call upon him. Call upon him on a Sunday and you will find him like a saint—don’t call upon him on the Saturday night—you might, perhaps, find him very much like the worst of sinners. Oh, of all the men in the world whom I fear most for, because I know their dangerous and deceitful position, they are those among you who try with all your might to follow the Church and yet follow the world. You can come up and sing the sacred hymns of Zion one evening and another time you can go to your haunts and sing a profane and lascivious song. You can drink one day at the table of the Lord and another day at the table of devils. You appear to run first of all with God’s people in His service and then afterwards run with the multitude to do evil.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this, indeed, is a terrible fact—a terrible index of a frightful disease. You must have a divided heart if you lead an inconsistent life. It is a happy circumstance when a minister can believe of his

Church that he has no hypocrite in the whole number. But I am bold to say, though with the deepest sorrow, this is more than I could believe of so large a Church as that over which I am called to preside. Ah, Friends, there may be some of you who practice sins unseen by your pastor's eye. Neither elder or deacon has yet found you out. You have been cunning in your iniquity. Perhaps your sin is of such an order that Church discipline would altogether fail to touch it.

You know, however, and your conscience tells you, that your life is not consistent with your profession. I adjure you, by the living God, as you and I must stand at the Last Great Day face to face at His tremendous bar, either give up your profession, or be true to it. Cease to be called a Christian, or else be a Christian in truth. Seek more grace, that you may live up to the example of your Master, or else I entreat you—and do it honestly and if you would take me at my word, I should rejoice that you had done so—renounce your membership and no longer make a profession of godliness. An inconsistent life, I say, is a sure token of a divided heart.

And again I must observe there is another token of a divided heart, namely—variableness in object. I might depict a character which you have met with often in your life. A man who attends a public meeting upon some religious matter is seized with a sudden enthusiasm to do good. If he will not be a missionary to the heathen himself, yet he will undertake to devote of his substance to the cause and for the next week there is nothing on his tongue but the missionary enterprise. A little while after he attends some political meeting and now there is nothing before him but the reformation of politics. Another week and he is called to attend some sanitary commission and now there is nothing wanted but proper drainage.

Religion, politics, social economy, each in its turn and everything else must give place to the last topic which has engrossed his attention. These men run first in one direction—then in another. Their religion is all spasmodic. They are taken with it as men are taken with a chill. They shake by fits and now and then they are calm. They are sometimes hot and feverish and now and then they are chilly and cold. They take up their religion and then they lay it down again. What does this prove concerning them, but that they have a divided heart and they are in the sight of God diseased, loathsome persons, who shall never see His face with joy?

To conclude the list of symptoms. Once more, frivolity in religion is often a token of a divided heart. And here I address myself more immediately to those of my own age. It is perhaps too common a sin with young persons to treat religion with a light and frivolous air. There is a seriousness which is well becoming, especially in youthful Christians. Cheerfulness should be the constant aim of the aged. Their tendency is towards sadness. Perhaps a proper seriousness and solemnity should be the aim of the youthful Believer, whose tendency will rather be to levity than to despondency.

Oh, my Brethren, when we talk about religious things with flippancy—when we quote texts of Scripture in order to make jests upon them, when we come up to the Lord’s Table as if it were but a common repast—when we come to Baptism as though it were but an ordinary observance, about which no solemnity is to be found—then I fear we prove that our heart is divided. And I know that any soul conscious of its guilt, if it has really been brought to know the love of Christ, will always come to sacred things in an altered manner. We do not come to the Lord’s Table with lightness of heart. There have been times when it has seemed too solemn a matter for us to come at all. And as for Baptism, he that comes to Baptism without having searched his heart, without having looked well to his motives and without true devotion of spirit, comes altogether in vain. As the wrong communicant may eat and drink damnation to himself, so may he who would be thus wrongly baptized receive condemnation instead of a blessing. Frivolity of spirit is often a sign of a divided heart.

III. This brings us to the third point, the sad effect, of a divided heart. When a man’s heart is divided, he is at once everything that is bad. With regard to himself he is an unhappy man. Who can be happy while he has rival powers within his own breast? The soul must find a nest for itself, or else it cannot find rest. The bird that would seek to rest upon two twigs would never have peace and the soul that endeavors to find two resting places, first, the world and then the Savior, will never have any joy or comfort. A united heart is a happy heart—hence David says, “Unite my heart to fear Your name.” They that give themselves wholly to God are a blessed people, for they find that the ways of religion are “ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.” Men who are neither this nor that, neither one thing nor another, are always uneasy and miserable. The fear of discovery and the consciousness of being wrong conspire together to agitate the soul and make it full of unease, disease and restlessness of spirit. Such a man is unhappy in himself.

He is in the next place useless in the Church. Of what good is such a man to us? We cannot put him in the pulpit to propound that Gospel he does not practice. We cannot put him in the deaconship to serve the Church which his life would ruin. We cannot commit to his charge the spiritual matters of the Church in the eldership, because we discern that not being spiritual himself, he is not to be entrusted with them. In no respect is he of any good to us. “Reprobate silver shall men call them.” His name may be in the Church-book, but it had better be taken away. He may sit among us and give us his contribution, we should be better without it and without him than with either, though he should double his talent and treble his contribution. We know that no man who is not united in his heart, vitally and entirely, to Christ, can never be of the slightest service to the Church of God.

But not only this. He is a man dangerous to the world. Such a man is like a leper going abroad in the midst of healthy people. He spreads the disease. The drunkard is a leper set apart by himself. He does but little harm comparatively, for he, in his drunkenness, is like the leper when he

is driven from society. His very drunkenness cries out, "Unclean, unclean, unclean!" But this man is a professor of religion and therefore tolerated. He says he is a Christian and therefore he is admitted into all society and yet he is inwardly full of rottenness and deception. Though outwardly whitewashed like a sepulcher, he is more dangerous to the world, I say, than the most vicious of men. Tie him up—let him not go loose—build a prison for him.

But what am I saying? If you would build a prison for hypocrites, all London would not suffice for ground for the prisons. Oh my Brethren, notwithstanding the impossibility of binding them, I do say that the maddest dog in the hottest weather is not one-half so dangerous to men as a man who has a divided heart—one who runs about with the rabid poison of his hypocrisy upon his lips and destroys the souls of men by contamination. Not only unhappy himself, useless to the Church, and dangerous to the world but he is contemptible to everybody. When he is found out nobody receives him. Scarcely will the world own him and the Church will have nothing to administer to him but its censure.

The most solemn consideration, however, is that this man is reprobate in the sight of God. To the eye of infinite Purity he is one of the most obnoxious and detestable of beings. His heart is divided. A pure and holy God hates, first, his sin and secondly, the lies with which he endeavors to cover it. Oh, if there is a place where sinners are more loathsome to God than anywhere else, it is in His Church. A dog in its kennel is well enough—but a dog in the throne-room is quite out of place. A sinner in the world is bad enough, but in the Church he is hideous. A madman in an asylum is a creature to be pitied, but a madman who protests he is not mad and will thrust himself among us that he may obtain means of doing mischief, is not merely to be pitied—he is to be avoided and needs to be restrained.

God hates sin anywhere, but when sin puts its fingers upon His Divine altar—when it comes and lays its insolent hand upon the sacrifice that is burning there—then God spurns it from Him with disgust. Of all men who stand in the most likely place to receive the mightiest thunderbolt and the most terrible lightning flash, those are the men who have a divided heart and profess to serve God while with their souls they are serving sin. Take heed, Sinner, take heed. Running on in your sin you will meet with punishment. But after all, O Hypocrite, look well to your ways—for your sin and your life together shall bring down a dread and swift destruction upon your devoted head.

IV. In conclusion I have to address some remarks to you with regard to the FUTURE PUNISHMENT of the man whose heart is divided—unless he is rescued by a great salvation.

I have endeavored to preach faithfully this morning, as faithfully as I could, but I am conscious that many of the children of God do not find food under such a sermon as this, nor is it my intention that they should do so. It is not rightly possible to blend the sieve of sifting, with the bushel of the Gospel. We cannot well bring you the wheat and the sieve, too. This

morning I have sought to take the fan ministerially into my hand and thoroughly purge this floor, in the name of Him who shall be the great "Purger" at the Last Day. We all need it whether we know it or not. The best Christian needs sometimes to question himself as to his motives. And when God's children are not fed, it is often more profitable to them to be led to examine themselves, than it would be if they had some rich promise to feed upon.

My Hearers, out of so vast a number this morning, are there none among you with divided hearts? Is it possible that this whole congregation is made up of sincere Christians, truly enlightened, called and saved? Is there not one man, who, mistaking his place, has put himself among the sheep when he should have been among the goats? Is there not one man here who, without making a mistake, has dared impudently to thrust himself into the number of God's priests, when he is really a worshipper of Baal? Let me then, in the last place, that I may with faithfulness discharge my mission, describe the terrible condition of the hypocrite when God shall come to judge the world.

The hypocrite comes with brazen face. He comes in the midst of the congregation of the righteous. The mandate has gone from the Throne, "Gather out first the tares!" He hears the mandate and his cheek pales not. His impudence continues with him even now. He would still knock at the door and say, "Lord! Lord! open to me." The dividing angel flies. Terror is on the face of the wicked, as on the left the tares are bound in bundles to burn. Imagine, however the still greater consternation of this individual, who, standing in the midst of ministers, saints and Apostles, suddenly finds himself about to be gleaned from them. With a tremendous swoop, like an eagle descending from its lofty height, the death angel bears upon him, snatches him away and claims him as his own.

"You are," says the black angel, "You are a tare. You have grown side by side with the wheat, but that has not changed your nature. The dew that falls upon the wheat has fallen upon you. The sun which shone upon it you have enjoyed also, but you are still a tare and your doom remains the same. You shall be bound up with the rest in bundles to be burned." O Hearer, what must be his consternation when with mighty hand that angel plucks him up by the roots, carries him away and he that thought himself a saint is bound up with sinners for destruction!

And now imagine the reception that he meets. He is brought into the midst of the wicked—the wicked who once with Pharisaic tongue he had reproved. "Here he comes," say they, "the man who instructed us, the good man who taught us to do better. Here he comes himself, found out at last to be no better than those whom he despised." And then imagine, if you dare, the inner dungeon, the reserved seats of that fiery abode and the heaviest chain of despair—imagine, I say, if you can, the terrible destruction, terrible beyond every other, which shall overwhelm the man who in this world deceived the Church and dishonored God, but who is now detected to his shame. Common sinners have the common prison,

but this man shall be thrust into the inner prison and made fast in the stocks of despair.

Tremble, Professors, tremble—you who are half-and-half religious men! Tremble, you who pretend to fear God, but like the Samaritans, worship your idols, also. O, tremble now, lest your trembling should come upon you in a day when you are not aware of it, when you shall long for the rocks to hide and for the mountains to cover you, but shall be without a shelter in the day of the fierce anger of the God of the whole earth.

And now, I cannot send you away without preaching the Gospel for a moment or two. I have, perhaps, one here who is saying, “Sir, my heart is not only divided, but it is broken.” Ah, there is a great deal of difference between a divided heart and a broken heart. The divided heart is cut in two, the broken heart is broken in pieces, all asunder and yet it is not divided. It is all in pieces, in one sense, as to its proud hope and it is melted, in another sense, as to its earnest longing that it may be saved.

Poor, broken Heart, I was not rebuking you. Are you desirous this morning to have your sins put away? Then from the bottom of your poor broken heart cry today, “Lord, save me from hypocrisy. Whatever I may be, do not permit me to think I am one of Yours if I am not.” Are you breathing out this prayer to God, “Lord, make me truly Yours. Put me among Your children. Let me call You ‘my Father,’ and not turn away from You. Give me a new heart and a right spirit. O wash me in the blood of Christ and make me clean. Make me what You would have me be and I will praise You forever”?

Remember, my dear Hearer, if that is the desire of your heart, you are this day bid to believe that Christ is able to save you and willing to save you and waiting to be gracious unto you and more ready to bestow mercy than you are to receive it. Therefore you are commanded to trust Him, for all your sins have been punished on Him as your Surety and for the sake of Christ, God is willing now to receive you, now to bless you. Come close with Him this morning. Lift yours eye to Him that did die upon the tree. Put your trust in Him who is my Redeemer and your Redeemer, too. Let the blood which flows from His side be received into your heart. Open your poor wounds and say, “My Master, heal these wounds for me. O Jesus! I know no other trust. If You will save me I will know no other love. My heart is undivided in its love, it looks alone to You. It shall be soon undivided in its gratitude. I will praise You, and You alone.”

Poor heart-broken Penitent, I did not wrongly contradict myself by saying, “Though your heart is broken, it is not divided.” Bring it just as it is and say, “Lord, receive me through the blood of Christ and let me be Yours now and Yours forever, through Jesus.” Amen.

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

THE DIVIDED HEART

NO. 3527

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 1916.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, APRIL 14, 1872.

*"Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty."
Hosea 10:2.*

THIS was originally spoken of the Kingdom of Israel. For many years they had been under a king who commanded the worship of Baal and persecuted the worshippers of Jehovah. God chastened the people very sorely for this, but He did not utterly destroy them. At last Hoshea, the king, came to the throne. He was the last king of Israel and it is very remarkable that it is said of him that he was much better than those who went before him. He did not evil in the sight of the Lord after the manner of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He was not what could be wished, but still he was not like the rest—and it seems very odd to a person who reads it casually that God should spare the nation under worse kings—and then should carry it away into captivity when they had, for once, a far better king! But the matter is explained thus. Hoshea withdrew the curse of persecution from the people and they were left free to follow Jehovah.

While they were persecuted—compelled to worship Baal—God, as it were, had compassion upon them. He abhorred their idolatry, but still His anger did not burn against them to the same degree as it did afterwards when they were left to do as they pleased, religious persecution was withdrawn and the pressure was taken off. Then, when there began to be internal discussion and strife—and some went after the true God, but others still followed the old idol—*then* it was that God saw that the nation was incurable. They were altogether set upon evil and He said, "Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty." Or it might be read, "Now shall they be condemned." From which I gather that a sin in a certain case may be overlooked for a while, but the same sin under another circumstance may be speedily punished. God knows the circumstances of temptation in which a man may be placed, and though the force of temptation is not an excuse for sin, it may serve as a mitigation of it. A person under a tyrannizing power who is driven to sin by fear may be far less guilty than another who is under no such constraint, but who willfully, of his own heart, chooses the evil. And God may bear a long time

with the same sin in a man under certain circumstances, which in another, under different circumstances, shall provoke Him at once to anger—and He shall sweep the man from off the face of the earth! Beware, dear Hearers, of deliberate sin! Beware of the sin which is of your own choosing! I may say, *beware of all sin*, for in a measure it is deliberate and of your own choosing—but especially that sin which is not brought upon you by any pressure, but simply by your own willful disobedience to God! This is a crying sin and one which God will not long put up with!

And now I shall take the language of the text and apply it in other ways. “Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty.”

I. THIS MAY BE TRUE OF ANY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

It has long been my joy, Beloved in the Lord, that our heart has not been divided. We have walked together these many years in holy fellowship and, imperfect as we are, yet there have not been divisions among us. There has been no division about Doctrine. We have agreed upon the great Truths of God. There has been, I believe, no division about who shall be the greatest. We have been content, each one, to occupy his place in the Church and to work on. It is not our goodness that has made it so—it is only the power of God’s Spirit which has kept us, who otherwise might readily have been divided—kept us as the heart of one man in sacred unity. Oh, let it always be so—let it always be so! May these eyes be closed in the darkness of death long before I shall see you contending, the one against the other! If it should ever happen that I should be unfit to go in and out among you to your edification, may I be laid aside and some other found round whom you may rally as one man, that by any means and every means the Church may be kept in its integrity—one in heart—a threefold cord which cannot be broken! Let each man endeavor to avoid giving offense to his brother. Let us all be members unto edification of the same one Lord, one faith, one Baptism. May the same Spirit abide in us and work with us to God’s Glory, for we well know that a divided Church is found guilty. It is guilty so far as anything like usefulness is concerned. The strength that is spent in division is so much taken away from service. When the children of God use their swords against one another, they are not using them against the adversaries of the Lord. May our strength never be spent in division. A house divided against itself must come to nothing, but strong in the unity which God shall give us may we not be found guilty! I will not dwell upon that, however, but remark that the text—

II. MAY BE USED, AGAIN, OF EACH INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN.

One-heartedness in a Christian is a great point. “Unite my heart to fear Your name” is a prayer which every Christian should always pray. “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” A double-hearted Christian—what shall I say of him? He is like the eye which when it is single, fills the body with light, but if it has lost its singleness, it causes the

body to be in darkness—and if the light that is in us is darkness, how great is that darkness! Though a Christian, deep down in his soul, cannot be divided in heart, but must love his God, yet there may be very much of division of pursuit, division of aim and objectives in Christians. And, Brothers and Sisters, may I not suggest that it may be so with some of you, that your hearts may be divided and, therefore, you are found guilty? Take the Christian who desires to serve God, but still is equally desirous to amass wealth. Such a man—may God not put him into the scales and judge him, for I fear he will be found wanting—but if his desire for wealth is ever subordinate to that of the Glory of God only in a slight degree, he will never attain to any great eminence in the Divine Life. He cannot! In proportion as his vital force is divided and drawn away from the main business of life, he will become spiritually lean, even if he becomes pecuniarily rich. He may be a millionaire in the world, but he will be a pauper in the Church. He may be a “strong” man in the market, but he shall be a very dwarf in the House of God! There will surely be a guiltiness where the heart is so divided! The most charitable construction we can put upon it is that there are darker evils!

We have known Christians, too, whose objective in life has been *the large acquiring of knowledge*, the pursuit of science, the gathering up of information. This, like the pursuit of wealth, is lawful enough in its subordinate place, but when it comes into rivalry with the seeking of the Glory of God, the man may become a scholar, but he will never become a beloved disciple that leans his head upon Jesus’ bosom! He may be great in the classics and he may be a master in the sciences, but he will never be a master in Israel! The division of his vital powers, the lack of concentration will be sure to keep him in the rear ranks of the Church of God—if he is kept there. Oh, what a blessed thing it is to see a wholehearted Christian, who, while he pursues his present business, still pursues it for God’s Glory! While he studies and stores his mind, is doing it for one objective, namely, that he may be thereby more useful to the Church of God and more helpful in the winning of souls! Give the man but one heart, one objective, and he is a man! Someone has said that he dreaded the man of one book—and so the wicked world may dread the man of one objective if that one objective is the Glory of God! They that have two targets to shoot at shall not strike either—they miss their aim—but he who lives only for God with all his might is like a thunderbolt launched from Jehovah’s hand that goes crashing through every difficulty and reaches the point God aims at—and that the man, himself, seeks! He shall live for something! He shall count upon his age! He shall leave his mark! The man with an undivided heart—he shall not be found guilty. But he that is this and that—a follower of Christ, but yet something over and above that, almost equally as much the other, as he is a Christian—he shall be a poor, poor thing! He shall not enjoy the light of fellowship with God. He

shall not walk in nearness to Christ. He shall be saved, but “so as by fire.” No “abundant entrance” shall be administered to him into the Kingdom of God, our Father.

I believe, dear Friends, and I will go a step further using the same words, that this case, if it should happen to be that of *a minister with a divided heart*, is more sad than it is in the case of the common Christian. Dear Brothers, those of us who believe that we are called to be ministers for Christ are, above all the rest of the Church, bound to devote ourselves to one thing. “This one thing I do.” If other men have two things to do, we, by our call and office, if we are not liars in professing to be of God, and traitors to our office, are bound to do but one thing—and that is to free ourselves from the blood of all men that we may stand before God as His honest servants. You may depend upon it that a minister with his heart at all divided will make a failure of his ministry. It must be so. I have watched the career of a good many young men, though not old, myself, [Spurgeon was near 36] and I remember one with remarkable abilities. In his preaching there was a good clear sound of the Gospel. But I, who was as a father to him, noted that he had an ambitious desire to be distinguished as a speaker. I saw that even when he sought to win souls, it was with a view that persons might say how earnest he was. I could not help detecting in his conversation that there was an evident objective to make himself something, that he might be great in Israel. And I remember well how I walked with him and warned him that if God’s servant did anything whatever for himself, God would not use him for His Divine purposes. That if we sacrificed to our pride, God would not let us stand as priests at His altar. That if we would be honored, we must stay down, stay humble—that God would not long bless a man who was self-seeking, even in the ministry of Christ. The warnings he received very kindly, but they never sank into his heart, and I can see him now! He is not here, but were he here I think he would confess the truth of what I say. He lies a miserable wreck upon the shore and he has fallen by his ambition! Had it not been for that, I would have conceived for him a high and excellent career. And I would say to every minister, “I charge you fling away your ambition! Your only ambition must be to be nothing, to be hated, scouted, called a fool, a driveller, if by any means you may win souls for Christ! But to cultivate rhetoric, to be an orator, to study that you may be thought to be a profound thinker, to labor earnestly with this idea that you may be esteemed to be a first-class soul-winner—even that is bad! The only thing is to seek to do what God would have you do and to glorify Him—to lay every honor at His feet and live for Him, for any sort of division in the Christian minister’s pursuit may make him faulty.” I believe that the man who gives himself to be a preacher should divest himself of the cares of this life, as the soldier does in the army, that he may be able to give his whole soul and life to the one matter for which

his Lord has called him. It will be good for him to do this. And then he had better leave politics alone. He had better leave everything alone but his one work. We have not mind enough for two things—and besides, our work is such that if we had mind enough for 20 things it would be best to consecrate it all to that one thing! If I may snatch firebrands from the flame, who will, may fill your Senate and may guide the policies of Cabinets! If I may lead sinners to the Cross of Christ and tell them of life in His dear wounds, I should be content, though I should never influence anything else except the hearts of men to the Savior! One thing, young man, if you are about to be a minister—one thing, my Brother, however old you may be, permit me to say to you and myself tonight—there is only one thing we must do if we would not be found guilty.

But the stress of my text I intend to lay tonight upon one particular case, and that is—

III. THE SEEKING SINNER.

There are some persons who are awakened and are seeking salvation, but they are not likely to find it because their heart is divided and they will be found guilty. Very briefly, and very briefly, indeed, I mean to speak upon this disease, upon the evil of it, and suggest a few thoughts by way of a cure for it.

Of this disease, let me say that *it is a disease in the heart*. Now a very small prick in the heart will kill. A great gash in the head may be healed, but a slight wound in the heart is deadly. A division of understanding or of judgment may be remedied, but a division of heart is a very terrible and often a very fatal disease. Let me show you how and in what respects some seeking souls are divided in heart.

And they are, first, *divided as to a sense of their condition*. At one time they think they are in great danger. Tomorrow they don't know that there is anything very particular. When they have read a passage of Scripture, they believe their heart to be evil, but they forget the text and they think their heart is, after all, not so bad as Scripture says it is. They hear that there is a wrath to come and they are alarmed, but they get away to their friends and neighbors and say, "Why was I so foolish as to be frightened by the preacher?" They are in danger—they dare not say they are not, but yet they almost hope it is not true! They know it is not all right with them, yet they try to cheat themselves with the idea that it is pretty nearly all right. They are never likely to seek a Savior while they are in this condition, for until a man's mind is thoroughly made up that he must be saved by Christ or perish, he will never go to Christ. A divided heart about our personal condition before God is a deadly sign.

These same seekers are often divided *as to the objects of their choice*. They need salvation tonight—they would give their eyes to have it. They will get to their chamber and pray, "O God, save me!" They will endorse the language of that hymn—

**“Wealth and honor I disdain.
Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain.
These can never satisfy—
Give me Christ, or else I die.”**

Tomorrow they will forget all about Christ and they will be seeking after something else. Tonight they would have Heaven, but tomorrow they would find a Heaven on earth! Tonight they would give up sin, but tomorrow they wish to have much of it. Tonight they see the emptiness of earthly pleasure, but tomorrow they will suck it down as the ox drinks down water. Their heart is divided between this and that. They are not quite for the world nor quite for Christ—they halt between two opinions! Oh, that God would decide them that their heart, their divided heart, may not prove their ruin!

Some seekers are divided as to *the object of their trust*. They trust in Jesus Christ, but they also trust a little in themselves. They believe His blood has a great deal to do with it, but they think their prayers have something, too, and so they stand with one foot on the land and the other on the sea and, therefore, they fall! They are relying upon self in part and upon Christ in part, and so they will assuredly come to destruction, for Christ will never be part Savior! It must be all or nothing! He never entered into partnership with sinful worms to help save them—He is the sole Foundation—and other foundation can no man lay. Alas, upon this matter, how many have their hearts divided! They are trusting to their Baptism, or to their Confirmation, or to their “sacraments”—all false foundations—and yet they are trying to trust in Christ at the same time! Their heart is divided and now they are held guilty.

And this division is found *in their love*. They think they love Divine things, but by-and-by some earthly thing comes in and gets uppermost in their souls! Oh, I do remember myself when, if I woke in the morning, I always took care to have a godly book under my pillow, and an awakening book, too—Doddridge’s, “Rise and Progress,” Alleine’s, “Alarm,” Bunyan’s books and the like—and yet at another time I forgot all about that. I was hot today and cold tomorrow. I would have been ready to die in order to be saved, sometimes, and other times would gladly have escaped from the mercy of God to be permitted to “enjoy myself,” as I said, in the things of the world! Oh, it is a sad state to be in. A seeker will never get Christ until he must have Christ, and he will never get salvation until salvation is the first thing, the last thing, the middle thing with him—until it comes to this, “By God’s Spirit I must be saved! Nothing will content me. I must be saved and until I am saved, I cannot give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids.” The Lord in His mercy give us an united heart about this, for a divided heart, here, is a guilty heart in the seeker. Now let me speak upon—

IV. THE DANGER OF THIS DISEASE—the evil of it. The evil of it is, first, that *seekers with divided hearts miss the blessing*. You shall find Him when you seek Him with your whole heart—not till then. Mercy's door opens to the knock of a whole-hearted knocker. A half-hearted seeker will have to wait many a day before that gate will ever give him entrance. No, Soul, if you do not think enough of mercy to ask for it with all your heart, you will have to wait awhile. No, Man, the choice mercies of God are too precious to be thrown away upon one who asks with a divided heart! Now look at Heaven's gate instead of here and there, instead of looking right and left. For you one thing is necessary, Sinner—just one thing. Fifty things you may leave to be sought, by-and-by, but now for you it is one thing, and if you will not make it one thing, you will miss it—miss it to your eternal loss!

Again, remember that you who seek the Lord with a divided heart *condemn yourselves*. When you stand before the Judgment Seat you won't be able to say, as some will, "Lord, we did not know of this salvation. Lord, we never were impressed with its value," for the Lord would tell you, "Why, you trembled under a sermon. You knelt and prayed, and you cried to Me, though you lied with yours lips because your heart was not perfect before Me. Yet you did know the value of these things and you did feel them, too, in a measure, so that you are without excuse." He that follows the world with all his heart and thinks that is the best, is a reasonable man in following it. But he who thinks the world to come the best, and yet follows this present evil world—why, what a fool he is—and who shall plead for him? When he stands before God, his prayers will damn him, if nothing else will, for his prayers will be swift witnesses against him that he did know, did feel and yet he would not act upon his knowledge—he blotted out that which he perceived in his feelings. God save us from missing Heaven and from condemning ourselves by seeking it with a divided heart!

Moreover, O Man, I would press one fact upon you very solemnly, and that is that a divided search after salvation is *an insult to the Savior*. Who is it and what is it, O Man, that you set up in competition with Christ? All Heaven and earth cannot produce His equal, and have you found something that can rival Him? What is it? Dare you say what it is? There have been men who have had good thoughts, but even a harlot's love has been chosen by them, instead of Christ! There are others who have loved the wages of unrighteousness, and Sabbath-breaking has made them forego Christ. We have known others who, for fear of a little scandal from their worldly companions, have been ashamed to follow Christ, and they have given up Jesus Christ sooner than bear a fool's derision! O Man, if you had the choice given you tonight of all the kingdoms of this world, or Christ, you would insult Christ if you should pause in the choice, for He is better than them all, and your soul's salvation is better than them all!

“For what shall it profit a man, though he gains the whole world, and lose his own soul?” But I can weep for you while I rebuke you. What is it you put in competition with Christ? What is it you prefer to Christ? Man, are you mad that you should insult your Savior, who poured out His heart’s blood for the salvation of such as you are, and do you think that anything can be worth the having at so dreadful a price as the loss of your soul, and the loss of the Savior’s salvation? I beseech you, turn that over in your mind! I cannot put it as forcibly as I would, but I pray you let your conscience help you and answer if it is right in you to have a divided heart, and so to insult your Savior.

Once more on this point, and that is, do you not know that a divided heart is *a continued disobedience to God*? He says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength”—and now you have sinned your soul out of His favor and in danger of eternal death—and still with only half a heart do you turn to Him! You put out one hand towards God, but with the other you would have your sin! You would gladly go to Heaven and take your sins with you! You would be saved, but you want to sit both at the table of the Lord and the table of Satan! You desire to hold with the hare and run with the hounds—be the friend of the devil and yet the friend of God. O Man, the very thought is rebellion against your Maker! Cast it away from you and ask the Lord, this night, to bind all your affections into one bundle, and then draw them all to Him—that for you the one thing may be to seek salvation through Christ and reconciliation to the good Lord in Heaven through the precious blood of His dear Son! And now hear the last few words which shall be meant to be—

V. A CURE FOR THIS DISEASE of a divided heart. And the first word shall be this. You ought well to have done with a divided heart when *the matter in hand is your salvation or damnation*. When a ship is floating gaily out at sea with favorable winds, men think but little of their safety. When she begins to rock and there is some danger, then their safety rises in importance and they put it side by side with the safety of the gold they carry with them! But when the winds break loose and the storm is up, and the ship is about to go by the board, and the man must leap into the lifeboat, he flings his gold away—he leaves his treasures loose upon the floor. As they sink into the abyss, he gives up anything if he may but save his life! In that dread hour when the vessel is going down and a handful of men alone are clinging to a mast, all is gone from them except the thought of saving life. And surely it should be so with you! When you are saved, you may begin to think of some other thing, but not tonight! For as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, there is but a step between some of you and death! Before another Sabbath—I may speak positively, for out of so many as there are here, someone of us will die this week, by all the probabilities of life and death—before another Sabbath one of us

will lie in the shell, prepared to be taken to the grave! And if that should happen to be an unconverted man, then before another Sabbath you will know of Hell and of the Lake of Fire more than this Book can tell or these lips can utter, unless you are converted and fly to Christ! Surely in such jeopardy, your whole heart ought to be set upon the one matter—your own salvation—and I beseech you and I pray God the Spirit to make it so that you may now, with your whole undivided faculties, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. By the awful peril of your soul, I do entreat you linger, delay and remain undecided no more, lest your heart, being divided, should prove guilty and be cast away forever!

Remember, again, and the argument is equally forcible, though it is more pleasing, *the mercy that you are seeking after is worth the concentration of all your thoughts to find it.* To be delivered from all your past sin—is not this worth the seeking? To be made a child of God—is not this worth wrestling for? To be secure of Heaven, to be delivered from Hell—is not this worth an attempt to obtain? Oh, if it were necessary that you should go to your houses, tonight, and neglect your tomorrow's business—it does not require it, but if it did—if you went not to the market or to the Exchange by the week together—yes, and if your tables were deserted and you snatched but a morsel that might sustain life—and if you took no walk, had no recreation, if you denied yourself anything and everything until you found Christ, I could not blame you! I am sure it would be well worth the while! Anything, everything should be neglected that you might become one of the people of God and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation! Did you know the joy that belongs to Christians, you would never be satisfied until you had it! The man that saw the pearl of great price saw it in another dealer's hands, and he thought, "I must have that! It is the finest pearl of all, so I must have it!" And he went his way, you know, and though he had many a dainty jewel, he sold all he had and turned it all to gold—and back he came to the trader—and he gave with joy all that he had that he might buy that one pearl, and he made a good bargain, too! And you would make a blessed bargain if everything were given up that you might find a Savior and be delivered from the wrath to come! Therefore I do pray you to seek Him with your whole heart.

Once more, do remember that *the Savior gave His whole heart when He came to save men.* There was no by-play about Christ. His zeal for souls did eat Him up. He, loved, He lived, He died to save them! Will you have a divided heart about that which took the Savior's whole soul? Remember the devil is in earnest to destroy you. He will leave no stone unturned to keep you his victim that he may utterly destroy you! Shall Hell be in earnest to ruin you and will you not be in earnest to escape from it? Remember, good men are in earnest. I wish that I could speak to you with the tongue of an angel tonight. There is no faculty of my mind which

I would not lay under a heavy mortgage if I might but bring your soul to Christ! I would willingly enough go to school, again, and sit at my Master's feet if He could tell me how to deal with human hearts aright, and stir them and draw them to the Savior! Ah, 'tis poorly done, but it is with my whole soul I would plead with you to fly to Christ! And yet 'tis but little a concern of mine, compared with the way in which it is a concern of yours! If I have been faithful, I shall not be responsible for you—it is your soul that is at stake. Sirs, shall I be anxious about your souls and will you not care about them? Do they seem precious to me and trifles to you? Shall I urge you to escape and will you feel, "It does not matter—it is but a trifle"? Lord, deliver us from this insanity, for insanity it is for a man to trifle with his soul, when others are in earnest for him! And God is in earnest. The great eternal God is in earnest! He says tonight to you, "Turn you, turn you! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" If salvation is child's-play to you, it is not to Him. He gave His Son from His bosom to redeem men! And He sent His Spirit unto men to sanctify them. He puts out His Omnipotence, lays His Wisdom under tax to find a plan and devise a way by which He might save mankind! Oh, trifle not where God is so in earnest, lest you find Him terribly in earnest in the day when His incensed love shall turn to wrath! Jealousy—what is it but love set on a blaze? And if you so hate God that you will prefer to live in Hell sooner than be indebted to His mercy, then rest assured you shall feel how heavy His arm can be—

***"What chains of vengeance shall they feel
Who slight the cords of Love?
How they deserve the deepest Hell
Who scorn the joys above!"***

May God in His infinite mercy prevent anybody here from daring the wrath of God by following after Christ with a divided heart—trifling with his Maker, trifling with his soul, trifling with Heaven, trifling with Hell! May we be in earnest, each one of us, and may we all meet at the right hand of God through Sovereign Grace. The Lord bless you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 10:1-6.**

Verse 1. *Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself.* Not to his God. It matters not how much fruit we bear—if it is for self, we are fruitless. A thing which is good in itself may lose all its goodness because stained with a selfish motive. We are to live unto God—and we must always be watchful about this—otherwise we may be doing much, and doing nothing. "Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself."

1. *According to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.* It is a very sad thing when the more men receive from God, the more they sin. But just in proportion as the land of Israel was fat and fertile, in that proportion did they set up altars to false gods and provoke the true God, who had given them these mercies. It is an ill thing when men grow rich and offer sacrifice to their own vanity—when men gather learning and only use it to debate against the simple teachings of God—when just as God blesses, men cease to bless Him!

2. *Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty.* A half heart is no heart at all. And when men seem to go after God, and at the same time to go after their idols, they are not going after God. Their religion is vain. The good side is but a pretense—the evil side is the real thing!

2. *He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.* Let us take heed then, dear Friends, that we make nothing into an idol. The shortest way to lose the dearest object of your affections is to make an idol of him. “He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.” Sometimes this is done in great mercy to God’s people, for there is no greater evil than for a heart to be happy in idolatry. Sometimes it is done in judgment upon the ungodly. They will not have the true God, and the false god shall be false to them. “He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.”

2. *For now they shall say, We have no king because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?* Their king was slain, but if he had lived, what would be the good of him without God? What is the good of any temporal blessing if God is not in it? It is the husk with the kernel gone! And if we are able to enjoy the husk, it looks as if we were swine, and swine are being fattened for the slaughter! What is the use of anything that we possess if God is divorced from it? I put the question again. If you are a true child of God, all the corn and wine in the world cannot feed you. Your bread must come from Heaven.

4. *They have spoken words.* That which they spoke was not the truth. We cannot speak without words, but it is an evil thing when our speech is nothing but words. Words, words, words!—no heart, no truth! “They have spoken words.”

4. *Swearing falsely in making a Covenant: thus judgment springs up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.* God keep us from untruthfulness, and especially from a want of truth towards Himself. Do you not think that oftentimes, both in prayer and praise, it might be said, “They have spoken words—nothing more”? There has been a falsehood in the most solemn transaction towards God. Woe unto you, dear Friends, if that should turn out to be the case! You may cheat your fellow men if you have a heart for it, but you never will be able to cheat your God! He is not mocked. “They have spoken words,” He says.

5. *The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth Aven.* Why, those calves are their trust. They rely upon those images of false gods—those images which they set up in the place of the true God. Pretending thereby to worship Him, they trusted in these—and now they shall become their fear. He who will have a confidence apart from God will find his confidence soured into a fear before long. Your greatest ground of distress will be that which was once the ground of your reliance apart from God!

5, 6. *For the people thereof shall mourn over it. And the priests thereof that rejoiced in it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to King Jareb.* The spiteful king.

6. *Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.* These golden calves excited the desires of the king of Assyria, and he took them away. These gods were baits to their enemies, instead of basis for their confidence. They were carried away captive of the people with them—their god, captive—their god melted down to make images, or to make money for the king of Assyria! Ah, what shame does God pour upon idolaters! And what shame He will pour upon us if we have any confidence except the unseen God and if we rely anywhere but upon the eternal Covenant of His Immutable Grace! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us try to flee away from that which is so tempting to sense—confidence in an arm of flesh—and let our sole and only trust be in Him who made the heavens and the earth, and in His Son, Jesus Christ!

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

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

SOW TO YOURSELVES

NO. 1261

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.”
Hosea 10:12.***

FARMERS are now devoting their attention to putting seed into the ground. They know right well that without sowing in the present they cannot expect a reaping in the future. Seedtime has many lessons. That which we shall learn this morning is very personal and practical. Our hearts are like a field and if we let them alone the only crop we shall get will be the natural weeds of the soil together with those tares which the evil spirit is quite sure to scatter whether we sow good seed or not. We are to sow beside all waters, but we must not neglect to sow to *ourselves*. There is need that we sow good seed in our own gardens, or else it will be of little use to us to have planted and watered others.

It is concerning this sowing of the home farm, this seeding of our own peculiar acre, that I shall now speak. May the Spirit of God bless the word. Before I launch into the subject, it may be well to observe that it does not apply to unrenewed hearts. It is in vain to sow unto yourselves till the soil has been prepared by our Father, who is the Farmer. Even Christ's own seed of the Word, pure from His own hands, brings forth no fruit when it falls on unprepared hearts. His ministers are bound to scatter the seed in all places—on the hard rocks, on the highways and among thorns—but still no harvest ever comes till the soil is broken up and made receptive of the Truth of God by the Spirit of God.

Our text stands in the midst of a number of agricultural similes and it is preceded by that of plowing. “I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.” Without plowing what is the use of sowing? Some soils need plowing and cross plowing—they are so heavy by nature that in them the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and only by mighty ripping of the soil are they saved. Have you ever had a broken heart, dear Hearer? Did the Spirit of God ever drive the black horses of the Law across your heart with the sharp plow of condemnation, killing your false hopes, wounding your spirit and revealing your secret sins?

If you have not known something about this I cannot tell you to sow to yourself in righteousness! You are not prepared for that step—you must first be plowed. I pray the Divine Spirit to operate upon your heart to the breaking up of your fallow ground that you sow not among thorns. Let us, also, add another statement, lest we should be misunderstood. Even when we speak to the people of God and bid them, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness,” we, by no means forget that all true culture of the heart comes of the Spirit of God.

We exhort men as the Scriptures do, as active, intelligent beings. We exhort them as much as if there were no Holy Spirit, but we also pray to the Holy Spirit to make our exhortations, the efforts of His servants, effectual for the designed end. Without His Divine operations, neither the precept of our text, nor any other, will be obeyed. In this, as well as in every matter connected with the Gospel, Grace reigns! If the first sentence of the text might seem to breathe legality, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness," yet the second clause of it most effectually evangelizes it, for it says, "Reap in mercy."

Unless we reap eternal wrath we must reap in mercy. If anything comes of what we *do*—if our prayerful anxiety and earnest faith as to the condition of our heart shall be really productive of holiness—it will be the result of infinite mercy and the effect of the Spirit's energy! Even the *desire* to be right before God arises from the operation of the Spirit of God! All the righteousness which is found in us comes by Divine power and is not of ourselves, but, like the whole of salvation, it is the gift of God! So, while I exhort, entreat and persuade, I am not forgetful of the Divine One without whose gracious working we can do nothing at all!

We will now draw near to the text. First, my Brothers and Sisters, *we must not neglect seedtime* and, secondly, *we must not neglect harvest when it comes*.

I. WE MUST NOT NEGLECT SEEDTIME. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest shall not cease." Both are necessary and, therefore, God has decreed that time for both shall be given to men. All life is, in some respects, a sowing. All that we think, say, do, or leave undone is a sowing for the harvest of the Last Great Day. And if we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap what always comes of the flesh, namely, corruption. But if we sow to the spirit we shall of the Spirit reap what is congruous to the spirit, namely, life everlasting! As a man sows, so shall he reap. It is not, however, upon that form of sowing and reaping that I am going to speak to you this morning.

As I have already told you, we shall deal with *the inner life*, for I think the connection shows that this is what was meant, for the Prophet is evidently dealing with the people, themselves, and their condition of heart before God. The outward sowing of righteous actions in the field of the world is, doubtless, very important, but none the less so is the secret sowing of the enclosed garden of the *heart*. Our subject will be just this—that after we have been plowed by conversion we need to take great care that our spiritual culture commences and is carried on.

The little spot enclosed by Grace out of the world's wide wilderness now calls for our attention and claims the holy skill and industry necessary to spiritual farming. It must be sown with the good seed of the Word of God, even the precious Truths of Scripture, that from its soil there may be produced a harvest which shall be garnered with abounding joy and bring glory to God. The first thing after conversion *to* Christ is confession of Christ. And the next is instruction *in* Christ. I fear that too many professed converts leap over these hedges and endeavor to become teachers at once! Without joining themselves to the Church of Christ, or becoming

disciples in His school, they rush to the front, endeavoring to teach before they have been taught—and if they are the least checked, they resent it as an interference and cast suspicion upon the zeal of their advisers.

They call themselves disciples and repudiate all discipline. They say they are soldiers of the Cross, but they can neither march in line nor keep step and neither will they submit themselves to order. They appear to think that the moment they are born, they are fathers! The instant they are enlisted they are officers! Now, conversion is the *beginning* of the spiritual life—not the climax of it! It makes a man a disciple and the main thing a disciple has to do is to *learn*. After he has learned, he will be able to teach others, also, but not till then. I have often said to you that nothing can come out of you that is not in you—and therefore if there is not something *put into you* to begin with, you may go out to war, but, as you have neither shot nor powder in your gun, the enemy will not be much injured by your valor.

We must be filled before we can run over! It is necessary for the Christian man to be prepared for holy service—in fact, what he does for God should be a harvest growing out of himself—because of a previous seed-time during which much precious seed was put *into* him. Let us take note upon this sowing and ask, first, *what shall we sow?* Here is our heart, a plowed field, ready to receive the seed. What shall we sow? I answer, see to it, my Brethren, that there is sown in you a *real* faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let it be of the simplest and most childlike kind. Do not trouble yourselves with definitions which darken counsel or by words without knowledge.

Hold on to Christ as a babe clings to its mother with its arms around her neck. Trust Him, depend upon Him, rest in Him and in Him, alone. Mind that your faith is real *reliance* on Jesus, for I meet with some who think that faith is to *believe* that you are saved, but if, indeed, you are *not* saved, such faith will be a lie and you will entangle yourselves in the net of false confidence. Others think that faith is to believe that Christ died for them, when at the same time they think that He died for *everybody*, so, of course He died for *them*! Surely there can be no particular virtue or power in believing what is a self-evident inference!

Many believe that Christ died for them and yet they are not saved. To believe savingly is to trust Christ—see that you have this trust sown in you. You ought to know *why* you trust Him and what He did for you, and in what relationship He stands towards you and God. You should be able, not merely to sing about His blood, but to know the doctrine of Atonement—to grasp the blessed fact of His Substitution—and know the reconciliation thereby effected. To know whom you have believed should be one of the chief objectives of your life! I am afraid that some who profess to have been converted do not even know the A B C of the Gospel, namely, what is the faith of God's elect and on what does it rest? Take heed to yourselves that you are not ignorant here, but let your heart be well sown with simple reliance upon the eternal Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Sow to yourselves and see that in your soul there is repentance of sin. Do not fall under the notion that the necessity for repentance is over. I have heard it said that repentance is “merely a change of mind.” I wish that those who so speak had undergone that change! It is a sad sign of a faulty ministry when men can depreciate that precious Grace of God! Mark you, no sinner will enter into Heaven who has not repented of his sins. No promise can be found in the Inspired Pages of eternal life to men who live and die without repentance! It is an old-fashioned virtue, I know, but it is in fashion with the angels who rejoice over sinners who possess it!

Know, my dear young Friends, that sin is an evil and a bitter thing—and the language to be used about it is such as David employed in the 51st Psalm. Pray to God to convince you of your guilt and ask Him to enable you to flee from every false way. Seek Grace to detect sin and as soon as ever you discern its presence, to fly from it as you would from a deadly serpent! May there be worked in you an inward abhorrence of sin and a loathing of yourself because of your tendency to transgress. “You that love the Lord hate evil.” “Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” May you also have a full conviction that in you, that is, in your flesh, there dwells no good thing—that your nature is empty, void and waste, like the chaos of old—except as the blessed Spirit shall brood over you and the everlasting God shall create you new.

There needs to be in your soul a deep sense of its rein or you will not prize redemption, or much of the godly sorrow of repentance, or you will not know the ecstasy of forgiveness. O for a plentiful sowing in tears, that we may reap in joy! Labor, also, to have sown in you a clear knowledge of the Gospel. Do not be satisfied to see men as trees walking, but ask for the eyes cleansed, even, of the smallest mote. Be thankful if you have only a little sight, but let your gratitude lead you to pray for the removal of every scale. If you are really to bring forth a harvest of wheat without tares, you must distinguish between things that defer, for a man’s belief affects his life more than some imagine.

You ought to know the plan of redemption, the system upon which God grants salvation. It will be a great advantage for you to understand the two Covenants and to see, plainly, the distinction between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. He who is clear upon that matter has grasped the marrow of theology and possesses the clue to the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ. I would have you know the Doctrines of Grace and understand them—and be able to defend them with Scriptural arguments whenever they are assailed. Young people, I pray you, be willing to learn! Learn *before* you teach!

Do not go blundering out to tell the tale of mercy before you have considered it and in some measure understood its grand points. God forbid that I should dampen your zeal, but I implore you to put a little knowledge with it, or else the best of causes will suffer at your hands. Become apt to teach by being first apt in learning. Grow in Grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior. Fill your basket with bread from His hands or you will never feed the multitude. I would have you well equipped for bat-

tle with the adversaries of the faith, or, at any rate, able to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Do not even be satisfied with clear knowledge. Ask for *living* principles growing out of this knowledge. The religion of passion is flimsy. The religion of principle will endure wear and tear. Heat and excitement too often engender a mushroom life which dies as readily as it is produced. We want you to know the Truth of God so as to feel its power till it dominates your entire nature, sways the scepter of your soul and becomes a resident monarch within you! Then will you be able to stand alone and you will not need a crowd about you, or a flaming orator to hold you in your place—you will know whom you have believed and be persuaded that He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him.

Oh, if our young friends and old friends, too, were well sown in this fashion, so that the Truths they profess to believe had a living foothold in their souls by the Holy Spirit, what Churches we should have and what little injury would the Pope and the infidel be able to do to us! A man may hold a religion—he may hold 50 religions and have a new one every week and be none the better—it is the religion which *holds the man* which will save him! Your Bibles printed on paper are a blessing, but to have the Scriptures written on the heart is far better! We need not so much the doctrine which has been driven into the brain by argument, but the Truths of God worked into the soul by experience through the teaching of the blessed Spirit! Would to God that living principles were thus sown in all hearts!

The great point is that whatever is sown in us should be sown *in righteousness*, that is to say, that it is *really* sown and that honest seed is taken into our hearts. If you sow in error, however sincerely you sow, it will produce bad results upon your intellect. “Sow to yourselves in righteousness.” Do not take handfuls of seed out of your grandfather’s basket simply because he put it there—study to see whether it is God’s Seed. Do not snatch haphazard at what is in the creed, or the articles of your Church—go to the winnowed corn of Scripture—sow that and that only. And though we, or an angel from Heaven, should teach you anything contrary to the Infallible Word of God, refuse such seed a place in your hearts.

Pray God to forgive the preacher his mistakes, but do not follow him. Pray to “sow to yourselves in righteousness.” Receive the Truth of God and only the Truth of God and beseech the Lord to give you an honest grip of that Truth—for there is such a thing as “holding the Truth in unrighteousness.” It is very easy to be untrue to the Truth of God. Truth held by a bad man is as a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout. The fair lily of Truth should be held in a clean hand. Nor is this all. Let us ask the Lord to rid us of the mere pretence and mimicry of faith. Away, forever, with a sham faith! Never talk fictitious experience. Do not borrow bits from this man and bits from that and retail them as your own—this is unrighteous!

Pretence in religion is a sort of blasphemy. May all our religion be such as will stand the test of the Day of Judgement. I charge you, make sure work in this matter. If, indeed, the Lord has plowed your heart, the field

belongs to Him. Therefore obey His Word and remember how He forbids His people to sow with mingled seed. Let all that which is sown in you be true, honest, gracious, loving, Godlike and Divine, so when the harvest comes you shall not lose what you have worked. God help you thus to sow!

The second inquiry is, *How shall we sow it?* The answer is, Sow in the Lord's appointed manner. The means of Grace are ordained of God to help us in sowing, watering, weeding and fostering the good seed. Let us, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, sow the heart, first, by diligently studying the Word of God. Every Believer ought to be a student in Christ's College. We who preach the Gospel are to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. Now, a *disciple* is a *learner*. Are all the people who professed to have been converted during the late special services learners? I should like to know, for one, where they are. I have anxiously asked several of my Brothers, the pastors of the neighboring Churches, and they do not know.

I should like to discover the Churches which have received these new converts, for wherever I inquire, I hear of one or two, but scarcely any more—and up to this moment my earnest inquiries have brought me nothing but bitter disappointment. If these *thousands* were made disciples, how is it that they do not come under discipline? They professed to be converted, how is it that they have not united themselves with our Churches? Do they need no instruction, or are none of us fit to edify them? Conversion should be the commencement of discipleship, but where are the disciples? Some months have now passed and with deepest sorrow I inquire with what Churches are they associated. Where are they learning the way of God more perfectly? I should rejoice to know.

My young Brothers and Sisters, lately brought to Jesus, search the Scriptures through and through! Be not satisfied with simply knowing the way of salvation—ask to know all that God has revealed—for there is nothing unnecessary in the Bible! There is not a leaf that we could afford to tear out and throw into the fire and say, "It is a superfluity." It is all to be studied and we must give ourselves to the study of it by reading it, by hearing it and by bowing ourselves to the influence of the Holy Spirit, that He may lead us into all the Truth of God! How shall we sow? Why, by an inward reception of the Truth into the soul! I cannot tell you how the branch takes in the sap, but I know it does take it in. And you must receive God's Truth into your hearts as living sap to your souls—it is the living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever.

I want you not only to know the Truth of God in theory, but to receive it in its inward power into your very souls as babes receive milk that you may feed thereon and grow. Only by such feeding can you come to the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. You can, also, thus, "sow to yourselves in righteousness" by much prayer, much praise, and much of every form of communion with Jesus Christ. O Brothers and Sisters, if you are to do exploits, you must be strong, and you cannot be strong except in the Lord and in the power of His might. O Brethren, if you are to be holy, you must commune with the Holy One and get a glow

upon your countenance reflected from the face of your Lord! In His light, only, can you shine as lights in the world.

To say you are converted is nothing! We desire your sanctification, your growing likeness to the Lord! I do not know whether I make my meaning fully apparent, but I mean this, that we must by all means that God has put into our power make our hearts to be a well-stored seed plot in which there shall grow for God all manner of precious fruits, which afterwards we shall reap and use to His Glory. You are trying to sow others, some of you, have you sown *yourselves* with that Seed which yields seed to the sower and bread to the eater? Look to yourselves, for if you leave home plowing unheeded you may have to complain with the spouse, "They made me a keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept."

I am certain that if we want to spread religion we must begin by securing the improvement of those who are already Christians. Until the army of the Lord shall be stronger and every man shall have more of the force of Divine Life, we cannot expect to see the nations conquered by the Church of God. Look well to this matter and see to it that you use the means of God's ordaining, that by the power of the Spirit you may sow to yourselves.

Thirdly, *When shall we sow to ourselves?* What is the proper sowing time? I answer, specially at the time of conversion and immediately after your new birth. Very much depends upon the soil being well sown when it is newly plowed. Then the heart is tender. Then the soul is in the formative stage—like clay on the potter's wheel, or like wax that has just been melted—it is, then, ready to receive the right impression and form. When Paul was converted he went into Arabia, for a time, and these months were, I have no doubt, the most profitable that Paul ever spent, for there he communed with God and his mind was impregnated with the Truths of God.

Perhaps he had never been so great an Apostle during the rest of his life if it had not been for that little tarrying in Arabia. The disciples, after the Resurrection of our Lord, were to tarry at Jerusalem till they were endowed with power from on high. O you Christian people, see to it that you give your first thoughts, after your conversion, to being edified and built up in your most holy faith! It will be the most practically useful endeavor to others, in the long run, if, like your Lord, you take time to do your Father's business in the quiet of Nazareth's contemplation than in bearing unripe fruit.

But, Brethren, it is not immediately after conversion, alone, I take it, that every Christian should sow unto himself in righteousness. We must be *always* sowing and if we do not, we shall not be always reaping. Ask the best instructed Christian and he will tell you that he knows more of his own folly than he ever did and is more willing to be a learner, now, than when he first entered into the school of Christ. Lord, teach us! Teach us every day! Even to gray hairs, still instruct us, that we may have the power to instruct others!

There should be a special sowing, it seems to me, whenever we desire a special harvest. Notice our blessed Lord—whenever He was about to do

some special action, such as sending out the 12, we always read that He retired to pray. Praying was His habit, but there were peculiar seasons when He had more of it than usual—that more power might go out from Him. Whenever you are about to be, as you hope, a great soul-winner, wait on the Lord more abundantly concerning it. If you are about to pass through an extreme trial and need great strength to yield a greater harvest of patience, have a greater sowing of Grace by drawing nearer to God. Our Grace should always be at the flood tide—but even then some flood tides are higher than others and we may pray the Lord to give us a spring tide flood when extraordinary Grace is required.

Again, I say, look well to yourselves, lest you lose that which you have worked. Seeing there remains a rest for the people of God, let none of us even *seem* to come short of it. With all your ability, get understanding. With all your doings see to it that your inner man is not neglected, that you walk before the Lord in secret and are not negligent in soul communion with Him. See that you walk circumspectly, that you grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should be always sowing, for we have to be, in practical holiness, ever reaping.

In the next place, *why do so many omit to sow?* It may be, first, because they are lifted up with the notion that they do not require sowing. How idle is their conceit! Here is a piece of land that has just been enclosed from the devil's common, and it has, for years, produced only briars and thorns. It needs sowing! Is there good seed in it by nature hidden among the clods? Impossible! Do you believe that because it has been plowed it may now be left alone and a harvest will come spontaneously? You know better! The novice is not to be set up as a teacher—he should sit down as a scholar. He may tell what he knows—so far *he* has been sown and so far he may produce a harvest—but how can he tell what he does not know, and how shall he communicate to others what has never been communicated to himself?

We do not pick up religious knowledge and maturity by instinct. We are bound to search out the meaning of the Word of God and yield ourselves to the illumination of the Divine Spirit. We must *prove* our conversion to be true by being teachable as little children. We are not to rush naked to the fight, but to seek full equipment—and that we have not in ourselves—helmet and shield and sword are to be sought for in the armory of God. Some do not like the sowing because it is very quiet work. A young man spends an hour searching into the Truth of God for a certain doctrine. Well, that will never be put into the newspapers, or written in the reports of a society and nobody will extol him for it—hence he is apt to despise such exercises.

He goes hour after hour to the Lord Jesus and begs to be instructed in the deep things of God—nobody will sound a trumpet about that! No, nor do they sound trumpets when they sow fields—the shouting is left till they bring in the sheaves! But the sowing must be done though nobody shouts over it and you must search the Word and get your souls well sown, none the less, but all the more, because it does not bring you applause. Sometimes it is even suggested that to cultivate the heart by quiet study is a

waste of time. The sower in sowing does not see any immediate results! Rather, as he scatters his handfuls, he perceives a void in his basket and there is so much less corn in the granary. There are no results, except his weariness, as he toils over the furrows—yet he is a wise man.

Yes, and you, dear Friend, must not be snatching at results too soon. I am glad that you are wanting to win souls! May that passion be increased in you, but more glad, still, shall I be if you combine *with* that passion, the prudent thought that you must ask His blessed Spirit to make you a vessel fit to be used! If you have been trying to produce a harvest for God without any preparatory sowing, you have only to take counsel of common sense and learn your error. You must be conscious that in some points you will not succeed. You will be staggered by infidel objections. You will often be completely nonplussed when tallying with inquirers because you will not know how to meet the questions put to you. Sometimes you will blunder over a text and will not be able to make heads or tails of it.

Well, come to school a little while before you go out as a teacher! Come and be plowed and sowed a little before thinking about the harvest home! Sowing, besides, is often very sorrowful work. We read of some who sow in tears. To learn costs humiliation, weariness, trouble and crying because of the task. I have cried my way into many a Truth of God. I believe there is many a portion in God's Word whose meaning will never reach you except you will work your passage, as some poor men do when they want to go to America. You cannot open these sealed treasure houses without hard thought, long toil, much prayer, much conquering of prejudice and yielding up of the soul to the Holy Spirit.

This is a kind of labor which always pays well and when it is over, your other work for God will be much lightened. After the sowing is over the farmer rests and the seed springs up both by night and by day. He knows not how but by thorough seeding of the soul with the Truth of God, studied and understood, there comes forth a future crop with wonderful ease and spontaneous growth. Lazy people generally take the most pains in the long run but it is a saving of time and effort to store the mind and heart thoroughly at the very first.

The shoeing of the horse and the buckling on of the harness with care will save time in the journey. Supplying a ship before it sails is a part of the means by which a safe and speedy voyage is procured. Your peace and strength in later years will amply repay you for care and effort now. Sow in the present that you may reap in the future! Last of all, on this point, *why should we sow?* We should sow unto ourselves and cultivate our hearts very carefully because our lives must, after all, as to their results, depend upon this sowing. If a man sows scantily—if he learns little, if he receives little of the Spirit of Christ into him—his life must be feeble and barren. How can there be a rich harvest from a scanty sowing?

Little cast into the soil ends in little coming out of it. If a man sows in a patchy way, attending only to a few selected Truths and Graces, as some do, there will be a patchy character as the result. Some Brothers and Sisters have been thoroughly sown as to one furrow and there is a first-rate crop in that place. But then they neglect other portions—they do not

strive before God to obtain all Grace or to know all Truth—and as a consequence their life is faulty in many points. Complete experience and watchfulness of every point are necessary to the formation of a complete character. Beware of a half obedience in the heart, or a semi-illumination of the mind, for these will create an inconsistent character—a garden here and a desert there.

Be cautious, also, not to sow with mingled seed, for this was forbidden of old and if you do it there will be a bit of wheat in one place and a bit of tares in another—and you will be trying to serve God *and* mammon. Too many professors are as pleased with the tares as with the wheat! They scarcely know one from the other! As the Eastern plant called in our version, a tare, is very like the wheat, so there are counterfeits of the virtues and these deceive many. If we sow only with the good Seed of the Truth of God, we shall realize a holy, influential, acceptable character—but mingled seed will produce fickleness, inconsistency, poverty of character and we shall bring no glory to the great Farmer. I am certain I am right in enforcing this point upon all the children of God with great earnestness.

Brothers and Sisters, do you believe that people would be carried away with Ritualism, which has now grown to be undisguised Popery, had they been fully instructed in the doctrines of our Protestant faith? I do not believe it would have been possible! At the present moment the wolves leap into our Churches and they find easy prey where the people are least instructed and established in the Gospel. The people that know nothing for themselves—nothing by *heart* knowledge—are readily deceived. But where there is a clear understanding and a fervent love for the Gospel. Where there is a spiritual growth and an abundant communion with God arising out of inward vital principles, men are not carried away by every wind of doctrine. They are not deceived by the sleight of man and his cunning craftiness—they stand fast, rooted and grounded in Christ!

In conclusion, this steadfastness is a part of the harvest of which I have now to speak.

II. WE MUST NOT NEGLECT THE HARVEST. If a man with constant watchfulness, holy fear, devout prayer and simple faith in Jesus seeks to cultivate his own heart, he may expect fruit to come of it, both towards himself and his God. Towards himself one fruit will be stability, as I have already said. The man will be able to say, “O God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise.” He is not to be decoyed by the boasts of the finders of new truth, nor by the contemptuous sneers of modern thinkers who deride the good old way, nor by those mighty discoverers who have found out that there is no truth at all! Experienced Believers know and are persuaded and have firm moorings.

Oh, be well sown, for then you will be stable and out of that stability will come solid comfort! Half the fears of Christian people rise like mists from the marshes of their ignorance. If we knew the promises better, knew the Gospel better, knew God better and knew Christ better, we should not have a tenth as many fears. Remember that as the soul is penetrated with the spirit of the Gospel, it will be filled with peace and consolation—

“Tis religion that can give

***Sweetest pleasures while we live,
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die."***

Those sweet pleasures and solid comforts are the harvest which those reap who look well to the good sowing of their souls. Those whose hearts are sown by Grace possess joys utterly unknown to other professors. What rapture and delight are frequently bestowed on those who have drawn near to God and had their souls full of Him! "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance." When others starve they shall feed, and when others faint they shall renew their strength because their souls have learned to stay themselves on God, alone.

One blessed fruit of this sowing is boldness in the Lord's service. The men that know their God shall be strong and do great exploits. He who fears God much fears not men. He has been living near to God and cares no more for the opinions of men than for the howling of the wind over the moor. With this courage comes patience under suffering—the man who is full of Grace is able to bear the Lord's will whatever it may be. This is a blessed fruit of the Spirit! You who think resignation a light thing may yet live to prize it. These are a few of the fruits which grow in a soul well-seeded by Grace.

Now notice the text says that though we sow in righteousness we must reap *in mercy*. If any fruit, Beloved, ever comes out of your earnest prayerfulness and watchfulness, it will be God's Mercy that gives it to you, for do what you will, anything that is God-like and holy must be planted, nourished and supported by Divine power—and nothing short of it! If you have shown any holy courage or gracious patience, or sacred stability, or hallowed experience, or spiritual joy, or heavenly rapture, or true holiness, it is God's Mercy that has enabled you to reap this precious fruit!

God bids you sow—it is your duty to do so and to be jealous over your own spirit—but to reap to the Glory of God is entirely the gift of His Grace, from first to last and we must cheerfully admit that it is so. The text most pointedly bids us *reap*. "Reap in mercy." There is fruit upon you if you have sown aright in the power of the Spirit of God—therefore reap it! That is to say, when the season comes, be ready with the outward fruits of your inward Grace. Let patience be ready in growth and perseverance in the day of labor. As you bring forth these things, bless the Lord for them. Do not be *exalted by them*, for you are to reap in *mercy*—if you were to reap in any other way, you might be exalted—be *humble*, for it is God's Mercy that gives you the Graces which flourish in your soul.

Take care to bless God for every good and perfect gift. And whatever comes out of your inner life, reap it so as to lay it out for the good of others in order that God may be glorified! If there is in you any zeal, courage, patience and what not, as the result of the inner culture, then come forward and spend it for your Redeemer's praise! Remember you have *nothing* which you have not received—and having received it, you are bound in gratitude to expend it for Him who gave it to you.

But closing, let us see to it, I say, dear Brothers and Sisters, that all of us are keeping our hearts with all diligence before the Lord. It is the Spirit's work! We have admitted this, over and over again, but the Spirit of God awakens us to activity and does not lull us into a passive condition, for He would have us careful that these things be in us and abound, that we are not barren nor unfruitful. He would have us see that we come not short in any good thing, but that we abound in all knowledge, all love and all patience to His Glory, that thus our life may show that we have, indeed, come under the fostering husbandry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I would to God we were as a Church lifted up to a higher platform altogether, the whole of us, by one blessed lift from the Divine Spirit! And then I would to God that out of us there might be chosen more ministers of Christ, more mighty soul-winners, more missionaries among the heathen and more of every order of soldiers for Christ! When our Master needs workmen, He does not take those who are sick. If you had to lay a railway you would not go to Brompton Hospital and pick out all the patients with consumption and give them a pickaxe or a spade to try and throw up embankments or dig cuttings. No, but you would select the strong men, the men of brawny arms, the men of muscle who know how to wield crowbar and spade.

And so will God do in His Church. We must be strong in Grace, strong in secret, strong in private prayer, strong in fellowship with God, strong in vital principle within us and after that the Lord will let us loose as a Church upon His foes, like a tornado sweeping everything before us! We cannot bring out of ourselves what is not in us! We must go to God to be filled or we cannot run! Lamps may shine, but they must be trimmed with oil, or else they will smell amiss and cease to shine—we must have food, or we cannot keep up our stamina—we must live upon Christ! We must be nurtured with His very heart's blood, or else the life in us will only be a life of pain and panting—not a life of triumph and of realization! See to this and may God bless you therein.

As for you who are not plowed, I beseech you, remember that you can bring forth no fruit to God. Be ashamed at your barrenness and cry mightily unto Him that He would deal graciously with you and bring you to Jesus! For now you are near unto cursing, and before long, unless Divine Grace prevents, your end will be to be burned. May God save you for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Ephesians 4.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—719; 119 (VER. II), 4-6; 39.**

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

THE DUTY OF THE PRESENT HOUR

NO. 1563

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

***“Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till
He comes and rains righteousness upon you.”
Hosea 10:12.***

“BREAK up your fallow ground.” Nature at its largest is but a small farm and we had need to get a harvest out of every acre of it, for our needs are great. Have we left any part of our small allotment uncultivated? If so, it is time to look into the matter and see if we cannot improve this wasteful state of things. What part of our small allotment have we left fallow? We should think very poorly of a farmer who, for many years, allowed the best and the richest part of his farm to lie altogether neglected and untilled. An occasional fallow has its benefits in the world of Nature, but if the proprietor of rich and fruitful land allowed the soil to continue fallow year after year, we would judge him to be out of his wits! The wasted acres ought to be taken from him and given to another farmer who would worthily cherish the generous fields and encourage them to yield their harvests. Bad is the man who neglects to cultivate his farm, but what shall be said of the sluggard who fails to cultivate *himself*? If it is wrong to leave untended a part of our estate, how much worse must it be to disregard a portion of ourselves!

Now, there is a part of our nature which many allow to lie fallow. It is not often that they neglect the clay soil of their outward frame. They dress *that* field, which is called the body, with sufficient care and, truly, I would not that they should be careless about it, for it is worthy to be kept in due order and culture. Albeit that it is a very secondary part of our nature, yet it is so interwoven with the higher that it is most important that the body should not be neglected. See you well to that field and, by temperance, cleanliness and obedience to the rules of health, let it be as a garden. Though it is, after all, but dust and ashes, akin to the common earth around us, yet the body is honorable and when Divine Grace has sanctified the soul the body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Few need to be exhorted to pay attention to their bodies. “What shall we eat? What shall we drink and how shall we be clothed?” is a trinity of questions which the majority of mankind spend all their lives in answering. The fault is not that they care for the body, but that it takes an undue share of consideration and usurps a higher place than it can claim. There is a second field in man’s self-farm and this is called the mind, or the soul, and there are many who neglect this. These do ill, for, “that the soul is without knowledge, it is not good.” There should be, for the mental powers, instruction and discipline. We should seek to know and learn to

understand, for we are not as the brutes which perish, which know nothing beyond their daily needs. We have thought and judgment and memory and imagination—these all need to be trained and used.

Let the mind be cultivated, by all means, and yet I need not say much upon this, for “culture” has become a kind of watchword with certain professors of religion and with supposed knowledge they are puffed up. They have enough thought for the mind and they glory in the harvests which it yields of human knowledge and earthly learning. The soul, in such cases, seems to be well tilled, but the spirit, the highest nature of all—that with which we speak to God—is suffered to lie entirely fallow! The soil where true religion should flourish in the furrows is left, by many, to produce the deadly nightshade of superstition, the hemlock of error, or the thistle of doubt!

Is it not so with some of you who listen to me at this hour? Your hearts, your innermost natures, have been neglected and from the finest part of your being the Lord has derived neither rent nor revenue! Your best acres lie fallow—fallow when you have good need to cultivate every inch of the ground. Do you know what happens to a fallow field? Do you know how it becomes caked and baked hard as though it were a brick? All the pliable qualities seem to depart and it hardens as it lies caked and unbroken—I mean, of course, if year follows year and the fallow remains untouched. And then the weeds! If a man will not sow wheat, he shall have a crop, you can be sure of that, for the weeds will spring up and they will seed themselves and, in due time, the multiplication table will be worked out to a very wonderful extent!

These seeds, multiplying a hundred-fold, as evil usually does, will increase and increase and increase, again, till the fallow field shall become a wilderness of thorns and briars and a thicket of weeds, nettle and thistle. If you do not cultivate your heart, Satan will cultivate it for you! If you bring no crop to God, the devil will be sure to reap a harvest! I fear that I am speaking to some who have never thought about this. It has not occurred to them to consider themselves and the reasons for which they have a being. There is one text which I should like to drop into your ear in the hope that it may drop down through your ear right into your heart, “The wicked shall be turned into Hell.” “Oh,” you say, “that is not *me*.” No, I did not mean that for you—I have not finished the verse yet. This is the part for *you*—“and all the nations that forget God.”

There are *nations* of them, so numerous are careless souls! What did they do? They did not do anything—they merely fell into a little matter of neglect, that is all. They forgot something—they forgot God! If I had to tell you how we are to be saved, I might take some time about it. But if you ask me how you are to be *lost*, I will tell you in a minute. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?” Neglect destroys men! Only sit still and allow matters to take their course and your damnation is sure! If you wish to be ruined in your spiritual farming, you need not sow thorns—you have only to leave your soul fallow and you will starve when the great harvest comes!

Fallow ground in human nature naturally and of itself will work famine and bankruptcy for every man who lets it have its own way. So my text begins right well by saying, "Break up your fallow ground." Begin to look to what you have neglected! Take a survey of what has come already of your neglect! Contemplate what results will surely come of continued carelessness. God helping you, go into that field which is up to your knees with weeds and look around it and say, "This must be cleared out. This must be got ready for plowing. We cannot have this sad waste any longer. We have not gone through this gate before. We have scarcely looked over the hedge. We have left the field entirely to itself and everything cries out against our neglect.

"Now, by God's Grace, we will enter into it and will clear all the rubbish away and pray the eternal God to bring the great steam plow of His almighty Grace and tear up the soil to the very bottom and then to burn these weeds and make this ground fit to be sown that it may bring forth a harvest to His praise." Leaving that first part of the text, I am going to dwell upon the second—"It is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness upon you."

I. First, here is A TIME MENTIONED. When is it time to seek the Lord? I am not going to try to say anything fine, but something that will come home to each unconverted person. May the Holy Spirit help me in this attempt and bless it to your souls. When is it time to seek the Lord? Well, it is time as soon as ever you know right from wrong. Oh, it will be a thousand blessings to you, dear boys and girls, wherever you may be at this moment and to you young people that are listening to me, if you are led to seek the Lord while you are yet little! While you are yet children may you become children of God!

Before you are permitted to go into open sin, may your hearts be opened to Divine Grace. Some of us who were converted while we were children will praise God forever, not only for our conversion, but for our *early* conversion. I have often prayed, with much sweetness to my own soul, that prayer of David, "O Lord, You have taught me from my youth and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works." I look forward, hopefully, to the time when I shall add, "Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." If you have had a man in your employ ever since he was a boy, you do not like to turn him away when he grows old—and our Lord never turns His old servants away. It is a surely prevalent plea with him, "You are my hope, O Lord God: You are my trust from my youth."

It is time to seek the Lord as soon as we can seek *anything*, for to such seekers there is the special promise, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." I found the Lord and joined His Church when I was 15 years old and I feel it no small joy to say with Obadiah, "I, Your servant, fear the Lord from my youth." Early piety saves from much sin and sorrow and is often followed by a blessed and useful life. My heart rejoices that He, who was, Himself, "the Holy Child Jesus," suffers the little children to come unto Him! Blessed be the name of the Lord for young people brought to Christ!

May it please the Lord to touch each young heart here, at this time, with this thought, "It is time for me to seek the Lord." Come, you lads and lasses, you boys and girls, and learn of Jesus while yet your life is in its sweetest hours!

But it is especially time to seek the Lord when it is late in the day of life and the shades of the eternal night are gathering. If it is time when first the morning breaks, how much more solemnly is it time when the shadows lengthen! You cannot live long, dear Friend, for age, I see, is taking its toll upon your once stalwart form. In the order of Nature you must soon be gone. You know that you have passed your threescore and ten, perhaps your *fourscore* years and you are living, now, upon the special charity of God. You have run out your lease and are now a daily tenant. Surely it is time for you to seek the Lord! You may be gone to the Judgment and the irreversible sentence before another Sabbath comes round—

***"It may be no tomorrow
Shall dawn for you or me.
Why will you run the awful risk
Of all eternity?"***

Take heed to yourselves that you do not trifle on the verge of eternity. With one foot in the grave, oh, seek to have both feet on the Rock of Ages! Then you need not fear old age and its infirmities, or its closing hours. Jesus will cheer and comfort you and your eventide shall only be the prelude of a blessed morning—a morning without clouds.

Dear Friend, it must be time to seek the Lord when death already *seeks you* and infirmity tells upon you. When they that look out of the windows begin to be darkened, it is time to look up to Heaven! When the keepers of the house tremble, it is time to find a home in Jesus. When our grave is ready for us, it is time to be ready for judgment. When there are evident signs of an approaching end, it is time that you should end your ramblings and seek the Lord! What a mercy it is that the very wording of the text gives us encouragement! "It is time to seek the Lord"—then there is still time in which to seek the Lord! Then it is not over with me, even if I have long delayed. I may still come to Him!

Yes, when you are nothing but a bag of bones with a crown of gray hair, Christ will have you! When you can only totter on your staff, you may come to Jesus and if you have grown so infirm that even your memory begins to fail you and all your senses seem to be departing, yet He can give you a child's eyes—the eyes of faith! And He can give you a child's heart—the heart of love! And He can make you a new man in Christ Jesus! I see a good many here who are aged and I know many of them are my fathers in Christ—I speak not to them. But I see some who are, perhaps, even though in advanced age, "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Oh dear old Friends, it is surely time that *you* should seek the Lord! You cannot dispute my plea. Yield to it at once and seek the Lord before yet another gray hair falls to the ground!

There are special occasions in which a Divine call is made to men. If you remember, we read, just now, the Word of the Lord in which He says,

“It is in My desire that I should chastise them,” and this is said in connection with the words of our text, “It is time to seek the Lord.” Now, have any of you been under the chastising hand of God of late? Have you been sick? Do you come up to this house after a time of illness? Well, it is a choice mercy to be afflicted! Take care that you do not despise it. The Lord has not given you up, it seems, for He still thinks it worth His while to put bit and bridle upon you! Waste not the opportunity which recovered health brings you, but hearken to the Divine call! He smites you that you may run to Him to have the wound bound up!

Or is it, dear Friends, that you have lately lost some of those who were dear to you? Are they in Heaven? Are you not going there, yourself? Then, God calls you by that baby that has been removed, by that godly mother or that Christian friend who has gone Home. He calls you and He says, “It is time to seek the Lord.” Or have you been losing property? Is trade very bad? Have you been out of work and are you brought to poverty? Will not these whips touch you and drive you to seek the Lord? I sometimes think that I have good reason for trusting God because I have nothing else to trust in! And beyond a question you might use the same reasoning. Go to God, for everything else is going away from you! You will soon have nothing left. O man, be sure of your God! When a Christian is in abundance, he finds God in everything and when a Christian is in poverty, then he finds everything in God.

But you cannot do that! You cannot do that, for God is nothing to you! And where will you be when all is gone and you have no God? When everything departs from you as “a dream when one awakes” and you wake up to find that you are “without God and without hope in the world”? Think upon this, I beseech you, and let it be a call from Heaven to you. “Hear the rod and Him that has appointed it” and, as the strokes fall upon you and you smart beneath them, think that you hear each stripe say to you, “It is time to seek the Lord!” It will be wise for us to add and for you to remember that it is time to seek the Lord before the chastisement comes. Is it not a wise thing to escape, if we can, from these judgments, for though kindly meant, would it not be better if we did not render them necessary?

Soul, do you want to be whipped to Christ? If God means to save you, He will bring you by fire and He will bring you through water! Yes, He will break all your bones in the bringing, but bring you, He will! Why necessitate the rougher means? “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” Why do you need to be goaded like an ox, or driven with blows like the stubborn mule? Yield at once! Yield to softer pressure! Be overcome gently, sweetly, by His love. Yield yourself to seek the Lord and begin to do so under milder influences than what I trust you will be made to do by some means or other. Do you not know what the Lord says concerning His people? “I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.”

The deed can be done without much ado! As yet you have not lost your children. Your trade is not bad. You are not in ill health. You have every mercy surrounding you—then let these cords of love draw you. Yield while

God is beckoning in mercy and speaking as a lover who woos the object of His choice! Come along with you, just as a little child does when a nurse holds out an apple, or when a mother puts out her hands and with a smiling face says, "Come to me, my child." Hear the still small voice telling you that in the midst of your prosperity and domestic happiness, it is time to seek the Lord! Oh, if you shall have this silver blessing of earthly felicity and the golden blessing of eternal love on top of it, how rich you will be! All that you have, indeed, to this time, may be compared to so many ciphers set in a row. You have seen a child make them on a slate. They all come to nothing! But if your God comes and puts His glorious unity in front of them, oh, what riches you will have! Get your God, the sacred Integer, to add real weight and value to all you have! It is but nothing until He comes there. "It is time to seek the Lord."

Let me argue with any that have been living a life of sin and have never come to Christ. Have you not had enough of it? May not the time past suffice you? When will you have eaten enough unsavory meat? What profit have you in it? What comfort has it brought you? What peace has it worked? Can you live on the profit of it? Could you die with sin about you and hope that it would make your pillow soft? You know that "the wages of sin is death" and, for my part, I judge the work of sin to be little better than the wages of sin. Do you not think so? And do you not think that you have long enough run risks with your soul and more than sufficiently played an awful game of hazard with immortality and Heaven and Hell? O Sirs, have you not had enough of the unprofitable works of darkness and have you not grieved the Spirit long enough? Have you not vexed the heart of Christ long enough? He has been knocking, knocking, knocking, knocking, till His head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night. Must He tarry still longer?

Oh, if He means to save you according to His everlasting purpose, He will come into your heart's bedchamber if He waits till cock-crowing! But do not, I pray you, treat contemptuously your loving, tender, patient Lord! Can you make Him wait, even, for another moment? Surely, by the memories of His long-enduring love, it is time that you should seek His face! Here are some sweet words which I would gladly put into your mouths—

***"He has called, I cannot tarry,
I have heard His voice before.
I will leave these deadly slumbers,
And set open wide the door.
In the north blast He rebuked me,
And I knew the message well.
In the south wind now He whispers,
And no longer I'll rebel.
Even now again I hear Him,
Come, my Lord and enter in,
How can I resist Your knocking?
Come and cover all my sin."***

There are certain occasions in our lives upon which there seems to be a special mark set—a sort of note bank—to make us note well that just now

is a happy occasion. Tides to be taken at the flood happen in men's lives and it is well if they are turned to profitable use.

I think, dear Friends, that it is time to seek the Lord very hopefully when you are in a place where others have sought Him and found Him! Your being in this House of Prayer is a token for good. I can bear personal witness that there is hardly a seat in this Tabernacle on which, at some time or other, there has not sat a seeking sinner who has found the Savior! If we marked these seats with golden stars, where souls were saved, you would see here many footprints of Grace—holy places which angels look on with delight! You are found in a place where God is known to do works of Grace—it is a place whose name might be called, "Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there." In this place the Lord has brought thousands, *many* thousands, to the feet of Jesus!

And why not you? Why not you? The same Gospel is being preached to you and by the same voice, too, which God has made effectual to others and with the same desire that it should be made effectual to you. The preacher can truly say that it is a desire which grows on him and absorbs the whole strength of his soul—the desire that you should be saved. "If by any means I might save some." The place is hopeful—it is a very Bethesda, a house of mercy, a hospital of healing! Why should you not now seek and find the Savior? Perhaps you are feeling in your heart, at this moment, a measure of thoughtfulness and softening—some drawings are upon you. This shows that it is time for you to seek the Lord—

***"Even at this hour He calls you!
It is not yet too late!
He has not closed the day of Grace,
He has not shut the gate.
He calls you! Hush! He calls you!
He would not have you go
Another step without Him
Because He loves you so."***

Do not trifle with your heart when it begins to open! Oh, I have known some that have come to me and said, "We were once tender and hopeful, but now we are like the man in the iron cage—we cannot feel. We are almost past concern and conviction and nothing awakens us." Beloved Hearer, if it is not so with you, you ought to be thankful, but do not rest in your tenderness, nor think that you are any better than others—bless the mercy which still waits for you and pleads with you. When sailors go to sea, they make use of every breeze—I know they would like a brisk trade-wind to carry them along from day to day—but if no such wind arises, they are glad of any favoring breeze. If there is only a puff, or a capful, they catch at it and tack about to use every breath of it.

Now, though you may not, at this moment, be feeling the secret power of the Holy Spirit to a high degree, yet, if conscience is only a little awakened, do not let it fall asleep. If the will is only a little swayed, do not try to stiffen it. If there is only a little desire to seek the Lord, take care of that desire and let it become a hungering and a thirsting! You know what your servant does when the fire is almost out, how she kneels down and blows

on the coals—how she puts her hands together and gently breathes the dying flame to life again. If you have a spark, may the Lord help you to blow it up, yes, and may His own living breath blow upon that little Grace till it becomes the master influence of your nature and like a consuming fire burns within your soul!

These are favorable moments, moments to be used before they flee, when showers of Grace are dropping upon you and the ground is soft and ready for the holy Seed! Take care that you use your opportunity well, for “it is time to seek the Lord.” And so it is, I think, when the Truth of God comes to you, personally, when you begin to feel, “There is something about the Gospel which is meant for *me*. I believe that God brought me to this Tabernacle tonight and He has guided the minister in His text and is helping him to bring the Word of God home to my conscience. I thought he looked at me, just now. I feel sure that he means me.” Yes, you are quite right! He does mean you and so does God mean you and thus He calls you to Himself!

Arise, He calls you! Lame, blind, dead though you are, He calls you! Oh, yield to the sacred summons while now it comes out of the excellent majesty where sits His enthroned Son, for Jesus, as well as the Father speaks to you! Come! Come at once! Come, you lingering, fainting one! Come, all you that labor and are heavy laden, for He will give you rest. “It is time to seek the Lord.” We have spoken enough about the time, if the Holy Spirit will but apply the warnings which we have uttered.

II. Let us now, in the second place, enlarge upon the peculiar work to which we are called at this time. Here is A SEARCH COMMENDED. “It is time to seek the Lord.” “Seek the Lord?” Why, He is here! “Seek the Lord?” He is everywhere! “Seek the Lord?” He needs no seeking, for in Him we live and move! Yes, but do you not see that it does not refer so much to where *God* is, as to where *you* are? You have turned your back on Him, dear Friend. If you are the person that I mean, tonight, you have been forgetting Him and so, because He has not been in your thoughts, you have, in a moral and spiritual sense, lost the Lord. He is everywhere except in *your* thoughts. He is not to be sought for as though He were some hidden thing to be discovered by search or ingenuity—He is to be sought after because, as far as you are concerned, you have so forgotten Him as to have lost sight of Him. “Seek the Lord.”

I hear the earnest enquirer say, “It must mean that I am now to endeavor to realize that there is a God. And that He is very near me.” Yes. “And that I am speaking to Him?” Yes. “And that He calls to me and says, ‘come to Me; be reconciled?’” Yes. All this and more is to be your finding of God as really existent to you. Begin now to live, not as an atheist who is without God, but as a Christian, who has God with him and has God within him. “Seek the Lord” means, then, that thought and love and desire should all come towards God and realize Him and so seek Him. “Seek the Lord?” asks one, “But I am sinful! If I come into His Presence, He will slay me, for He cannot look upon iniquity.” Then you must come and seek

the Lord in the way in which it will be good for you to come near to Him, namely, through His dear Son!

As a sinner, you could not come to Him, or He to you, but He has been pleased that His dear Son should take upon Himself the form of a Servant and be made in the likeness of sinful flesh and “bear our sins in His own body on the tree.” Now, if you will come to Christ, *God* is in Christ and you will thus come to God! We may not come to God without preparation, but we may come to *Christ* without any preparation! We may come just as we are—at once—in all our carelessness, in all our nakedness, in all our filthiness! We shall never find God till we seek Him by the way of Jesus Christ! My sinning Brother, since the Lord has not hidden Himself in Christ, but has *revealed* Himself in Christ and bids you see Him in His Son, I entreat you, attend to this word of the text, “It is time to seek the Lord.”

Come and seek Him, now, by asking Him to wash you from your sin that you may find Him. Ask Him to change your whole nature that you may find Him. Ask Him to make you like Himself that you may dwell with Him. Ask Him to help you to serve Him that you may live in the light of His Countenance. Ask Him to help you to cast off every false way and to abound in His Grace, that the rain of His righteousness may come upon you and saturate your soul so that you can never lose His Presence again. “It is time to seek the Lord.” My dear Hearers, if any of you are not accustomed to hear the Gospel, but have been brought up in various forms of will-worship, let me beseech you not to think that it is of any use to seek a priest, or to seek a sacrament, or to seek anything but the Lord!

You must personally come to God, Himself, in Jesus Christ! And the text says not, “It is time to be confirmed,” or, “It is time to be baptized,” or, “It is time to come to holy communion.” No, it says, “It is time to seek the Lord.” That is the pith and core and marrow of your necessity—that your soul must seek after God and your heart must come into the arms of God as the prodigal son came into the arms of his father. Did he say, “I will arise and go unto my *priest*”? No, prodigal as he was, he was not so much a dupe! He said, “I will arise and go unto my *father*.” There was wisdom in going at once to headquarters and seeking pardon from one who had the power to give it! The prodigal had fed swine, but he had not become one of the swine, himself, or he might have gone to a father-confessor or a priest! But being, still, a man and having come to himself, he sought his father.

O Soul, I beseech you, seek no minister! Seek to no outward form or ceremony, for in the Lord, alone, is your salvation! Every remedy short of Divine aid will mock your misery. Time enough have you sought to earthly physicians and you are nothing better—go, then, to Jehovah Rophi, the Lord that heals you and you shall be made whole! You will never be cured of your inward malady by sacraments, though you should devour a mountain of sacred bread and drink an Atlantic of consecrated wine! You will still be as lost as ever, though all saints and angels should come to your rescue—unless you seek God—God in Christ Jesus. “It is time to seek the Lord.”

III. I close with a third point upon which I will be very brief—there is A PERIOD SET. How long are we to seek the Lord? “It is time to seek the Lord, till He rains righteousness upon you.” I believe that very much seeking of the Lord is based on ignorance—that there are some who really set about seeking the Lord as if they could not find Him and as if He were a long way off. This is corrected by the Apostle in those memorable words, “Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven, or who shall descend into the depths? The Word is near you.” How near you? “In your mouth.” That is how near it is. “In your mouth.”

What hinders a man’s receiving that which is in his mouth? Swallow it, man. Swallow! That is all you have to do. It is in your mouth—nothing can be nearer, surely, than to have it in your mouth. Oh, if I were dying and I had a lozenge in my mouth and I knew that it would save my life, do you think I would not suck it down? Ah, would I rest until it was down? I would not care if a critic stood by and said, “You must not eat that lozenge. You are not worthy of it.” I have got it in my mouth and your remonstrance comes too late, it is gliding down my throat. “Oh, but you must not swallow that lozenge: you are not fit to receive it.” I have got it and I defy anyone to rob me of it, for down it goes. “But you must not, really, partake of it. It may not be meant for you. Perhaps you are not in the Election of Grace.”

In vain your supposition! I have got it in my mouth and if possession is nine points of the law, it is all the points of the Gospel! I take it into my inward parts and I will never part with it. That is just the Gospel and a sweet way of putting it—“The Word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart.” “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” You have it, again, in our Lord’s words in His commission to His disciples, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.”

But, about this seeking. You see that there are some that forget that it is so very near them and they go seeking, but, if you seek the Lord, Soul, whatever of ignorance mingles with the search, I exhort you to persevere in seeking the Lord till He rains righteousness upon you. Seek the Lord, my dear Hearer, till you find Him! Never be satisfied with means! Rest not till you get to the end—find the Lord, or else go on seeking. Oh, stay not at Heaven’s *gate*—ask for an abundant entrance! Be not content with knocking, but knock louder and yet louder till the gate is opened! It is well to be near the kingdom, but it is an awful thing to be so near it and yet not to be in it. It is well to be persuaded to be a Christian, but a dreadful thing to be *almost* persuaded and then to stop in an undecided condition.

“Well,” you say, “but I may, perhaps, wait a bit longer. I have waited long already and I am weary.” Suppose it to be so, is it not worth waiting for? But I tell you, your waiting is very much through your own ignorance. As I have already said, the Word is near you and you may have it tonight! Even now you may have it, for it is in your mouth. If those poor blind eyes

are delivered from the scales that hide a present Savior, even now, at this moment, you may give that look of which we sing—

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

Yet, if you do not understand it, cease not to seek that light may come! Pardon will pay you abundantly when it comes. You say, “I have been pleading for months.” Then, do not waste all that you have done! Come and close with Christ and get, now, the answer to all those prayers!

Think of Columbus within three days of America, that wondrous land in which he believed. He saw few signs of it—here and there a bit of seaweed—some little tokens that there might be land ahead. But the mariners declared that they would sail no farther upon that mysterious sea. Suppose that, within three days of the shore, Columbus had turned back? Then he would have lost all his pains for lack of a few hours perseverance! And you, tonight, perhaps, within half-an-hour of unspeakable joy—you, within the next 10 minutes able to rejoice in Christ and find present salvation—will you now start back? No, by the Eternal Godhead, push on! O Spirit of the living God, push the sinner on and lead him, now, to say, “If I perish, I will perish pleading for mercy and hoping in the Grace of God by Jesus Christ.” You cannot and you shall not perish so! “It is time to seek the Lord, till He rains righteousness upon you.”

That is how long you have to seek Him. I will give you a picture and with that conclude. You know the story of Elijah when the heavens had long been deaf—a bronze concave that mocked the desires of men? He went up to the top of Carmel and he began to pray. With groans and cries and tears—with his head between his knees he used language which only God heard—and it was mighty pleading! Then he said to his servant, “Go up, now, look toward the sea.” And Gehazi went up and looked toward the sea—he gazed down there along the shoreline and up there above the Lebanon. And then he cast a wistful look around and came back and said, “There is nothing.” The Prophet, while his servant was gone, had been crying more importunately. He had been pouring out his soul to its very depths before God, saying, “I will not let You go unless You bless this thirsty land!”

A second time He said to Gehazi, “Go again.” I think I see Gehazi going and looking, but he perceives nothing. “Master,” he said, “there is nothing.” But the Prophet had still been praying and so he said, “Go, a third time.” And away went Gehazi, thinking it was a fool’s errand. He went and looked and in a moment said, “There is nothing. I told you there was nothing.” But the Prophet had still been praying while the servant went and he said to Gehazi, “Go again” for the fourth and then the fifth time. He felt, “As the Lord lives, He must hear my prayer,” and he gave himself, again, to wrestling with his Lord. Before the living God he knelt and he felt that he could not rise until the promise and the covenant had been fulfilled! Here comes Gehazi. He does not like his task at all. “Master,” he says, “I

have been five times and there is nothing! Will you send me again?" "Go again, Gehazi! Go again," said Elijah. "Go again."

And Gehazi goes the sixth time. "Alas!" he says to himself, "I never went on such an idle set of errands before." All along the Mediterranean Sea he looks and looks and looks again. And back he comes with the old tale, "There is nothing. There is nothing. There is nothing." But what does Elijah say to him? "This last time while you have been gone, I have prevailed. I have believed that I have the petition which I asked and I know I have it. Go, Gehazi, go and look! I said to you, go again seven times—so go and look again." The weary servant is in no hurry to go. The longer he is about it, the more is the likelihood there will be nothing to come of it. When he reaches Carmel's top and casts his eyes over the sky, there is a little fleece of cloud—but it is such a tiny flake that it is not bigger than a man's hand.

What is that to the sky? What rain can come out of a morsel of cloud to be measured by a span? He comes back and he declares, "Behold, there arises a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." Up rises the Prophet and wraps his mantle about him! The rain is coming and he sends Gehazi in haste down to Ahab, to warn him against the nearing deluge, saying, "Prepare your chariot and get you down, that the rain stop you not." Nobody could hear it, but Elijah had marvelous ears as he had a marvelous voice with God! He runs before Ahab's chariot in sacred exhilaration of delight! The heavens are already beginning to turn to blackness and the first big drops are falling! Elijah has prevailed!

Now, get to your chambers tonight—you that have not found the Lord—and come not forth till you have found Him and He has given you Grace as a mighty shower! If, by the morning light, there is but a little hope and though you can only say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," keep the watches and continue the prayer! O Soul, though you can only cry, "Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief," yet watch on and seek on, for the Lord will rain righteousness upon you! A deluge of mercy shall descend and your heart shall rejoice, for this is His own promise, "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." So be it unto you. Amen.

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

AN URGENT NECESSITY

NO. 3557

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 1917.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 31, 1870.

"It is time to seek the Lord till He comes and rains righteousness upon you."
Hosea 10:12.

HOSEA uses a great many figures taken from farming. He describe the seeking of the Lord in the former part of this verse as plowing, and sowing, and breaking up fallow ground. I suppose he intends by this to describe conviction of sin, humiliation of soul as the work that plows, the reception of the Truth of the Gospel by faith in Jesus Christ as sowing, for this introduces the Living Seed into the soul. And he here gives two reasons why this matter of seeking the Lord should be attended to at once. His first reason is the season. "*It is time to seek the Lord.*" The second is a *very gracious expectation* that God will rain righteousness upon us. First, then, the Prophet reasons that we should seek after the Lord because it is—

I. THE TIME TO SEEK GOD.

"It is time to seek the Lord." I wish you to reflect, first, that we yet have time. It might have been otherwise. We might have been cut down in our sins. Many of our neighbors and acquaintances have died. Some of them, we have reason to fear, died in their iniquities and were taken away with a stroke. We, too, have passed through dangers. Some have escaped in shipwreck. Some have been in imminent peril in accidents—some of us have come into the very jaws of death in serious sickness. We might almost sing, or quite sing—

***"Lord, and am I yet alive?
Not in torment, not in Hell?
Still does Your good Spirit strive
With the chief of sinners dwell?"***

We yet have time. Let no person living say he has not time, for while life lasts, hope lasts. The sentence, "Depart, you cursed," is not yet pronounced by Christ's lips on you. Pronounce it not on yourselves! Do not conclude your case to be hopeless and make it hopeless, but rather believe that being in the assembly of God's people, listening to the testimony of His Grace, you are still on praying ground and pleading terms with

God—and you yet have time given you to seek the Lord! The most aged need not despair! The most guilty need not conclude that their day of Grace is over! Until that iron bar shall fasten the door and you are shut in the pit of Hell forever, let not Satan persuade you that you are beyond all hope! While the Gospel note rings from the silver trumpet of gracious invitation, “He that has ears to hear let him hear,” you yet have time—time to seek the Lord!

This time is given you *for this very purpose*. You think, perhaps, that your prolonged life is given you that you may mature your plans, that you may rectify mistakes of business, that you may accumulate more money, or perhaps you are gross enough to think that the best way of using time is to get earthly pleasure out of it—and indulge animal passions and appetites! Ah, Sirs, it is not so! To whatever use you put this talent of time, God’s long-suffering has been your salvation. By it God teaches you to repent while He permits you to live! His long-suffering is not that you may provoke Him further, but that you may cease to provoke Him! He cuts not down the tree that it may spread its useless branches and cumber the ground yet worse, but if, perhaps, being dug about a little longer, it may bring forth fruit! It is the very motive why the Intercessor pleads, “Spare it yet another year.” He spares you that you may not depart hence till you are ready to depart. He gives you space, not for sin, but for repenting opportunity! Not for perpetrating worse offenses, but for turning from your evil ways! Your time has this mark on it, if you would but see it, “Repent! I give you space. Repent! Take heed you waste it not.” There is encouragement to every unconverted person in this thought! If this time is given you to repent in, then rest assured that, repenting and believing in Jesus, you will be accepted! If the judge stands at the criminal’s door and waits, and says he waits there until he is willing to receive the pardon he grants, and if the criminal is anxious to receive the pardon, there can be no difficulty in the way! The very waiting of the judge at the door proves that he does not want to execute the sentence—only desires to see some symptom of contrition, some tokens of turning from the evil way and gives space if, perhaps, these tokens may become apparent. Hear you, then, oh, unconverted ones! Hear you, then, and trifle not with the space allowed you!

It is time to seek the Lord, says the text. Surely it is *high* time! Not only *the* time, but *high* time. It is high time, you young ones, that you seek the Lord, for Satan is on the watch for you if, perhaps, your unwary footsteps may be decoyed into the paths of evil—evil which, if you are not delivered from, you will have to regret ever having trodden to life’s latest hour! Oh, if you would be kept from the snare of the fowler, you young ones, it is time you seek the Lord—high time! Now when you are leaving

your mother's roof—going away from a father's gentle guidance, it is time to seek the Lord. I would press this on any young man here just launching into life, or that marriage, or that business he entered upon—it is time to seek the Lord! Set up God's altar when you set up a house, and before you trade for yourself, consecrate yourself and your substance to God, who can bless you and will!

But, oh, you that have passed now into middle life, have you spent forty years in sin? It is high time you sought the Lord! Your best days have been given to provoking Him. Will you not give the rest, such as they are, to His service? Oh, that His Spirit might compel you to do so. And you that lean upon the staff, you who have come to the verge of human life, is it not high time to seek the Lord? I see your sun going down—the sky is scarcely bright, the red rays betoken that the sun is hiding itself. Oh, before the dark, dark, endless night comes on, seek the Lord while yet He may be found! Be grateful for having been spared so long. Oh, be not so ungrateful as to use so long a life all for sin, for remember, it will be then all used for your own destruction! You have been a fool long enough! Gray hairs and foolery are not well matched. You have long enough sported on the brink of Hell—will you not start back from it? By God's long-suffering and patience, I beseech you remember it is high time for you to seek the Lord.

And you in whom I mark that treacherous spot upon the cheek that marks the worm beneath, and you with the preternaturally bright eyes that indicates the fire of consumption within, it is time you sought the Lord! And you whose crumbling frames, or aching bones or relaxed sinews, or trembling nerves, all betoken how weak your body is and how readily it may be crumbled back into the dust—these tokens from the Lord are upon you—it is time you sought Him! He knocks gently as yet, and gives you warning. Take heed, He will soon come and remove the house of the wicked, and the tabernacle of the ungodly, and your souls must appear before His Judgment Seat! It is high time you sought the Lord. And, oh, all of you ungodly ones who listen to my voice, and have listened to it so long, I have asked the Lord to teach me how to preach that I may somehow get at your hearts. I seem not to have learned the art as yet. May His Spirit come and give the right word with a barbed shaft that shall plow its way right through your armor and pierce its way through all the hardness of your heart until it breaks the conscience and wounds you—and compels you to cry for mercy! What? All the years at Park Street, Exeter Hall and the time at the Surrey Gardens—and ever since this Tabernacle has been built—and yet unsaved? It is time to seek the Lord! The very seats you sit on cry out against you, some of you, and I, unwilling as I am to speak it, I must be a swift witness against some of

you, for to the best of my ability I have pointed you to Christ, I have warned you of danger, I have told you of your great peril, I have warned you of the terrible punishment of sin, I have entreated you to fly to Jesus! It is time, you Gospel-hardened ones, that you sought the Lord! If your lusts are gods, serve them! But decide and choose this day—and may God choose for you whom you will serve! It is high time as well as time to seek the Lord!

Remember, too—and here is something solemn, but something sweet as well—*it is God's time*, for these are God's words put into the Prophet's mouth—it is time to seek the Lord! God says, "It is time." When God says it is time, why, then, when I come, I cannot be denied! God says, "It is time." Then if I do not come, I provoke Him! Hear you these words, you that are dull of hearing, and you whose hearts have a thick crust! Hear you, for Jehovah speaks to you this day. "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation." "Today"—He limits the time—"Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, for if you do so, the day will come when He will deal with you as He did with His people, Israel, who, having long provoked Him, received this as His answer to their face, "He swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest." Not yet has He spoken, but He may, and that awful voice which comes from Solomon's Proverbs may come to you. "Because I have called and you refused, I stretched out My hand and no man regarded it, I also will mock at your calamity; I will laugh when your fear comes." "Today is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation."

Once more only. It is time to seek the Lord, and *it is but time*. It is but a time. You have not given to you eternity in which to seek the Lord. It is *the time*, and the time is limited. It is *still* time, but *it is limited*. To some of you it is most limited. It is time to seek the Lord. The vessel lies in the harbor and the favorable wind would take her out to sea and bear her on to her port, but the sailor sleeps—the captain observes not the wind. The sails are furled. Tomorrow the wind has changed. Now he may do as he will, but he is land-locked, and there must he remain. He cannot put out to sea, for he cannot command the gale. So is it with you—there is a time which God appoints you. Tis now! Slight it and it may never come again! It is but a time. Oh, take this mercy at the flood—miss it not, I pray you. While God waits, come you, lest there should come an hour when you shall knock at His door and the voice shall be heard, "Too late, too late! You cannot enter now." Ah, I would I had but power to put this as I should, and so that you would feel it, but, perhaps, you will feel it when I would wish you had no need to do so—I mean on your dying bed.

The Puritans tell a story of a woman convinced of sin on her deathbed, who lived near Cambridge, who was visited by several ministers, all of

whom had great skill in comforting seeking souls. When five or six of them had spoken gently and comfortingly to her, she opened her eyes upon them with a glare, and all she said was this, "Call back the time, call back the time, for otherwise I am damned!" And so she died. And there are many, I hear, who might say that. "The time is gone! The time is gone! I cannot call it back!" Oh, take it on the wing while yet it is time to seek the Lord. You know, perhaps, the story of the traveler on the prairie, when a fire in the distance could be seen. The prairie was on a blaze, and he knew that his only hope for life was to fight fire with fire. He searched for his matches. If he could make a ring around him and burn the grass so that when the fire came up, it would have nothing to feed upon, then he might escape. He found but three matches in his box. He took one and struck it with some degree of care, but, alas, before he could light the train which he had laid, the match had gone out. He took another, and this time, very tremblingly, with much of tremulous anxiety about him, struck it. There was a light—he thought he was safe, but a gust of wind blew it out. And now all depended on the last match! He would be burnt to ashes, with no help, no pity from a friend, if that match failed him. Down he falls and breathes the prayer—"God help me, God help me! Grant this may succeed." He struck it! You may guess with what care he had laid all the grass around it, and then he struck it as though he were loath to run the terrible risk, but he praised God when he saw its success and that his life was saved!

You have but one match left, O Sinner! Use it well—one light, one time—the time to seek the Lord. Oh, seek Him now—tonight! This moment in the pew say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Is that your prayer? 'Tis well. God hear and answer it! But now I must, by your patience, speak for a little while upon the second part of the text. There is another reason given for seeking the Lord—and that is—

II. THE BLESSED EXPECTATION.

It is that in due time He will rain righteousness upon us! I understand by this that the plowing and the sowing are ours, but these are nothing without the heavenly rain of Grace. But God will be sure to send that in due time. In fact, our plowing and sowing are results and tokens of His Grace, and the Grace of comfort will come where the Grace of humiliation has already come. When it says, "righteousness," I think it means to assure us that God can, in a way of righteousness, be gracious to us. Through His dear Son, who bore the punishment of our sins, God can righteously rain upon sinners. Now just a moment or two. You say you have not Grace. You say you are not what you should be. 'Tis even so. But seek the Lord and He will rain righteousness upon you! Observe *all Divine Grace must come from Him*. Rain comes from God. He rains it.

Every drop of Grace comes from Heaven. You, Sinner, can never get any Grace unless He gives it you! Remember this, and wait upon Him for it now. It must be heavenly Grace, or it will be no Grace at all. It can come to you. There are some parts on earth that never could be watered if it did not rain. Nobody would ever think of watering the hilltops. But He waters His hills from His chambers. We cannot give Grace to you—you are in such a desolate, lonely, mountainous place, but He can get to you and He will! See how it is He will rain righteousness upon you. Then, as there is a straight way for rain even to the wilderness, so is there a straight way for God's Grace to drop into your desert heart. Rain comes Sovereignly as God wills it, where He wills it, when He wills it. And in degree and duration according to His will. So does Grace. Lift up your soul, then, to Him for it, and bow your head, feeling that you deserve it not!

But in the metaphor of rain there is the idea of plenteousness. He will *rain* righteousness upon you. If you have no Grace, He will give you much Grace if you have great needs. He will give you great supplies. He will rain it upon you. God is not stinting in His love—He will not give you a drop or two, but He will give you a sea of mercy. “I will pour water upon him who is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.” Now is not this good reason for seeking the Lord? You cannot get Grace anywhere but from the Lord. God can give it to you very abundantly. It is in His hands to give or not as He wills. Oh, seek it. He holds the stars! He guides the clouds! He wing the tempest! Seek Him for His Grace—He will give it to you. It can come from none besides. But it will come. There is the mercy of it. And you are told in the text to seek it until it does come. Seek Him until the Grace comes! I have known a sinner cry to God once, and mercy has come immediately, but there have been many cases where souls have cried again and again, and only after a long while have they had success. I saw as I came here tonight—it all happened in a moment—I saw a little child just come home from school, I suppose. A very little child and she tapped at her mother's door, and the mother did not come, and she did what was the best thing to do under the circumstances—cried as loud as ever she could—and her mother came to her! If you have knocked at Mercy's door and Mercy has not come, cry for it! Oh, a groan, a tear, a cry, a sigh will quicken the steps of Mercy! God cannot linger when a sinner cries. When a sinner weeps, Christ will soon have pity on him. But, anyhow, keep on till He comes. Seek till He rains righteousness upon you.

Elijah got the fire in prayer very soon, but he did not get the rain very soon. He had to say to his servant, “Go and look towards the sea.” There was Elijah, with his head between his knees, in mighty prayer, but not a drop of rain or sign of a cloud. “Go again, go again,” he repeated till he

had commanded his servant seven times—and then there is a cloud the size of a man's hand! Sinner, have you prayed? Pray again. Have you prayed twice? Pray again! Has it come to three times? Pray again! Has it come to four times? Pray again! Does it amount to six times? Pray again! Let there be no stint in prayer. You have kept God waiting long enough. You must not marvel if He should now tarry awhile. Pray again! Pray again! Say, "I am resolved that I will not give it up until You shall rain Your comfort, Your righteousness, Your Grace, upon me." He will surely do it and you do not know how soon—you do not know how soon—you will get comfort. And when it comes it will make up for all delays. You know the woman, when the child is born, remembers no more the travail, for joy that a man is born into the world—and, oh, when Christ is yours, you will forget your travail in your joy and your rejoicing!

I am thinking just now of Columbus and his crew. They had sailed long across the Atlantic, and had not found the golden land, the El Dorado, and so the sailors talked of going back, and many a scheme he had, by which he tempted them a little further on to that unknown shore! At last it came to this, they mutinied—they would go no further! They would not seek the land again—why should they drift away and be lost forever? He said, "Give me but three days, and if between now and the third day we see not the shore, then we will reverse the helm." Within those three days there stood the fair shores of the New World before the mariners' eyes! Suppose they had turned back the second day, and had gone home and never found it? Well, I don't know that it would have mattered much *to those sailors*. Somebody else would have found it, but you are, perhaps, within three days now of being accepted in the Beloved—perhaps within three hours! Pray God that it may be within three minutes! And will you not go on little farther? Will you not still cry and will you not take the Gospel step, the grand step of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do, and you shall be saved! That brings you to the El Dorado, to the land of gold, to the land of mercy, to the bosom of Christ, to the safety of the blessed, to the security of the Glory that shall be revealed hereafter! Oh, Sinner, be not discouraged, but seek the Lord, for you have His promise He will be found of you!

Some even of God's servants have been a good while seeking and they have not found Him. When that dear martyr of Christ, Mr. Glover, lay in prison, he was in a very sad state of heart, and he said, "I love Him, and I will burn for Him, but, oh, that I had some glimpses of His face!" And his fellow sufferer who lay in prison with him used to tell him, "He will appear to you—you shall have joy." But day after day all through that weary time spent in prison, he would constantly be saying, "Am I His? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Has He shut up the heart of His com-

passion?” “But,” said Glover, “if He never speak comfortably to me again, I know His Truth and I know His Gospel, and I will burn for Him. By His Grace, I will never turn away!” And the morning came on which he was to be burned—and he awoke with some heaviness of his spirit. There seemed to be no comfort in any promise to which he turned, and prayer brought no relief. And they came and put the chains on him, and they led him out. He came to where the stake was and where the firewood was and he was about to strip and put on his shirt for the burning—and suddenly he leapt up and said, “He is come! He is come! He is come! Glory be unto His name!” His friends had asked him to give some sign that his spirit had revived—and he stood and burned as though he scarcely felt the fire, singing Psalms and praying!

And so it will be with every earnest seeker. If the looks of love have never come to you for years, you will have them yet, for never soul believed but what was safe! Some have believed, but not been comfortable, but they are safe—the comfort will come. Only seek Sinner, for He will rain righteousness on you—

**“So I must maintain my hold,
‘Tis the goodness makes me bold;
I can no denial take,
For I plead for Jesus’ sake.”**

Oh, Sinner, never let go! Cling close to Christ and He cannot cast you away, for this is His promise, “Him that comes, I will in no wise cast out.” Come, then, and the Lord bless you! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: DEUTERONOMY 32:1-39.

A very marvelous Chapter it is—a song and a prophecy, in which the poet-seer seems to behold the whole future spread before him as in a map—and it is so vivid to him that he describes it rather as a matter present or past, than as a thing which is yet to be. It is the story of God’s dealing His chosen and peculiar people, Israel, from the beginning to the end. The commencement is exceedingly noble.

Verses 1-3. *Give ear, O you heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe you greatness unto our God.* All through, the song is for the glorification of God! Not a syllable, indeed, in which man is held up to honor, but the Lord, alone, is exalted in His dealings with His people. He is the Rock. All other things are the mere cloud that hovers on the mountain’s brow. But—

4. *He is the Rock.* Immutable, eternal.

4. *His work is perfect.* Sometimes very terrible and very mysterious, but His work is perfect,

4. *For all His ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.* But as for His people, what a contrast between them and their God!

5. *They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of His children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.* What a stoop from the God of Truth, without iniquity, to a people full of iniquity—a perverse and crooked generation! We never know so much of our own vileness as when we get a clear view of the excellency of God. What said Job? “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You, therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

6. *Do you thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He your Father who has bought you? Has He not made you, and established you?* Who made the Jews to be a people? Who set Israel apart to be a nation? Who, but God, who bought them with a price when they came out of Egypt and, in his fatherly care, led them through the wilderness?

7, 8. *Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.* God’s first point in the government of the world was His own people. Everything else was mapped out after He had set apart a place for them—a place sufficient, large, fruitful and in an admirable position, that there they might multiply and enjoy all the good things which He so freely gave them. And to this day dynasties rise and fall, kings reign or are scattered by defeat, only with this one point in God’s eye and purpose in His mind—the upholding of the Church in the world—the spread of His glorious Truth!

9-12. *For the LORD’S portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wrings, takes them, bears them on her wings: So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.* This is the history of the tutoring of Israel in the wilderness. When they came out of Egypt they were a mere mob of slaves, degenerate by the debasing influence of long bondage. They had to be trained before they were fit to be a nation. Now in all this, let us try to see ourselves. What has God worked for those of us who are His people in bringing us out from the bondage of

sin? And how graciously does He this day preserve us as a man guards the apple of “his eye”? No sooner does anything come near the eye than up goes the hand instinctively to shield the eye. And let anything happen to the people of God—and the power of God is ready at once for their defense. An eagle has to teach her young eaglets to fly. She will take them on her wings, so they say, and cast them off, and let them flutter, and then dash down and come under them and bear them up again till she has taught them to use their wings. And the Lord has been doing this with many here—apparently casting them off, only that, when they fall, underneath them may be the everlasting arms. We have to be trained to faith. It is a difficult exercise for such poor creatures as we are. We are being trained for it at this day. After they had thus been tutored, they were brought into the promised land, which Moses never entered, but yet in his vision of prophecy he sees it all.

13, 14. *He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields: and He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; curds from the cattle, milk of the flock, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the choicest wheat: and you did drink the pure blood of the grape.* It was a very fruitful land, abounding not merely in necessaries, but in luxuries. Palestine gave to its inhabitants all that heart could wish, and for a long time, while they were faithful to God, they lived in the midst of plenty.

15. *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.* “The little holy nation”—for I suppose that is the meaning of “Jeshurun.” It is a diminutive word—“the little religious nation waxed fat. It abounded in prosperity. It grew stout and kicked.”

15. *You are waxen fat, you are grown thick, you are covered with fatness: then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.* Alas, alas! Alas! They set up calves in Bethel. They turned aside to Ashtoreth, and worshipped the Queen of Heaven!

16, 17. *They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abomination provoked they Him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, Demons—not to God.*

17. *Not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.* There is nothing new in religion that is true. The truth is always old. But only imagine a new God! And verily we have had lately some new fashions brought up—some new styles of worship. I think they call them mediaeval. They certainly are no older than that—“new gods that newly came up, whom your fathers feared not.”

18. *Of the Rock that begat you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten God that formed you.* Israel was nothing apart from God—a little tribe of

people—nothing to be compared with the great nations of the earth. Its only reason for existence was its God. He was its center, its light, its glory, its power. They had got away from Him that formed them.

19, 20. *And when the LORD saw it, He abhorred them, because of the provoking of His sons, and of His daughters. And He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very forward generation, children in whom is no faith.* There is the mischief—lack of faith. Lack of faith leads to all manner of sin. Oh, that we had a strong elastic faith to realize the unseen God and keep to purely spiritual worship, not needing symbols, signs and outward tokens—all of which are abominable in His sight, but worshipping the unseen in spirit and in truth. But the Lord said—

21. *They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.* And so the idolatrous nations came and conquered Judea. One after another they trampled down the holy city and let them see that God could use the nations that they despised to be a scourge upon them!

22-25. *For a fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn unto the lowest Hell and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischief upon them; I will spend My arrows upon them—they shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction. I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.* Now read the story of the destruction of Israel and Judea—the overthrow of these two kingdoms—and you will see how, word for word, all this came true!

26, 27. *I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men. Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD has not done all this.* God always looks out for some reason for mercy when He is dealing with His people—and He found it here—that the heathen nations would not admit that God had thus been chastening His erring people, but would begin to ascribe their victories to their own demon gods! Therefore He said He would scatter them.

28-30. *For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them,*

and the LORD had shut them up? That little people would have been victorious over all their enemies if God had still been with them, but they were defeated and scattered because they had grieved the Lord. Oh, what strength Believers might have if they would but believe! If we could but cast ourselves upon God in simple, childlike faith, we might play the Samson over again and smite our thousands! But we, too, have little faith in God, even those who have most of it—and when the time of trial comes, we also are a stiff-necked and unbelieving generation, as our fathers were!

31-34. *For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. For their wine is of the wine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up among My treasures? What an awful text! God lays man's sins by—seals them up among their treasures, that they should not be forgotten—and He will bring them to account.*

35, 36. *To Me belongs vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the LORD shall judge His people. He will not always let His enemies triumph over them. He will come back to His people whom He seemed to cast away. "The Lord shall judge His people."*

36. *And have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. He seemed very angry, but how soon He comes back in love and tries His people over again.*

37-39. *And He shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted? Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up and help you, and be your protection. See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me. I kill, and I make alive: I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand.*

—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.**

OUT OF EGYPT

NO. 1675

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 20, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son.”
Matthew 2:14, 15.*

*“When Israel was a Child, then I loved Him, and called My Son out of Egypt.”
Hosea 11:1.*

EGYPT occupies a very singular position towards Israel. It was often the shelter of the seed of Abraham. Abraham, himself, went there when there was a famine in the land of his sojourn. To Egypt, Joseph was taken that he might escape from the death intended for him by his envious brothers and become the stepfather of the house of Israel. Into Egypt, as we all right well know, went the whole family of Jacob—and there they sojourned in a strange land. There Moses acquired the learning which was so useful to him. It was out of the spoils of Egypt that the furniture of the Tabernacle was made—as if to show that God intended to take out of heathen hands an offering to His own Glory—just as, afterwards, the timber of the Temple was hewn by Hiram, the Phoenician, that the Gentiles might have a share in building the Temple in token that they would, one day, be made fellow heirs with Israel.

But while Egypt was, for a while, the shelter of the house of Israel, it became, later, the house of bondage and a country fraught with danger to the very existence of the elect nation! There was a very useful purpose to be served by their going down into Egypt—that they might be consolidated into a nation and might acquire many useful arts which they could not have learned while they were wandering about in Palestine. The lesson was valuable, but it was learned in much misery. They had to smart beneath the lash and faint beneath their labor—the iron bondage entered into Israel's soul so that an exceedingly great and bitter cry went up to Heaven. Yet, when the heaviest burdens were laid on their shoulders, the day of liberty was dawning! When the tale of bricks was doubled, Moses was born! When man had come to his extremity of persecution, then God took His opportunity of salvation and led His Israel out of Egypt in the teeth of their tyrant master!

It had been at first a Goshen to them, a place of great abundance in the Delta of the Nile, but afterwards it became a Mizraim to them, for that is the Hebrew word for Egypt, and it means a place of straits and tribulations. The point that is meant to be brought forward by the Prophet is that

they were called out of Egypt, for it was not possible for them to mingle with the sons of Ham and lose their separate existence. They were on the banks of the Nile and, at first, dwelt there in much comfort, but this seductive ease was not allowed to hold them—full soon they were heavily oppressed and their existence was threatened. Yet both from the comfort of Egypt and from the captivity of Egypt they were called and, at the call of God, they came forth.

The living seed may go into strange places, but it can never be destroyed! The host of God may walk through fire, but it shall not be burned! God has made the living seed immortal and it cannot die, for it is born of God. Out of deadly lands, where every breath is disease, they shall be called by the eternal Voice. Those whom God has chosen may be cast *far* away, but they shall never be cast away! They may dwell among a people like the Egyptians—most superstitious and debased. A nation of whom even the heathen Juvenal made sport when he said, “Oh, happy people who grow their gods in their kitchen gardens!” They worshipped leeks, onions, all kinds of beasts and fowls and creeping things, but the children of the Lord cannot be suffered to remain among such a people, for the Lord desires to make of Israel and of all Believers, a people separated unto Himself.

Out of the midst of guilty Egypt the Lord called His people, whom He had formed for Himself, to show forth His praise. The abundance of superstition, though it was like the sea, shall not quench the spark of the Divine life in the living family of God! It shall burn on amidst the waves until the God who first enkindled it shall, by His own right hand, pluck it from among the billows and set it as a light upon a candlestick that it may give light to all that are in the house! Neither Egypt of old, nor Babylon, nor Rome can destroy the royal seed—out of all dangers, the Church must emerge the better for her affliction.

“Out of Egypt have I called My Son,” is a text worthy to be made a proverb, for it is true all through the history of the chosen seed. They are called out from among the surrounding race of rebels and, when the call comes, none can hold them back. It were easier to restrain the sun from rising than to hold the redeemed of the Lord in perpetual servitude! “The Breaker has gone up before them, and their King at the head of them”—who shall block up their road? God is still calling them out and until the very last of His elect shall be gathered in, it shall still stand true, “Out of Egypt”—and out of anywhere else that is like Egypt; out of the worst and vilest places; out of the places where they are held fast in bitter bondage, out of these—“have I called My Son.”

At this time I shall, first, call your attention to the text in Hosea according to the sense in which the Prophet first uttered it. He speaks of the natural seed called out from the sheltering world, for Egypt was a sheltering world to Israel, the natural seed, and they were called out of it by the Omnipotent power of God. Secondly, we shall notice the Divine Seed called out, literally, from a sheltering Egypt and brought up from it into the land of Judea, that He might be the Glory of His people Israel. Thirdly, we shall spend a little time in considering the chosen seed, those who are

given unto Christ of the Father—these, also, must come out from the world, whether it is friendly or hostile. The Lord has said to them, “This is not your rest, for it is polluted.” He is saying the same today. It is still true of the spiritual seed as of our Lord Jesus and of the natural seed, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.”

May the Holy Spirit be our Teacher while we handle this great subject.

I. Let us think of THE NATURAL SEED of Israel as called out of Egypt, for with them this wonderful text began to be expounded. It is well worth considering, for this constituted one of the loftiest lyrics of Hebrew poetry. The deliverance of the people of God out of Egypt, “with a high hand and with an outstretched arm,” is a song which the nation never wearied of singing—and which we ought never to weary of singing, either—for at the close of all things, we and all the redeemed spirits shall sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb!

The great redemption of the Exodus shall always be so eminent a type of the greater redemption upon the Cross that the two may be blended together and words that were sung concerning the first deliverance may be readily enough used as expressions of our joy in our salvation from death and Hell—

***“From Egypt lately come,
Where death and darkness reign,
Seek our new, our better Home,
Where we our rest shall gain.
Hallelujah! We are on our way to God.”***

While speaking upon this natural seed I want you to notice, first, that if they are to be called out of Egypt, they must first go down into Egypt. They cannot come out of it if they have not first gone into it. I do not know of anything that could have tempted them down into Egypt, for it had nothing to offer which was better than Canaan, but the fathers of the tribes were driven there by a famine which troubled the whole world. The Lord sent a man before them, even Joseph, who laid up, in store, food for the seven years of famine, and Israel went down into Egypt that they might not die, but might be cherished by Joseph, who had become lord of the land.

The Lord may, in order to prevent His people falling into a worse evil, permit them to go into that which seems hopeful, but ultimately turns out to be a great trial to them. Suffering is infinitely preferable to sinning. The Lord may, therefore, send us sorrow to keep us from iniquity. Dear Friend, the Lord who reads your heart may know that it is absolutely necessary for you to be tried—and so, spiritually, to go down into Egypt. He may send a famine to drive you there. He may place you under great tribulations and so He may bring you down both mentally and spiritually into a sad condition where you shall sigh and cry by reason of bondage.

Do not look upon this as a strange thing, for all God’s gold must pass through the fire! It is one of the marks of God’s elect that they are afflicted! The Lord Jesus says, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” Depend upon it that if you are one of the true seed you must go down into Egypt! The Lord said to Abraham, “Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs.” The shield of the chosen bears

the emblem of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. Even if the world shelters you, it will sooner or later become to you the house of bondage—yet into that house of bondage you must go, for there is a great educational process going on in affliction to prepare us for the land which flows with milk and honey!

Egypt is one of the early lessons. It is strangely early with some—their religious life begins with a cloudy morning and threat of storm. This will work them lasting good. “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” Therefore we have, “When Israel was a child, then I loved Him and called My Son out of Egypt.” The earliest days of Israel were in Egypt; the nation, in its infancy, was called from there. While the Divine life has not yet attained to maturity, we meet with straits and troubles and have to go down into Egypt and feel the weight of the yoke upon our shoulders. This is one of God’s ways of preparing us for freedom, for he that has never tasted of the bitterness of bondage will never be able to appreciate the sweets of the liberty with which Christ makes men free. So Israel must first go down into Egypt. He descends that he may rise to greater heights!

Note, next, that it was while in Egypt and at the worst time of their bondage in Egypt, that they received the first notification that the nation was to be called the son of God. Israel is not called a son until Moses comes to Pharaoh and says, “Israel is My Son, even My first-born: and I say unto you, Let My Son go, that He may serve Me.” God had been with Abraham and called him His friend, but I do not perceive that He called him His son, or that Abraham addressed the Lord as, “Our Father which are in Heaven.” Neither do I find similar sweet words flowing from the lips of Isaac or of Jacob—but when Israel was in bondage—*then* it was that the Lord revealed Israel’s adoption and openly declared, “Israel is My Son, even My first-born.”

He scourges every son whom He receives and He receives them even while the scourge is sorely bruising them! They were a poor down-trod nation—a nation of slaves begrimed with brick-earth and bleeding beneath the lash of their taskmasters! The Egyptians must have utterly despised a people who yielded so readily to all their exactions. They looked upon them as a herd of slaves who had not the spirit to rebel, whatever cruelties they might endure. But now it is, while they are lying among the pots and their faces are stained with tears, that the Lord openly, before proud Pharaoh, owns the nation as His Son, saying, “Israel is My Son, even My first-born.” I think I see Pharaoh’s grim, sardonic smile as he seems to say, “Those slaves, those wretched brick-makers whom the lowest of my people despise—if these are Jehovah’s first-born, what care I for Him or them?”

Learn therefore, dear Brothers and Sisters, that God is not ashamed of His children when they are in their worst estate. We are told, concerning our Lord Jesus, “For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Yes, and not when they put on their beautiful array; when the jewels are in their ears; when they are led forth with music and dancing and when they shout over Egyptian chivalry drowned in the Red Sea will they be more the Lord’s children than they are in the house of bondage! The

Lord God speaks of their adoption for the first time when they are still under the oppressor and when it seems impossible that they can be rescued! The Lord speaks very plainly to the haughty Pharaoh, "Let My Son go that He may serve Me; and if you refuse to let Him go, behold I will slay your son, even your first-born."

Oh, but is it not a blessed thing to go down into the Egypt of tribulation if there, for the first time, we learn our adoption of the Lord? Is it not a sweet thing, even, to be under the heaviest bondage if you are, by such means, made to understand better than you ever did before what it is to be a son and a heir, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ? The first-born of every creature is He and we are the Church of the First-Born whose names are written in Heaven! The heritage of the first-born belongs to Jesus and to us in Him—and we often know this best when our heart is broken because of sin and when our troubles are overwhelming our spirit.

"Fear not," says He, "I will help you." "Fear not, you worm, Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Yes, it was in Egyptian bondage that they received the first witness of the Spirit, that they were, as a people, the sons of God! When it became clear that they were really the sons of God, then they suffered persecution for it. A place which, as I have said, was, at first, their shelter, now became the iron furnace of oppression. Their hard labors are doubled; their male children were ordered to be cast into the river and edicts of the most intolerable kind were fulminated against them.

Now, Brethren, Satan soon knows the man that God has acknowledged to be His son and he seeks to slay him even as Herod sought to kill Jesus. When the Man-Child was born, the Dragon knew who that Man-Child was and sought to destroy Him. He vomited forth floods to sweep Him away, until we read that the earth helped the woman and there were given to her wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished from the face of the serpent. No sooner is the child of God really acknowledged to be such, than at once the seed of the serpent will hiss about him—and if they can, will cast their venom upon him. At any rate, they will bite at his heel till God has taught him, in the name of Jesus, to break the serpent's head.

Rest assured that this is another mark of the election of Grace. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. In Ishmael's case, it was seen that he that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the Spirit, and so it is now. You cannot expect to pass through this Vanity Fair without exciting the jeers and sneers of the ungodly, for the Lord's inheritance is unto him as a speckled bird—the birds round about her are against her. Every David has his Saul; every Nehemiah his Sanballat and every Mordecai his Haman.

But now comes the crown of the text, that is, "I have called My Son out of Egypt," and out of Egypt, Israel must come! Egypt was not Israel's portion—it was "a land that was not theirs." My Brothers and Sisters, we are not citizens of "the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where, also, our Lord was crucified." The best thing in this present evil world is not your portion nor mine. Friendly Egypt, sheltering Egypt, was

not Israel's inheritance. He gave them no portion, even, in the land of Goshen by a covenant of salt. They might tarry there for a while, but out of it they must come, as it is written, "You have brought a vine out of Egypt." The best side of the world, when it seems warmest and most tender to us, is not the place where we may lie down with comfort.

The bosom of our God—that is the true shelter of His people—and there we must find rest. If we are dwelling in the world and are tempted to be of the world—and to take up with the riches of Egypt—we must, by Grace, be taught to cast all this behind our back, for we have not our portion in this life, neither can we have our inheritance until we enter upon the life that is to come. Jacob said on his death-bed, "Bury me not, I pray you, in Egypt." And Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones that they should not remain in Pharaoh's land. Even so, the saints of God are weary of the world's dominions; they tremble like a bird out of Egypt. Not in Egypt would God reveal Himself to His people. What says He? "Come you out from among them: be you separate and I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters."

When He called Israel His son, it is in connection with this coming out. "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." And you and I must be fetched out from the world and all its associations—and truly severed from it—if we are ever to come to know the Lord our God. In Egypt, God was not known, but "in Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel." His people must not permanently reside in a strange country. The land of tombs was no fit home for a living people whose God was the living God! Therefore it is written, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son" and the heathen knew it, for they said, one to another, "Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt."

There were many difficulties in connection with this calling of Israel out of Egypt. Perhaps one of the chief obstacles was their own wish to stay there, for, strange as it may seem, though it was a house of bondage to them, they did not wish to stir from it at first! Their spirit was broken by their sore bondage so that they did not receive Moses and Aaron as they ought to have done, but they even chided them. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, the chief work of God with us is to make us willing to go out, willing, by faith, to follow Jesus—willing to count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! He did make them willing and they went out, at last, right joyfully, marching in rank like a trained army! They did not need to be driven, but hurried to escape out of the enemy's country.

Moreover, the Lord made them *able* to go, as well as willing, for it is very beautiful to think that there were no sick people in the whole nation of Israel at that time of the going out! We read—"There was not one feeble person in all their tribes." What a splendid thing for a whole nation to have no weaklings! There was no need to carry any in the ambulance—they all went marching forth with steady foot out of the dominions of Pharaoh! O child of God, has God given you the will to get out of the bondage of the sin and the corruption of this crooked generation? He that gives you the will, will give you the power! Perhaps you are crying, "Who

shall deliver me? To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would, I find not."

Rest assured that God, the Holy Spirit, who has given you the will, will also give you the strength—and you shall come marching out of Egypt, having eaten of the Paschal Lamb! The Lord stunned their enemies, so that they begged them to be gone and bribed them to make haste! With blow upon blow, He smote the Egyptians, till on that dreadful night, when shrieks of pain went up from every house in Egypt, the Egyptians hastened them to go. "We are all dead men," they said, "unless you go!" Even their taskmasters urged them to immediate flight. Our God knows how to make even the wicked men of the world cast out the Christian—they cannot endure him when once his adoption is made known! They grow tired of his melancholy presence; tired of his convictions of sin and of that gloomy face which he carries about with him, and they say, "Get out, get out, we cannot endure you!" They perceive something in him which is foreign to themselves and so they thrust him out. Egypt was glad when they departed and so the world, itself, seems glad to be rid of the Lord's elect when God's time is come to set a difference between Israel and Egypt!

The spiritual meaning of all this is that from under the power of sin of Satan and of the world, God will certainly call His own redeemed. They shall not abide in the land of Egypt! Sin shall not be pleasant to them! They shall not continue under Satan's power, but they shall break his yoke from off their neck! The Lord will help them and strengthen them, so that they shall clean escape from their former slavery. With a high hand and an outstretched arm He brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt—and with that same high hand and outstretched arm He will save His own elect whom He has loved from before the foundations of the world and whom He has purchased with His most precious blood! They, too, shall sing as Israel did, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," in the day when God shall deliver them!

So far we have spoken of the natural seed.

II. Now we turn with pleasure to THE DIVINE SEED, the Man Christ Jesus. He had to be called out by an angel from the sheltering Egypt into which Joseph and His mother had fled with Him. I dare say when you have read that passage in Hosea, you have said, "I cannot see that it has anything to do with Christ." The passage in Hosea is evidently about Israel, for God is speaking of Israel both before and after the verse. But look—the natural seed of Israel is the shell of the egg of which the Divine Seed is the life! God calls Israel His Son. Why? Because within that nation lay that Seed which, afterwards, was known as the Well-Beloved, the Son of the Highest. They were the shell and, therefore, to be preserved for the sake of the Blessed One who, according to the flesh, lay within the race!

I do not think the Lord would have cared about the Jews more than any other nation if it had not been that in due time He was to be born of them, even He in whom is His delight, that choice One of the Father, the Son whom He loves. So when He brought His Son out of Egypt, it means, first, that He rescued the external, nominal, outward sonship. But the core, the living core within, is this Son, this true Son of whom the Lord said, put-

ting all others aside, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And the passage, if I had time to show you, could not be limited to Israel, for if it had been, it would lose much of its accuracy.

Why, do you think, the passage was made so obscure? It is confessedly obscure and anyone reading it without the spiritual teaching which Matthew received would never have perceived that Christ was going down into Egypt to fulfill that Word. I take it the reason of the obscurity was this—that its fulfillment might be of the Lord, alone. Suppose His father and mother had known these prophecies and had purposely set themselves to fulfill them? There would have existed a kind of collusion which would have beclouded the wonderful wisdom of God in bearing testimony to His Son. Mary and Joseph may have known of this prophecy, but I greatly question whether they perceived that it referred to their son, at all, or to the Son of the Highest—but now they must do the very thing that God says shall be done—without knowing that they are fulfilling Scripture!

One of the worst things you and I can ever attempt, is to try and fulfill a prophecy. Good mistress Rebecca wanted to fulfill a prophecy and what a mess she made of it! She endeavored to make her second son the heir and, in the attempt, she brought upon him and herself a world of sorrow! Had she not better have let the prophecy alone? Surely, if a prophecy is made of God, God will see that it comes to pass. If it is a Chaldaic prophecy, a prophecy of soothsayers and magi, no doubt they will try to make their own oracle true—but the Lord, who sees the end from the beginning and ordains all things—can speak positively of the future. If any of you set up for prophets, beware of prophesying till you know that you can make it good! God does not need such petty provision—He needs no help from us—His word will surely be established! Mary and Joseph did not try to fulfill the prophecy, for they could not have understood it to mean what it meant. It was purposely put in a dark and cloudy form, but still the Lord knew what He was doing—"That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

Remember one thing, that all the Words of God in the Old Testament and the New refer to Christ! And what is more, all the works of God have an opened window towards Christ. Yes, I say that in the creation of the world the central thought of God was His Son, Jesus, and He made the world with a view to His death, Resurrection and glorious reign! From every gnat that dances in the summer sunbeam up to the great leviathan in the sea, the whole design of the world works toward the Seed in whom the earth is blessed! In Providence it is just the same—every event, from the fall of a leaf to the rise of a monarchy—is linked with the kingdom of Jesus! I have not time to show this, but it is so, and if you choose to think it over, you will clearly perceive it.

God set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel—and everything that has happened, or ever shall happen in the outside world—all has a look towards the Christ and that which comes of the Christ! I love to find Jesus everywhere—not by twisting the Psalms and other Scriptures to make them speak of Christ when they do nothing of the kind, but by seeing Him where He truly is. I would

not err as Cocceius did, of whom they said his greatest fault was that he found Christ everywhere, but I would far rather err in his direction than have it said of me, as of another divine of the same period, that I found Christ nowhere!

Would it not be better to see Him where He is not than to miss Him where He is? The Pattern of the things on earth is in Heaven—is, in fact, in Jesus, the Son of God! He is the Pattern according to which the Tabernacle and the Temple were built. Yes, and the Pattern according to which this brave world was made—and worlds which are yet to be revealed. All the treasures of the wisdom of God are hidden in Christ—and in Christ they are made manifest. I do not wonder, therefore, that this passage in Hosea should point to Him! It is certain that our blessed Lord is, in the highest sense, the Son of God. “Out of Egypt have I called My Son,”

Write the word, SON, in capitals—and it must mean Him—it cannot, with emphasis, mean anyone else! I would rather give up the idea that Hosea even *thought* of Israel, than think that the Holy Spirit did not intend that we should see Jesus in those memorable words, “My Son.” It came to pass that our Lord must find no room in Israel and so must go down into Egypt. There was no room for the young Child in the inn and, now, the Edomite, the child-devouring Herod, has risen and there is no room for the new-born King anywhere in Palestine! Alas, how sad a picture of the visible Church where Christ, at times, can find no room!

What with contending sects, Pharisees and Sadducees, there would seem to be no more room for Christ in the Church, today, than there used to be. By fear of Herod, His parents are made anxious, and by angelic direction they must go down into Egypt, where Herod’s warrant would not run. Heathen Egypt will shield, while hypocritical Judea will slay! Jesus, like another Joseph, must be carried down into Egypt, that the young Child’s life may be preserved. Here He has a foretaste of His life trials and early begins His life of affliction. The King of the Jews flees from His own dominions! The Lord of All must know the heart of a stranger in the land of Egypt! The poet represents His mother as saying—

***“Through the desert wild and dreary,
Following tracts explored by few,
Sad at heart, and worn, and weary,
We, our toilsome march, pursue.
Israel’s homes lie far behind us,
Yet we pause not to look back,
Lest the keen pursuer find us,
Lest grim murder scent our track.
Eagles o’er our heads are whirling,
Each careering towards her nest;
Even the wolf and fox are stealing
To the covert of their rest.
Every fowl and noxious creature
Finds on earth its lair and bed
But the infant Lord of Nature
Has not where to lay His head.
Yes, my Babe, sweet sleep enfolds You
On Your fainting mother’s arm;
God in His great love beholds You,***

***Angels guard Your rest from harm.
Earth and Hell in vain beset You,
Kings against Your life conspire!
But our God can ne'er forget You,
Nor His arm that shields You, tire."***

Mark well, that if the Lord Jesus Christ had willed it, even though but a Babe, He might have blasted Herod as He did another Herod in later days. And He might have made him to be eaten of worms. The glorious Jehovah could have sent a legion of angels and have driven the Idumaeen dynasty from off the throne, if so it had pleased Him. But no violence was used—a gentler course was chosen. When Jesus stands up to fight, He wars by nonresistance. He says, "My Kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight." He conquers by flight rather than by fight. He taught His people, when persecuted in one city, to flee to another. And He never bid them form bands and battle with their persecutors. That is not according to Christ's Law or example! A fighting church is the devil's church, but a bearing and enduring Church—that is Christ's Church.

His parents fled with Him by night and took Him down into Egypt, that He might be sheltered there. Traditions tell us wonderful stories about what happened when Jesus went into Egypt, but as none of them are Inspired, I need not waste your time with them. The only one that might look like fact is that His parents sheltered themselves in a temple wherein idol gods were and when the Child entered, all the images fell down. Certainly, if not actually true, it is a poetical description of that which happens wherever the Holy Child puts in an appearance! Every idol god falls before Him! Down he must go, whether it is Dagon, or Baal, or Ashtaroth, or whatever the god may be called! Yes, and he that wears the triple tiara on the seven hills and calls himself the vicar of God on earth—he, too, must come down—and all his empire must sink like a millstone in the flood!

We do not know how the young Child and Joseph and Mary lived in Egypt except that they had received gold from the Magi and that, being a carpenter, not a hedge carpenter, but one skilled in joinery and repairing wheels, Joseph could find plenty of work in Egypt where vast multitudes of Jews were already settled. Whether our Lord was carried to Alexandria or not, we cannot tell. The probability is that He was housed there, for it was the great rendezvous of the nation and the center of their learning—there the Bible had been translated into the Greek tongue—and there flourished schools of Jews much more liberal than those in Judea. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the Prince of Peace went to that region where we have most unhappily illustrated Christianity with cuts—not all of wood, nor all innocent of blood.

But Jesus could not stay in Egypt. "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." His parents, by a brave act of faith, went back at the command of the angel, to the Holy Land—Your land, O Immanuel! Jesus could not stay in Egypt, for He was no Egyptian! He did not come to exercise a ministry among the Egyptians. He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel in His public working. Being called out of Egypt, the heavenly vision was not disobeyed. His foster-parent, Joseph, took Him back and they set-

bled in Nazareth. Yet remember, He had been in Egypt and this was a prophecy of blessing to that land—for wherever Jesus goes, the air is sweetened!

Every plot of land that His foot has ever trod on shall be His forever. What said God to Jacob? “The land whereon you lie will I give you.” And the same is true to Jacob’s great descendant! Jesus has slept in Egypt and Egypt is His own. God has given it to Him and His it shall be! Glory be to His blessed name!

III. Let us turn to think of THE CHOSEN SEED that shall be brought out of Egypt. Here I would remark that this passage may be taken and should be taken, literally. God has a chosen people who shall assuredly come out of the very Egypt which now exists. It is remarkable that early in the Gospel day the Truth of God was gladly received in Egypt. Egypt became the land of saints and divines and, as it had once been the source and home of civilization, so it became an active camp for the soldiers of the Cross. Under the successors of Mohammed, all this was swept away and now the Crescent’s baneful beam falls where once the heavenly sun shed out its infinite Glory and scattered health among the sons of men.

Egypt did turn to God and it will turn again. Let me read you this passage (Isaiah 19)—“In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan and swear to the Lord of Hosts; one shall be called the city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of Hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and He shall send them a Savior, and a great one, and He shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yes, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: He shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and He shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.”

So that we feel clear that our God has yet a son to call out of Egypt and He will call him. There shall be a seed to serve Him even in the midst of the down-trod people who live by the Nile floods, for God has said it. There is one passage to which I should like to refer you, because it is so full of comfort. (Jeremiah 43:12)—“And He shall array Himself with the land of Egypt”—think of that—putting it on as Joseph put on his coat of many colors! “As a shepherd puts on his garment; and He shall go forth from thence in peace.” Yet shall Christ wear, as a robe of honor, this land of Egypt! And again shall it be true, “Out of Egypt have I called My son” Let us learn from this, that out of the strangest and oddest places God will call His son. Certain Brethren among us go the lodging houses in Mint

Street, Kent Street and other places. Can any good thing come out of them? Assuredly, it can, for, "Out of Egypt have I called My son."

Out of Thieves' Acre and Ketch's Warren, saints shall come! Some of you, perhaps, know of holes and corners in London where a decent person scarcely dares to be seen—do not pass by these abominable haunts, for out of such Egypts will the Lord call His sons! The worst field is often the most hopeful. Here is virgin soil, unplowed, untilled. What harvests may be won by willing workers! Oh you brave hands, thrust in the plowshare and break up this neglected soil, for thus says the Lord, "Out of Egypt have I called My son." Many of you who live in the midst of Israel and hear the Gospel every day remain disobedient—but some from the lowest and vilest parts of the earth shall yet be called with an effectual calling—and they shall obey, for it is written—"Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

But we will take the text and conclude with it in a *spiritual* sense. All men are in Egypt, spiritually, but God calls out His own sons. Sin is like Pharaoh, a tyrant that will not yield. He will not let men go, but he shall let them go, for God says, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." We are in a world which is the destroyer of Grace as Pharaoh was the destroyer of Israel's little ones. You do not think a good thought but what it is laughed out of you! You scarcely catch a word of Scripture, but as soon as you get home you are compelled to forget it. Nevertheless, out of that—"Out of Egypt have I called My Son." You shall yet be delivered! Put you your trust in Jesus Christ, for, "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." And He will call every son of His out of Egypt.

Perhaps you are in the dark, as the Egyptians were during the plague, or as when God turned the dark side of the pillar to Egypt. Ah, but if you are one of His—if you will but trust Jesus, which is the mark of being God's elect—out of darkness will God call you! Out of thick Egyptian night will He fetch you and your eyes shall be made glad with the light of the Gospel of Christ! Perhaps you dwell in the midst of superstition, for the Egyptians were horribly given to superstition—but yet out of that will God call His people! I look to see priests converted! I hope to see leaders of the Gospel found among men that were once steeped to the throat in superstition! Why not? "Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

Where did Luther come from but from the monastery? And he preached the Word of God with thunder and lightning from Heaven—and God blessed it to the emancipation of nations! He will bring others of that kind—out of all sorts of ignorance and superstition He will fetch them to the praise of the Glory of His Grace! I feel encouraged to pray for those who appear to be hopeless! I feel as if I must cry to God, "Bring them out of Egypt, Lord, the worst, the vilest." You, here, that know what Egypt is and are in it, and *know* you are in it, oh, believe that the Emancipator has come! The Redeemer has appeared! With an offering of blood He has stood before God and given Egypt for a ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you! Oh, that He might win those with power whom He has bought with price! And to Him be Glory, world without end. Amen.

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

HEAVEN'S NURSE CHILDREN

NO. 1021

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

*"I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms."
Hosea 11:3.*

IF you note well the opening part of this chapter, you will find that it consists of a wonderful chain of mercies—every single line is a rare jewel, and the whole passage is a case unspeakably precious. The chapter begins with love—ancient, sovereign, electing love. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him." When the Israelite nation was in a very low and poor estate, and was brought into slavery and subjection in Egypt, God had set His love upon it, and called it His own inheritance. Not for their numbers or greatness as a nation were they chosen, but when they were little and despised they were yet beloved of God. Distinguishing Grace had written the name of Israel upon Jehovah's heart.

Spiritually, we who have believed are in the same favored condition, and our hearts rejoice this day at the memory of "His great love, where-with He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." This is the riverhead, from which all the streams of mercy flow—"I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Like the golden-sanded river which had its rise in Eden, electing love branches off into many streams and waters all the garden of the Lord. This is the root from which the tree of blessing springs. "He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:3, 4).

Let others say what they will, electing love will always be most precious to us. For it is the foundation blessing, the first of all favors, the mother of mercies. We nail to our mast the old flag of Free Grace, and believe with the Apostle (Eph. 1:11) that we were, "predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will." The next sweet word in the chapter is *sonship*—"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called *My son* out of Egypt."

We are, according to the inspired Apostle, "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:5). Adoption follows hard upon the heels of election, and is another messenger of good tidings. Innumerable blessings come to us by this door. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a son." "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "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 He is. For we shall see Him as He is."

Sonship with God is a dignity unspeakable, and yet it is reserved for such poor dust and ashes as we are—what shall we say concerning this? Are we not swallowed up with adoring gratitude? Unto which of the angels has He said at any time, “You are My son”? But this has been said to us! And we are thus favored above all creatures that the Lord God has made. Boundless blessings are included in sonship—it is no light thing to be a child of the Lord of Hosts, the Prince of the kings of the earth. “If a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” This opens up before us far-reaching views of present Covenant provision, and of future infinite bliss.

To be, indeed, born into the family of God is a dignity to which the descent of an imperial prince bears no more comparison than a spark in the tinder to the sun in the heavens. And, because we have in this chapter love and sonship, we see immediately after, in the same verse, *calling, salvation, and deliverance*—“I called My son out of Egypt.” The Lord does not leave His chosen people forever in the bondage of sin. When the day of their jubilee dawns, they go forth without price or reward, with a high hand and an outstretched arm. They cannot remain forever under guilt, nor abide heirs of wrath, even as others—out of Egypt they must come when the years are accomplished. They are His, and He will call them by His effectual Grace, and separate them to Himself.

Their calling is something more than the common and universal Gospel invitation—it is a persuasive, convincing, conquering call. Only they whom the Lord has set apart for Himself know it—“Whom He did predestinate, them He also called.” This call is like Joseph’s invitation to his venerable father to come and see him—it was accompanied by the wagons in which the old man could ride. It was not only an entreating call, but an *enabling* call. “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me,” says the Savior. And He speaks to purpose, because He helps them to come—no, He brings them Himself—*carrying* them, like lost sheep, “upon His shoulders rejoicing.”

There is no violence done to the will, but it is set free, and then, being acted upon by a graciously enlightened understanding, it yields to the call, and follows Jesus. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” Israel would never have come out of Pharaoh’s country if the Lord had not fetched them. But none can say that He drove them out—no, rather, “as for His people, He led them forth like sheep.” Every step of their exodus from bondage under the Divine call was the result of Divine leading and influence. Even thus, spiritually, a peculiar but delightful stress is put upon the chosen of God, and, therefore they come out of the Egypt of sin.

The Grace to eat the paschal lamb, to strike the blood upon the lintel, and to gird up the loins and leave the land of leeks, and garlic, and onions, is given only to the heirs of the promised possession. Then we, upon the blessing of *holy rearing and education*, which we have in our text—“I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms,” as they do who have to teach little children to walk, supporting their tottering footsteps, and instructing them how to put one foot before the other, until they are able, at last, to run alone.

Calvin says it means, "I have led him on foot. As a child who cannot yet walk with a firm foot is, by degrees, accustomed to do so, and the nurse, or the father, or the mother, who leads him, has a regard for his infancy. So, also, have I led Israel, as much as his feet could bear." And, as if this mercy and condescension of God, in thus comparing Himself to a woman with her babe, were not sufficient—in addition to this He becomes a physician, too—and grants *healing*. He says, "I healed them." They had not only weakness that needed to be supported, and ignorance that needed to be tutored. But they had, in addition, sickness and infirmity that needed medicine. "I healed them."

He who had carried them as Shaddai—the Lord All-Sufficient, became to them Jehovah Rophi—the Lord that Heals Them. Who shall tell how much we all owe to heavenly pharmacy? Our diseases are deep-seated and most dangerous. How happy are we in having an Omnipotent Physician, whose Word, alone, is more than a match for all our maladies. Surely we have a sickness for every day in the year, but the beloved Physician has a remedy for every complaint. Glory be unto Him who forgives all our iniquities, and heals all our diseases!

Then, as if all this were not enough, we find Him drawing them on in the paths of obedience and holiness—not with ropes and chains that would compel against their will, overhauling them roughly—but with forces suited for minds and hearts. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Thus does the gracious Spirit of God work in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. "The love of Christ constrains us." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "The Spirit also helps our infirmities." Thus we have in a few lines unostentatiously opened up before us a cabinet of Covenant gems rivaling those which adorned the high priest of old.

Here is a holy education for the nursling that was afraid to walk! Here is exercise of the strength which the Physician had restored. As if this had not completed it, there come *unburdening* and *rest-giving*—"I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws." They had been like oxen, with a heavy yoke upon them, and God had come and taken the yoke away. And there they stood, as we see horses stand when they are made to rest, when the bearing-rein is loosened, and they stand at ease.

And this, God has as surely done for us, as for His ancient people. He has fulfilled that Word unto us, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and you shall find rest unto your souls." We enjoy the peace of God which passes all understanding—it keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. Nor is this all, for the gracious Redeemer takes care to fill His people's mouths with good things! Therefore, He does not forget the *feeding*, for it is added, "I laid *meat* unto them." The Lord refreshed His weary people with "food convenient for them." As the oxen, after the yoke was removed, were fed, so God, when He had removed our yoke of guilty bondage, fed us with the finest of the wheat as He made us understand the Gospel of His Son.

The doctrines and promises of His Word are substantial meat for hungry souls. "My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips." Certain under-shepherds are

afraid of laying too much doctrinal food before the Lord's people, but it is a great mistake. Truth never surfeits, though it always satisfies. The Good Shepherd does not stint His sheep, but He gives them so much that they lie down amid the exceeding plenty of the green pastures. They cannot eat it all, and they lie down in the midst of a superabundance which infinite mercy has provided.

See, then, how God's boundless love piles mountain upon mountain—as the old classics used to say—Pelion upon Ossa, that we, up from the depths of our distress, may climb to the heights of His blessedness and enjoy the fullness of the Glory which God has treasured up for us in the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord. One is tempted, with such a preface to our text, to linger in it and to be like the man who made the porch of his house larger than the house itself! You can but be fed, and it matters not whether the barley loaves and fishes are in my basket, or whether I carry them loosely in my hand—so long as you are refreshed by them you will not quarrel with my disorderly serving.

However, I restrain my loitering heart, and proceed to the text. Here is the figure of a nurse and a child. "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms." Let us look at this in reference to the children of Israel. Then let us view it in reference to ourselves. Take *Israel's case* first. They were in Egypt and God was about to bring them forth and make them a nation, and give them a country of their own. He began to deal with them as little children. He selected as His ambassador and as the mediator between him and them, not a man of imperious disposition, not an Elijah with fire at his beck, or a John the Baptist with an axe in his hand, but, "the man Moses, who was very meek, above all men that were upon the face of the earth."

They were childish, vain, foolish—and their leader must be very gentle and full of pity. It requires a patient disposition to deal with such grownup children, for what you could bear from children, who are children in years, you cannot so well endure from those who, though they have reached the age of maturity, have not reached the age of discretion and seem as if they never would. You can teach a child of six. But who shall be tutor to a child of sixty? The great God, the Father of Israel, selected as a tutor for these grownup children the meekest man that lived, and, in so doing, He dealt tenderly with them, as a mother with her child.

Then, though He meant them ultimately and finally to come out of Egypt, He did not uproot them from their adopted land all at once, roughly and without previous loosening. No unexpected command was given them that they were at once to sever all the ties that connected them with the people of Egypt. They were not forced in an unlooked-for moment to leave the leeks, and garlic, and onions, and to go forth into the desert. But a long series of miracles was exhibited before their eyes—not only that Pharaoh's power might be broken—but that they might be encouraged to venture themselves upon the Providence of God, and trust themselves with Him.

They ought to have been strong enough to have marched out of Egypt at once, at the first word of their leader. Had they forgotten the old Covenant which had been made with their fathers? That the Lord would give

them a land that flowed with milk and honey? But they were little children and could not perform manly exploits. They needed to be taught courage, and manliness, and faith in the unseen God of their father Abraham. All those plagues which God worked in the fields of Zoan, while they had a dark side to Egypt, had a bright side to Israel. It was a "teaching them to go." A gently persuading them to trust in God, and go forth at His call.

Yet, after having seen all Jehovah's wonders, when at last they did take the first step, and found themselves at Succoth, and by-and-by came to Pihahiroth by the sea, they trembled like babes who totter and are ready to fall. Was it not tender mercy on the part of God that He put forth His hand and *held them up*, and drowned all their fears at once? They had been alarmed when they heard the whip of their taskmasters and the rattling of the war chariots behind them. But God made, as it were, with one sweep, an end of everything that need give them distress. I do not find, whatever were their foolish fears, that the children of Israel in the wilderness were ever again afraid of the Egyptians pursuing them and attempting to drive them back as slaves.

The old fear was slain at once. They had been slaves and dreaded their masters, but the strength of Egypt had been so terribly broken at the Red Sea that Israel, who before tottered, even began to dance to the music of the triumphant timbrel. Infinite tenderness removed the stumbling block out of their way, lest their infant faith should be tripped up. When they were fairly in the wilderness they were still treated as children, and they needed it. They had many sensible manifestations of the Presence of God with them.

A truly spiritual faith does not expect any manifestation to the senses. God treats us today as men compared with the way in which He nursed the Israelites. We have no pillar of Glory shining over a visible tabernacle. We have no Shekinah above a material Mercy Seat. We have now no holy places whatever. And no symbolic worship—

***"Wherever we seek Him He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."***

Our service of the spiritual God is *spiritual*. We walk by faith and not by sight. We worship God in the *spirit* and have no confidence in the flesh.

The tribes of Israel, as being in their religious childhood, had manifestations of different kinds. They saw not God, for who shall behold the invisible? But the bright light shone between the wings of the cherubim, the Glory of the Lord at times burst forth from the tabernacle, and on an ever memorable occasion they heard a Voice speaking out of the thick darkness from the top of Sinai when the Lord came from Paran with ten thousand of His holy ones. We have not heard the Voice, neither have we seen the Glory—nor need we wish for either since we have a sure Word of Testimony—and the abiding of the Holy Spirit.

But the Lord treated the tribes in the wilderness as children—their faith and spirituality were so feeble that, like the young Church of Christ in the upper room which needed the rushing wind, and cloven tongues, and miraculous power—they were favored with signs and wonders to confirm their faith. "He taught them to go, taking them by their arms."

Another part of this spiritual nursing which the Lord condescendingly gave to His people was their instruction by symbols. He did not give to them, as He gives to us, the clear vision of the glorious Gospel in the face of Jesus Christ. But as they were not capable of reading the plain sense, and they needed pictures in their books, He gave them many and most instructive symbols. They saw the morning and the evening lamb. How full of instruction must that double offering have been! They ate the Passover. They saw the doors besprinkled with blood—here was a sort of kindergarten school teaching for them. The high priest in his white garments, or in his glorious robes of beauty, with the Urim and Thummim glistening on his breast, the altar, the censor, the candlestick, the table of the showbread, the laver—all these were pictures in the first A B C book for children.

The gentle Father was teaching them to walk. There are some childish lovers of the first Covenant who would like to get the child's books back again—like big babies they cry for the horn-books of infancy, and would put aside the Glory Book which God has given to His children to read in the day of the open manifestation of His Holy Spirit. We need not imitate their example. We desire not go back to the rudiments now that the Lord has revealed Himself in the Person of the Only-Begotten. Yet to Israel type and symbol was the main instruction, and in that respect the Lord taught them to walk or go.

Yes, and it was not only instruction by a few chosen symbols, but *everything* was a symbol to them. They were always being instructed and helped. The bread they ate was food from Heaven, and the water they drank leaped from the living Rock. They were covered from the heat by the Cloud. They were lighted at night in their encampment by the fiery Pillar—everything about them was fitted for a people that needed something tangible, something to be felt, something to be seen and perceived of the senses—a people in childhood who required to have everything represented to the eye as well as spoken to the ear.

The whole of that forty years' journey in the wilderness was a long "teaching them to go." They were not a people able to have formed a well-regulated state. They were no better than a mob of slaves—they were not fit for self-government. And therefore they were led about, trained, taught, educated in the space of forty years, before they were able to go, as they did at last, when the Lord settled them in Canaan. And note—and here I will not continue the story longer because there are ten thousand various ways in which we can illustrate the Truth of God—how He treated them as children even in the conquest of Canaan.

Before they came up to the country to conquer it, a pestilence had destroyed many of the people. The spies said, "It is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof." The Lord had also sent the hornet before them—some terrible and deadly insect which had distressed and driven out the Canaanites, and, in addition to these two scourges, the fear of them and the dread of them had very much weakened their adversaries and prepared the whole land to submit to them. That marvelous passage of the Jordan, and that miraculous falling down of the walls of Jericho without their needing to strike a blow—were not these all the means of teaching

them to go? Were they not thus gently led on till at last they became men enough to drive out the Canaanites and to settle in the land, and sit every man beneath his own vine and fig tree?

We will now leave the seed of Israel, and think of ourselves a while. How very graciously has the meaning of our text been fulfilled in us. The Lord has treated us as a nurse treats a little child. To begin with, *the first step the child takes*—its first introduction to the art of locomotion—is *caused by the nurse's holding it up*. Do we not remember the first uplifting that the Lord gave to some of us? We were groveling in the dust and should have been content to be there still, but, under a gracious Word that He sent to us through the ministry, or by some other means, He lifted us up, and we began to feel that there was something better for us than to be always creeping about on the earth, or lying still in supine worldliness.

The nurse's hand is first put out before the child thinks of walking, and the Divine power of the Holy Spirit was first exerted upon us (we being then passive under it for a while) before we felt a desire for better things. We crawled upon the earth like beasts till God taught us to stand erect in uprightness like Grace-born men. We owe all to Him who has taught us from our youth. The nurse, when the child begins to walk, soon *teaches it to know its own weakness*. It has a fall or two, and a few bruises and tears. But the falls are necessary to its learning to walk. We, also, had many slips and falls. Oh, how often did we resolve in the most admirable manner, but our resolutions ended in smoke?

How frequently did we make attempts in our own strength? But these were failures, till at last we said, "We must give it up," and we were compelled to lean wholly upon our Lord. We became more active in the right way after we were weaned from our natural self-reliant activities which had been so dear to us. But we were very long in the weaning. Falls into sin are terrible things, and these are not what I speak of here. I mean those broken resolutions, and those aspirations to which we did not attain, those many disappointing tumbles which we encountered when we tried to walk. It is a part of the nurse's art to let the child feel its weakness—and it is a part of our heavenly Father's wisdom to let us know how feeble we are.

We are never wise till we discover that we are fools—we are never strong till we confess that we are weak. True enough are the Apostle's words, "When I am weak, then am I strong." The nurse *regulates the child's exertions* and allows it to take a step or two at first, and only a step or two. Do we remember how tottering were our first steps? We limped very sadly. Our walking was comparable to the seeing of the man to whom men looked like trees. Our state of mind was a mixture of light and darkness. We cried, "Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief." There were only one or two promises in God's Word which I could get any hold of when I first came to Him.

My soul was stayed a little while on that Word, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Only that could I grasp. I have known some who could get consolation from nothing but this sweet Word, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." They could believe only a little. It hardly amounted to believing—they reached as far as hoping and

trusting—intermittently mixed up with a world of doubting and fearing, but they could stir no further. Very delightful to the Christian pastor is it to see a young convert begin to take the first step or two. We have seen them fall down with doubts and fears, but we have been so pleased that they could walk even a little in the way of faith, and believe even a portion of the Word of God.

What a mercy it is that the Lord reveals to us His own Truth by slow degrees! We ought never to expect our young converts to understand the doctrine of election and to be able to split hairs in orthodoxy. It is vain to overload them with such a precious Truth as union with Christ, or so deep a doctrine as predestination. Do they know Christ as the Savior, and themselves as sinners? Well, then, do not try to make a child run! It will never walk if you do. Do not try to teach the babe gymnastics—first let it totter on and tremble forward a little way. “I have many things to say unto you,” said the Savior, “but you cannot hear them now.”

Now, had certain reputedly wise men been there they would have said, “Lord, let us hear it all! Make full proof of it all! Bring it all out—we can hear it—only try us.” But our Lord knew what was in man, and therefore He, little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept, brought out the Truth—and He does so experimentally with His children still. We do not know our own depraved hearts so well at first as we do afterwards. The disease and the remedy have both of them to be more fully revealed to us by-and-by.

If we knew at the first all we shall know hereafter, we should be so overwhelmed with the abundance of the revelation that we should not be able to endure it! The Lord, therefore, lets in the Light by degrees. If a person had been long famished, and you were to find him hungry, and faint, and ready to die, your instincts would say, “Put food before him at once, and let him have all he wants.” Yet this would be a ready enough way to kill him. If you are wise, you will give him nutriment slowly, as he is able to bear it. If you have been long in the dark, and come into the light at once, your eyes smart, and you cannot bear it. You need to come to it by degrees, and thus is it with the Lord's children.

By little and by little He introduces them into the Glory of His kingdom, preparing them for its fullness as children are prepared for their manhood. Have you not seen how the nurse will tempt the child to take a little longer walk by holding out a pleasant thing to allure it? And how often has our blessed Lord tempted us to some bolder deed of service, to something that required more faith than we had before by giving us choice signs of His Presence, and ravishing our hearts with His love?

Some of us know what it is to have seen such sweet results from our little faith that we could not but desire to try what stronger faith would do. God so rewarded the weak faith we had that we felt we must rely upon Him, and venture still further. Kindly has the Lord conducted us onward in this respect. The nurse *does not let the child put too much weight upon its little legs at first*, for it might be to its lasting injury. It shall have a little trial of walking—but she will put her hands under its arms and hold it up that it shall not be tried too long, lest it is strained and injured. So does our heavenly Father try our faith little by little.

When we shall have become men in Christ Jesus, we shall be tested by stronger trials, for the Lord loves to put stress upon faith. He sends forth His knights of the Cross upon desperate battles, knowing that He intends to glorify Himself in their natural weakness by granting them strength. But to the little babe He sets no such stern tasks. He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb and deals tenderly with those that are but tender. "He carries the lambs in His bosom, and does gently lead those that are with young." Can you not look back, beloved Brothers and Sisters, to your own experience, and confirm all I have said, only feeling that you could say very much more about it if you could speak out your own heart?

The Lord has dealt with us in other respects as children, as, for instance, in *not chiding us for our many mistakes*. If the nurse were to scold the child for not walking as *she* does. If she were to be angry with it because it is not as strong as she is, the poor thing might be long before it came to walk at all. God sometimes does with His people as the artist did with Alexander when he painted him—he did not draw the scar on Alexander's face, but placed his finger over it.

Note how the Holy Spirit describes Sarah. There was not much good in what Sarah said on that day when she lied. But she called her husband "lord," and the Holy Spirit lights on *that* and mentions it to her honor. He has often accepted our poor service and given us sweetly to feel that it was so, though when we look back upon it we wonder how it could have been accepted at all. Many of us who preach the Gospel had God's blessing on our early preaching. Our knowledge was dreadfully scant, and our ability slender.

We wonder how God could have blessed us, but He did. If He were to let us know how badly we do His work even now, we should despair, and do no more. But in His great mercy He lets the light pour on the brighter spots, and lets us see what His Spirit is doing. And so we take courage and go on, and learn to walk after all. With all our trembling, and tumbling, and falling down, we do at length learn to stand upright—and even, by His Grace, to run in His ways. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do you not feel that God has had great patience with you? Do you not wonder that He has endured you?

Could you have had so much patience with another as God has had with you? Impossible! You can hardly run alone yet, can scarcely take a step without slipping or sliding—you need still to be carried in the Everlasting Arms like babes—and yet you are persuaded that His patience will hold out till there shall be no more need of it. He will bear us as on eagle's wings, that is, with unwearied perseverance and strength of love He will uphold us even to the end. We must remind you, however, before we leave this, that there are some respects in which the figure before us does not come up to the full point.

God has been very gracious to us, beyond what a nurse is to a child. Let us unfold this fact for a moment or two. The nurse, with the child, has not the disadvantages that God has with us—for we are full of the notion that we can walk, and thus there are two battles in our case. The first is to get us out of our bad walking, and the next is to teach us to walk rightly. It is sometimes more difficult to instruct a man who has been educated

wrongly than it would have been if he knew nothing. He has both to learn and to unlearn. So with us—we have a notion that we can do so much—until the Lord shows us without Him we can do nothing!

We are very strong in our own opinion—we are blown up with pride and self-sufficiency. And that has to be taken from us so that there is a double task for Infinite Mercy to perform—not merely to plant a tree, but to cut down the old tree and root it up—to get rid of our former way of walking, and then to teach us to walk in the Spirit, and not in the fancied energy of the flesh. Moreover, you never found a babe anxious to use stilts. But every one of us, when God's Spirit has begun to teach us to walk, have been seeking to use crutches. "Cursed is he that trusts in man. And how many of us must have deserved that curse. For trusting in man is very, very common.

Resting on an arm of flesh seems to be the hereditary disease of God's people. They fly first to this and then to that, but forget their true and only resting place. The simple walk of faith, trusting and leaning alone upon the Invisible, how difficult it into bring ourselves to it! We would have some favorite child to lean upon, or husband, or wife, or friend. Our abilities, or something or other that we can see and handle, shall be the golden calf which we set up and say, "These are your gods, O Israel!"

Here is a great difficulty, then, to wean us from crutches which are promoters of spiritual lameness. I have never met with a child that had any fear about the nurse's power to hold it up. She puts her arms about it, and it trusts itself with her, leaning wholly upon her. But we appear to be afraid of leaning hard upon God—we cannot leave ourselves with Him—we don't throw ourselves right back on the Divine bosom. Yet is there no true rest to ourselves till we do. As long as we are trying to support ourselves in some measure or degree we have not yet come to the rest of faith.

I have known people who went in the sea to learn to swim but they never dare take their feet off the bottom, and I do not see how they can swim while they also endeavor to stand on their feet. Standing and swimming cannot be managed at the same time. So there are souls that would gladly trust themselves to the goodness of God, but they cannot be content without an earthly prop. They cannot quite cast themselves upon God and trust in the stream of His abundant faithfulness. This, then, is another difficulty which is not with the nurse, but which is with our God in reference to us.

One more remark let us make, and that is that we are, many of us, most unwilling to *try* to walk. Though we are Believers, after a fashion, it may be said of us at this day as of those in the Savior's time—"If the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" Why, entire portions of the Christian Church are afraid to trust God with the maintenance of their ministers and the support of their worship! They enter into an adulterous alliance with the State sooner than trust in God and rely upon the faithfulness of His people.

And as it is with large masses of the people, so is it with separate Christians. They cannot walk by faith. They must have some way or other of clinging to the flesh. Oh, for Grace to be willing to believe in God! Oh,

for power to cut the moorings and have done with the signs, and the evidences, and the marks, and come to look upon Christ and His finished work—upon the Covenant, and upon the faithful God, who breaks not His promise and cannot turn away from His decree! May He who teaches us to profit make us to walk in His ways. Our prayer is like that of quaint old Quarles—

***“Great ALL IN ALL, that is my rest, my home.
My way is tedious, and my steps are slow—
Reach forth Your helping hand—or bid me come.
I am Your child, O teach Your child to go—
Conjoin Your sweet commands to my desire,
And I will venture, though I fall or tire.”***

Now, why is it that mothers take so much pains in teaching their children to walk? I suppose the reason is because they are their own offspring. And the reason why the Lord has been so patient with us, and will be so still, is because we are His children, still His children, still, His children! Ah there is wondrous power in that—still His children! I was sitting at table once, and I heard a mother expatiating upon her son. She said a very great deal about him. And someone sitting near me said, “I wish that good woman would be quiet.”

I said, “What’s the matter? May she not speak of her son?” “Why,” he said, “he’s been transported. He was as bad a fellow as ever lived, and yet she always sees something wonderful in him.” So I ventured, some little time after, when I had gained her acquaintance, to say something about this son. And I remember her remark—“If there is nobody else to speak up for him, his mother always will.” Just so. She loved him so that if she could not be altogether blind to his faults, yet she would also see all that was hopeful in him.

Our blessed God does not bring into the foreground what we are, so much as what He means to make us. “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever.” He puts our blackness away. And He sees us as we shall be when we shall bear the image of the heavenly, and shall be like our Lord. For Christ’s sake, beholding our shield and looking upon the face of His Anointed, He loves us and goes on to instruct us still. It seems at times as if there were a conflict in the Divine bosom, and He felt He must surely give us up, but then His love rushes to the rescue, and it comes to this—

“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.” He returns to us with such a word as this—“I have betrothed you unto Me in righteousness, and in mercy, and in judgment.” He declares that He hates putting away—“Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married unto you.” We are His own children. Oh, I have found it such a blessed thing, in my own experience, to plead before God that I am His child!

When I was racked some months ago with pain to an extreme degree so that I could no longer bear it without crying out, I asked all to go from the room and leave me alone. And then I had nothing I could say to God but this, “You are my Father and I am Your child. And You, as a Father, are tender and full of mercy. I could not bear to see my child suffer as You

make me suffer. And if I saw him tormented as I am now, I would do what I could to help him, and put my arms under him to sustain him. Will You hide Your face from me, my Father? Will You still lay on a heavy hand, and not give me a smile from Your Countenance?"

I held the Lord to that. I talked to Him as Luther would have done, and pleaded His Fatherhood in right down earnest. "Like as a father pities his children, even so the Lord pities them that fear Him." If He is a Father, let Him show Himself a Father—so I pleaded. And I ventured to say, when I was quiet, and they came back who watched me—"I shall never have such pain again from this moment, for God has heard my prayer." I bless God that ease came and the racking pain never returned. Faith mastered the pain by laying hold upon God in His own revealed Character—that Character in which in our dark hour we are best able to appreciate Him.

I think that is why that prayer, "Our Father which are in Heaven," is given to us, because, when we are lowest, we can still say, "Our Father." And when it is very dark, and we are very weak, our child-like appeal can go up, "Father, help me! Father rescue me!" He teaches us still to go, taking us by the arms, because He is our parent still. If anyone fears God may leave him, let him enquire whether a mother can forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb—for even if it is so, God will not forget His people.

He has engraved you upon the palms of His hands. There is a relationship between you and Him so familiar that it never can be forgotten—so firm that it can never be dissolved. Be of good confidence! He will teach you to go till you shall run without weariness, and walk without fainting. I would that all here had committed themselves to this good Father's hand. I pray that they may do so. The Holy Spirit grant it, for whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 11.

SOME of our sermon readers may not be aware that MR. SPURGEON issues a monthly magazine, price 3d., entitled, *The Sword and the Trowel*. It is full of interesting matter, and commands a large circulation. The volume for 1871 will be ready in a few days after the First of December. Early orders for next year are requested. Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster are the Publishers.

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

SILKEN CORDS

NO. 3005

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1864.

“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.”
Hosea 11:4.

No man ever comes to God unless he is drawn. There is no better proof that man is totally depraved than that he needs to be effectually called. Man is so utterly “dead in trespasses and sins” that the same Divine Power which provided a Savior must make him willing to accept a Savior, or else he will never be saved. You see a ship upon the stocks. She is finished and complete. She cannot, however, move herself into the water. You see a tree. It is growing—it brings forth branches, leaves and fruit, but it cannot fashion itself into a ship. Now, if the finished ship can do nothing, much less the untouched log! And if the tree, which has life, can do nothing, much less that piece of timber out of which the sap has long since gone! Christ’s declaration, “Without Me you can do nothing,” is true of Believers, but it is just as true, and with a more profound emphasis, of those who have not believed in Jesus. They must be drawn, or else to God they never will come.

But many make a mistake about Divine drawings. They seem to fancy that God takes men by the hair of their heads and drags them to Heaven, whether they will or not and that when the time comes, they will, by some irresistible power, without any exercise of thought or reasoning, be compelled to be saved. Such people understand neither man nor God, for man is not to be compelled in this way. He is not a being so controlled—

***“Convince a man against his will.
He’s of the same opinion still”***

As the old proverb says, “One man may bring a horse to water, but 20 men cannot make him drink.” So, a man may be brought to know what repentance is and to understand what Christ is, but no man can make another man lay hold upon Christ. No, God Himself does not do it by compulsion. He has respect unto man as a reasoning creature. God never acts with men as though they were blocks of wood, or senseless stones. Having made them men, He does not violate their manhood. Having determined by man to glorify Himself, He uses means to show forth His Glory—not such as are fit for beasts, or for inanimate nature, but such as are adapted to the constitution of man. My text says as much as this, “I drew them with cords”—not the cords that are fit for bulls, but, “with cords of a man”—not the cart ropes with which men would draw a cart, but the cords with which a man would draw a man and, as if to explain Himself, the Lord puts it, “I drew them with bands of

love.” Love is that mighty Power which acts upon man! There must be loving appeals to the different parts of his nature, and so he shall be constrained by Sovereign Grace.

Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn—but it is equally true that God draws no man contrary to the constitution of man. His methods of drawing are in strict accordance with ordinary mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is and He acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that He uses, are “cords of a man.” The bands He employs are “bands of love.”

This is clear enough. Now I am about to try—and may the Lord enable me—to show you some of these cords, these bands, which the Lord fastens around the hearts of sinners. I may be the means in His hands of putting these cords around you, but I cannot pull them after they are on. It is one thing to put the rope on, but another thing to draw with all one’s might at that rope. So it may be that I shall introduce the arguments and, by the prayers of the faithful now present, God will be pleased, in His Infinite Mercy, to pull these cords and that your soul will be sweetly drawn, with full consent, with the blessed yielding of your will to come and lay hold upon eternal life!

I. First, *some are drawn to Christ by seeing the happiness of true Believers.*

A true Believer is the happiest being out of Heaven. In some respects, he is superior to an angel, for he has a brighter hope and a grander destiny than even cherubim and seraphim can know. He is one with Christ, which an angel never was. He is a son of God and has the Spirit of Adoption within him, which a cherub never had. There are some Christians who show this happiness in their lives. Watch them and you will always find them cheerful. If, for a moment, a cloud should pass over their brow, it is but for a moment—and soon they rejoice again. I know such people, and glad am I to think that I ever came across their path. Wherever they go, they make sunshine. Into whatever company they come, it is as if an angel shook his wings. Let them talk when they may, it is always for the comfort of others—with kindness upon their lips and the law of love within their hearts! Many a young person, watching such Christians as these, is led to say, “I wish I were as happy, I wish I were as joyful as they are. They always have a smile upon their face.” And I do not doubt that many have been brought to lay hold on Jesus through being drawn by that band of love!

And let me say to you, dear Friend, that this is a most fitting cord with which to draw you, for if you would know the sweets of life, if you would have peace like a river, if you would have a peace that shall be with you in the morning and go with you into your business—that shall be with you at night and close your eyes in tranquil slumber—a peace that shall enable you to live and shall strengthen you in the prospect of death—no, that shall make you sing in the midst of the black and chill stream—be a Christian! My testimony is that if I had to die like a dog. If this life were all and there were no hereafter, I would prefer to be a Christian for the

joy and peace which, in this present life, godliness will afford. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." It has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. You would be happy, young man? Then do not kill your happiness. You would have a bright eye? Then do not put it out. You would rejoice with unspeakable joy? Then do not go into those places where sorrow is sure to follow your every act. Would you be happy? Come to Jesus! Let this band of love sweetly draw you.

Another band of love—it was the one which brought me to the Savior—is *the sense of the security of God's people, as a desire to be as secure as they are*. I do not know what may be the peculiarity of my constitution, but I have always loved safe things. I have not, that I know of, one grain of speculation in my nature. Safe things—things that I can see to be made of rock and that will bear the test of time—I lay hold on with eagerness. I was reasoning thus in my boyish spirit—Scripture tells me that he that believes in Christ shall never perish. Then, if I believe in Jesus, I shall be safe for time and for eternity, too! There will be no fear of my ever being in Hell. I shall run no risk as to my eternal state—that will be secure forever. I shall have the certainty that when my eyes are closed in death, I shall see the face of Christ and behold Him in Glory. Whenever I heard the Doctrine of the Final Preservation of the Saints preached, my mouth used to water and I used to long to be a child of God! When I heard the old saints sing that hymn—

***"My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible Grace.
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"—***

my heart was as if it would leap out of this body, and I would cry to God, "Oh, that I had a part and lot in such a salvation as that!" Now, young man, what do you think of this band of love? Do you not think there is something reasonable and something powerful in it—to secure yourself against all risk of eternal ruin and that, by the Grace of God, in a moment? "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." What do you say to this? Does not this Truth of God attract you? Does not this band draw you? Lord, draw the sinner by the sweet allurements of security, and let him say, "I will lay hold on Christ tonight."

Certain Christians will tell you that *they were first drawn to Christ by the holiness of godly relatives*—not so much by their happiness as by their holiness. There is an Eastern fable that a man, wishing to attract all the doves from the neighboring dovecotes into his own, took a dove and smeared her wings with sweet perfume. Away she flew and all her fellow doves observed her and, attracted by the sweet incense, flew after

her and the dovecote was soon full. There are some Christians of that sort. They have had their wings smeared with the precious ointment of likeness to Jesus—and wherever they go, such is their kindness and their consistency, their gentleness and yet their honesty, their lovely spirit and yet their boldness for Jesus—that others take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus! And they say, “Where does He dwell, for I would gladly see Him and love Him, too? I am afraid I cannot attract you, Sinner, in such a charming way as that, but I would have you read the lives of godly men. Study the actions, perhaps, of your own mother. Is she dead? Then remember what she used to be. What her life of devotedness to God was. And I charge you, by the love of God, by her many prayers and tears, by the pity of her soul and the yearning of her heart towards you, let your mother’s example be one of the bands of love to draw you towards God! Lord, pull at that cord! Lord, pull at that cord! If the cord is around you and the Lord will pull at it, I shall have good hope that you will close with Christ tonight!

You see, I only show you the cord and then leave it, hoping that perhaps one or another may be taken by its power. Now for another. I believe *that not a few are brought to Christ by gratitude for mercies received.* The sailor has escaped from shipwreck, or, perhaps, even in the River Thames he has had many a narrow escape for his life. The sportsman has had his gun burst in his hand and yet he has been unharmed. The traveler has escaped from a terrific railway crash—himself picked out of the debris of the broken carriages unhurt. The parent has seen his children, one after another, laid upon a bed of sickness with fever, but yet they have all been spared. Or he, himself, has had loss upon loss in business, till at last it seemed as if a crash must come—but just then God interposed in a gracious Providence and a strong tide of prosperity set in! Some have thought over these things and said, “Is God so good to us, and shall we not love Him? Shall we live every day despising Him who thus tenderly watches over us and graciously provides for our needs?” O Sirs, I think this band of love ought to fall about some of you! How good God has been to you, dear Hearer! I will not tell your case out in public, but when you have sometimes talked with a friend, you have said, “How graciously has Providence dealt with me!” Give the Lord your heart, young man! Surely you can do no less for such favor as He has shown you! Mother, give Jesus your heart! He well deserves it, for He has spared it from being broken. Woman, consecrate—may the Lord help you to do it!—consecrate your heart’s warmest affections to Him who has thus generously dealt with you in Providence. He deserves it, does He not? Will you be guilty of ingratitude? Is there not something within you that says, “Stay no longer an enemy to so kind a Friend, but be reconciled to Him. Be reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” May that cord lay hold of some of you—and may God draw it and so attract you to Himself!

Persons whose characteristic is thinking rather than loving are often caught by another cord. I do not know what may be your mode of thinking of things, but it strikes me that if I had not laid hold of Christ, if

anybody should meet me and say, "*The religion of Christ is the most reasonable religion in the world,*" I should lend him my ear for a little time and ask him to prove it to me. I have frequently caught the ears of travelers and held them fast bound when I have tried to show the entire reasonableness of the plan of salvation. God is just, that is taken for granted. If God is just, sin must be punished—that is clear. Then, how can God be just and yet not punish the sinner? That is the question and the Gospel answers that question! It declares that Christ, the Son of God, became a Man. That He stood in the place of such men as were chosen of God to be saved. These men may be known by their believing in Christ. Christ stood, then, in the place and of those whom I will now call Believers. He suffered at God's hand everything that was due to God from them. No, He did more. Inasmuch as they were bound to keep God's Law, but could not do it, Christ kept it for them and now, what Christ did becomes theirs by an act of faith. They trust Christ to save them. Christ's sufferings are put in the place of their being sent to Hell and they are justly delivered from their sins. Christ's righteousness is put in the place of their keeping the Law of God, and they are justly rewarded with a place in Paradise, as if they had themselves been perfectly holy!

Now, it strikes me that this looks reasonable enough. In everyday life we see the same thing done. A man is drawn for the militia—he pays for a substitute and he goes free. A man owes a debt. Some friend comes in and discharges the bill for him—and he is clear. The ends of justice are answered through *substitution*. There seems to me to be something so unique about the whole affair of God taking the place of man, and God's suffering in man's form for man, that Justice may by no means be marred, that my reason falls down at the feet of this great mystery, and cries, "I would have an interest in it! Lord, let me be one of those for whom Jesus died! Let me have the peace which springs from a complete Atonement worked out by Jesus Christ!" My Brothers and Sisters, I wish I could draw you with this cord, but I cannot. I can only show you this cord and tell you how well it would draw you. If you reject it, your blood shall be upon your own head. I know too well you *will* reject it unless the mighty hand of God shall begin to tug at that band of love and draw you to Jesus!

Far larger numbers, however, are doubtless *attracted to Jesus by a sense of His exceeding great love*. It is not so much the reasonableness of the Atonement, as the love of God which shines in it which seems to attract many souls. There once lived, in the city of London, a rich merchant, a man of generous spirit, a Lollard, one of those who were subjected to fines, imprisonment and even death for the Truth's sake. Near him there lived a miserable cobbler—a poor, mean, despicable creature. The merchant, for some reason unknown, had taken a very great liking to the poor cobbler and was in the habit of giving him all his work to do and recommending him to many friends. And as this man would not always work as he should, when the merchant saw his family in any need, he would send them meat from his own table and frequently he clothed his children. Well, notwithstanding that he had acted thus—

had often advanced him sums of money and had acted with great kindness—a reward was offered to anyone who would betray a Lollard, or would point out such person or persons as read the Bible, to the magistrates. The cobbler, to obtain this reward, went to the magistrates and betrayed the merchant. As God would have it, however, through some skillful advocate, the merchant escaped. He forgave—freely forgave the cobbler and never said a word to him about it. But in the streets the cobbler would always turn his head the other way and try to get out of the way of the man whom he felt he had so grievously ill-treated. Still, the merchant never altered his treatment of him, but sent him meat as usual and attended to his wife and children if they were sick, the same as before, but he never could get the cobbler to give him a good word. If he did speak, it was to abuse him.

One day, in a very narrow lane in the city—for the streets were narrow and still narrower were the lanes—the merchant saw the cobbler coming. And he thought, “Now is my time. He cannot pass me, now, without facing me.” Of course, the cobbler grew very red in the face and made up his mind that if the merchant should begin to upbraid him, he would answer him in as saucy a manner as possible. But when the merchant came close to him, he said, “I am very sorry that you shun me. I have no ill-will towards you. I would do anything for you or for your family, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be friends with you.” The cobbler stopped and presently a moisture suffused his eyes and, soon a flood of tears poured down his cheeks, and he said, “I have been such a base wretch to you that I hated you, for I thought that you would never forgive me. I have always shunned you, but when you talk to me like this, I cannot be your enemy any longer. Pray, Sir, assure me of your forgiveness.” Forthwith, he began to fall upon his knees.

That was the way to draw him with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love! And, in a nobler sense, this is just what Jesus Christ has done for sinners. He has offered you mercy. He has proclaimed to you eternal life and you reject it. Every day He gives you of His bounties, makes you to feed at the table of His Providence and clothes you with the livery of His generosity. And yet, after all this, some of you curse Him! You break His Sabbaths. You despise His name. You are His enemies. Yet, what does He say to you? He loves you still—He follows you, not to rebuke you, but to woo you and to entreat you to come to Him and have Him for your Friend. Can you hold out against my Master’s wounds? Can you stand out against His bloody sweat? Can you resist His passion? Oh, by the name of Him who bowed His head upon the tree, who cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” can you hold out against Him? If He had not died for me, I think I must love Him for dying for other people. But He has died for you—you may know this if so you trust Him, now, with your soul, just as you are. This is the evidence that He died for you! Oh, may God enable you to trust Jesus now, drawing you with this band of love, this cord of a man!

II. There are many more cords, but my strength fails me and, therefore, I will mention but one more. *The privileges which a Christian*

enjoys ought to draw some of you to Christ. Do you know what will take place in these aisles tonight if the Holy Spirit should lead a sinner to Christ? I will tell you. There he stands, he is as vile a sinner as walks this earth. He knows it. He is wretched. He has a burden on his back. If that man is led to look to Christ tonight, his sins will roll off from him at once! They will roll into the sepulcher of Jesus and be buried and never have a resurrection. In a moment, he will be clothed from head to foot with white raiment! The kiss of a Father's love shall be upon his cheek and the seal of the Spirit's witness shall be fixed upon his brow. He shall be made, tonight, a child of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. His feet shall be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. He shall be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. He shall go to his house, not wretched, but as though he could dance for joy the whole way home! And when he gets home, it may be never so poor a cottage, but it will look brighter than it ever did before. His children he will look upon as jewels entrusted to his care, instead of being burdens, as he once said they were. His very trials he will come to thank God for, while his ordinary mercies will be sweetened and made very dear to him. The man, instead of leading a life like a Hell upon earth, will live a life like Heaven begun below—and all this shall take place in an instant!

No, that is not all! The effect of this night's work shall tell throughout his entire life. He shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus so that, when the time shall come that his hair is gray and he lies stretched upon his bed and breathes out his life, he shall, in his last moments, look back upon a path that has been lit with the Grace of God—and look forward across the black river to an eternity in which the Glory of God shall shine forth with as great a fullness as a creature can endure! This is enough, surely, to tempt a sinner to come to Jesus! This must be a strong cord to draw him! O Man, Jesus will accept you! He will accept you now, just as you are! He has received millions like you already! Let Heaven's music witness to the fact. Millions more like you He is still willing to receive—some of us can bear our testimony to them. Come and welcome, then, come and welcome! Never mind your rags, prodigal, a Father's hand will take them off! Never mind your filth! Never mind having fed the swine. Come as you are! Just come now!

I hear somebody saying, "Well, I am inclined to come, but I do not know what it means to come to Christ." To come to Christ is to trust Him. You have been trying to save yourself—do not try any more. You have been going to church, or going to chapel, and you have been trying to keep the Commandments, but you cannot keep them. No man ever did keep them and no man ever will keep them! You have been, in fact, like a prisoner who has been sentenced to hard labor—you have been walking upon the treadmill in order to get to the stars and you are not an inch higher! After all you have done, you are just where you were. Now, leave this off—have done with it. Christ kept the Law! Let His keeping it stand in the place of your keeping it. Christ suffered the anger of God—let His sufferings stand to you in the place of your sufferings. Take Him now, just as you are, and believe that He can save you—no, that He WILL save

you and trust Him to do it! This is all the Gospel I have to preach. Very seldom do I finish a sermon without going over this simple matter of trusting Christ. There are some, perhaps, who enquire for something new. I cannot give it to you—I have not got anything new, but only the same old story over and over again! Trust Christ, and you are saved!

We have heard, in our church meetings, that on several occasions when, at the close of the sermon, I have merely said as much as that, it has been enough to lead sinners into life and peace and, therefore, I will keep on at it. My heart yearns to bring some of you to Christ tonight, but I know not what arguments to use with you. You surely do not wish to be damned. Surely you cannot make the calculation that the short pleasures of this world are worth an eternity of torment! But damned you must be unless you lay hold on Christ. Does not this cord draw you? Surely you want to be in Heaven. You have some desire toward that better land in the realms of the hereafter, but you cannot be there except you lay hold on Christ! Will not this cord of love draw you? Surely it would be a good thing to get rid of fear, suspense, doubt and anxiety. It would be a good thing to be able to lay your head on your pillow and say, "I do not care whether I wake or not." To go to sea and reckon it a matter of perfect indifference whenever you reach land or not. No, sometimes the wish with us to depart preponderates over that of remaining here! Do you not wish for that? But you can never have it except by laying hold on Christ. Will not this draw you?

My dear Hearers, you whose face I look upon every Sabbath, and into whose ears this poor, dry voice has spoken so many hundreds of times, we do not wish to be parted. I know that to some of you, this is the very happiest, as well as the holiest spot you ever occupied. You love to be here. I am glad you do and I am glad to see you. I do not like to be separated from you. When any of you move to other towns, it gives me pain to miss your faces. I hope we shall not be separated in the world to come. My beloved Friends around me, who have been in Christ these many years, you also love them. We do not wish to be divided. I would like that all this ship's company should meet on the other side of the sea. I do not know one among you that I could spare. I would not like to miss any of you who sit yonder, nor any of you who sit near—neither the youngest nor the oldest of you. Well, but we cannot meet in Heaven unless we meet in Jesus Christ! We cannot meet father, mother, pastor and friends unless we have a good hope through Jesus Christ our Lord! Will not that band of love draw you? Mother, from the railings of Heaven, a little angel-child is looking down tonight, beckoning with his finger. He is looking out for you and he is saying, "Mother, follow your baby to Heaven." Father, your daughter charged you, as she died, to give your heart to Christ—and from her seat in Heaven her charge comes down to you with as great force as it came from her sick-bed, I trust, "Follow me, follow me to Heaven!" Friends who have gone before—godly ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus—in one chorus, say to you, "Come up here! Come up here for we, without you, cannot be made perfect." Will not this band of love draw you? Oh, will not this cord of a man lay hold upon you

and bring you to the Savior's feet? The Lord grant that it may, but, as I have said, I can only show you the cords. It is God's work to pull them—and they will be pulled if the saints will join in earnest prayer, invoking a blessing upon sinners. The Lord grant it, for His love's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 11; 14.**

Hosea 11:1. *When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt.* God's love was very early love. He began with the nation of Israel when it was a mere handful of men in Egypt. There He multiplied them and, in due time, He called them out from among the heathen. God's love to some of us manifested itself at a very early period of our lives when we were yet children. It is among our most joyous memories that we have known the Lord from our youth up. Happy man, happy woman, of whom God can say, as He said concerning His ancient people, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt."

2. *As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.* The nation of Israel did not fulfill the promise of its youth. It was not faithful to God. The people heard from the lips of Moses the command, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord," yet they continually turned aside to the idols of the nations. Have not some of us, also, although we have been loved by God, been faithless to Him? Can we not look back, with great regret and sorrow, upon our many stumbling and backslidings? If it is so, let us repent of our sin and never repeat it.

3. *I taught Ephraim also to go.* Just as nurses teach children to walk—"I taught Ephraim also to go."

3. *Taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.* God has done great things for many of us who, possibly, have never noticed His hand at work on our behalf. Lives which were in great peril have been saved, yet the goodness of God has never been acknowledged by those whom He has delivered. Men have been raised up from beds of sickness, yet the great and good Healer has never been thanked for what He has done for them. Oh, how sad it is that God should do so much for us, and yet that we should not even thank Him for doing it!

4. *I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.* As men do with the bulls that have been plowing, lifting the yoke from them, and giving them rest and food before they have to begin plowing again. So did God to Israel, and so has He done to us. He lifted from us the heavy burden of our sin and He gave us rest and heavenly food. But oh, what a poor return we have made for all the thoughtful kindness of our God! If any man here imagines that he can boast of his conduct towards his God, he does not feel as I do. Rather dear Friends, I think that we all ought to humble ourselves in the Lord's Presence when

we remember what ill returns we have made for all that He has done for us.

5, 6. *He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. All the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.* If men will sin, they shall suffer. And God's people will be the first to suffer for their sins against the Lord, as He said by the mouth of the Prophet Amos, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." If a man lets other men's children go unchastened, he will chastise his own children, if he is worthy of the name of a father. And God will do the same. He will not destroy us, but He will chasten us if we backslide from Him.

7, 8. *And My people are bent to backsliding from Me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him. How shall I give you up, Ephraim, how shall I deliver you, Israel?* There seems to be a contest in the heart of God. At least that is how He describes it Himself, as though Mercy pleaded with Justice, and Love contended with Wrath—"How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel?"

8. *How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim?* "I cannot destroy you, as I destroyed the guilty cities of the plain in the days of old."

8. *My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.* O Backsliders, if God's repentings are kindled, will not yours also be kindled? If you have left Him and yet He will not give you up, will you give Him up? Will you not return to Him? Listen to His own words.

9. *I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.* What a mercy this is for us! If the Lord had been man, He would have cast us off long ago. But, as He is God, He is infinitely patient and He loves to forgive. "I am God, and not man."

9, 10. *The Holy One in the midst of you: and I will not enter into the city. They shall walk after the LORD.* See what His almighty Grace will do to make these wanderers come back to Him.

10. *He shall roar like a lion: when He shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.* Even His roaring like a lion will only make them tremblingly come back to Him.

11, 12. *They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, says the LORD. Ephraim compasses Me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints.*

Hosea 14:1. *O Israel, return unto the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.* Let anyone here who has turned aside from the Lord, hear these tender pleading words and then yield to Him who utters them! God speaks, not to condemn, but to comfort. He would gladly allure you back to Him with His gracious words of love! "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity."

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.* But the poor penitent cries, “Alas, Lord, I do not know what to say. So God puts in the sinner’s mouth the very words he is to utter.

2. *Say unto Him. Take away all iniquity.* That is where the mischief lies, in your inequity, your turning aside from the path of truth and equity. Say to the Lord, “I do not want to keep any of my iniquity. I desire to be delivered from it altogether.” “Take away all iniquity.”

2. *And receive us graciously.* “Lord, take us back again! According to the greatness of Your Grace, restore us to Your heart of love and let us dwell where Your children dwell. ‘Receive us graciously.’”

2. *So will we render the calves of our lips.* That is to say, “We will give You the sacrifice of our praises. We will speak well of Your name. If we have the calves of the stall, we will give them to You, but, in any case, we will give you the calves of our lips.”

3. *Asshur shall not save us.* They had been accustomed to rely either upon Assyria or upon Egypt. And one of the first signs of their real repentance was that they had given up their false dependences. So, Sinner, you must give up your self-righteousness, your ceremonialism—anything and everything in which you have trusted in place of trusting in the Lord! “Asshur shall not save us.”

3. *We will not ride upon horses.* In the day of battle, they had trusted in their cavalry. But now, in the time of their repentance, they cry, “We will not ride upon horses.”

3. *Neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, you are our gods: for in You the fatherless finds mercy.* What a beautiful ending there is to this verse! If any of you are full of sin and full of needs, and have become like orphans who have lost everything and are utterly destitute—if you have none to provide for you, and none to care for you—come to the God of the fatherless and put your trust in Him! “For in You the fatherless finds mercy.” Then follows this gracious promise.

4. *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.* Listen to the heavenly music! “I will.” “I will.” When God says, “I will,” you may depend upon it that He will do what He says He will. If you or I say, “I will,” it must be with the proviso, “If it is God’s will, I will do so-and-so.” But God is the almighty King whose least word is a sovereign mandate—“I will heal their backsliding: I will love them freely.”

4. *For My anger is turned away from him.* If you have come back to the Lord with true penance of heart, He is no longer angry with you, but He is ready to welcome you again.

5. *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* “Not as fire, not as tempest, but in gentle, yet effectual Grace, I will visit them. I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

5. *He shall grow as the lily.* “He shall be as beautiful and fair as the lily, though just now he was black as night.”

5. *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* “He shall be as stable as he is beautiful. Like old Lebanon, the mighty mountain which none can shake, so shall this poor sinner be when I have visited him with My love.”

6. *His branches shall spread.* “I will endow him with usefulness and influence.

6. *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree.* “I will load him with fruit. He shall have the beauty that belongs to that fat and oily tree, the olive.”

6. *And his smell as Lebanon.* God can make the foul, polluted sinner to become fragrant to Him. “His smell shall be as Lebanon”

7. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* His family, his workers, his neighbors who wandered from the Lord because he wandered, shall get good from his holy influence. His restoration shall be a benediction to them! “They that 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.* All good things come to a man when God comes to him and he comes to God. Get right with God and you shall get right with all things around you—and you shall be the means of helping to put other people right.

8. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* “He will spontaneously purge himself from the evil things which he once loved. I shall not need to send the hammer to break his idols, but he shall say, out of the fullness of his own heart, ‘What have I to do any more with idols?’”

8, 9. *I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise, and he should 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 transgressor shall fall therein.* Yes, they shall fall even when they are in the right ways—and I know of no falling that is worse than for men to be in the ways of religion and yet to stumble and fall even there! For, if they fall there, where will they *not* fall?

—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.**

BANDS OF LOVE

NO. 934

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 5, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was
to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws,
and I laid meat unto them.”*
Hosea 11:4.

GOD, by the mouth of His Prophet, is here expostulating with His people for their ungrateful rebellion against Him. He had not treated them in a harsh, tyrannical, overbearing manner, else there might have been some excuse for their revolt. But His rule had always been gentle, tender, and full of pity. Therefore, for them to disobey Him was the very height of wanton wickedness. The Lord had never made His people to suffer hard bondage in mortar and in brick as Pharaoh did, yet we do not find that they raised an insurrection against the Egyptian tyrant. They gave their backs to the burdens, and they bore the lash of the taskmaster without turning upon the hands which oppressed them.

But when the Lord was gracious to them and delivered them out of the house of bondage, they murmured in the wilderness, and were justly called by Moses, “rebels.” They had no such burdens to bear under the government of God as those which loaded the nations under their kings, and yet they willfully determined to have a king for themselves. No taxes were squeezed from them, no servile service was demanded at their hands. Their thank offerings and sacrifices were not ordained upon a scale of oppression. Their liberty was all but boundless—their lives were spent in peace and happiness, every man under his own vine and fig tree—none making them afraid.

Yet, since other nations bowed before the rule of despotic kings, these foolish people were not content till they had raised up between them and the Divine government a ruler who would take their daughters to be confectioners in his kitchen, and their sons to be servants in his court. God bore with their ill manners, and gave them a king in His anger. And then, even under the reign of kings, how graciously the Lord their God treated them! If it was necessary for their punishment to give them up for awhile to foreign dominion, how He soon took away the affliction when they cried unto Him!

Though they were chastised, yet—

***“His strokes were fewer than their crimes,
And lighter than their guilt.”***

The whole dealings of Jehovah with His people Israel were full of matchless tenderness. As a nursing mother with her child, so did God deal gently with His people. Yet, hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! The Lord has nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Him. Did a nation ever cast away her gods, even though they were not gods? Were not the heathen faithful to their idols? But Israel was bent on backsliding—her heart was set upon idolatry, and the God of her fathers was disregarded.

Jehovah was despised, and His gentle reign and government she set herself to destroy. This was the complaint against Israel of old. As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man. As men were in days of yore, so are they now. God has dealt with us who are His people in an unexampled way of loving kindness and tender mercy, and I fear that to a great extent the recompense we have rendered to Him has been very much like the ungrateful return which He received from the seed of Jacob of old.

This morning I shall ask you to think of the tender dealings of God with you, my Brothers and Sisters, that you may not be as Israel was. But that feeling the power of the Divine gentleness, you may serve your God with a perfect heart, and walk before Him as those should who have partaken of such benefits.

The first thing we shall have to consider is the Lord's way of leading His people to their duty—“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.” Secondly, the Lord's Grace in giving His people rest—“I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws.” And, thirdly, the suitable nourishment which He gives to His chosen—“I laid meat unto them.”

I. First, then, THE LORD'S WAY OF EXCITING HIS PEOPLE TO ACTION. We who have believed in Jesus Christ have passed into a new condition with regard to God. We were once, at the very best, only His subjects, and having sinned we were scarcely fit to be called subjects, but rebels, traitors—disgraced with high treason. But now, since Divine Grace has renewed us, we are not only his *pardoned* subjects, but what is far better, wondrous Grace has made us his Beloved sons and daughters! we are now not so much subjects of His crown as we are children of His care.

We are by Grace brought into an entirely different relationship from that of fallen nature, and we are ruled and swayed by motives and regulations altogether unknown to the unregenerate sons of men. The way in

which God brings His people to serve Him is that to which I now ask your consideration. It is a way pre-eminently peculiar in its tenderness and kindness. The only cords are cords of a man, and the bands are bands of love. In the heroic days when Xerxes led his army into Greece, there was a remarkable contrast between the way in which the Persian soldiers and the Grecian warriors were urged to combat.

The unwilling hosts of Persia were driven to the conflict by blows and stripes from their officers. They were either mercenaries or cowards, and they feared close contact with their opponents. They were driven to their duty as beasts are, with rods and goads. On the other side, the armies of Greece were small, but each man was a patriot and a hero. When they marched to the conflict it was with quick and joyous step, with a martial song upon their lips—and when they neared the foe they rushed upon his ranks with an enthusiasm and a fury which nothing could withstand.

No whips were needed for the Spartan men-at-arms. Like high-spirited chargers they would have resented the touch thereof. They were drawn to battle by the cords of a man, and by the bands of patriotic love they were bound to hold their posts at all hazards. “Spartans,” would their leaders say, “your fathers disdained to number the Persians with the dogs of their flock and will you be their slaves? Say, is it not better to die as freemen than to live as slaves? What if your foes are many, yet one lion can tear in pieces a far-reaching flock of sheep. Use well your weapons this day! Avenge your slaughtered sires, and fill the courts of Shushan with confusion and lamentation!”

Such were the manly arguments which drew the Lacedaemonians and Athenians to the fight—not the whips so fit for beasts, nor the cords so suitable for cattle. This illustration may set forth the difference between the world’s service of bondage, and the Christian’s religion of love—the worldling is flogged to his duty with fear, and terror, and dread. But the Christian man is touched by motives which appeal to his highest nature—he is affected by motives so dignified as to be worthy of the sons of God. He is not driven as a beast—he is moved as a man.

Let me explain. In the first place, the Christian man never *works* to obtain eternal life. He knows it to be a *gift* and receives it as such. The unconverted man thinks that there are certain things which he ought to do and by the doing of which he will be saved. And he selfishly, if he is awakened, sets to work to perform these actions with more or less of perseverance in the hope of obtaining pardon for sin and salvation for his soul. Being a son of the bondwoman, he finds his way to Sinai.

But the Christian man knows that salvation is not the wage of service, but that life is the gift of God, the dowry bestowed on us by Sovereign

Grace—and therefore he never looks for salvation from the Law. As a child of the promise, he wins the New Jerusalem by birthright and by the Covenant of Grace. Legal motives cease to affect the instructed Believer—while he was out of Christ he did, in his ignorance, seek to work out a righteousness of his own—but now he has come to Christ and seen everlasting righteousness finished and brought in. He is saved—he knows that he is saved, and he knows also that he is saved by the merits of Another.

Now, being saved, he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, not that he may save himself, but because he knows he is saved, since God Himself is working in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure. If that man is engaged as a minister of Christ he will never preach as though his salvation depended on his preaching. Let him be occupied in his trade or calling, he will not be honest and sober, conscientious and devout, because he thinks to save himself thereby. No, verily, he has turned his hope *away* from his *own* works to the work of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, and therefore that motive of trying to win salvation by merit is disgusting to him.

He is so far from yielding to its power, that he utterly loathes it. Let such arguments affect the ungenerous spirits that can live for themselves, but over us it has no power. We are saved, and now being saved. Out of love to the Father and the Well-Beloved we are impelled to service.

Neither does a Christian seek to serve God with the idea that he is to keep himself in spiritual life by such service. I have heard it more or less insinuated that although we are saved at present, and have eternal life in present possession, yet all depends on our own faithfulness. And if we are not what we should be, eternal life will die out and the Divine Grace given will be withdrawn. I must confess I find in the Bible nothing of the kind, neither do I pray, nor read the Scriptures, nor attend Divine worship with the remotest idea of sustaining my own spiritual life.

The spiritual life which the Holy Spirit gives us cannot die. It is eternal as the life of God. It is a living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. A true Believer in Christ is most safe, for he can never perish, neither can any pluck him out of Christ's hands. The dread of being driven out of the Divine family is not a motive capable of stirring his heavenly nature. He knows that because Jesus lives he shall live also. He is not forced to holiness by dread of being forsaken of his God. He does not believe such a thing to be possible. He leaves a motive so slavish to the poor sons of Hagar who, like their bondslave mother, cannot dwell with the child of promise.

As for the Christian, other and higher considerations rule him. He is drawn by the cords of a man and by the bands of love. Further, you will see the gentleness of the way in which God calls His people to duty in the fact that He is pleased to accept their service even when it is, in itself, far from being at all worthy of His smile. O my Brethren, if you and I had to be saved or to be preserved in spiritual life by our *doings*, then nothing but perfection in service could answer our turn. And every time we felt that what we had done was marred and imperfect we should be full of despair.

But now we know that we are already saved, and are forever safe, since nothing remains unfinished in the work which justifies us. We bring to the Lord the loving offerings of our hearts, and if they are imperfect we water with our tears those imperfections. We know that He reads our hearts and takes our works not for what they are in themselves but for what they are in Christ. He knows what we would make them if we could. He accepts them as if they were what we mean them to be. He takes the *will* for the *deed* often, and He takes the half deed often for the whole.

And when Justice would condemn the action as sinful, for it is so imperfect, the mercy of our Father accepts the action in the Beloved, because He knows what we meant it to be. And though our fault has marred it, yet He knows how our hearts sought to honor Him. Oh, it is such a blessed thing to remember that though the Law cannot accept anything but what is perfect, yet God, in the Gospel, as we come to Him as saved souls, accepts our imperfect things!

Why, there is our love! How cold it often is, and yet Jesus Christ takes pleasure in our love! Then, again, our faith, I must almost call it unbelief, it is often so weak—and yet though it is as a grain of mustard seed, Jesus accepts it, and works wonders by it. As for our poor prayers, often so broken with so many distracted thoughts in them, and so poverty-stricken in importunity and earnestness, yet our dear Lord takes them, washes them in His blood, adds His own merit to them, and they come up as a sweet savor before the Most High. It is delightfully encouraging to know that in our sincere but feeble service the Scripture is fulfilled—“a bruised reed shall He not break, and a smoking flax will He not quench.” Even our green ears of corn may be laid on the altar. If we cannot bring a lamb, our turtle doves and two young pigeons shall be received.

Then, further, our gracious Lord gives us promises of help in all holy exercises. Under the Law it is, “Make the bricks,” but there is no promise of straw. Under the Gospel we have help for every time of need. You know how it is written, “The Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not

what we should pray for as we ought.” Our good works are rather God’s works than ours, in so far as they are good. He first of all gives us good works, and then rewards us for them, as if they were all our own. “You have worked all our works in us.” “I am like a green fir tree, from me is your fruit found.”

Yes, blessed be God, all true fruit of Grace comes from Him. Is not this a charmingly powerful motive to service? Though it is so different from the reasons which drag on the sons of men, do we not feel it to be mightily operative? The Lord will help us in the service, and render unto man according to his work. He has said, “Fear you not. For I am with you: be not dismayed. For I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.”

Furthermore, as if more fully to show how we are drawn with the cords of love and bands of a man, all the motives which are used to impel us to service appeal to that which is most honorable in our regenerated manhood. We have frequently heard the objection of those who oppose the Doctrines of Grace, “If I believed as you do, that all true Believers are saved, and shall never perish, I should live as I like.” Our answer is, “It is highly probable that you, as an unconverted man, would do so. But if you had received a new nature, and all your tastes were changed, matters would stand otherwise.”

For a Christian to live as he likes would be to but live an absolutely pure and perfectly holy life. The Holy Spirit implants within His people at their new birth a dignity and nobility of character to which they were utterly strangers before. And they would not, and could not, sin as once they did. They cannot sin as before because they are born of God. The things which they took pleasure in before, now seem to them groveling and despicable. They seek after higher and nobler objects. I believe that Gospel motives, if they were addressed to all mankind promiscuously, would prove a failure as much as if we tried to excite enthusiasm in all men by poetic imagery or profoundly philosophical argument.

But Gospel motives to God’s people are as nails fastened in a sure place. They are suitable, and therefore effectual. You could not hope to govern the nation by the same ruler and methods with which, as a father, you order your family. In your family it may be there is not even a rod, certainly there is no policeman, no prison, no black cap. Children are ruled by a father on a scheme essentially different from the rule of magistrates and kings. There are maxims of courts of legislature which would never be tolerated in the home of love. Just so, within the family of God there are no penal inflictions, no words of threat such as must be

employed by the great King when He deals with the mass of His rebellious subjects.

You are not under the Law, else there would be judgment and curses for you. You are under Grace, and now the motives by which you are to be moved are such as might not affect others, but which, since you are renewed in the spirit of your mind, most powerfully affect you. It is a great thing for a man to feel that God does not now appeal to him as He would to an ordinary person, but that having given him a new nature, He addresses him on higher grounds. "I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

We have known of a boy in school whose conduct has been greatly improved when the master has had wisdom enough to appeal to his better qualities. When the lad has felt that his age, or superiority of position have demanded better things of him, he has yielded to the motive. In dealing with His people, the Lord appeals to their higher characteristics. He does not say to the regenerate man as He did to Adam, "Do this and you shall die." He says to him, "He that believes in Christ shall never die. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I have loved you with an everlasting love: what, then, is your return for all this love?"

The really saved soul, overwhelmed with gratitude, exclaims, "My God, my Father, I cannot sin, I must live as You would have me, I must serve You. Such love as this touches my heart, it stirs everything that is noble that You have implanted in me. Tell me what Your will is, and whether I have to bear it or to do it, I will delight in it if You will give me all-sufficient Grace." Yes, the Lord always appeals to the higher points in the Christian's constitution, and thus He draws us with the cords of a man, with bands of love.

Let us add that love is always the great master force in moving Christians. Terror is but little used—threats and wrath are laid aside. Gospel arguments are molded in this fashion, "The love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not from now on live unto themselves." Jesus seems to plead, "I have made you, even you, poor defiled one, to be precious in My sight. Do you love Me? If you love Me, keep My commandments, and feed My sheep.

"I have bought you, even with My heart's blood have I redeemed you out from among the people, and from the chief men thereof. Does not My

love constrain you? Will you not give yourself to My service, to promote My Glory?" All-conquering Love is master of all our forces. He is the Commander-in-Chief of all our powers. When the love of God is manifestly shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, our duty becomes our highest delight, and the work of God our highest joy. Rutherford, speaking of how his Lord encouraged him with sweet fellowship while he was serving Him, says in his quaint way, "When my Master sends me on His errands, He often gives me a trinket for myself."

By which he means, as sure as ever God sent him on His errands He gave him a penny for reward, as we do to boys. How often have our prayers for others returned into our own bosom? How often do we find it a blessing to bless others? Have you not found it so? You have been trying to comfort God's people, and the comfort has been reflected upon your own soul. You watered others and thereby were watered yourself. You were trying to praise God—you were not thinking of yourself—but as you sang you obtained a blessing, your heart mounted higher and higher, and you blessed your Lord with an exhilaration of spirit you had not known before.

The praises of God's people are poured forth, even as larks give forth their songs. They sing, not because they ought, but because they *delight* to sing. They fulfill their nature, and find in it their happiness. Virtue and holiness become to God's people a delight—they take pleasure in it—sin is hateful, but holiness is lovely to them. As it will be their highest Heaven to be perfect, so now their nearest approach to Heaven is when they are by God's Spirit sanctified and led into nearness to Christ.

Thus I have, without dwelling on the mere words, given you the sense of the first clause of the text, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." The impelling, urging powers that lead Christians on to consecration and holiness are never those which befit slaves or carnal minds. They are such as are worthy of the dignity of the sons of God, and they are full of tenderness, and kindness, and love. For the gentleness of God is great towards His people.

II. I shall now ask you to turn to the next sentence, and observe HOW THE LORD GIVES REST TO HIS PEOPLE—"I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them."

Sometimes a common illustration may be more forcible than a more refined comparison, and I shall give you in a moment a very homely one. The passage here means that God treated His people as farmers. When they are merciful, they treat the bullocks with which they have been plowing, gently. They lift off the yoke from them, withdraw the muzzle, and then give them their food. But our explanation of it shall be a sight

more common. Out there in yonder street stand still and observe. Yonder inn is a common halting place. Watch it a moment. Here comes a huge, heavily loaded van.

Three or four steaming, panting horses have been laboriously dragging along this mountain on wheels. They are greatly in need of rest. The word is given, and the poor animals gladly stand still. Down comes the driver from his box. The reins are dropped and he proceeds to take the bits out of the poor creatures' mouths. How pleased they seem to be to get rid of the bits which have been so long between their jaws. Nor is the rest all the horses get, they shall have a draught of water, or the well-filled nose bags shall be fitted upon them and they shall rest and feed.

I thought of this text when I looked at that sight the other day. It is the exact explanation of the text, "I was to them as they that take off the yoke from their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." As you see wearied horses contentedly and happily take their rest and feed, you have before you precisely what the Prophet meant. God takes the bits out of His servants' mouths, the yoke from their backs, brings them their food, and bids them feed and rest and be happy.

Let us take, then, the first point, "I was to them as they that take off the yoke." Now, the Lord has taken off from His people a great many yokes, or the same yoke under different aspects. He has taken many bits out of their mouths. First, there was the old yoke of ceremonialism—what a burden that must have been to Believers under the Law! There was this they must not eat, and that they must not drink, and the other they must not wear. There was this to be done on one day and that to be done on another. It was always touch not, taste not, handle not, and so on. They were environed and surrounded with all sorts of legislation, and hedged in by laws about their houses, their clothes, their beds, their drinking vessels. Legislation about birds and beasts and fishes—about everything, in fact.

But now Christ has taken off that yoke from us, and "touch not, taste not, handle not," stands as an abrogated Law. We have given to us a liberty, a freedom from every yoke of bondage—and though there are some who are for bringing in new ceremonial laws, with holy places, and holy days, and holy things, and priests, and rites, and ceremonies—and I know not what—these are the children of the bondwoman, we regard them not. Under the Law of Liberty which Christ has proclaimed, we are free, indeed—

***"Wherever we seek Him He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."***

Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused. Now it is the *heart* that is holy or unholy, and not the *thing*. What our Lord has cleansed, we count no longer common or unclean. Carnal ordinances of outward things are put away as childish things. We worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Better still, He has taken from us the yoke of the Law. Oh, do you not remember, Beloved, when you carried that yoke because you were trying to save yourselves by your own works? You supposed that if this sin were relinquished, and that virtue were pursued, you might at length grow acceptable with God. But after months and perhaps years of such attempts, you found yourself as far off from acceptance as ever—as indeed you would have been if you had lived ten thousand years—for by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.

All that the Law can do is to bring a knowledge of sin, but it is not capable of bringing acceptance with God. At that time, how the yoke of Divine Justice pressed upon you heavily! You felt you had sinned and that God must punish sin, and you did not understand that He had laid help upon One that is mighty to save. This yoke galled you very terribly, but, do you remember when He took away the yoke from you, and removed this bit from your mouth? Well does my soul remember it, when I saw Jesus put under the Law for me, that I might no more be under the Law.

When I saw Him fulfill it, and satisfy all its demands that I might be absolved—oh, what joy to perceive that I was not condemned! The Law had no more dominion over me, and I was not under the Law but under Grace! Everyone here who has believed in Jesus has received just such liberty as this—and now the Law does not alarm you, neither does your past sin make you to tremble—the Law is satisfied, your sin is pardoned, and God has given you this blessed rest, this quiet resting-place.

Further than this, you have also been delivered from the yoke of sin. Time was when we strove to be rid of sin. We had been made to see its evil nature, and we were sufficiently alarmed and awakened to see that Hell would follow upon it. Therefore we desired to escape from evil habits—but, alas, we found that the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin, and the leopard his spots—than we cease to do evil. Our works, though we strove to make them good, remained imperfect. The old leprosy tainted all.

Sin, like an iron net, encompassed us and held us fast. Nor could we be free, struggle as we might, until that pierced hand which took away the guilt of sin also released us from its power. By Jesus’ help habits

which seemed invincible were soon overcome. Customs which bound us fast were broken as Samson snapped the green withes. We were free by the power of God's Holy Spirit from the service of Satan and were enlisted under the banner of Christ. Oh, what freedom is this! May the Lord continue to give us more and more of it till the last link of sin's cruel chain shall be removed and our freedom of holiness shall be complete.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope that to many of you God has also been pleased to give great rest from the yoke of care. We ought not to be burdened with cares, and yet some are so. Our Savior has bid us by the example of the fowls of Heaven, and of the lilies of the field, to leave care to our God. We are told by His servant, the Apostle, to be "careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication to make known our requests unto God."

A minister was in a house where there were some five or six little children who were playing about and making merry noises, and their father said to the minister, "Yes, Sir, they may well be happy. These are their best days, for they have a father to care for them, they have no need to care for themselves." When that good man went to Church next Sunday he was very much surprised to hear his minister quote his words. He said these were the good times for God's children, for they had a Father to care for them, and they might be as free from care as little children are. Yes, when we live by faith we are just as free from care as the lambs in the field, or the birds in the woods—casting all our care on Him who cares for us. He that bore the burden of our lifelong sin may well bear the burden of our daily troubles. And He is in this respect to us as one that takes off the yoke from the jaws.

So also, I would add, has the Lord often delivered us from the yoke of fear. There is fear of death which haunts too many. Fear of coming trial alarms others. Fear of I know not what, a sort of indefinable dread comes over not a few. But when we fly to our God, all terrors, whether palpable or impalpable, are scattered like the mists before the wind. When we can but once come to God in Christ, and say, "My God, my Father, my whole trust is in You, and my heart resigns itself to You," then straightway we can sing —

***"Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled,
Now I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world."***

Get near to God, Believer, and you will be calm. Commune with Heaven and be at rest. The peace of God passes all understanding, and it is this which Jesus waits to give you. There is no reason why you should be

heavily burdened. Return unto your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

III. And now we will take the last clause, “And I laid meat unto them.” Here we have THE NOURISHMENT WHICH THE LORD GIVES HIS PEOPLE. Humble as my illustration is, I must take you back to it, and point to the nose-bags of the horses, for the illustration is just for our country what is meant by the text. The farmer would put up his fodder to the ox when he took off the yoke. Now observe what it is that God gives His people.

First it is meat. “I laid meat unto them.” Look back on your experience, Christian—see what meat God has made you to live on. No soul ever ate a morsel more dainty than this one Substitution. I do think that this is the grandest Truth in Heaven and earth—Jesus Christ the Just One died for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. It is meat to my soul. I can feed on it every day, and all the day. When some of the other Truths of God’s Word seem to be too rich for me, I can always find appetite for this, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Yes, the Lord has given us that Truth for meat.

Then take the word “Covenant,” what meat there is for His people there! He has made a Covenant with us, ordered in all things and sure. In Christ Jesus, God has entered into solemn league and compact with His people, and they are His and shall be His. There is meat for you! Every promise of God’s Word in its turn becomes meat for faith. The doctrine of election—what food is that—what butter in a lordly dish! The doctrine of the immutability of God’s purpose, and the consequent security of His saints! The doctrine of the union of God’s people with Christ, their perfection with Him, their acceptance in the Beloved. Why, here is meat that the world knows not of—meat whereof if a man eats he shall live forever. Yes, Jesus Christ Himself in His blessed Person, what food is He? His flesh and His blood, are they not meat, indeed, and drink, indeed?

But what is meant by this word in the text? “I laid meat unto them.” You see the meat God has given us, but how does He lay it unto us? Why, just as with the ox, the food was not put so low down that he could not reach it, nor so high up that he could not get at it, nor so far away that he could see it but could not feed upon it. “I laid meat unto them.” So God has a way of bringing home precious Truths to His people. He does not put it so low down that they may say, “I never experienced such trouble as that. I was never brought into such depths of soul agony as that, and therefore I cannot enjoy that Truth.”

No, He lays the meat to *their* experience, so that if they have never had a very deep experience, yet there shall be food convenient for them. Sometimes when I have heard a sermon, I have thought that the preacher put the food too high. I was anxious enough to get at it, but his experience was a happier one than mine, his knowledge of God's ways more extensive than mine, and his way of putting Truth more elevated than mine—I could not reach his teaching. But you see, God does not place the fodder too high or too low, but He lays meat unto us.

Have you ever found it so? You have said, "That sermon was meant for me. That text, why the Lord seemed to have written it after my troubles happened, just to fit and suit my case." Mark you, Brethren, the preacher may try to lay meat unto you and yet fail, for though he may think he understands your experience, he may fail to touch it. But when He that knows all things and tries the reins of the children of men—when He means to give His people a feast of fat things full of marrow—He knows how to lay the meat where they will get at it, and to give them an appetite at the same time as He gives them the meat. And their souls shall be satisfied, and their mouths shall praise Him with joyous lips. See, then, the goodness of God to you—you have been set free from bondage, the yoke is taken off your neck—and you are fed on angels' food, satisfied with the bread of Heaven.

Now what is to come out of all this? You see I am coming back to the point I began with—all this is the way in which God is leading you to *serve* Him. He has set you free from the old yoke, that you may take upon you His yoke, which is easy, and His burden, which is light. He has given you food, and it is in the strength of that meal you may run in the ways of His Commandments, and serve Him with all your hearts. Do you not, as you turn over the pages of your experience, feel your love kindle, my Brethren? I hope you do. And if you do, I know you will serve God, for you cannot love Him without intending, by-and-by, and speedily, to put that love into the form of active service. You will teach better this afternoon in the school. You will do more for God today if you feel these tender thoughts of God exciting in your hearts zealous thoughts towards Him.

Three things I am anxious to say. The first is, if God has thus dealt tenderly with us, we see clearly how truly He loves us. Why does a mother love her child? There are many reasons, but one is this—because she has done so much for it. It is a strange thing, in human nature, that if anybody does you a kindness, you may forget him, and be ungrateful. But if you bestow a kindness on a person, you will love him and remem-

ber him. It is not the receiver generally that is certain to give love, it is the *giver* of kindness who binds himself to the other.

A mother must love her child because she has done so much for it. She has suffered, and she has cared so much that she must love it. The more you have done for a person the better you love him. Now Jesus does not love us because of anything good in *us*, but today He loves us because He has done so much for us. He has taken the yoke from our necks. He has laid meat unto us. He has drawn us with bands of love, and cords of a man—and having spent so much love on us—He loves us dearly. Jesus who suffered so much, is bound to us by new bonds. Calvary is not only the fruit of His love but the root of fresh love.

Another stream of love springs up at the Cross foot. “I,” says the Redeemer, “can see My groans and agonies in them.” He loves us because He has loved us. This thought ought to cheer us—God has done too much for us to let us perish—

**“Can He have taught me
To trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me
To put me to shame?”**

Can He have loved me before the world was, and redeemed me with His own Son’s life, and yet cast me away? It cannot be—the love of God in times past is a guarantee for the continuance of that love forever and forever.

The second word is this—if God has done all this for us, come, my Brother, what do you think? Will we not try to do more in the future for Him? Shall it be that the Romanist, that the legalist, that those who serve God out of fear, do more than we? Shall they give more than we? Shall they love more than we? Shall they pay more than we? No, if there are any that should love God, we claim to take the first rank. If there are any that may suffer for Him, or that may work for Him, we feel we ought to be in the forefront. If we might make some reserve, and duty did not call, Jesus has loved our souls with love so great that we (if others do not) must give Him all. O let us prove, my Brethren, by our future zeal and consecration, that the motives which God uses, though they are gentle or strong, and though they seem to others to be but frail, yet to us are Omnipotence itself.

The last word is this—all this surely that we have been saying this morning ought to lead those who know not God to desire to know Him. What if His service is conducted not on principles of slavery but of liberty? Will you not take up His yoke? If He takes the bit from the jaws, if He it is that feeds His children and gives them rest, do you not feel drawn to Him? You who are harnessed to the heavy van of this world’s care and

toil—will you not ask to have such rest as this? You who, like the laborious bullock, have been plowing to and fro in the furrows of your worldly toil seeking rest but finding none, working as the ox does for others, and scarcely having a morsel of fodder for your own mouth—come unto Jesus and He will give you rest.

Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light. O that you would seek Him this day! And if you seek Him He is to be found. He is to be found by the eye of faith that looks out of self to Him. Trust Him—that is the word—and He is yours. God grant you may exercise that trust today, each one of you, and a vision of joy and peace will open before you, the like of which, though a man should tell it to you, you would not conceive to be possible. He that believes in Jesus Christ has life eternal and has Heaven begun. May you have it now for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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

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

“GOD, AND NOT MAN”— WHAT DOES IT MEAN? NO. 2447

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY,
JANUARY 12, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 17, 1889.**

***“I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.”
Hosea 11:9.***

THE Lord, speaking of Himself as, “God, and not man,” mentions as the special point in which He is above and beyond man, that He has greater Grace, greater long-suffering, and greater willingness to forgive—“I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.” In a thousand respects, God is greater than man! For us to enter into that theme would require a very considerable length of time, but the Lord, here, puts this Truth of God most prominently forward, that He is “God, and not man,” in that He is infinitely more forbearing, infinitely more tender, infinitely more ready to pass by offenses than any man can ever be. What men cannot do by reason of the narrowness and shallowness of their goodness, God can and will do by reason of the height and depth and length and breadth of His immeasurable love!

Note that Truth in our text and then note another. When God can find in man no reason for showing mercy to him, He still finds a reason for displaying His mercy, for He looks for it in His own heart. He does not say, “I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for he is not as bad as he might be, and there is really something hopeful about him.” No, the Lord does not let the bucket down into that dry well, but He fetches the argument for His mercy out of Himself—“For I am God.” “It is not what he is, but what I am that decides the case,” says Jehovah. “I will have mercy upon Ephraim because I am God, and not man.” Guilty one, your hope of pardon lies in the Character of God! And the more quickly and completely you recognize this fact, the better will it be for you. Do not be looking into yourself to find some reason why God should have pity upon you, for there is no reason within you but what Satan can answer and overturn!

Rather look to God—especially as God looks to Himself—for your hope lies in what He is whom you have offended. I know that He is just and holy and that this Truth, at first, condemns you. But He is also good and gracious—and *this* Truth of God brings joy and brightness to you! The only rays of light you can ever get must come to you from the sun. You will not find any in your own eyes, for they are blind. It is from the sun that your very power to see, as well as the light by which you can see,

must come. So, God fetches His argument in favor of mercy from Himself! You have one specimen of it in that grand passage where He says, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” drawing the reasons for the display of His mercy out of the great deeps of His own Sovereignty.

Our text reveals this as God’s reason, drawn from His own Nature, why He forgives men—“I am God, and not man.” I have known a despondent soul often turn to this great Truth the wrong side out and find in it a reason for *despair* rather than for hope. “Look,” says the awakened sinner, “if I had only offended against my fellow man, I would have some hope of pardon. But my sin is terrible because it is committed against high Heaven! It is with *God* that I have to deal and I can say with David, ‘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.’” It is because you have to deal with God, rather than with men, that some of you think you must be shut up to despair. That mistake of yours only shows what a poor, faulty guide unbelief is, for it turns your back to the Light of God and makes you walk on in darkness! Faith, on the other hand, argues after the manner of God and says, “If I had offended against *man*, I could not have expected him to forgive me. If I had injured man as I have injured God, I could not have hoped to be pardoned. But since I know that God is Love and that He is infinite in Grace, I see that there is a wondrous depth of sound reasoning about this Divine declaration, ‘I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.’”

I am going to speak upon this one theme, to hammer away upon this one nail! There will be no great variety in my subject and no particular freshness of thought in considering it, but I shall dwell upon just this one Truth of God, that there is hope for guilty men! There is hope for every man, woman and child who will come and confess sin, and trust in Christ, on this ground—that He with whom we have to deal is, “God, and not man.” This I shall have to show you at considerable length and under many particulars, but the whole purpose of my discourse will be to show you the *hopefulness* in this great Truth of God that, as sinners, we have to deal with God, and not with men!

I. For, first, MAN CANNOT LONG FORBEAR HIS ANGER.

I am not speaking, now, of certain passionate people who have no control over their tempers. Oh, dear, there are some persons whom I know whose blood seems to lie very close to the surface! It is soon up and very hot. With them it is, as men say, “a word and a blow.” But sometimes it is the blow without even waiting for the word! They are so very irritable that any little offense puts them on the defensive, or makes them ready to attack others. They cannot bear anything that annoys them. Some, because they are so little and, as the proverb truly says, “A little pot is soon hot.” And others because they think themselves so big that if anybody comes between the wind and their nobility, that person has committed an altogether unpardonable offense! Oh, dear, if we had to deal with a God who was like these men, we should have perished long, long ago!

But our text means even more than that. The Hebrew of this passage is very significant and expressive and it might be rendered thus—“I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not the best of men.” For with even the best of men—the noble spirits who can bear a good deal more than ordinary individuals—yet there is still a point of forbearance beyond which they cannot and will not go. If you have offended them once, twice, thrice, it may be that they are patient with you and forgive you. But when the offense is repeated and the provocation is multiplied, even the best of men are apt to ask, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?” He who put that question thought that he had gone a long way when he suggested sevenfold forgiveness! But the Savior said to Peter, “I say not unto you, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven.” You remember what the Apostles said when they heard this saying? They prayed, “Lord, increase our faith.” As much as to say, “It needs very great faith to be able to forgive an offender until seventy times seven.”

We have offended against God far more often than seventy times seven, yet He has borne with us! We who are here are the living monuments of Divine Mercy and might truly write upon our brows, “Spared by the long-suffering of God,” for if He had strictly marked our sin, He must have destroyed us and if He had even dealt with any one of us who has been unfruitful, He must have said, as did the owner of the fruitless fig tree, “Cut it down; why cumberst it the ground?” But here is the mercy of our case—we have to deal with the God of Patience who is long-suffering and full of pity—who is, in fact, as our text declares—“God, and not man.” This should make us bless His name continually for the great forbearance He has shown toward us. And this goodness, forbearance and long-suffering of God should lead us to repentance. We may not continue in sin because God’s Grace abounds, but His abounding Grace should make us loathe and leave sin.

II. Next, if we had to deal, not with God, but with our fellow men, we would very often find that WHEN MEN GET INTO A LOW, NERVOUS, SENSITIVE STATE, THEY ARE USUALLY QUITE UNABLE TO BEAR WITH OTHERS. A person’s temper often depends a great deal upon the state of his health. If a man is perfectly well, sound in mind and body, he can put up with a good deal. But there are times when the head aches, or when the tooth aches, or when the heart aches, or when there is an overpowering sense of nervousness upon you—and then you know what a very little thing will put you out. “Oh, take that child away!” you cry, petulantly, “I cannot bear its noise.” That ringing bell has startled you. That cry of the vegetable seller in the street has quite irritated you and now you are in a state of mind to act the part of a tyrant!

One who was discussing a certain trial said, “I wonder what the jury-men are having for breakfast this morning, for their food will have a good deal to do with the verdict they will give.” And, no doubt, unless a person is pretty well and in a good mental and spiritual condition, his weakness or his sensitiveness will make him deal severely with others even for a very small offense. What a mercy it is that the One with whom we have to deal is, “God and not man”! Our glorious Jehovah is never weak, impetu-

ous, unjust, ungenerous! He is always magnanimous, kind, gracious, forbearing! He is never in such a condition that He feels ready to be irritated with His creatures, but, self-contained and self-possessed, dwelling in the eternal sublimities of His own unsullied happiness, the God over all, blessed forever, He is in that state of mind—if I may so speak of Him after the manner of men—that He is willing to pass by iniquity, transgression and sin. He is a God ready to pardon, waiting to forgive the guilty. Could you truly know Him and see how free He is from those human frailties which lie at the roots of all irritability and unwillingness to forgive offenders, you would understand what a mercy it is that He is, “God, and not man.”

Come, poor Soul, approach your God! You have not to come before an angry judge! You have not to approach an austere person who is ready to take offense even at little things, but you are coming to the infinitely-blessed God who delights not in the death of any, but would rather that they should turn to Him and live!

III. There is a third reason why we should rejoice that the Lord is “God, and not man. It is this—MEN ARE NOT ANXIOUS TO RECONCILE TO THEMSELVES THOSE WHO HAVE OFFENDED THEM IF THEY ARE PERSONS OF BAD CHARACTER.

A man who has been injured may, in the greatness of his mind, say, “I hope that person did not realize the wrong that he was doing. I hope that he is a good man—he must surely have misunderstood the consequences of his action. He probably only made a mistake, so I am willing to see him and, frankly, to forgive him and to put the matter right as soon as possible.” But suppose that you have been grievously wronged by some mean, base individual, whose character you know to be altogether beneath contempt? I know what you say to yourself, “Well, I shall not put myself out of the way to seek *him*. I do not particularly care what he thinks or says about me. Perhaps it is just as well that such a person as he is should remain at a distance. I do not need his company. Let him go, he really is not worth my seeking to be reconciled to him.”

Ah, Sirs, if God had said that concerning us, He would have spoken justly, indeed! For us, creatures of the dust, to have offended our great and glorious Creator. For us, worms of the earth, to have offended the Infinite Jehovah and to have done it willfully and continually as we have done, might well have made the Lord say, “There, let them go. If they will be My enemies, let them be My enemies. They cannot harm Me and their curses will fall on their own heads. If they speak evil of Me, what does it matter to Me while I have the songs of angels and of cherubim and seraphim? If they despise Me, what is their opinion worth, one way or the other? Let them go.”

But, dear Friends, the Lord does not deal thus with us, for He is, “God, and not man.” What a wonder of Grace and mercy it is that He should actually desire that we should be reconciled to Him! That He should desire it with anxiety, should long for it, and that His whole heart should go forth with the desire! The Lord is not willing that we should be His enemies. He is not willing to treat us as His enemies, but, to speak after the manner of men, He is anxious to reconcile us to Himself and,

therefore, He sends to us His ambassadors with tears beseeching us to be reconciled to Him! Oh, this is Godlike! This is Divine!

IV. In addition to the points I have mentioned, I must remind you that **THERE ARE SOME MEN WHO ARE WILLING TO BE RECONCILED TO THOSE WHO HAVE OFFENDED THEM IF THE OFFENDERS WILL BEG FORGIVENESS.** Notice what they say—“That person has done me grievous wrong. I am quite willing to pardon him, but let him *ask* to be pardoned. I do not think it is my place to go after him. I am the offended person and it cannot be expected that I should humble myself before him. If he comes to me and asks forgiveness, I shall be going a great way if I do heartily forgive him. But as to being the first to move in this matter—well, it is not to be expected of me.” No, Friend, it is not to be expected that *you* should do so, for you are only a man. But the Lord is, “God, and not man” and, therefore, He is the first to move in the direction of the reconciliation that is to end the quarrel.

It is the offended One, the grievously offended One, who comes to the offender and says, “Let us be friends. I will blot out this offense, I will remove this sin. Come to Me. Accept the reconciliation I am prepared to give.” I feel half inclined to stop here and to say, “Let us sing, again, the last verse of that grand hymn that we sang before prayer, and roll out the refrain in full thunder of grateful thanksgiving—

**“Oh may this strange, this matchless Grace,
This God-like miracle of love,
Fill the wide earth with grateful praise,
And all the angelic choirs above!
Who is pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”**

It is never the sinner who wants to be reconciled first. It is always God, in the freeness of His Grace, who comes to the sinner—no sinner can ever be premature with God! If you are anxious to be reconciled to God, it is He who has *given you that anxiety*. It is His own infinite Grace that has begun to work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure, for here is seen the superiority of the Godhead to the highest and the kindest manhood—that the Lord begins the work of reconciliation by Himself—seeking out those who have offended against Him!

V. Next, **A MAN MAY BE WILLING TO BE RECONCILED IF THE OFFENDER DOES NOT REPEAT THE OFFENSE.** Suppose that the offending person breaks out again with a new offense just as the reconciliation is about to be given. “There,” says the man he has offended, “I was quite willing to have overlooked the past, but look, he is up to his evil ways again! I stood prepared to give him my right hand, but he has added insult to injury! Even while we were talking about reconciliation, look what he has done—he has made a new breach! If there had been nothing between us before, he has now acted in a way that would have commenced a terrible battle between us. I cannot put up with this. You cannot reasonably expect that I should be on terms of amity with one who, again and again and again repeats the grievance—and who, having done me wrong, at the very time that I am inviting him to be reconciled, commits that wrong again! There is a limit to all things and certainly there must be a limit to the pardon that a man will give to an offender.”

Just so, just so. I knew there was such a limit. I do not altogether blame you, I do not say much against you, but I do say much in commendation of the forgiving Grace of God! Though we sin. Though even while the sinner is repenting, there is still a measure of sin about him—and while God is forgiving and while we are receiving the forgiveness—there is still evil about us, yet He forgives! Is He not, as one said, a great Forgiver? There is not any offense so aggravated but that God is willing to forgive you if you come to Jesus Christ by faith! If you have heaped up your sins, mountain upon mountain, as the giants in the old fable were said to have piled Pelion upon Ossa, hill upon hill—if you have done even this, yet is God willing to sweep them all away and still be your Friend!

You remember that blessed expression in the 55th of Isaiah, “He will abundantly pardon”? I cannot help ringing out those words again and again, “He will abundantly pardon! He will abundantly pardon.” I hope that the music of them may strike the ear of some poor desponding soul who will say, “That is the word for me! It must be either great mercy or no mercy at all for me, for little mercy is of no use for such a sinner as I am! I must have great mercy to pardon my great sin.” Oh, then, thank God that you have to deal with Him and not with man!

VI. Now let me go a step further. I feel morally certain that men who are offended with their fellows—**MEN WHO HAVE BEEN VERY GREATLY WRONGED, WOULD NOT PROPOSE TO GO AND LIVE WITH THOSE WHO HAVE WRONGED THEM, AND TAKE UP A POSITION OF EQUALITY WITH THEM.**

I could not expect a *king*, whose subjects had revolted against him, who had refused to render to him due honor and submission, who had even insulted his crown and done despite to his character, to say, “I will leave my palace and my crown, and my splendor and all that I have, and I will go and live among these rebels. I will wear their rags. I will fare as they fare and dwell in their hovels. I know that they will kill me—they will spurn me, and spit upon me and, at last they will fasten me to a cross and hang me up to die. But with the strong desire that they should be reconciled to me, I am willing to go and to be one with them.”

Such a thing was never heard of among men! But listen. There is One who is God as well as Man, even that blessed Savior who descended from Heaven to earth, became a Man, shared our poverty, lived in the midst of our sin and, knowing that He would be spitefully treated, scorned, scourged and nailed to a Cross, yet endured all out of an excess of love which overflows to the guiltiest of the guilty even now! This was compassion worthy of a God, that the Son of the Highest should leave the perfections of Heaven to dwell here amid the infirmities and the sins of earth, as you know He did!

VII. If such wondrous love were possible to any man, here is another thing that I cannot conceive of, that any man would say, “I have been grievously wronged by that person. The injury is a very cruel one and there is no remedy for it, but I WILL, MYSELF, BEAR THE PENALTY FOR ALL THE WRONG WHICH HAS BEEN DONE. The offender has broken the law. There is a penalty laid upon him for what he has done and which he righteously deserves to bear. It was an offense against me and

he deserves to be punished for it—but I will bear the whole penalty myself.”

We never heard any mere man say, “Here is a burglar who has broken into my house. He is to serve five years in prison for his crime, but I will offer to go to prison in order that he may be set free.” Or, “Here is a murderer doomed to die, but I will offer to suffer in his place, that he may be accounted innocent.” Such a thing was never heard of among men! But this is *exactly* what God has done!

As Judge, the righteous God must punish sin. Say what you will, there is a necessity that the Judge of all the earth should do right. If you could take away the justice of God and the fact of the judgment to come, you would have stolen the linchpin from the wheels of God’s chariot! You would have marred the moral government of the universe! Sin must be punished, but the Judge, Himself, condescends to bear the penalty for the offenses committed against Himself! Mark—to bear the consequences of sin committed against His own authority and His own Person—and to bear those consequences in His own Person so that the offending one may be reconciled to Him! There never was such another tale as I am now telling you! It could not have been invented by men—it must be Divine! It has such a stamp of originality about it, that it must have come from God! It is so Divine on the very surface of it that it must be a blessed fact!

God Himself becomes the Substitute for those who have broken His own Law and done despite to His own name and, in union with human nature, in His own body on the Cross, He bears the consequences of the sin which otherwise must have fallen upon His enemies—the guilty sons of men! It is a very amazing story, this, “old, old story of Jesus and His love.” I cannot tell it to you as I should like to tell it, but it does not so much matter how it is told. The power of it lies not in the telling of it, but in the doctrine and Truth, itself, when blessed by the Spirit of God!

VIII. MEN WOULD NOT ENTREAT, AGAIN AND AGAIN, AN OFFENDER IF HE REFUSED THE PARDON. When a man has done all that lies in his power to make peace. When he has even suffered what he ought not to have suffered in order to produce peace with one who has offended him—suppose that after all that he comes to the offender and he says, “Let us be friends,” and the person turns on his heels and says, “I have too much to do to attend to you”? Or, suppose that he says, “I do not need any of your peace! It is nothing to me, I have other things to think of”? And suppose that this generous-hearted one should say, “But incline your ear and come to me. Hear what I have to say! Come, now, and let us reason together”? And suppose that the man says, “I need none of your reasoning! I care nothing about all this talk! I do not believe it—it is all an idle tale and I want to hear nothing of it”? And suppose that this generous person should follow him and entreat him, persuade him, implore him, plead with him—and still use a thousand arguments of loving kindness with him?

“Ah,” you say, “that is not like man!” No, it is not. But He who deals in mercy with you is “God, and not man,” and therefore He pleads with you who have long resisted Him and begs you, even now, to listen to Him—

and even now to turn to Him! Listen to His own words, “Turn you, turn you, from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?” These are the pleadings of God, Himself, with men who have sinned against Him. If you pleaded for mercy at God’s feet and were importunate with Him, that would seem natural enough. But for *God to plead with you* and to beseech you to accept His mercy is supernatural and Divine!

IX. Yet again, remember that MEN WOULD NOT RESTORE AN OFFENDER WITHOUT A SEASON OF PROBATION. Suppose that someone had grievously offended any one of you and that he asked your forgiveness? Do you not think that you would probably say to him, “Well, yes, I forgive you, but I—I—I—cannot *forget* it”? Ah, dear Friends, that is a sort of forgiveness with one leg chopped off! It is a lame forgiveness and is not worth much. “But,” one says, “I need to see how this man goes on. If he is really sincerely penitent for what he has done and he acts kindly to me in the future, then I think I could believe him to be sincere and I think—I hope—I could restore him to my favor.” Ah, yes, that is because you are a man that you talk like that! But He of whom I am speaking is “God, and not man,” and His invitation to you is, “Come to Me just as you are.” The Lord will receive you and forgive you without any probation!

There was a good old minister who said, “The Lord Jesus took me into His service without a character. He gave me a good character and He has helped me to keep it even to my old age.” Yes, He does take us without a character, so come to Him just as you are! He freely forgives and He perfectly forgets, for He says, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”—a feat in which Omnipotence outdoes itself! For God to forget is impossible! Yet He does forget the sins of His people. This is one of the impossibilities that are only possible to Omnipotent Grace—it would be impossible with men, but it is possible with the Lord, for He is “God, and not man.”

X. Yet further, MEN CANNOT FORESEE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING LENIENT. One says, “I do not see what the consequences would be if a man is to behave so badly toward me as this one has done, and I am to overlook it and say nothing about it. After that, I shall have every dog barking at my heels. I really think, Sir, that you must not preach up there and tell us to forgive *absolutely* because you know that if you tread on a worm, it will turn. And really, there is something due to society. I cannot suffer such wrong as this and pass it by, for everybody will be doing me a similar injury and saying, ‘He is such a flat, and so soft, that he will never resent it.’”

My good Sir, I am not going to argue with you! You are a man, so go your way among other men. But He of whom I speak is “God, and not man.” He knows precisely what the consequences of forgiving sinners will be and yet He does it! When we preach free pardon to the chief of sinners, what do you think they say in certain newspapers? Why, that we are encouraging immorality! The wise men who write for them say that our doctrine does not tend to public morality. Ah, poor dears, what do they know about *morality*? We do not care much about their opinion on *that* point, for we see well enough where true morals are. They run side by side with “Free Grace and dying love” and we intend to still preach

those Truths of God albeit that there are some, and we must admit it, who will turn the Grace of God into lasciviousness! If a man means to hang himself, he is sure to find a piece of rope somewhere. And when a man means to live in sin, he can find an argument for it even in the infinite mercy of God! But we must not stop our preaching because of that. God is willing to forgive crimes of the greatest horror, sins of an intense blackness, known in their full blackness only to Him—and as for the consequences, He is well aware of what they will be.

XI. I am going another step further. MEN WOULD NOT LOVE, ADOPT, HONOR AND ASSOCIATE WITH THE OFFENDING. “Well,” says one, “suppose I could entirely forgive everything that has been done against me? Is anything more required of me?” Could you do something else? Could you love the one who slandered you, who tried to take away your good name, who sought to injure your business and offended you in every way that he could? Could you take him into your family and make him your son, or make him heir of all that you have? Could you provide for him for life? Could you be content to make him your friend and companion? Could you trust him, do you think—actually *trust* him with the most precious things that you have? Could you do all that?

“Well, Mr. Spurgeon,” says one, “it is an unreasonable thing that you are asking. You are talking quite unreasonably.” I know that I am, but that is because you are a man that it seems unreasonable to you. Yet our God goes beyond all reason, for this is *exactly* what He does. He takes the wretched sinner just as he is, blots out his sin and gives him to believe in Christ—and to as many as believe in Him, to them He gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name! More than that, He says, through His Apostle, that if children, then they are heirs—“heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.” These poor miserable sinners become the objects of His daily care as they are the objects of His eternal choice! He engraves their names upon the palms of His hands. They lie on His heart and *in* His heart!

“They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.” Yes, more—Christ is married to them! Oh, what condescension it is for Him to be married to those who were black as Ethiopians! There is nothing that He will not do for a pardoned sinner! There is nothing that He will withhold from a soul that, believing in Christ, has sin forgiven! You shall be with Him where He is. You shall sit on His Throne with Him. You shall reign with Him forever and ever, as surely as you come and accept His infinite Grace!

XII. The last point is that MEN WOULD NOT TRUST ONE WHO HAD FORMERLY WRONGED THEM. I have always felt, in my own mind, that it was one of the clearest proofs that I had God’s forgiveness of my many sins when I was trusted to preach the Gospel. I should think that if a prodigal came back to his father, the old gentleman would kiss him and receive him, and rejoice greatly over him—but the next Saturday, market day, the old gentleman would say—“I cannot send young William to market—that would be putting temptation in his way. Here, John, you have always been with me—go to market and buy and sell for me, for all that I have is yours. William, you stay at home with me.” He might not let him

see all that he meant, but he would say to himself, “Dear boy, he is hardly fit for that great trust. I love him, but still, I hardly dare trust him as much as that.”

But see what my Lord did with me—when I came home to Him as a poor prodigal, He said, “Here is My Gospel, I will entrust you with it—go and preach it.” I bless His name that I have not preached anything else and I do not mean to begin to do so—

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

Then the Lord said to me, “I will trust you with those people at Water-beach, at New Park Street, at the Surrey Gardens, and at the Tabernacle. Go and see what you can do to bring them to Heaven.” I do long to see souls saved as one great result of my ministry! But what an instance of my Lord’s love it is that He thus trusts me! That was one of the things that made Paul hold up his hands in astonishment—he said that he had been put in trust with the Gospel and he could not make it out. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, yet he was put in trust with the Gospel!

O dear Heart, you who have been a drunk, or a swearer, or whatever else you have been, come and trust in Jesus! If you do, I should not wonder but that one of these days you, also, will be put in trust to preach the Gospel of Christ. “Oh,” you say, “I could never preach.” You do not know what the Grace of God can do for you and through you—and you would, anyhow, be able to tell what a wonderful Savior He was who saved you, would you not? That is the best preaching in the world—telling others what God has done for you! And I know that the burden of your testimony would be, “He is God, and not man,” and you would ask them to sing over and over again—

***“Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”***

Now trust the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the way of salvation! “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” Or, if you want the plan of salvation stated in full, here it is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” God grant to all of us Grace to believe in Christ and to confess our faith in Him for his dear name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—605, 202, 568.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HOSEA 11.

Verse 1. *When Israel was a child.* When the nation was yet young and had scarcely started on its march among the peoples of the earth—“When Israel was a child”—

1. *Then I loved him and called My son out of Egypt.* God’s love does not depend upon the standard of our spiritual attainments. While we are yet children in Grace, the Father’s love is set upon us, as it was upon Israel in its beginnings as a nation.

2. *As they called them, so they went from them.* Such was the perversity of this child-nation which, nevertheless, God loved, that though called by Jehovah, they went away and refused to obey the Divine call. The Israelites in Egypt “hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage” and, even after their great deliverance, they were constantly turning aside from the path pointed out by Moses, who bade them be faithful to their God.

2. *They sacrificed unto Baalim.* They offered sacrifice to many Baals, first to one and then to another, for men will readily change their idols when they know not the true God.

2, 3. *And burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go.* This child-nation was taught by God how to walk—

3. *Taking them by their arms.* As nurses hold up their little children when, for the first time they try to stand or toddle along.

3. *But they knew not that I healed them.* This was an amazing thing and it shows the great blindness of man, that he does not know his own Physician. It was so with Israel—“They knew not that I healed them.” Surely, Brothers and Sisters, it seems impossible that we should not know our Divine Healer, yet our blindness is extreme by nature and leads to many a folly.

4. *I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.* As men do to their cattle when they have been plowing and they come to the end of the day’s work, then the bit is removed, or the yoke is lifted off the shoulder and fit fodder is provided for the cattle that they may be refreshed. This is what God did to His people Israel. He brought them out of Egypt where they had to perform hard tasks, caused them to rest from their labors and gave them both material and spiritual meat to eat. Nevertheless they were ungrateful to Him. We say that ingratitude is the worst of sins, but, alas, it is one of the most common evils and we, ourselves, are ingrates to our God!

6. *He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king because they refused to return.* If we try to escape from our trouble without hearing the voice of God in it, we shall run into another. If, by our own plotting and scheming, we escape from Egypt, then the Assyrian shall be our king and there is small difference between Assyria and Egypt. It is always best to take with submission the sorrow that God appoints, lest, by fleeing from the bear, the serpent bite us and so we go from bad to worse.

6. *And the sword shall abide on his cities and shall consume his branches, and devour them because of their own counsels.* That is a very striking expression, “Because of their own counsels.” It should be a solemn warning to us not to follow the devices of our own heart when we see the consequences of Israel’s walking after his own way.

7. *And My people are bent to backsliding from Me.* They seemed as if they *must* do it—as if their hearts were set upon it. They were “bent” upon it. Oh, that our bent and bias were towards holiness and not towards backsliding!

7. *Though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him.* See how Israel puts God away and will not hear Jehovah’s voice? Now observe the change in the chapter, for God speaks of *His* faithfulness even to backsliding Israel. He does not give His people up. He still yearns over them in the most tender pity and forbearance.

8. *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.* And this Divine turning and repenting, remember, were toward a people who did not turn to the Lord! God turned towards a people that would not turn towards Him and His repentings were “kindled together” towards the nation that would not repent! Oh, the unspeakable, the unthinkable Grace of God! He does for us “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

9. *I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.* Our hope lies in the fact that God is God! Sometimes that Truth of God is a terror to men—they are distressed at the thought of the great and holy God, yet in this Truth is their only hope of salvation! The Lord says, “I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not man.”

9. *The Holy One in the midst of you: and I will not enter into the city.* That is, the Lord says, “I will not come into it to see all its iniquities, lest in My wrath I smite and destroy it.” How tenderly does God bear with wicked men! How great is His long-suffering! How graciously He seems to close His eyes, as if He would not see that which must bring upon us swift destruction if He looked upon it in His righteous anger!

10. *They shall walk after the LORD.* It is a great blessing when men begin to seek the Lord whom they formerly shunned. This proves that there has been worked in them a complete change of heart.

10. *He shall roar like a lion: when He shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.* God’s terrible voice often makes men tremble and that is one proof of the working of His Grace in their hearts, for they tremble before Him and flee unto Him.

11, 12. *They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, says the LORD. Ephraim compasses me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet rules with God and is faithful with the saints.* There are still some left to serve Jehovah! There is a remnant according to the Election of Grace even in the very worst of times. “Judah yet rules with God and is faithful with the saints.” May we be found among the faithful few! Amen.

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

EVERYBODY'S SERMON

NO. 206

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 25, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*"I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes."
Hosea 12:10.*

WHEN the Lord would win His people Israel from their iniquities, He did not leave a stone unturned, but gave them precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little. He taught them sometimes with a rod in His hand, when He smote them with sore famine and pestilence and invasion. At other times He sought to win them with bounties, for He multiplied their corn and their wine and their oil and He laid no famine upon them. But all the teachings of His Providence were unavailing and while His hand was stretched out, still they continued to rebel against the Most High.

He hewed them by the Prophets. He sent them first one and then another. The golden-mouthed Isaiah was followed by the plaintive Jeremy. While at his heels in quick succession, there followed many far-seeing, thunder-speaking seers. But though Prophet followed Prophet in quick succession, each of them uttering the burning Words of the Most High, yet they would have none of His rebukes. They hardened their hearts and went on still in their iniquities.

Among the rest of God's agencies for striking their attention and their conscience, was the use of similitudes. The Prophets were accustomed not only to preach, but to be themselves as signs and wonders to the people. For instance, Isaiah named his child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, that they might know that the judgment of the Lord was hastening upon them. And this child was ordained to be a sign, "for before the child shall have knowledge to cry, 'my father and my mother,' the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria."

On another occasion, the Lord said unto Isaiah, "Go and loose the sackcloth from off your loins and put off your shoe from your foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, "Like as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia—so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives young and old, naked and barefoot, to the shame of Egypt."

Hosea, the Prophet, had to teach the people by a similitude. You will notice in the first chapter a most extraordinary similitude. The Lord said to him, "Go, take unto yourself a wife of whoredom; for the land has

committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord,” and he did so. And the children begotten by this marriage, were made as signs and wonders to the people. As for his first son he was to be called Jezreel, “for yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.” As for his daughter, she was to be called Lo-ruhamah “for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel. But I will utterly take them away.” Thus by many significant signs, God made the people *think*. He made His Prophets do strange things, in order that the people might talk about what He had done and then the meaning which God would have them learn should come home more powerfully to their consciences and be the better remembered.

Now it struck me that God is every day preaching to us by similitudes. When Christ was on earth He preached in parables, and, though He is in Heaven now, He is preaching in parables today. Providence is God's sermon. The things which we see about us are God's thoughts and God's words to us. And if we were but wise there is not a step that we take which we should not find to be full of mighty instruction. O you sons of men! God warns you every day by His own Word. He speaks to you by the lips of His servants, His ministers. But, besides this, by similitudes He addresses you at every turn. He leaves no stone unturned to bring His wandering children to Himself, to make the lost sheep of the house of Israel return to the fold. In addressing myself to you this morning, I shall endeavor to show how every day and every season of the year, in every place, and in every calling which you are made to exercise, God is speaking to you by similitudes.

I. EVERY DAY God speaks to you by similitudes. Let us begin with the *early morning*. This morning you awakened and you found yourselves unclothed and you began to array yourselves in your garments. Did not God, if you would but have heard Him, speak to you by a similitude? Did He not as much as say to you, “Sinner, what will it be when your vain dreams shall have ended, if you should wake up in eternity to find yourself naked? With what shall you array yourself? If in this life you cast away the wedding garment, the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ, what will you do when the trump of the archangel shall awaken you from your clay-cold couch in the grave, when the heavens shall be blazing with lightning and the solid pillars of the earth shall quake with the terror of God's thunder?”

How will you be able to dress yourself then? Can you confront your Maker without a covering for your nakedness? Adam dared not—can you attempt it? Will He not frighten you with His terrors? Will He not cast you to the tormentors that you may be burned up with unquenchable fire, because you did forget the clothing of your soul while you were in this place of probation?

Well, you have put on your dress and you come down to your families. And your children gather round your table for the morning meal. If you

have been wise, *God has been preaching to you by a similitude then*—He seemed to say to you—“Sinner, to whom should a child go but to his father? And where should be his resort when he is hungry but to his father’s table?” And as you feed your children, if you had an ear to hear, the Lord was speaking to you and saying, “How willingly would I feed you! How would I give you of the bread of Heaven and cause you to eat angels’ food!

“But you have spent your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which is not. Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Did He not stand there as a Father and say, “Come My child, come to My table. The precious blood of My Son has been shed to be your drink, and He has given His body to be your bread. Why will you wander hungry and thirsty? Come to My table O, My child, for I love My children to be there and to feast upon the mercies I have provided.”

You left your home and you went to your business. I know not in what calling your time was occupied—of that we will say more before we shall have gathered up the ends of your similitudes this morning—but you spend your time in your work. And surely, Beloved, all the time that your fingers were occupied, God was speaking to your heart, if the ears of your soul had not been closed. But you were heavy and ready to slumber and could not hear His voice And when the sun was shining in high Heaven and the hour of noon was reached, might you not have lifted up your eye and remembered that if you had committed your soul to God, your path should have been as the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day?

Did He not speak to you and say, “I brought the sun from the darkness of the east. I have guided him and helped him to ascend the slippery steps of Heaven and now he stands in his zenith, like a giant that has run his race and has attained his goal. And even so will I do with you. Commit your ways unto Me and I will make you full of light, your path shall be as brightness and your life shall be as the noonday. Your sun shall not go down by day, but the days of your mourning shall be ended, for the Lord God shall be your light and your salvation.”

And the sun began to set and the shadows of evening were drawing on—and did not the Lord, then, remind you of your death? Suns have their setting and men have their graves. When the shadows of the evening were stretched out and when the darkness began to gather, did He not say to you, “O man, take heed of your eventide, for the light of the sun shall not endure forever”? There are twelve hours wherein a man shall work, but when they are past there is no work nor device in the night of that grave where we are all hastening. Work while you have the light, for the night comes wherein no man can work. Therefore, whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.

Look, I say, to the sun at his setting and observe the rainbow hues of glory with which he paints the sky. Mark how he appears to increase his orb as he nears the horizon. O Man, kneel down and learn this prayer—Lord, let my dying be like the setting of the sun. Help me, if clouds and darkness are round about me, to light them up with splendor. Surround me, O my God, with a greater brightness at my death than I have shown in all my former life. If my deathbed shall be the miserable pallet, and if I expire in some lone cot, yet nevertheless, grant, O Lord, that my poverty may be gilded with the light that You shall give me, that I may exhibit the grandeur of a Christian's departure at my dying hour." God speaks to you, O Man, by similitude, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

And now, you have lit your candle and you sit down. Your children are about you and the Lord sends you a little preacher to preach you a sermon, if you will hear. It is a little gnat and it flies round and round about your candle and delights itself in the light thereof, till, dazzled and intoxicated, it begins to singe its wings and burn itself. You seek to put it away, but it dashes into the flame and having burned itself it can scarcely fan itself through the air again. But as soon as it has recruited its strength again, mad-like it dashes to its death and destruction.

Did not the Lord say to you, "Sinner, you are doing this also. You love the light of sin. Oh, that you were wise enough to tremble at the fire of sin, for he who delights in the sparks thereof, must be consumed in the burning!" Did not the hand seem to be like the hand of your Almighty, who would put you away from your own destruction and who rebukes and smites you by His Providence, as much as to say to you, "Poor silly Man, be not your own destruction"? And while you see, perhaps, with a little sorrow the death of the foolish insect, might not that forewarn you of your awful doom, when, after having been dazzled with the giddy round of this world's joys, you shall at last plunge into the eternal burning and lose your soul, so madly, for nothing but the enjoyments of an hour? Does not God preach this to you?

And now it is time for you to retire to your rest. Your door is bolted and you have fast closed it. Did not that remind you of that saying, "When once the Master of the house is risen up and you shut the door, and you begin to stand without and to knock at the door saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us,' and He shall answer and say unto you, I know not who you are"? In vain shall be your knocking then, when the bars of immutable justice shall have fast closed the gates of mercy on mankind—when the hand of the Almighty Master shall have shut His children within the gates of Paradise and shall have left the thief and the robber in the cold chilly darkness—the outer darkness—where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Did He not preach to you by similitude? Even then, when your finger was on the bolt, might not His finger have been on your heart?

And at nighttime you were startled. The watchman in the street awoke you with the cry of the hour of the night, or his tramp along the street. O Man, if you had ears to hear, you might have heard in the steady tramp of the policeman the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go you out to meet Him." And every sound at midnight that did awaken you from your slumber and startle you upon your bed, might seem to forewarn you of that dread tramp of the archangel which shall herald the coming of the Son of Man in the day He shall judge both the quick and the dead, according to my Gospel. O that you were wise, that you understood this, for all the day long, from dewy morning till the darkness of the eventide and the thick darkness of midnight, God evermore does preach to man—He preaches to him by similitudes.

II. And now we turn the current of our thoughts and observe that ALL THE YEAR round God does preach to man by similitudes. It was but a little while ago that we were sowing our seeds in our garden and scattering the corn over the broad furrows. God had sent the seedtime, to remind us that we, too, are like the ground, and that He is scattering seed in our hearts each day. And did He not say to us, "Take heed, O Man, lest you should be like the highway whereon the seed was scattered, the fowls of the air devoured it. Take heed that you are not like the ground that had its basement on a hard and arid rock, lest this seed should spring up and by-and-by should wither away when the sun arose, because it had not much depth of earth. And be you careful, O son of Man, that you are not like the ground where the seed did spring up, but the thorns sprang up and choked it. But be you like the good ground whereon the seed did fall and it brought forth fruit, some twenty, some fifty and some a hundred fold."

We thought, when we were sowing the seed, that we expected one day to see it spring up again. Was there not a lesson for us there? Are not our actions all of them as seeds? Are not our little words like grains of mustard seed? Is not our daily conversation like a handful of the corn that we scatter over the soil? And ought we not to remember that our words shall live again, that our acts are as immortal as ourselves, that after having laid a little while in the dust to be matured, they shall certainly arise? The black deeds of sin shall bear a dismal harvest of damnation. And the right deeds which God's grace has permitted us to do, shall, through His mercy and *not* through our merit, bring forth a bounteous harvest in the day when they who sow in tears slowly reap in joy. Does not seedtime preach to you, O Man, and say, "Take heed that you sow good seed in your field"?

And when the seed sprang up and the season had changed, did God cease then to preach? Ah, no. First the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear, had each its homily. And when at last the harvest came, how loud the sermon which it preached to us! It said to us, "O Israel, I have set a harvest for you. Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap. He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. And

he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." If you have an opportunity to journey into the country during the next three weeks, you will, if your heart is rightly attuned, find a marvelous mass of wisdom couched in a cornfield.

Why I could not attempt for a moment to open the mighty mines of gabled treasure which are hidden there. Think, Beloved, of the joy of your harvest. How does it tell us of the joy of the redeemed if we, being saved, shall at last be carried like shocks of corn fully ripe into the garner? Look at the ear of corn when it is fully ripe and see how it bends toward the earth! It held its head erect before, but in getting ripe how humble does it become! And how does God speak to the sinner and tell him that if he would be fit for the great harvest he must drop his head and cry, "Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner." And when we see the weeds spring up among wheat, have we not our Master's parable over again of the tares among the wheat? And are we not reminded of the great day of division, when He shall say to the reaper, "Gather first the tares and bind them in bundles, to burn them. But gather the wheat into My barn"?

O yellow field of corn, you preach well to me, for you say to me, the minister, "Behold, the fields are ripe already to the harvest. Work yourself. And pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers into the harvest." And it preaches well to you, you man of years, it tells you that the sickle of death is sharp and that you must soon fall—but it cheers and comforts you, for it tells you that the wheat shall be safely housed—and it bids you hope that you shall be carried to your Master's garner to be His joy and His delight forever. Hark, then, to the rustling eloquence of the yellow harvest.

In a very little time, my Beloved, you will see the birds congregated upon the housetops in great multitudes and after they have whirled round and round and round as if they were taking their last sight of Old England, or rehearsing their supplications before they launched away, you will see them, with their leader in advance, speed across the purple sea to live in sunnier climes, while winter's cold hand shall strip their native woods. And does not God seem to preach to you, Sinners, when these birds are taking their flight? Do you not remember how He himself puts it? "Yea, 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."

Does He not tell us that there is a time of dark winter coming upon this world—a time of trouble, such as there has been none like it, neither shall be any more? A time when all the joys of sin shall be nipped and frost-bitten and when the summer of man's estate shall be turned into the dark winter of his disappointment? And does He not say to you, "Sinner fly away—away—away to the goodly land, where Jesus dwells! Away from self and sin! Away from the city of destruction! Away from the whirl of pleasures and from the tossing to and fro of trouble! Hasten, like a bird to its

rest! Fly across the sea of repentance and faith and build your nest in the land of mercy, that when the great day of vengeance shall pass over this world, you may be safe in the clefts of the rock”?

I remember well, how once God preached to me by a similitude in the depth of winter. The earth had been black and there was scarcely a green thing or a flower to be seen. As you looked across the field, there was nothing but blackness—bare hedges and leafless trees and black, black earth, wherever you looked. On a sudden God spoke and unlocked the treasures of the snow and white flakes descended until there was no blackness to be seen—all was one sheet of dazzling whiteness. It was at that time that I was seeking the Savior and it was then I found Him. And I remember well that sermon which I saw before me—“Come now and let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as snow, though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than wool.”

Sinner! Your heart is like that black ground. Your soul is like that black tree and hedgerow, without leaf or blossom. God's Grace is like the white snow—it shall fall upon you till your doubting heart shall glitter in whiteness of pardon and your poor black soul shall be covered with the spotless purity of the Son of God. He seems to say to you, “Sinner, you are black, but I am ready to forgive you. I will wrap your heart in the ermine of My Son's righteousness and with My Son's own garments on, you shall be holy as the Holy One.”

And the *wind* of today, as it comes howling through the trees—many of which have been swept down—reminds us of the Spirit of the Lord, which, “blows where it wishes,” and when it pleases. And it tells us to seek earnestly after that Divine and mysterious influence, which alone can speed us on our voyage to Heaven. It shall cast down the trees of our pride and tear up by the roots the goodly cedars of our self-confidence—which shall shake our refuges of lies about our ears and make us look to Him who is the only protection from the storm—the only shelter when “the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.”

Yes, and when the *heat* is coming down and we hide ourselves beneath the shadow of the tree, an angel stands there and whispers, “Look upwards, Sinner, as you hide yourself from the burning rays of Sol beneath the tree. So there is One who is like the apple tree among the trees of the wood and He bids you come and take shadow beneath His branches, for He will screen you from the eternal vengeance of God and give you shelter when the fierce heat of God's anger shall beat upon the heads of wicked men.”

III. And now again, EVERY PLACE to which you journey, every *animal* that you see, every *spot* you visit, has a sermon for you. Go into your farmyard and your ox and your ass shall preach to you. “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib. But Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” The very dog at your heels may rebuke you. He follows his master—a stranger will he not follow, for he knows not the

voice of a stranger—but *you* forsake your God and turn aside unto your crooked ways. Look at the chicken by the side of yonder pond and let it rebuke your ingratitude. It drinks and every sip it takes it lifts its head to Heaven and thanks the Giver of the rain for the drink afforded to it—while you eat and drink—there is no blessing pronounced at your meals and no thanksgiving bestowed upon your Father for His bounty.

The very horse is checked by the bridle and the whip is for the ass. Your God has bridled you by His commandments and He has chastened, by His Providence, yet are you more obstinate than the ass or the mule. Still you will not run in His commandments, but you turn aside, willfully and wickedly following out the perversity of your own heart. Is it not so? Are not these things true of you? If you are still without God and without Christ, must not these things strike your conscience? Would not any one of them lead you to tremble before the Most High and beg of Him that He would give you a new heart and a right spirit and that no longer you might be as the beasts of the field, but might be a man full of the Divine Spirit, living in obedience to your Creator?

And in *journeying*, you have noticed how often the road is rough with stones and you have murmured because of the way over which you have to tread. And have you not thought that those stones were helping to make the road better and that the worst piece of road when mended with hard stones would in time become smooth and fit to travel on? And did you think how often God has mended you? How many stones of affliction He has cast upon you? How many wagon loads of warnings you have had spread out upon you, and you have been none the better, but have only grown worse? And when He comes to look on you to see whether your life has become smooth, whether the highway of your moral conduct has become more like the king's highway of righteousness—how might He say, "Alas, I have repaired this road, but it is none the better. Let it alone until it becomes a very bog and quagmire, until he who keeps it thus ill shall have perished in it himself."

And you have gone by the seaside and has not the sea talked to you? Inconstant as the sea are you, but you are not one-half so obedient. God keeps the sea, the mountain-waved sea, in check with a belt of sand. He spreads the sand along the seashore and even the sea observes the landmark. "Fear you not Me, says the Lord? Will you not tremble at My presence, which have placed the sand for the boundary 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." It is so. Let your conscience prick you. The sea obeys Him from shore to shore and yet you will not have Him to be your God, but you say, "Who is the Lord that I should fear Him? Who is Jehovah that I should acknowledge His sway?" Hear the *mountains* and the *hills*, for they have a lesson. Such is God. He abides forever, think not that He shall change.

And now, Sinner, I entreat you to open your eyes as you go home today and if nothing that I have said shall smite you, perhaps God shall put into your way something that shall give you a text, from which you may preach to yourself a sermon that never shall be forgotten. Oh, if I had but time and thought, and words, I would bring the things that are in Heaven above and in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth and I would set them all before you—and they should every one give their warning before they had passed from your inspection. And I know that their voice would be, “Consider the Lord your Creator and fear and serve Him, for He made you, and you have not made yourself. We obey Him and we find it is our beauty to be obedient, and our glory ever to move according to His will. And you shall find it to be the same.”

Obey Him while you may, lest haply when this life is over all these things shall rise up against you—and the stone in the street shall clamor for your condemnation. And the beam out of the wall shall bear witness against you and the beasts of the field shall be your accusers and the valley and hill shall begin to curse you. O Man, the earth is made for your warning. God would have you be saved. He has set hand-posts everywhere in nature and in Providence, pointing you the way to the City of Refuge. If you are but wise you need not miss your way. It is but your willful ignorance and your neglect that shall cause you to run on in the way of error, for God has made the way straight before you and given you every encouragement to run therein.

IV. And now, lest I should weary you, I will just notice that every man in his CALLING has a sermon preached to him.

The *farmer* has a thousand sermons. I have brought them out already—let him open wide his eyes and he shall see more. He need not go an inch without hearing the songs of angels and the voice of spirits wooing him to righteousness—for all nature round about him has a tongue given to it—when man has an ear to hear.

There are others, however, engaged in a business which allows them to see but very little of nature and yet even *there* God has provided them with a lesson. There is the *baker* who provides us with our bread. He thrusts his fuel into the oven and he causes it to glow with heat and puts bread therein. Well may he if he is an ungodly man, tremble as he stands at the oven's mouth—for there is a text which he may well comprehend as he stands there—“For the Day comes that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble. They shall be consumed.” Men ingather them in bundles and cast them into the fire and they are burned. Out of the oven's mouth comes a hot and burning warning—and the man's heart might melt like wax within him if he would but regard it.

Then see the *butcher*. How does the beast speak to him? He sees the lamb almost lick his knife and the bullock goes unconsciously to the slaughter. How might he think every time that he smites the unconscious

animal, (who knows nothing of death), of his own doom? Are we not, all of us who are without Christ, fattening for the slaughter? Are we not more foolish than the bullock—for does not the wicked man follow his executioner—and walk after his own destroyer into the very chambers of Hell?

When we see a drunkard pursuing his drunkenness, or an unchaste man running in the way of licentiousness, is he not as an ox going to the slaughter, until a dart smite him through the liver? Has not God sharpened His knife and made ready His axe that the fatlings of this earth may be killed, when He shall say to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, "Behold, I have made a feast of vengeance for you and you shall feast upon the blood of the slain and make yourselves drunken with the streams thereof"? Yes,, butcher, there is a lecture for you in your trade. And your business may reproach you.

And you whose craft is to sit still all day, making shoes for our feet, the lap stone in your lap may reproach you—for your heart, perhaps—is as hard as that. Have you not been smitten as often as your lap stone and yet your heart has never been broken or melted? And what shall the Lord say to you at last, when your stony heart being still within you, He shall condemn you and cast you away because you would have none of His rebukes and would not turn at the voice of His exhortation?

Let the *brewer* remember that as he brews he must drink. Let the *potter* tremble lest he be like a vessel marred upon the wheel. Let the *printer* take heed, that his life be set in heavenly type, and not in the black letter of sin. *Painter*, beware! For paint will not suffice—we must have unvarnished realities.

Others of you are engaged in business where you are continually using scales and measures. Might you not often put yourselves into those scales? Might you not fancy you saw the great Judge standing by with His Gospel in one scale and you in the other, and solemnly looking down upon you, saying, "*Mene, mene, tekel*—you are weighed in the balances and found wanting"? Some of you use the measure and when you have measured out, you cut off the portion that your customer requires. Think of your life, too—it is to be of a certain length and every year brings the measure a little farther—and at last there come the scissors that shall clip off your life and it is done. How do you know when you are come to the last inch? What is that disease you have about you, but the first snip of the scissors? What is that trembling in your bones, that failing in your eyesight, that fleeing of your memory, that departure of your youthful vigor, but the first cut? How soon shall you be cut in two, the remnant of your days past away and your years all numbered and gone, misspent and wasted forever!

But you say you are engaged as a *servant* and your occupations are diverse. Then diverse are the lectures God preaches to you. "A servant waits for his wages and the hireling fulfills his day." There is a similitude for you, when you have fulfilled your day on earth and shall take your wages

at last. Who then is your master? Are you serving Satan and the lusts of the flesh—and will you take out your wages as the hot metal of destruction? Or are you serving the fair prince Emmanuel—and shall your wages be the golden crowns of Heaven? Oh, happy are you if you serve a good master, for according to your master shall be your reward. As is your labor such shall the end be.

Or you are one that *guides the pen* and from hour to hour wearily you write. Ah, Man, know that your life is a writing. When your hand is not on the pen, you are a writer still. You are always writing upon the pages of eternity. Your sins you are writing or else your holy confidence in Him that loved you. Happy shall it be for you, O writer, if your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life and if that black writing of yours, in the history of your pilgrimage below, shall have been blotted out with the red blood of Christ—and you shall have written upon you the fair name of Jehovah—to stand legible forever.

Or perhaps you are a *physician* or a *chemist*. You prescribe or prepare medicines for man's body. God stands there by the side of your pestle and your mortar, and by the table where you write your prescriptions, and He says to you, "Man, you are sick. I can prescribe for you. The blood and righteousness of Christ, laid hold of by faith, and applied by the Spirit, can cure your soul. I can compound a medicine for you that shall rid you of your sins and bring you to the place where the inhabitants shall no more say, 'I am sick.'" "Will you take My medicine or will you reject it? Is it bitter to you and do you turn away from it? Come, drink My child, drink, for your life lies here. And how shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?"

Do you cast iron, or melt lead, or fuse the hard metals of the mines? Then pray that the Lord may melt your heart and cast you in the mold of the Gospel! Do you make garments for men? Oh, be careful that you find a garment for yourself forever. Are you busy in *building* all day long, laying the stone upon its fellow and the mortar in its crevice? Then remember you are building for eternity, too. Oh, that you may yourself be built upon a good foundation! Oh that you may build thereon, not wood, hay, or stubble—but gold, and silver, and precious stones—and things that will abide the fire! Take care, Man, lest you should be God's scaffold, lest you should be used on earth to be a scaffolding for building His church and when His church is built you should be cast down and burned up with fire unquenchable. Take heed that you are built upon a rock and not upon the sand—and that the vermilion cement of the Savior's precious blood unites you to the foundation of the building—and to every stone thereof.

Art you a *jeweler* and do you cut your gems and polish the diamond from day to day? Would to God you would take warning from the contrast which you present to the stone on which you exercise your craft. You cut it and it glitters the more you cut it. But though you have been cut and

ground, though you have had cholera and fever. and have been at death's door many a day, you are none the brighter, but the duller, for alas! you are no diamond. You are but the pebble of the brook and in the Day when God makes up His jewels He shall not enclose you in the casket of His treasures—for you are not one of the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold. But be your situation what it may, be your calling what it may, there is a continual sermon preached to your conscience. I could that you would now from this time forth open both eyes and ears and see and hear the things that God would teach you.

And now, dropping the similitude while the clock shall tick but a few times more, let us put the matter thus—Sinner, you are as yet without God and without Christ. You are liable to death every hour. You can not tell but that you may be in the flames of Hell before the clock shall strike ONE today. You are today, “condemned already,” because you believe not in the Son of God. And Jesus Christ says to you this day, “Oh, that you would consider your latter end!” He cries to you this morning, “How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not.”

I entreat you, consider your ways. If it is worthwhile to make your bed in Hell, do it. If the pleasures of this world are worth being damned to all eternity for enjoying them—if Heaven is a cheat and Hell a delusion—go on in your sins. But, if there is Hell for sinners and Heaven for repenting ones, and if you must dwell a whole eternity in one place or the other, without similitude, I put a plain question to you—Are you wise in living as you do, without thought—careless and godless?

Would you ask now the way of salvation? It is simply this—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” He died. He rose again. You are to believe Him to be saved. You are to believe that He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. But, more than that, believing that to be a fact, you are to cast your soul upon that fact and trust to Him, sink or swim.

Spirit of God! Help us each to do this and by similitude, or by Providence, or by Your Prophets, bring us each to Yourself and save us eternally and unto You shall be the glory.

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

THEOCRACY

NO. 2848

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1877.

"I will be your King."
Hosea 13:10.

"You are my King, O God."
Psalms 44:4.

THOSE of you who were present, this morning, will remember that I preached upon the Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ and that I earnestly entreated my hearers to submit themselves to His Kingly authority. [Sermon #1375, Volume 23—"NOW THEN, DO IT"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I hope that many who were with us felt that an Almighty force was operating upon them, making them willing to surrender themselves to the control of the great King of kings. I dwelt, then, mainly upon the need of decision for Christ and upon our duty to yield ourselves up wholly to Him. That is the human side of the question and is, by no means, to be kept in the background, but, on this occasion I want to speak to you upon the *privilege* of having Christ for our King and upon the graciousness of Christ in allowing Himself to be our King and permitting us to become His subjects. My purpose, at this time, is rather to set forth what God does for us in this matter than what He demands of us. To me it seems inexpressibly beautiful that while we are, in one place, bid to "kiss the Son" and accept Him as our King, we have, in another portion of Scripture, such a delightful declaration as this, "I will be your King." It is always interesting to trace great rivers to their sources. You usually find that their springs lie far up among the mountains and, if you trace back to their springs certain practical subjects that you find in the Word of God, you get to the eternal hills of Everlasting Love!

I am going, first, to run away from my text and to take another. If you look in the 10th verse of the 13th Chapter of Hosea, which contains our text, you will see these words near the end of the verse—"Give me a King." So, our first head is *the need of nature*. Then, in the second part of my discourse, I shall keep strictly to my first text—"I will be your King." That is *the answer of Grace*. And then, thirdly, we shall go back to the 44th Psalm, and at the 4th verse we shall find *the acknowledgment of faith*—"You are my King, O God." That is our program—may we be helped by the Spirit to carry it out and may we be able, in our hearts, to go from step to step all through!

I. First, then, we are to consider THE NEED OF NATURE—"Give me a king."

Man was once happy in Eden, for God was his King. But when he cast off his allegiance to God and became a rebel and a traitor, then he lost both his Paradise and his peace. Ever since then, man has, morally and spiritually, needed a king—and the deep groaning of the natural man is, "Give me a king."

Now, first, *this is the cry of weakness*. Man finds himself to be a poor puny creature and he feels that he needs to look up to someone greater, stronger, wiser, more enduring than himself. There are some plants that cannot grow much unless they can get something stronger than themselves to which they can cling and around which they can twine. You may, perhaps, have seen them when they have been away from a wall or a tree, stretching out their tendrils and seeking for something to climb upon. And if they do not find it, they fall to the ground till, in the damp weather, their leaves grow wet and rot—and the plant is in a sickly state in which it can barely exist. Such is human nature. It is a trailing thing and it gladly would be a climbing thing, and a clinging thing. In some persons, this trait is very conspicuous. They are always needing somebody to whom they can cling—and this tendency is the source of the greatest possible danger and sorrow to them. They select wrong objects for their love and trust and, consequently, they are betrayed, they are disappointed and they sadly learn the meaning of that text, "Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord." That is the result when this clinging tendency is wrongly used, but many people have this tendency. Man is weak and he knows that he is weak and, therefore, he cries, "Give me a king"—someone who will guide me, direct me, govern me, rule me, take care of me."

Besides being the cry of weakness, it is also, oftentimes, *the sigh of distress*. In the 9th verse of this Chapter, we read, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help." Then follows my first text, "I will be your King." Do you see the connection of the two passages? A King is promised to them because they had destroyed themselves. When a man feels that he has destroyed himself, brought himself down to destruction by his sin and folly, then he, too, cries, "Give me a king." He needs help that he may be brought up out of his sad condition. When a soul is really convinced of its sin and made to see that it is brought under the sentence of God's righteous Law, it naturally cries out for something, or someone, that can give it the help which it does not find in itself. And this craving is often the cause of our being duped—for a so-called "priest" comes in and he says, "I can help you. I am ordained of God to rescue you from destruction." Many people are willing to trust in anything that has certain robes upon it, but, for my part, I will trust neither in chasubles, nor albs, nor stoles, nor any decorations or dresses, whether they are on linen-horses or on men-milliners!

What can there be in man, or in his clothes, that can be of help to his fellow man in such a case as this? Besides, God has not entrusted such a ministry as that to any man! God has bid His servants preach the Gospel—and that Gospel conveys help, light and power to all who believe it—but as for forms and ceremonies, musical performances, ornate ritual, masses and the like, they are sheer deceptions through and through! Trust not the weight of a feather to them—much less your souls! But again I remind you that there is in man a craving which makes him long for someone who can rescue him from destruction—and the mercy is that God meets that craving by setting before us His dear Son, who is Prophet, Priest and King! Prophet to reveal to us the mind of God. Priest to cleanse us by His own blood and to make us acceptable to His Father. And King to rule and control us and bring us into conformity to His own will. I know that cry right well and for years I sent it up from the very depths of my soul, “Give me a king,’ one who is wise enough, strong enough and willing enough to help my soul in its greatest extremity.”

Further, dear Friends, if sinners were wise, this would also be *the prayer of thoughtfulness*. I will suppose that I am addressing a young man to whom God has given a wise and understanding heart. He has passed his majority and is just about to leave his father’s roof. And he now feels that everything must depend upon himself and his own character. He cannot depend upon others as he has done in the past. Now, if he is a wise young man, he will say to God, “Give me a King,” for he will know from observation, I hope, rather than from experience, that anarchy in the soul is a truly terrible thing. There have been men of great talents, who, it seems to me, in the Providence of God, have been permitted to live on purpose to show what a man is when there is no King in his soul—when every passion that rules him, leads the mob of his faculties to tumult and revolt. If his thirst said, “Drink,” the man drank till he was drunk! If his natural appetite and taste said to him, “Gratify us,” he gratified them even though, thereby, he plunged into all manner of licentiousness and excess!

There have been men, I say again, of great talents, who have blazed in the moral firmament like meteors and have astonished many with the brilliance, yet luridness, of their light—yet their influence has been baleful to the nation and mischievous to all men except those who learned from them not to try to govern their own passions in their own strength. To let all the powers within us be without a supreme Ruler is the most terrible thing that can happen to any man! Young man, never believe that it can be for your good to follow the leading of your own evil passions. No, it is in restraining yourself that your welfare and your happiness will lie, not in throwing the reins upon the neck of carnal desires, but in reining in these fiery steeds and keeping them well in hand. And, to do that, you need to pray, “Give me a King.”

It is a dreadful thing to lead an aimless life. I know no person, in the whole world, who is more wretched than a man who has no true objective in life. His father, perhaps, left him all the wealth that he could desire

and now the sole occupation of his being is to kill time—and to dig its grave and his own, also—as quickly as he can! He does not live to benefit others, he has no high and noble objective as his guiding star—he simply squanders his time till it is all gone. Now that is the most miserable man I know. A man who is toiling hard to bring up a large family may be, and very often is, among the happiest of men. A man who has an objective in life, especially if it is an unselfish one and who strains all his faculties in order that he may attain it, is sure to be happy! Possibly happier while he is pursuing that goal, than after he has attained it. Trying to win a race warms a man and produces in him joy, the joy of activity, the joy of competition and, often, the joy of success. But there are some young men who start out in life intending to do nothing and they do it very thoroughly—they are great consumers of bread, meat, wine and such-like things, but, beyond that, I know not what is to be said about them! Such poor, aimless beings are always unhappy. They pretend to be merry and they make a great noise which is supposed to imply joy, but it is only like “the crackling of thorns under a pot.” They know nothing of what substantial pleasure means. I would as gladly never have been born as live without an objective and, long ago, I said, “‘Give me a King.’ Give me something to live for, something to die for, something that commands all my faculties and wakens up all my powers, something that stirs my spirit and makes a man of me. ‘Give me a King.’ I must have a King, or else what is life worth to me?”

Any thoughtful man will also have noticed that selfishness, if it controls our life, is a mean thing. Look over there! Do not tell me that So-and-So is a man—tell me that he is one of a herd of swine greedily devouring all that he can grasp. He simply lives that he may be rich, that he may be famous, that he may be called respectable—he lives only for himself. His soul is so small that it is trooped up within his own ribs. His heart, if he has one, is so cramped that it never goes out on behalf of others, but only beats one tune and that is, “Take care of Number One.” That is a wretched kind of life and any thoughtful young man must say, “I don’t want to live like that, ‘Give me a King.’ Let me keep clear of all selfishness. I do not want to be under the sway of the tyrant, Self. Let me have something that will rule and govern me. Give me a constitutional monarchy. Give me someone who is worthy to have the control of my whole life.”

I recollect that the thoughts which passed through my mind, when I was starting in life, were something like these. I distrusted self-guidance, for I saw how unsafe it was. I have told you before that I knew one who was at school with me, who used to be held up as a pattern and example to me, such a good boy, such an excellent young man. He came to London and within a few weeks, London was too much for him—I saw him come home in disgrace, his employer would not have such a fellow in his house! I then said to myself, “That may be my experience if I trust to myself. I should not like to begin life, away from home, in disgrace, to continue it in dishonor and to die with everybody feeling that it was a relief

to the world when I was gone.” So I said to myself, “By what means can I ensure my character? Can I get a guarantee that I shall be kept?” And when I turned to this blessed Book and found that the Lord Jesus Christ had promised to keep those who committed themselves unto Him, I accepted Him upon this ground, as well as upon others, that He was able to keep that which I had committed unto Him until the Great Day of His appearing. In that sense, my prayer was, “‘Give me a King,’ somebody who will take charge of me, care for me and protect me.” And I believe that such a cry as that is a very wise one for any young man to utter—and also for anyone else who has not yet acknowledged the Lord Jesus Christ as King.

Once more concerning this cry of nature, *it often comes up as the result of experience*. Ah, how little do we learn except as we go to the school of Dame Experience, who raps us on the knuckles very hard! When a man discovers, to his surprise, that he has played the fool—as soon as he becomes wiser, he says, “Give me a King.” How many a man, who has made shipwreck of his life and has only discovered it when he has been upon the rocks, has at last cried, “Oh, that some strength greater than my own had saved me from this ruin!” I have known men, when they have been under a sense of danger, when they have seen death approaching, begin to cry, “‘Give me a King’—one who can fight the last enemy for me, one who can ensure my safety when I pass through the Valley of Death Shade.”

This experience, too, sometimes makes a man feel *the weight of responsibility*. He says, “How can I bear it?” And he wants someone who is his superior, someone who will tell him what to do so that, when he does it, the responsibility will no longer be with himself. Have not many of you who are without Christ felt a desire to have somebody with whom you could leave your responsibilities? Well, this is just what the Christian finds in Christ—that he can bring all the difficulties in his life to his great Lord and King, and leave them there—and find in his King, when he obeys Him, the promise that in obedience shall be the path of safety. It is a blessed thing to have such a King! When we have once yielded ourselves to Him, our care is ended and we are at peace.

So much about the need of nature.

II. Now, secondly, and but briefly, I have to speak upon THE ANSWER OF GRACE—“I will be your King.” Listen to this short sentence, you who are longing for a Master-Spirit to rule your spirits—“I will be your King.”

Notice *the condescension of this promise*. Here is a ruined Kingdom—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help. I will be your King.” Who will care to wear the battered crown of a desolate kingdom, whose metropolis is destroyed and whose land is sown with salt? The great Lord and King of Mercy says, “I will. Lost and ruined as you are, I will accept the monarchy of your soul. I will be your King. You have had many lords who have had dominion over you, yet I will be your King. And I know those pretenders are yet alive and seek to set up their old claims over you and to get the mastery over you again. It is an uneasy

throne, yet I will occupy it. I will be your King. Besides this, you are very unruly subjects. In this Kingdom there are many thoughts, forgings and lusting that are in rebellion against Me, yet I will be your King. Many disloyal subjects are there within My town of Mansoul, yet I will be the Prince of it and drive out all the followers of Diabolus. Enemies are threatening on the right hand and on the left, and whoever becomes king must carry on a long and serious war, yet I will take this crown of thorns and wear it—I will be your King.” Is not this wonderful condescension on God’s part? Do not you, Beloved, feel ready to spring up and say, “Blessed Lord, if You will be our King, we will gladly be Your subjects, rejoicing that we may have such a King as You”?

Notice next, *how suitable and satisfactory such a King as this is to be!* If a man must have a king and yet can have his choice as to which king shall be his, it is well for him to have the One whom Wisdom, itself, would select, for there is none to equal Him! He is a King who is able to subdue the whole territory of our nature through His Almighty power by which He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. O blessed King, we are glad to have You to rule over us and to have our stubborn and rebellious passions brought under the power of Your Grace! This gracious King is in every way worthy to rule over us. Think, Beloved, what your God is, what your Savior is. Ought He not to be King over you? Yes, verily, then let us set Him up on a glorious high throne and let us rejoice that we can bow down before One whom it is an honor to obey! What wisdom He has to govern us aright! Fools should not be kings, but Infinite Wisdom is fully qualified to rule us altogether! Then, what perfect goodness there is in the Lord Jesus Christ! What unspeakable goodness in the Divine Father and in the ever-blessed Spirit! Happy are the people whose King is the Lord of Hosts! Besides, think what love He has shown to His subjects! Behold His head, His hands, His feet! Look upon the spear-mark in His side, for it was by those wounds that He bought us! Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to be crowned as our King and to receive the loyal homage of our hearts—

***“Let Him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed His head to death.
And be His honors sounded high
By all things that have breath!
Jesus, our Lord, how wondrous great
Is Your exalted name!
The glories of Your heavenly state
Let the whole earth proclaim.”***

So, it is a proof of Infinite Condescension, on God’s part, for Him to say, “I will be your King,” and we realize what a suitable King He is for us and how satisfactory it is for us to have such a blessed Master and Lord!

Then, Brothers and Sisters, how *unspeakably consoling* it is that the Lord should be our King! I say, “consoling,” for who could feel unsafe or uneasy when Jehovah becomes his King? If the Eternal and Invincible God becomes our King, what foe can harm us? His shield can protect us from all the arrows that fly by night or by day! How consolatory it is for

us to submit to such a God—no longer to stand up in opposition to Him, but to lie down at His feet as His loyal subjects—no longer to have a will and a way of our own, but to submit unreservedly to the will of God, to lie passive in His hands and let Him be our King! Have you ever experienced this kind of consolation in a time of deep affliction or bereavement? You have lost the delight of your heart, the joy of your eyes, the dearest one you ever had—and you have somewhat rebelled. In that rebellion has been the very bitterness of your grief, but you have said, “The Lord has done it. He is my King, so He has the right to do with me just as He wills.” That is the great source of your consolation—you never get relief from the anguish of your spirit till you see Jesus as your crowned King and only Lord and lay your hand upon your mouth and, in the silence of your soul say, ‘It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.’”

And, oftentimes, this same precious Truth has consoled you when you have been in great difficulties and embarrassments. I often sing to my Lord those lines by F. T. Faber—

***“When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to Thee.
And when it seems no chance nor change
From grief can set me free,
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And patiently waits on Thee.”***

I do not know a stronger force in all the world than utter helplessness—for that is the end of all care. Many and many a time I have tried till my head has ached, to work out a problem in Church government, but have not discovered the solution—I could not see any way out of it. So I have just done as a schoolboy would who shuts up the two parts of his slate and puts it on the shelf. I have said to myself, “I will never have anything more to do with the matter, but will leave it for the Lord to solve.” And I have found that the proposition has been worked out for me in due time.

So, dear Friends, your strength is to sit still and to feel that you have a King who can settle all your difficulties! When the servant at the door is puzzled by the many questions that are put to her, she says, if she is wise, “I cannot answer you, but I will go and ask my master.” And when she has received the message from her master, she has no further trouble about the matter—she simply says, “I have told you what my master says. If you do not like it, I cannot help that, for I am only his messenger.” That is the way to end all controversy! A young man, or anyone else who has a number of questions put to him by various persons, will be wise if he says, “Well, I have searched my Bible and found what the King says about these points. If that does not satisfy you, I am sure I cannot. Your quarrel is no longer with me, but with my Master—you must settle the matter with Him.” This is a blessed consolation! It gives joy to the spirit to have God for your King. No man is so free, no man is

so happy as he who loyally bows before the King of kings—to serve God is to reign! He who has God for his King, is, himself, a king!

Further, think *how gloriously inspiring it is to have God as our King*. I should not like to be a soldier in the armies of certain kings whom I might mention. If I were in their service, I would try to run away as soon as I could, for I would feel ashamed to have anything to do with them. If you were a soldier in the army of some little, mean, beggarly tyrant, I think that you would be glad to leave your regimentals at home whenever you could. It is strange that any man could be found to fight for some of the miserable miscreants who have been found in the ranks of kings. But, with Alexander as leader, every Greek became a hero! He was so great a warrior that each man in his army felt that he was, himself, great. Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ becomes our King, it is most inspiring to us, for He leads us on to fight with sin, to fight with selfishness, to overcome evil by love and to conquer hate by kindness! It is a grand thing to serve the King whose fights are all of that sort and to have Him for a King who never shirked a battle, but who was always to the front, the bravest of the brave!

It is grand, even, to unloose the laces of His shoes. To be trodden on by Him would be a high honor. To do anything, however little, in His cause, makes us feel ourselves elevated! My dear young Friend, if you have God in Christ Jesus to be your King, your life will be sublime! With Him for your Example, with His Grace to lead you on, you shall continually rise higher and yet still higher until even your common life shall be made sublime! Oh, blessed, blessed, blessed, thrice blessed, is everyone to whom Jesus Christ is King and Lord! If we are linked with Him, we are ready either to live or to die!

III. Now turn with me to my second text, which you will find in the 44th Psalm, and the 4th verse—“You are my King, O God.” That is THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FAITH.

Let me just pause a moment and ask each one of you here, “Can you say that?” Can you say that, my Brother? Can you say that, my Sister? At the close of this morning’s service, we sang—

**“Tis done, the real transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine,”**

and it was noticed by careful observers that there were some persons in the congregation who did not sing that verse. They shut their mouths quite firmly while others around them were singing. I was glad that they were honest enough to do so and that they would not sing what they could not truthfully sing. At the same time, I was very sorry that their honesty compelled them to make such a silent confession of their lack of subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not your King, then? He is your Creator, but not your King? He is your Preserver, but not your King? He will be the Judge of the quick and the dead, yet He is not your King? He is the one and only Savior of the lost, yet He is not your King? Sadly, sorrowfully, let this thought eat into your spirit, “Then, I am a rebel against the Lord Jesus Christ.” For He is, lawfully and rightly, your

King—and you are a traitor, for your heart plots against Him! Remember, also, that if you die without accepting Him as your King, there is a text which I scarcely dare to quote, yet I must—and, as I do so, let it fall like fiery hail upon your spirit—“But those My enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before Me.” God grant that none of you may ever know what that terrible verse means!

But now, having given you that word of warning, I ask you to think of the blessedness of having the Lord to be your King. If you look at this 44th Psalm, you will see that *when God is our King, we may confidently expect to enter upon our inheritance in the skies*—“You did drive out the heathen with Your hand, and planted them.” That is to say, each one of the tribes that entered Canaan under Joshua, obtained its proper portion in the Covenant-given land of promise. And we who are under the leadership of King Jesus, the true Joshua, the one and only Savior, shall win the heritage above—and each one of us shall stand in his lot at the end of the days, blessed forever and ever in our portion in the heavenly Canaan!

Notice, next, that, if the Lord is our King, *we may expect help in the time of trouble*. Read the whole of verse four—“You are my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.” If ever you are in poverty. If ever you are in sickness. If ever you are under slander and reproach, if ever your spirit is depressed—if ever family trials affect you, if ever the clouds in your sky are heavy and the days are dark—you may go to your King and tell Him all and expect Him to “command deliverances” for you, for, if He is your King, He will see you through, bear you up and make what appears to be evil to work for your good and cause your troubles to prove to be the best of blessings to you! Who would not have such a King as this?

Next, notice that if the Lord is our King, *we should repose entirely in Him*, as the Psalmist says, “For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.” What a mercy it is to be able to put up your weapons away—to feel that there is Another who fights for you—to have done with care, worry, distress and just to feel that you have left everything with Jesus your King! If He cannot do it, then it must be left undone. Oh, it is blessed to feel that you have put the affairs of your soul into your King’s hands and that you have left the whole of them with Him, in the utmost confidence! Who would not have a King upon whom it is perfectly safe to rely?

More than this, he who has God for his King *knows that he is saved*. Read the 7th verse—“But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put them to shame that hated us.” He who acknowledges Christ as his Lord and Master knows that he is saved. His salvation is not a thing that is to be accomplished tomorrow—it is done now. It is not a privilege to be enjoyed only in the last few moments of our life, but it is to be enjoyed now, for our King has covered us with the garments of salvation! “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” even now. Our salvation is finished! Our great Messiah said so on the Cross and He spoke the Truth. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.”

And, last of all, he who takes Christ to be his King *has cause for great joy and rejoicing*. In the 8th verse, the Psalmist says, “In God we boast all the day long, and praise Your name forever.” He who has Christ for his King need never be ashamed of his Monarch, or of his Monarch’s livery, or of his Monarch’s laws, or of his Monarch’s friends. He may, rather, adopt the high strain of boasting in his God and triumphing in Him all the day long.

So I end by repeating the question I asked earlier in my discourse—can each of you say, “You are my King, O God”? If not, what is your position with regard to Him? If you do not acknowledge Him as your King, you are a rebel! Yet, if you are ready to acknowledge that fact, you come under the act of amnesty which is available for regicides—for you rebels are just that, and even Deicides in having conspired to put the King of Glory to death by your sin—and you shall have even this high crime of God-killing blotted out from the King’s records! You shall be just as though you had never sinned at all if you are willing to take Christ to be your King and Savior! “Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

Will you have Him? I mean, the Son of God, who was also the Son of Mary. I mean the Man of Nazareth, who is also very God of very God. Trust to the Atonement which flowed from His wounds! Accept the power which God has given to Him, for all power in Heaven and in earth is given to Him! God has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as His Father has given Him. Only trust Him! Cast your souls upon Him! Yield yourselves to His sway! Repent of your sin! If you lay hold upon His perfect righteousness at once, the guilt of the past is gone and you shall be admitted into the full privileges appertaining to citizens of the heavenly Kingdom and subjects of the great King of kings! I trust that even before this service closes, some of you will say. “By the Grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit, I yield myself to Jesus, my Lord and King, to be His loyal subject and faithful servant forever and ever.” God grant it, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 44:1-8; PSALM 45.**

Psalm 44:1. *We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work You did in their days, in the times of old.* Now Israel was restored to Canaan and the Canaanite and Perizzite were driven out, that God’s chosen people might occupy their appointed place.

2, 3. *How You did drive out the heathen with Your hand, and planted them: how You did afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Your right hand, and Your arm, and the light of Your Countenance, because You did favor them.* They did use their own arm and sword but, for all that, it was God who won the victory for them. It was His

might that made them brave and a consciousness of His gracious purpose that made them strong, so that they routed all their foes until, from Dan to Beersheba, the land was all their own.

4-6. *You are my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through You will we push down our enemies: through Your name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.* See how the lesson from ancient history was turned to practical account in the Psalmist's own experience? "As our forefathers were delivered, not by their own bow or sword, but by the right hand of the Most High, so I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me." Brothers and Sisters, let us always labor to reproduce in ourselves, by God's Grace, the best experiences of His saints. Wherever we see the hand of the Lord displayed in others of His people, let us pray that the same hand may be manifested to us and in us.

7, 8. *But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise Your name forever. Selah.*

Psalm 45:1. *My heart is overflowing with a good thing: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.* You know what King is referred to here, it is He of whom the Psalmist said, in the 4th verse of the previous Psalm, "You are my King, O God." "I speak of the things which I have made touching the King."

1, 2. *My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the children of men.* The Psalmist writes as if he had been actually looking upon Him. Faith has a wonderful realizing power—and when the soul is deeply meditative, it seems to be full of eyes—"You are fairer than the children of men.' Though You are one of them, yet You are fairer than all the rest of them. There is a beauty about You, O Lord, that is not to be perceived in the brightest and best of the sons of Adam!"

2-5. *Grace is poured into Your lips: therefore God has blessed You forever. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty, with Your Glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness, and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under You.* There is no other conqueror who is equal to Christ, whether He smites with His sword, His foes who are near at hand, or shoots His arrows from His bow at those who are far away. Whether the Gospel is preached to us who have long heard it, or is proclaimed to the heathen in distant lands, it has the same Almighty Power in it to work the glorious purposes of God's Grace.

6, 7. *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Your Kingdom is a right scepter. You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.* Note the connection here between God and Man—the very same Person who is addressed as God, is also spoken of as anointed by God above His fellows. God and yet Man are You, O blessed Jesus Christ!

You are very God of very God, yet just as truly Man, the God-Man, the Mediator between God and man!

8-10. *All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad. King's daughters were among Your honorable women: at Your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. Hearken, O daughter, and consider.* Listen, each one of you who are a part of this matchless bride of Christ, you who are part of her whom Christ has looked upon with infinite and eternal love—"Hearken, O daughter, and consider,"

10. *And incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house.* God's message to His people in the world, today, is just what it was when the Spirit bade Paul write to the Corinthians, "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."

11. *So shall the king greatly desire your beauty: for He is your lord; and worship Him.* Our Savior is our King and He must be both loved and adored—"He is your Lord; and worship Him."

12. *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor.* When Christ's Church really has her Lord in the midst of her, and when she is strong in the power of His might, there will never be any lack of wealth for the carrying on of His cause—"Even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor."

13. *The King's daughter is all glorious within.* Other daughters are often far too glorious without, but that is the best beauty which is inward. "The King's daughter is all glorious within."

13-16. *Her clothing is of worked gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto You. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace. Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children.* We often see the hoary head laid low, and the ripe saint taken home to Heaven—but the ranks of Christ's retinue are not thereby thinned, for the sons shall stand in the place of their fathers. God be thanked for this cheering promise! "Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children,"

16, 17. *Whom You may make princes in all the earth. I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise You forever and ever.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—416,357,412,658.

—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 PROSPEROUS MAN'S REMINDER

NO. 1441

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 27, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me.

Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the cage of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them."

Hosea 13:5-8.

OUR text will lead me at this time to speak upon the perils of prosperity and, as those who are prospering in worldly circumstances make up a comparatively slender portion of any congregation, the sermon must mainly aim at a small class. Still, it is my duty to speak to these, for every word of Scriptural warning should have its tongue in a complete ministry and every condition of soul must be duly met by a watchful pastor. May the Holy Spirit enable me to make full proof of my ministry by declaring the whole counsel of God to all characters. Suffer me, however, to observe that if the subject should seem to take a narrow range, it is in your power to alter it very rapidly, for, while those who are prospering will kindly take note of the voice of God's Word to themselves, those of you who are not prospering may be profited by becoming the more contented with your lowly lot since it will be plain to you that had you succeeded in life you might have fallen into the sins denounced in our text.

It may be that you would never have known the holy joy and sacred peace which you now possess if you had been allowed to climb to those heights of wealth which you have longed to reach. God, who knows your frame knew that you were not able to bear the trial of prosperity and, therefore, He has kept you where you are—more safe and more happy, though less enriched. Another class of persons may have enjoyed fair weather in times past, but now a cloud has come over them and they are troubled. Possibly they may be taught by our discourse to say, each one to himself, "God has taken me not so much out of the *sunlight* as out of the *furnace*. He saw that evils were generated by my success which would have caused me solemn injury and so He has removed me out of their reach. He has transplanted me out of the glare of the sunlight and set me in a place more shaded but more suited to my spiritual growth."

There may also be some present who are eagerly aspiring after great things and these may learn a lesson of sobriety. A desire to rise is laudable, but the winged horse needs to be well bitted and reined lest it fly away with its rider. Some spirits are dissatisfied with moderate success—they pine to reach the front ranks and to climb to the high places of the earth. Ambition has become the star of their life—perhaps I had better say

the will-o'-the-wisp of their folly! Let them learn from this morning's Word of God that all is not gold that glitters, that outward prosperity does not make men truly prosper and that there is a way of growing rich without being rich towards God.

Another word remains to be said before I proceed further—Hosea speaks of Ephraim, or Israel, the kingdom of the 10 tribes—we may profitably view that people as a type of ourselves. Israel represents the Church and yet not altogether the true *spiritual* Church of God. They were not all Israel that were of Israel, for they were a seed according to the flesh and, therefore, they were a mixed multitude and represent, rather, the *professing* Christian world than the *elect* Christian Church. Now, I must take the text as I find it and use it for those to whom it can fairly be applied, namely, general Christendom, the nominal people of God. For this reason the lines of distinction, this morning, between God's regenerated people and mere professors will be but faintly drawn in my address. It must be so, for I shall be speaking upon a Truth of God which relates to a mixed people—and you must be the more careful—in self-examination, so that each one may take home that which belongs to him.

I speak to all Israel this morning, whether they are of Israel in spirit or not—I speak to all the professing people of God, to all who meet with them at any time for public worship, or are numbered with them by general repute. “He that has ears to hear, let him hear,” and may the Holy Spirit bless the hearing! And now to our discourse.

I. The first subject suggested by the text is MEMORIES OF ADVERSITY. The Lord says to many of us, “I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.” Carefully consider this by taking a review of the past. Have you risen in the world? Have your circumstances changed? Have you been raised up from a sick bed, or delivered from depths of anxiety? Are your circumstances now happily abounding in good things and blessed with the temporal favor of God? I ask you to look back upon the way by which the Lord's hand has led you. Look back upon your early trials and the mercy which sustained you under them.

To some of the prosperous their early difficulties were very severe, comparable even to the great drought of the wilderness. They were so unhappy and so bereft of all comfort that it may be said of them that they sought water and there was none and their tongue failed for thirst. Thirst is one of the most terrible ills that can happen to men and such were the needs and anxieties of many a man's early days. They rendered existence misery and life itself a perpetual death! The children of Israel went three days without water—they came to wells where they expected to drink and found them brackish so that they could not drink of them. Do not many of the Lord's people remember when things were very scant with them—when even the necessities of life were scarcely to be had—when they sought friends for help but were disappointed?

They were driven to their wits' end, their little store began to run out and they counted out their last few pence almost as men sell their lives. Ah, those were wilderness days, indeed! So, also, were those weeks which we spent upon a bed of sickness, when at night we cried, “Would God it were morning,” and when daylight came the garish sun fatigued us and

we wished it were evening that we might sleep again! Perhaps neither of these were our particular trial, but we were distracted with many cares and knew not on whom to depend for advice. We could not see our way; the thread of our life was tangled thread and we were sorely perplexed in the attempt to unravel it. Often we held our poor head with both our hands and felt as if we should lose our reason if fresh distractions assailed us. It was a land of great drought, a wilderness infested with serpents and scorpions.

Do not let us forget that we traversed that desert road. Surely it is not difficult for us to refresh our memories upon *that* subject, for we usually retain a vivid recollection of our sorrows and that vivid recollection I would now make use of to cause the past to live again before you. The good point about those times was the fact that you *did* think of God. Why, then you went to Him for every meal and depended upon Him from hour to hour as much as the Israelites depended upon Him for the daily manna! The crust was hard but it was sweet, for the Lord gave it to you. Do you not remember when everything in business seemed as if it must go to pieces—one large house failed on the one side and another firm tottered at the other? Your own case was hazardous; it seemed the turn of a hair whether you would be bankrupt or not. Ah, you remember it, now, and you acknowledge that you then turned to God in real earnest, for you had nowhere else to turn! What times of prayer you had then! How sweet was that passage of Scripture which came like a prophecy to your heart! How you prized the prayers of God's people who cried to the Lord for you!

Or was it sickness which tried you? Ah, then you remember how you turned your face to the wall and, like Hezekiah, you sought the Lord with tears, pleading to be raised up again. The bitterness of pain made you cry, "My Father, help, strengthen and relieve me." Those were the times when you felt that you could not live without God. If there had been no God to go to, you would have been driven to desperation! So, though you did not know Him as you would wish to know Him, yet there was a God for you just as there was a God for Israel when the chosen tribes went through the wilderness and saw His glorious marches in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night! God was manifest to your spirit then, yes, and what is better, He knew you! How beautiful are the words, "I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought."

He was not ashamed to acknowledge you, then, and to have dealings with you. Those poor prayers of yours, which you would not have prayed at all if it had not been for your stern necessity, were, nevertheless, answered by Him and He heard you and comforted you in a very wonderful way! Looking back, you can see how He delivered you. It is true no manna dropped from Heaven, yet your daily bread was given and you were amazed and felt as thankful as if it had fallen from the skies! It is true no rock of flint gave forth a stream for you to drink, yet help came from people from whom you expected it as little as you would hope to see a fountain leap from a flinty rock! Somehow, by the hand of the Lord, you were sustained in trouble and ultimately delivered out of it. The scene is marvelous in retrospect and unless you believed that God's hand was in it, it

would remain to you a perfect riddle—you feel that the only way of explaining your life is to believe in the everlasting hand of the Almighty.

He helped you and your losses turned to gains. The burden which you thought would crush you was readily carried! The draught which was thought to be deadly turned out to be medicinal! You have now left the famine of the wilderness for plenty and ease—you have all that your heart can wish and your mouth is satisfied with good things! Do not, however, forget for a moment how the Lord knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. Looking back upon that time, you see nothing that you can now boast of, because it was not so much that *you* knew God as that *He* knew *you*! You prayed and believed after a sort, but it was very poor praying and very weak believing—yet the mercy of the Lord was great and *He knew you*.

He knew your whereabouts, He knew your temptations, He knew your weaknesses, He knew your needs, yes, and He knew how to meet the time of your need to the very tick of the clock. If He had waited five minutes later in relieving you, it would have been too late, but He was punctual in His tenderness! He never is before His time—He never is too late. He helped you marvelously, though you were ready to faint at one time and at other times were full of worldliness, murmuring and rebellion! In looking back, you feel compelled to say, “He knew me in the land of drought, but as for me, even then I walked not faithfully before Him, but there were wanderings of my heart, even as in the case of Israel, who made a calf at Horeb and bowed before it, defiling even that holy place, the mountain of the Lord, where Jehovah had revealed Himself.” The Lord knew us, blessed be His name, when we were in a desert land, in the howling wilderness and His knowledge showed itself in practical help!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, have you forgotten the loving kindness of the Lord in the cloudy and dark day? If you have, He has not. Often in Scripture the Lord speaks of Israel's early days. He says, “I remember you, the love of your espousals when you went after Me into the wilderness,” as much as to say, “I remember you when you were a young Christian and how you were willing to suffer the loss of all things for My name's sake. I remember when you were poor and blessed My name for every morsel of bread which I gave you. I remember when you lived in the poor little cottage in the back street and how you cried unto Me for help in your deep poverty and praised Me with tears standing in your eyes when your bread and your water were handed out to you.” The Lord remembers a thousand things which we forget.

The *receiver* seldom remembers the gift as long as the giver does. Ingratitude is a grievous fault, but it is sadly common and forgetfulness grows out of it. Yet it seems inevitable that the doer of kindness has a better memory than the receiver of it! Our children forget what we did for them when they were little, but the mother cannot fail to remember all she suffered for her baby—neither does she forget the anxiety and care with which, in her tenderness, she brought her child through its varied sicknesses. The Lord remembers all that He has done for us and He now, by the Word of His servant, recalls it to our thoughts, saying, “I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.”

Now, therefore, let us remember it also. Assuredly to have received special mercy from God in time of sorrow should bind us with cords of gratitude! Do we not feel the force of the obligation? I will not delay you with even a word upon that subject because your pure minds need but to be stirred up by way of remembrance and you will be filled with thankfulness to the Lord who helped you so graciously. Should it not also lead us to great humility when we remember what we were? How dare we be proud—we whom God lifted from the dunghill? He made David a king, and He reminded him of the time when he followed the ewes great with young, to pick up their lambs like any other common shepherd boy! What if he did become great in Israel, yet once the sum total of his possessions was a staff, a wallet and a sling.

Some of us had no more when we began life. This should make us humble and it will be well to mingle the humility and the gratitude together and sing like Hannah of old—"The Lord makes poor and makes rich: He brings low and lifts up. He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and He has set the world upon them." All this I bring before you now, my Brothers and Sisters, and I wish that, as with the wand of a magician, I could make the past march before your very eyes! Then were the days of scanty bread but abundant thankfulness; of few changes of raiment but many cries unto the Lord; of little gold but much Grace, of small incomes but large cries of praise and zeal!

Then you drank not the wine of indulgence, nor anointed yourselves with the oil of luxury, but yet the Lord knew you and made your spirit glad. Necessity often drove you to your knees in prayer and prompt answers turned your hearts to praise and your soul was refreshed! Let it not now be said, "Of the rock that begat you, you are unmindful and have forgotten God that formed you."

II. We must now enter upon a sadder subject and, with the memories of adversity fresh upon us, consider THE TENDENCIES OF PROSPERITY. I hope, beloved Friends, that many of you have, through Divine Grace, proved superior to these tendencies and have been able to swim against the stream. If so, you will, beyond all others, be aware that such tendencies exist, for you have had to resist them with no small effort. I fear, on the other hand, that I should be a flatterer if I professed to hope that all of you have so escaped. In so large a number of professed Christians as we have here, we dare not hope that all have escaped unhurt from the furnace of worldly prosperity. At least the smell of the fire lingers upon some of us. Let us, with much searching of heart, look to the text and then judge ourselves. And the more so if Providence has dealt bountifully with us.

We read in our text, "According to their pasture, so were they filled," that is to say, the Israelites became earthly-minded. They were filled according to their *pasture* and not according to their God. They satisfied themselves with temporal goods and asked for nothing more. They lived upon their possessions, not above them. They made a god of their goods—they filled their desires and their affections with the good things of this life

and knew nothing of the fullness of God. They entered into Canaan where they ate the fat and drank the sweet and there they settled down, content without the higher blessings of Divine Grace. They did not need their God, for now they were neither dependent on the manna nor on the stream which leaped from the Rock. If *God* had been their pasture, it would have been well to have been filled according to their pasture—but foolishly they tried to live on bread alone and the Word of God was despised.

Alas, this is an evil into which many fall! They increase in riches and they set their hearts upon the riches instead of the Giver of the riches. Permit me, dear Friends, to recall your hearts to your first love and to the highest and best things. Know you not that God usually gives the most of earthly wealth to those for whom He has *no* love? Those who are masters of earth's treasures are seldom the favorites of Heaven! It is a wonder when an Ethiopian treasurer is baptized, or a Joseph of Arimathea confesses himself a disciple of Jesus! Gold and the Gospel usually go different ways. Those who roll in wealth seldom rest in God. How many among the princes of the earth are also heirs of Heaven?

Is it not true that not many of the great men after the flesh are chosen? Worldly possessions are evidently lightly esteemed of God, for He gives little of them to His children—and the most of them He casts out at the feet of worldlings as men cast husks into the trough for swine! Do not, therefore, set a high price on that which the Lord lightly esteems! Your Lord and Master had none of the world's goods. Jesus had not where to lay His head! Do not, therefore, covet what He despised. Remember, again, that the quality of earthly things is very inferior and altogether unworthy of the love of an immortal soul. What is there in broad acres to satisfy the heart? What is there in bonds, mortgages, debentures, gold and silver to stay a soul when it faints, or to make a spirit rejoice when it is heavy?

Earthly gear has its uses, advantages and benefits, otherwise we could not ask you to be thankful for it. Wealth is a thing to be grateful for, since it may be turned to admirable account for God's Glory, but the tendency will be for you to think too much of it and if you do, I would remind you that you are coming down from the position which a Christian ought to occupy and are acting like a man of the world who has his portion in this life. A child of God should continually say, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire beside You." It will never do for you to dote upon your property. What? Are you going to dethrone your God and set up wealth in His place? Then in what do you differ from the Israelites who bowed before a calf of gold and said, "These are your gods, O Israel"? Far be it from us to sin in that fashion, but let us love the Lord for His mercies—and the more we have of them the more let us be devoted to His fear!

Remember, again, that earthly things ought not to be too highly esteemed, for they may vanish from our sight. How many instances of this have happened around us of late! The Lord have pity upon the many who have had grievously to suffer by the misconduct of others. Truly in their case riches have taken to themselves wings and those who ought to have held the birds have been among the first to cause their flight! Hundreds were, yesterday, in comfortable circumstances and are today deprived of

all and know not where the matter will end. You, perhaps, say, "The same could not happen to me. I have no shares in a bank. My liabilities are all limited—I cannot lose my property." How do you know? No man, till his last hour, is beyond the reach of those calamities which are common to men! There was never a garment which moth could not eat, or time devour—nor is there gold or silver in human coffers which the thief could not steal somehow or other—in spite of iron safes, legal documents, sound investments and experienced prudence! Riches are but as the mist of the morning, or the smoke from the chimney. They will certainly perish in the using—take care that you do not perish with them!

Once more, remember that even if wealth does not fly away, you may soon lose all power to enjoy it. What is the value of a thousand a year to a man who is paralyzed? To one who lies upon his back from morning till night, of what use is the park and the estate which he cannot see? To one who has to be confined to his chamber, of what use is it that he has the means of traveling round the world? The Lord can take away from a man his taste and of what use are his dainties, then? His eyesight, and of what value are his works of art? His hearing, and of what use are the daughters of music? The Lord can leave us the apparent blessing and yet the soul of it may have gone with the power to enjoy it! Moreover, how soon must you leave these temporal comforts! The day must come when you must bid farewell to house and garden, children and friends and all that you possess—and, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," must be the end of you as well as of the poorest man that ever begged his bread! Do not, therefore, set your heart upon these toys, nor let your mind be filled by them, for if you do, you have already met with one of the most serious of the evils which haunt a successful life.

The next peril is that of greediness, for, according to the text, these people were filled twice. "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled." Their fullness is mentioned twice. They were not satisfied with being filled—they must be filled again. What numbers of persons there are who, when they were in their low estate, thought if they could ever amass a certain sum they would be perfectly satisfied? But when they reached that point, they laughed at their own folly! "Oh," they said, "if I might double, or triple, or multiply it ten-fold, then I should reckon that I had enough of this world and I would begin to think of eternal matters." But even when they reach that ten-fold height they are not one whit more content—they still long for something more.

They are like men who drink sea water to quench their thirst—they become still more thirsty. The danger of worldly wealth lies in this, that a man at last gets to be nothing better than an ox yoked to the plow clogged with thick clay. Like a horse harnessed to a chariot, the more there is attached to such a man, the heavier his toil. Instead of gaining greater enjoyment, many a rich man only accumulates heavier care as his fortune increases. In the case of those in the text, they cared only for themselves—"they were filled—they were filled." They never thought of consecrating their substance to God. No, it was retained for filling *themselves*. They thought not of blessing the name of God for enabling them to get

wealth, nor of making every mercy to be a wing upon which the grateful soul would soar on high.

No, their whole mind was given to filling and being filled again. There was no living above it all. They lived *for* it; they lived *by* it and lived *under* it like moles burrowing in the earth. "They were filled, they were filled." Alas for those who can be filled with this poor earth! They will have no portion in the world to come, for they have received their good things and their turn will come to dwell with that rich man of whom our Lord spoke who went from faring sumptuously to suffering eternally!

What came next? They were filled and their heart was exalted. This is that of which the Lord warned His people in Deuteronomy 8:12-14. "Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built good houses, and dwelt therein; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." As for those in our text, they were rich and felt that they were somebodies. When they were in the wilderness, in the land of drought, their God was everything—but now they were filled and they were swollen with self-importance! Their bags were full, their barns were bursting, their lands were far-reaching and, therefore, they thought highly of themselves as if a man could be measured by the acre, or reckoned up in pounds, shillings and pence.

"A man's a man for a' that," said the homely poet, when he sang of those who have neither rank nor money. Many men are swollen by the meat they feed on and poisoned by their mercies till they are bloated with arrogance and begin to despise their fellows. Children of God whom they were once pleased to associate with, are now, "so very vulgar." They despise those who are much better than themselves—more prayerful and more holy—and they leave their company to go into society as if the children of God were not the best society under Heaven! Alas, some professors choose their company not by rules of Grace, but of wealth! The saints have not so much corn and wine and oil, nor can they ride so high a horse as the prosperous sinners and, therefore, the base-born professor turns his back on them. Poor Lazarus, whom once they would have honored, now lies at their gate full of sores for dogs to lick! They value not the people of God for their character, but because they are *poor*, they speak lightly of them.

When the deceitfulness of riches works its way, there is no longer any walking humbly with God, nor simple dependence upon Him. There is little or no prizing of Grace and seeking after it as for hidden treasure—are not the barns full—and is that not enough? And now the spiritual worship of God becomes too plain and commonplace and something more pleasing to the eye and to the flesh must be sought after. The Israelite only saw the Temple on certain days of the year and then the main sight was a sacrifice—and so the great ones asked for something more pompous, more impressive to the eyes—hence came the oxen set up at Dan and Bethel with services most pompous and performances most abundant!

Today, also, the simple worshippers of the unseen God carry on a worship which is too bare and unadorned! There is nothing aesthetic about it

and, therefore, the great ones must go off to the national religion even as Ephraim did in the days of Jeroboam—for there they can have dainty dresses, fine music, the smell of incense and all that can charm the tastes! Besides, do not all the rest of the wealthy of the land go that way? Hence we see men forsake their former associates, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. Their hearts are exalted by their prosperity and God and His people and His Truth may all go. Better far that riches had never come near them! Examples are close at hand.

And what next? It is further written, "They have forgotten Me." Their God was forgotten, even Him to whom they owed all things! Ah, they would talk much about Him in their humble days, when they met with those that thought upon His name! But now there is not a word for God. Then they spoke often, one to another. But now God is seldom mentioned, for He is not much known in fashionable society! The Lord Jesus is seldom spoken of, for how should the carpenter's Son be the theme of polite conversation? I am not saying that this is the case with anyone here present, but as this is the tendency of prosperity, I should not wonder if some of you are yielding to it!

Therefore, awaken yourselves to escape the evil—to forget that only God is fullness and that outward possessions are emptiness apart from Him! The tendency of the outward possession is to make us forget that it is only the shell and God must be the kernel of all true comfort and delight. Prosperous men are apt to forget that they will find out, very soon, how much they need the Lord. While the prosperous man is looking over his accounts and storing up his gold, he may dare to forget God, but when he comes to himself and repents of his worldliness, he will have to creep to Jesus' feet like the poorest servant on his farm! If saved from his idolatry of money, he will have to cry unto the Lord to manifest Himself to him even as He did when he could scarcely find himself with bread from day to day!

It will not do, my Brothers and Sisters, for us to exalt ourselves and act as if we were independent of God, for our very being rests on His will and we are nothings and nobodies! It would not do for the successful preacher to pride himself upon the number of his congregation or upon the power which he wields over men's minds, for, after all, he is nothing but a poor sinner spared through the compassion of God and pardoned through Jesus Christ, even as others! Humble gratitude is the only safe and right and happy condition of the mind in prosperity. Now, have you not seen, even if you have not felt it in yourself, that many persons who prosper in the world forsake religion altogether? While they were in humble circumstances, one had hope for them, but now they seem quite out of reach of sanctifying influences.

Have you not seen others grow cold and worldly? I will not ask if you have felt this declension in yourselves, but have you not noticed it in others? They used to be at every Prayer Meeting, but now they cannot find time! They worked hard in the Sunday school, but now their energies are overtaxed with doing nothing! Now that they have much more opportunity of serving God and more to serve Him with than they ever had before, they do less than in their humbler times! Do you not know some—may it not

be so with yourselves—who do not walk so near to God, now, as they used to do? Barefooted they kept the way of the Lord—but in velvet slippers they go astray! Richer times have come for them, but they are not happier because they are further off from God! Is not this very grievous and will it not provoke the Lord?

I will ask you one question. Can you find in the Word of God one instance of a man of God who was injured by his troubles? Do they not all, like Job, come out of the furnace of affliction much profited? Let me then ask another question. Is it not almost a rule with us, though it ought not to be, that our prosperity is our loss? David, when hunted like a partridge on the mountains, glorified the Lord his God! But David, when he lived in a palace, sinned again and again, so that the Holy Spirit draws a distinction between his earlier and his latter life, for it is written of Jehoshaphat that he walked before the Lord in the first ways of his father, David. Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, was not proof against prosperity. He had all he could desire and then his earthly loves stole away his heart.

Take one case which will give both sides of the matter. See Hezekiah with Sennacherib's letter, spreading it before the Lord in faith—he is, then, an example in history—a man of God to be envied for his prayers of faith. He is far fallen when his realm is at peace and his riches are multiplied, for he becomes vainglorious and displays to the Babylonian ambassadors all his treasures and provokes the Lord his God! Brothers and Sisters, I wish you great prosperity, but far more do I wish you great Grace that you may carry a full cup with a steady hand! There is need to pray for men who are going up hill lest they fall upon their high places. In our low estate Grace will surely be given, for the Lord pities us! But when we are rising, we have double need to pray, for God resists the proud!

III. Under the third head we must consider VISITATIONS OF RETRIBUTION. Ingratitude to God, of the kind I have described, is sure to bring with it, in the case of the Believer, heavy chastisements and in the case of the *unbeliever*, sure and overwhelming punishments! Now please notice what the Lord says, "Therefore I will be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the cage of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them."

In the case of men who have prospered in this world and turned aside from God, it often happens that fierce trials come upon them such as are here described under the figure of a lion, a leopard, a bear and a wild beast. In the case of the Israelite nation, this prophecy was singularly fulfilled, for, according to the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel, nations comparable to the lion, the leopard, the bear and the wild beast, namely the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman empires all dealt with the Jews and brought them into subjection. I do not lay any stress upon that, as though I were interpreting prophecy, but it is very amazing that those four beasts mentioned here should be the very four afterwards mentioned in the visions of Daniel!

I prefer to take the metaphorical meaning. We are here taught that as God visited His people, Israel, with stroke upon stroke and made His great wrath to be known, so has He often done against backsliding believers.

God is a shepherd to His people to guard them from the lion, but when His people depart from Him, He Himself becomes as a lion to them! I have seen rich professors with God against them. I have seen the man multiplying wealth and multiplying sorrow! His sons have grown up to vice and profligacy, using their father's wealth to indulge their passions, till the old man has been ready to tear his hair in anguish. His own children have been as lions to him! Have we never known such persons, too, living entirely to themselves? They have become the victims of wretched manias which have made them believe themselves to be poor while surrounded with luxury!

Such despondencies are *worse* than a bear robbed of her whelps. Have we not known millionaires haunted with the dread of sudden disaster as though God would leap upon them like a leopard? Men have been struck down with depression of spirit so that they could not rejoice in *anything*—they seemed to be torn by their own thoughts, as by wild beasts—and yet they had more than heart could wish! When the Lord had multiplied mercies around them they had not used them for His Glory, but only filled themselves with them and, therefore, the Lord visited them in anger for their selfish ingratitude. It is often a great mercy when God sends these heavy trials, for if they befall His own children, it is by such trials that He drives them home to Himself! The lions roar them back to Christ and the leopards and the bears drive them home to their old standing so that they return unto their Savior and Jesus is again precious to them.

But sometimes these wild beasts are of a spiritual character. Doubts, fears, horrors come forth from the Lord against the backsliders in heart. The Lord, who was all gentleness, kindness and love to them, now seems to have become their enemy! This is sadly the case with any of us when we forget God. We turn to His Word and it threatens us! We get to our knees and we cannot pray! Thoughts of our past sins haunt us. We have no peace with God, no rest day nor night! God lets loose all the wild beasts upon us and we cannot escape, they tear and maul us. Ah, He knew us in the land of drought and then He multiplied our mercies—but we went away from Him and became cold of heart and it is, therefore, no wonder that now He withdraws His consolations and sends furious convictions to hunt us down.

It is God's way of saving us, making our very destructions to be the means of our salvation, by driving us out of ourselves. Our God will not suffer His people to build their nests *here*. You may be sure of that! We are not of the earth, neither will our heavenly Father suffer us to be filled with the earth. If He has ordained us to eternal life by Christ Jesus, He will drive us out of the haunts of deadly selfishness by lions, by bears, by leopards, by wild beasts, or by some means or other and He will fetch us to Himself. Did you notice one passage here in this threat where the Lord speaks of the trouble as coming terribly home to His people's hearts? "I will rend the cage of their heart." That is to say, He will tear that which encloses and shuts up their heart. When a man loves the world it shuts up his heart, blocks it all round and leaves no room for God. It is a great blessing when God rends the cage of a man's heart and opens it once again to the entrance of the Truth of God. It is a sweet thing to have the

heart opened as Lydia's was, by the sacred key of love—but when we forget God and backslide—the keyhole is stuffed up and the key will not work.

The heart suffers from fatty degeneration until it might almost be said of the children of God even as of worldlings, "Their heart is as fat as grease." There is no getting at them, no making them *feel*—they have but little life, little love, little zeal for God and, therefore, the Lord sends these lions, leopards and bears and they rage and rend until at last they tear the cage of the heart. Then the man undergoes a death of despair—but what a mercy it is that the Lord raises him up, by-and-by, to the life of hope, even as a little further down in this chapter we read those precious Words of God, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death." The Lord brings up His poor dead child, again, and gives him life and joy and then he truly lives in the service of his Lord.

Now, Sinners, if, after God has been very gracious to you, you will not learn the lesson of His love, but refuse Christ, you will be given up to destruction! And as for lions, leopards, bears, or worms that never die and fires that never can be quenched, these are only faint emblems of the woe which will come upon you because you have refused the Lord! As for you who are Believers, He will not utterly destroy you, but if you turn aside from Him you will make a rod for yourselves and let loose bears and lions which the Lord would have kept caged if you had walked near to Him. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes his enemies to be at peace with him" so that the beasts of the field and the stones of the field are at league with the man that is living near to God. But if you walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to you and He will call for His lions and beasts of prey, that they may trouble and molest you! He will give you water that you die not for thirst, but it shall be the water of bitterness! And He will give you bread to eat, that you faint not, but it shall be mingled with ashes till your soul shall abhor its ingratitude and turn unto the Lord.

If I had time I would have spoken upon a fourth head, but I can do no more than say that close upon the text there are —INTIMATIONS OF MERCY. See what intimations of mercy there are in the next verse. "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help." There is help for the wanderer and help for the man who has grieved His God! Read also these Words of God, with which the next chapter opens, and may the Holy Spirit help you to carry them out, "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all our iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him."

The Lord fulfill those Words for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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

FORGETTING GOD

NO. 2975

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1876.

“Therefore have they forgotten Me.”
Hosea 13:6.

Our text reminds us that God does take notice of what men do, or of what they do not do. Here He complains—and there is a kind of mournful plaintiveness about His words—“Therefore have they forgotten Me.” It is not a matter of indifference to God whether men remember Him or not. It seemed to be a subject of surprise to David that God should think of man, for He wrote, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man, that You are mindful of him?” Yet God is mindful of man and it grieves Him that man is not mindful of Him! It would not disturb our minds if one tiny ant should forget or ignore us, yet we did not create it, and we have not the claims upon it that God has upon us. Yet, little though we are—and so insignificant that the ant, itself, is a great thing in comparison with us if we reckon what we are in comparison with God—it seems that He does want us to remember Him, to think of Him and to trust, love and serve Him. And when we do not, He is vexed and grieved. At least, speaking after the manner of men, we are taught to believe that it pains Him at His heart, so that He cries out by the mouth of His servant, the Prophet, “They have forgotten Me—their Maker, their best Friend and their greatest Helper.”

I am afraid, dear Friends, that the accusation in our text may be brought against a very large number of us. Certainly it can be laid to the charge of all those who have lived without thinking of God and who have never turned to Him with repentance and faith and who, consequently, are still strangers to Him. How many such people there are, God alone can accurately compute! The great mass of our fellow creatures would come under that category. But, worst of all, among the Lord’s own people there are, alas, some against whom this accusation can be brought! They have forgotten their God—not absolutely, so as to be utterly and altogether like the thoughtless sinner—yet very sadly and grievously, so that God, Himself, complains of them, “They have forgotten Me.” For, mark you, if God observes what ordinary men do, much more does He take notice of what His own people do! An unkind word from a stranger may have a very slight effect upon us, but if such a word should come from the lips of one whom we love it would cut us to the quick! We could put up with a thousand things from those who are mere acquaintances,

but from a beloved child, or from the wife of our bosom—such a thing would be very hard to bear. Remember, O Christian, that ancient declaration, “The Lord your God is a jealous God.” Because He loves us so much, He is in that very proportion, jealous, for the greatest jealousy grows out of limitless love. And the Lord our God who bought us with the heart’s blood of His dear Son, counts us so dear to Him that a wandering thought in our mind becomes a crime against Him—and the giving up of any part of our heart to love of the world, or of self, or sin, or Satan, or any other of His rivals—becomes to Him a cause of grief and sadness. If there are any children of God here—and I fear there may be many—who have grown cold in heart and who have wandered from the Lord, I hope the text will come like a lament from Him who hung upon the Cross of Calvary, “Therefore have they forgotten Me. Therefore have they forgotten Me.”

I. I am going to call your attention, first, to THE TIME WHEN THIS SIN WAS COMMITTED. “Therefore,” says the Lord, “have they forgotten Me.” When was that? If we ascertain that, we shall also find out when *we* ought to be most upon our guard against falling into a similar sin.

It appears, dear Friends, to have been when the Israelites had come out of the wilderness into Canaan—*when they had escaped from troubles and had come into an easy condition*, for so the context reads—“I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me.” It is a very sorrowful fact that in this case the greater God’s goodness was to His people, the less was their gratitude to Him—just in proportion as He was kind to them, they were cold to Him. These people had been delivered from excessive toil. In Egypt they had been a nation of slaves. And in the wilderness they had been for 40 years pilgrims with weary feet. They seldom tarried long in any place, but backwards and forwards across that “waste howling wilderness” they marched almost continuously. And concerning all that time, God says, “I did know you in the wilderness.” He knew them, morning by morning, as the manna fell. He knew them when the quails came on swift wings to bring them flesh to eat. He knew them when the morning and evening lambs were offered in sacrifice for them, sinners as they were all the while they were in the wilderness, and He says, “I did know you then.” So, Brothers and Sisters, it has happened to some men that when they have had hard times, long hours and stern labor, they have managed to be up in the morning early to get a quiet season of communion with God and, though they scarcely could have been thought capable of doing it, for they worked so hard, yet they could find leisure to teach a few children in the Sunday school, or to distribute tracts, or to speak a word for Christ at an open-air service! They had very hard bondage in their daily occupation, yet whenever there was a weeknight service, they always managed to get there. They were very apt out of sheer weariness because they had been toiling so hard during the day, to fall asleep when they sat down in the pew—still, they said that half a loaf

was better than no bread—and they were glad to get a message from any of the Lord’s servants in those trying days.

But, dear Friends, you remember that in due time the children of Israel came to Canaan. Then there was no more marching to and fro in the wilderness for them! They found houses built ready for them to occupy and they could sit, every man, under his own vine and under his own fig tree—and then it was that the Lord said, “They were filled, and their heart was exalted, *therefore* have they forgotten Me.” It is just the same with the man who used to come to the House of God Sundays and weeknights, though he was sorely weary with his heavy work. He now has what men call, “an easy berth,” and has very little to do, so, being no longer a poor galley slave tugging at the oar, you might have thought that he would have given more time to God’s service and have become one of the most industrious Christians living! But instead he does not do as much, now, as he used to do with the little bits of time which his hard toil allowed him! Ah, Brothers, when you get into smooth and easy places, then is the time when you should be most anxious, lest of you, as of the Israelites, the Lord should have to say, “Therefore have they forgotten Me.” I would gladly wish for every one of you that you may be able to earn your daily bread without any excessive labor. I would that every man who has to toil beyond due and reasonable hours, were delivered from such semi-slavery. Yet I know that there are many who make an ill use of any leisure that they get and some who are not nearly as fervent in the cause of God, now that they have leisure, as they used to be before they were so privileged!

These Israelites, also, were now *delivered from the pressure of urgent needs*. At the very beginning of their wilderness journey, they had to go for three days without water. “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.” They cried to Moses, “What shall we drink?” And he cried to the Lord and soon the bitter waters were made sweet. Before long, they had eaten up all that they had brought with them out of the land of Egypt—and they murmured, again, and then the Lord gave them a daily supply of manna—their bread dropped from the sky morning by morning! But now that they have got into Canaan, that have broad fields that are very fruitful, they reap abundant harvests, their barns are full to bursting and the hillsides are clad with vines, olive trees, fig trees and all manner of dainties! Instead of having to gather one day’s food at a time, they have many months’ supplies laid up in store. Some of them became very rich but, alas, it was of them that the Lord had to say, “According to their pasture, so were they filled...therefore have they forgotten Me.” You surely have known or heard of men and women who have loved the Lord when in poverty—or, at least, who have seemed to do so—and who were very fervent and active while they had to look up to the Lord from day to day and pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” But, in the order of God’s Providential dealings, they have been lifted up into another station in life. You would naturally have supposed that they would have loved

the Lord more and have done more for His cause—and laid themselves out with a greater willingness for His service—but, instead of that, it has been the very reverse with them! When they were financially poor, they were spiritually rich—but now that they are financially rich, they are spiritually poor! As they have gone up temporally, they have gone down spiritually. Their barn has become full, but their heart has become empty! Their wine press has overflowed, but the joy of the Lord has departed from them. It is a sad, sad thing wherever this happens. Sadly, some of us know that it often happens. Let it not be so with any of you, Beloved.

Then, again, *these Israelites had become very self-indulgent*. They enjoyed themselves and lived only for pleasure. And they despised everybody who would not or could not do the same. Being “rich and increased with goods,” they looked down upon those who were not rich and, worse than that, they began to forget their God. O my Brothers and Sisters, I have often looked upon them who have been in sore trouble and I have wished that, by some magic touch, I could lift the daughters of sorrow out of their sad state! But I have lived long enough to feel that if I could do it, I would deliberately stay my hand until I had consulted with Infinite Wisdom to know whether it would be for their good or not. If it were in my power to lift the cross from every Brother and every Sister’s shoulders here and to give all of you your heart’s desire, I would not do so, however much I might feel prompted to do it! As I often see how the plant that bloomed in the shade is burnt up in the sunshine—and how some natures have never yielded the sweetest perfume except in grief’s sad dripping-well—when I perceive that some of God’s saints never seem to honor Him when they are lifted up into high places—I feel that you and I had better be satisfied to let the Lord put His people wherever He pleases and keep them on “short commons,” sometimes, and even chasten them every morning, as the Psalmist says was done to him. Perhaps some of them, if the Lord did not make them cry every morning, would make themselves cry twice as much before night—and if He did not afflict them, they would very soon bring far worse afflictions upon themselves by falling into some great sin.

I think I know the reason why God does not trust some of us with the bright eyes and the elastic step which He bestows upon others. I think I can see why He does not give some of us more prominent positions in His Church and greater influence among the works for Him. I think I can tell why that Sister is lame and that Brother is blind—why that one hangs her harp upon the willows and that other toils amid continual poverty. It is because God will not risk all His ships on the roughest sea. He has constructed some of His vessels so that they can stand the storm—and these He sends away into the thick of the tempest—but His little ships He keeps nearer the shore. Some of His seamen see less of His wonders in the deep because they are not able to bear the sight as others can. I think it is so and, certainly, this is true—that seasons of prosperity, of any sort, are seasons of great trial to Christians. According to our text, it was at the time of their prosperity that the Israelites forgot their God.

II. Now, secondly, let me indicate THE PROGRESS OF THIS EVIL WHENEVER IT HAPPENS TO A MAN.

It has happened that *some men have lived all their lives forgetting God*. It may be that some of you who are here at this service have never really thought of God—you have forgotten all about Him. A gentleman was walking down a country road one Sabbath morning and he met a man with a cartload of hay. He was asked by the man who was driving the cart whether he had seen two lads on in front. “Yes,” said the gentleman, “I have, and I think they are the boys of a father with a short memory, are they not?” He said he did not know whether it was so or not, but they were his lads. “Well,” said the gentleman, “I thought that you were their father and that you had a short memory, for you do not seem to have recollected that there is a text of Scripture which says, ‘Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy.’” That short memory concerning the Sabbath affects a great many people concerning everything else that is good. Some of you, I fear, have such short memories that you have never even recollected the God who made you. You have eaten just as the cattle eat and you have drunk as they drink—but you have never blessed the Giver of the unnumbered mercies that you have received—any more than the cattle have done! Some of you go on from morning to night without any recognition of God. There are hundreds of men who might be compared—as Rowland Hill did once compare them—to hogs under an oak. “They eat the acorns,” he said, “but they never look up and thank the oak.” They live in this world and feed upon the bounties which God has provided for them, yet they have no thought of Him! It is His air that they breathe and it is by His power that they exhale the air—they could not exist for a single moment if it were not for Him—yet He is not in any of their thoughts! If God were blotted out of the universe—if such a thing could be, that He should no longer exist, but that they could still exist—they certainly would not be grieved. Possibly they would feel all the easier in their mind because there would be no judgment to come and no punishment for all their evil.

Ah, my Friend, you must be in a very bad plight if you think you can get on better without God than with Him! If your boy were to say concerning you, “I wish I might never see my father again”—if that little child who eats at your table every day, whom you clothed but the other day with new garments—if he were to say, “I never want to speak to my father again—I wish he were dead!”—there must be something radically wrong in that child! His morals must be thoroughly bad. Even if nobody has ever found him out in deceiving or lying, I am sure, from that one fact, that he is a bad boy. Now, my Friend, even if I cannot point to any sinful act of yours, I am sure that there must be something very wrong with you if you have lived in this world all these years without thinking of God!

If I am invited to go and stay with a friend in the country and I simply see his beautiful park and his fine gardens, and indoors I have all that I need in the way of refreshment during the day and a comfortable bed at

night, but my host never puts in an appearance—and I do not know whether he is anywhere about the premises—I do not enjoy my visit. I came down to see him, so I cannot be content with seeing his park and his gardens, and so on. I say to the servants, “Where is your master? I came down here to pay a visit to him and I cannot find any pleasure here unless I see him.” And, dear Friends, I feel just like that with regard to my God. When I look at this beautiful world which He has made—and it is a beautiful world, after all, let who will speak against it—I always feel that I need to see Him who made it. Even our lovely gardens which seem to me to be a thousand times more beautiful than all the vineyards of the Continent, would give me no pleasure in looking at them unless I could always realize that God is there. The sea itself—the wide and open sea—what is it if there is no God to rule its waves and to speak in its storms? I must see traces of God in everything that happens! But some of you have lived all this while and God’s cry concerning you—over hill and dale, up and down the street, in the house where you live, across the table at which you eat, and over the pillow on which you sleep—is, “They have forgotten Me. I have made them, kept them alive and blessed them in a thousand ways, yet they have forgotten Me!—Me, of whom they ought first to have thought, for it was essential with them that they should first have thought of Me—and through not thinking of Me, they have bred within themselves all manner of evil.” O unconverted people, I wish you could put yourselves in God’s place for a few minutes and just think how you would feel if others had treated you as you have treated Him! Let the sharp arrows of conviction stick fast in your conscience as you realize that you have acted in a mean, dastardly, ungenerous, ungrateful way towards your God—the tender, loving, gracious Creator, Preserver and Friend of men!

But, now, turning to you Christian people, I want to ask of the progress of this evil in *you*. I will show you how it often works. When God prospers you in business, takes away sickness and removes causes of sorrow, it sometimes happens that *the evil of forgetting God begins with an almost imperceptible alienation of heart from Him*. You do not notice it. You would be very grieved if you did, but your heart begins to grow cold and the love to your Lord that once burned in your soul is not as fervent as it used to be. And this condition of spirit very speedily shows itself in increasing fondness for worldly things. To have riches may be a blessing to you, but for *the riches to have you* will be a great curse to you. There are some who have abundance of temporal things given to them and they make a good use of them, so they may be thankful for them. But there are others who are carried away by these temporal things which thus become the source of all sorts of calamities. A man may have a fine house and a beautiful garden and he may be thankful for them—so far, so good—but he may fall into the sin of making a Heaven of that house and garden—and so they will be the cause of sin. He may be wealthy and that will be a good thing if he uses his money rightly. But, by-and-by, he may begin to feel that the one thing worth living for is to have money—and that will be an evil. If you have acquired a certain amount of money

and you feel that you are a person of importance simply because you have so much wealth, you are putting earthly things into the place which God alone should occupy. As old Master Brooks says, it is as when a husband, whose wife used to dote upon him, has given her rings, chains and other ornaments—and now that she has them, she dotes over them and forgets him! It is very sad when this is the case and it is often so with some who profess to be the Lord's. If we accept His gifts as tokens of love from Him and see Him in them, than they are helpful and not hurtful. But when we get to thinking of *them*, and not of *Him*, then they become mischievous to us.

This is an evil which continually grows, for *this man who is beginning to mind earthly things, keeps on indulging himself*. He takes more of what he calls pleasure than he used to do and, indulging himself thus, he gets into a wrong state for prayer, for searching the Bible, for attending the means of Grace. And the more he enjoys this world, the less does he think of the next world. As the things that are seen eat like a canker into him, the things that are unseen seem to lose their power over him. If he still attends the place where he went before to hear the Gospel, he says that the minister does not preach as he used to do, and the singing is not as lively as it used to be. Other Christian people say that they cannot see any difference at all, but he can. You know, dear Friends, what is very often the difference between one dinner and another. It is not the fault of the cook—it is the need of an appetite. Here are some Brothers and Sisters who have lost their spiritual appetite. They cannot eat this and they cannot eat that, and they cannot eat the other. They have lost their appetite, that is the reason. "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet," says Solomon, but this man, who has prospered in the world and has had much enjoyment in it, is now beginning to lose all relish even for those very spiritual things that were once the delight of his soul! So he begins to drop off coming to the House of God and gradually declines, first a little in this way, and then in that. He has more money, now, than he used to have, so it takes him a longer time to count it. He has more business than he used to have and it takes more time to look after it. He cannot come to weeknight services and if, on the Lord's-Day, for appearance sake, he does not cease going to the place of prayer, he carries his ledger with him in his carriage—metaphorically, if not literally! There is many a man who comes into his pew with acres of land hanging to his boots. And there is many a woman who sits there in a fine new dress—not only the one she has on, but the other one that is to be made up on Monday!

It is sad when worldly things then get into the soul and come right into God's House. Why, the preacher himself knows what it is to find a thousand distracting thoughts come to his mind while he is addressing you! And, therefore, he knows that they must come to your minds while you are listening to the Word of the Lord. Thus it happens that in one thing after another, the love of God and His Word withers—and the love of the world grows. By-and-by, family prayer gets pushed into a corner—

very short and not very sweet. And private prayer hardly knows where to find a place for the sole of its feet. Private prayer, as there are none but yourselves to note its observance, is a very convenient place for retrenchment. You want to save time, as you have so much to do and, therefore, you snip off a piece here, and another piece there, and who but God is the wiser? You do not perceive any very great difference, for your conscience is getting seared. So, by degrees, a Christian who is declining in spiritual things, gives up private prayer—not altogether, perhaps, but the sweetness and the enjoyment of it depart as he trifles with it, instead of entering into the holy exercise with all his heart and soul.

In some professing Christians, this declension goes still further. *At last they give up all religious profession.* I wonder whether there are any here who once declared and probably believed that he was a Christian, but who has now given up even the name of Christian? If so, my Friend, one of two things is true concerning you—either you never were converted at all, and so have been a mere professor, or else, if you ever were truly converted, you will have to come back. As surely as ever the Lord looked upon you with an eye of love, you must come back to Him, for, after He has once set His seal upon you, He cannot and will not let you go! Oh, that you would come back to Him now! You will have to come back, poor wandering sheep, for you belong to the Good Shepherd who will not lose one of His flock! Wayward as you are, He will have you with Him and if you will not come back to Him when He calls you, He has some rough dogs that will worry you back! But back from the paths of sin you must come—and I pray God that you may come back right speedily and so once more enjoy the blessings of peace with Him! I sometimes pass persons who used to sit in these pews and who were, I thought, ardent Christians. Even now some of them have respect for me, but I fear that they have none for my Master. If I get anywhere near them, they slink away, for fear I should speak to them. I wish they had as much anxiety about the grief they have caused my Lord as they have about any grief they may have caused me. May God grant, through His Sovereign Grace, that all of us who have professed to be His, may be preserved, lest—

***“When any turn from Zion’s way
(Alas, what numbers do!)”—***

we also should turn away, as we shall certainly do unless His Grace shall hold us fast!

III. Now, thirdly, and very briefly, a few words about THE PECULIAR EVIL OF THIS SAD CONDITION—“They have forgotten Me”

It is *so grossly ungrateful* that every Christian who realizes that he is apt to slide into such a condition should, at once bestir himself and watch against it. What? Shall I love the Lord less because He gives me more? Shall I set the gifts which His goodness bestows upon me, upon His Throne and let them be idols to deprive Him of my heart’s love and worship? If I do this, surely I shall be worse than the brute beasts! God grant, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we may be ashamed of such a condition as this and flee from it!

Remember that if any of us do begin to set our hearts upon the things of this world, *whatever we gain, we must be losers*. The man who has scarcely a rag to cover him, but who delights in God, may be the *beau ideal* of a happy man. But the man who is robed in purple and who calls an empire his own—and who has forgotten his God—is to me the model of misery mocked by majesty! God save you from being able to delight yourselves in anything but your God! May He put so much bitterness into every other cup that you will be compelled to take the cup of salvation and, calling upon the name of the Lord, to drink only of that! You will be dreadful and eternal losers, whatever else you gain, if you lose the Lord!

If you forget God, you who are indeed His children—and I am speaking only to such people just now—it is a terrible thing for you to be led into a condition in which you forget your Heavenly Father. If there were a wife who was very poor, but who, as long as she was poor, clung to her husband and found all her delight in his love, but who, when they became rich, no longer cared for him, it would be wretched riches that could burn away her heart from him who ought to possess it all! If I love my brother and find great comfort in fellowship with him, but I should suddenly get to be so great that I should not know my brother—what a miserable being I would be! Many a man does not know his own relations when he begins to get rich. He thinks he is somebody of importance, but really he is a big nobody—a very great and dreadful nobody! And when a man, just because God prospers him, does not know Jesus Christ, his great elder Brother, and gets to be ashamed of mixing with God's poor people who go to the little Ebenezer Chapel or of being seen with those poor commonplace sort of Christians who try to follow the Lamb where ever He goes—he is a poor, poor specimen of a man, much less of a Christian! God give us minds and hearts quickened by His Grace, that will enable us to live above all such meanness as that!

A sad part of the wretchedness of this condition is that *it involves so much trifling with God*. If we have forgotten God, dear Brothers and Sisters, we have forgotten the many deliverances we have had in the days that are past. We have forgotten the wiping away of our tears of sorrow. Worse still, we have forgotten the precious blood of Jesus that spoke peace to our soul. And we have forgotten the Holy Spirit who came into our hearts and gave us joy and rest in Jesus Christ. And if we have forgotten God, we have forgotten His gracious promises which are yet to be fulfilled, and the glorious Covenant of His Grace, ordered in all things and sure, on which our hopes of Heaven are based! We have also forgotten His claims upon us—forgotten that we are His children, His beloved, His elect, His redeemed! We have forgotten all that and we are living in such a condition that we are trifling even with His threats! He has threatened that He will chasten us and we seem to make light of His threats and to defy His chastisements. We must have gotten into a state that is piteous and lamentable to the last degree if we can live from day to day in forgetfulness of God!

IV. I will say no more about this sad decline, but finish my discourse by telling you HOW THIS EVIL CAN BE CURED.

If any of us, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, are suffering from this dreadful decline, *it is a good help towards its being cured when we see the mischief of it.* When a man has this sad condition pointed out to him and the Spirit of God enables him to see it, that is a great help towards lifting him out of it. But I think that the best thing for us all to do is, just for the moment, to sink all differences and not ask any questions about whether we are saints or sinners—whether we ever did love the Lord, or whether we did not—and *let us all go straight away to the Cross, just as if we had never gone there before.* By nature, and by practice, too, we are all guilty and we all deserve to be cast into Hell—the best of us as well as the worst. So let us all go where the Savior carried the great load of sin upon Himself and bore the consequences that He might set us free from it forever. Let us look up to Him and, by faith, view the flowing of the blood from those many wounds that He received on our behalf. Let us look into that dear face of His—the image of matchless misery and majesty combined! Let us note the crown of thorns and the marks of ignominy and shame that cruel men put upon Him. Let us hear Him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And, as we see Him die, let us believe in Him again, or believe in Him for the first time.

My Savior, my Redeemer, wherever I may have wandered, I come back to You. My soul believes in You, trusts You, hangs all her hopes for time and eternity upon You. Will You not speak peace and pardon to my guilty spirit? Ah, if you come to Him with such a confession and cry as this, you will get your love back. The best place to get it back is the place where it was born. It was born at the Cross and you will get it back if you go to the Cross, just as you went at first, and stand there, with this as your soul’s confession of faith—

***“I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.”***

I cannot say more except just this—if *God is prospering you, keep very close to the Cross.* Do you not see that if the richer you get and the more often you go to the Cross, it will be safe for you to be trusted with wealth? Take care to sanctify everything that God gives you by giving Him His proper portion and do not use your own portion till you have given Him His. Then, if you look at every blessing as coming to you by the way of the Cross, and say, “Jesus Christ has sent me this, for—

***“There’s never a gift His hand bestows
But cost His heart a groan”***—

if you receive everything as *through* Him and then desire to use everything *for* Him, you may be as rich as the Rothschilds and yet you may be as gracious as the Apostle Paul! You might have all the world given you, and yet, for all that, it would not hurt you. If you had as much of God as you had of gold, God would see that the gold was safe in your hands. He would trust us with prosperity if He saw that all our prosperity only bound us more closely and more completely to the Cross of His dear Son. So, if any of you have forgotten Him, conclude this

evening's service by coming to the Cross. And thus Father, Son and Holy Spirit shall get glory from you. May it be so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 13:1-9.**

Hosea was full of complaints against the people of God, for in his day they had very sadly wandered from the Lord. They had even forgotten Him. In Hosea's prophecy we have the plaintive voice of a loving God chiding His backsliding children.

Hosea 13:1. *When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel, but when he offended in Baal, he died.* A modest, humble, trembling heart is often by far the sounder heart, but when we begin to sin and to sin boastfully, and to wrap ourselves about with the robe of self-complacency, then is death very near to us! "When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died."

2. *And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the word of the craftsmen: they say of them, let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.* When Jeroboam became king of the new Kingdom of Israel—in order to prevent his subjects from going to Jerusalem to worship God in Solomon's temple—he started two shrines at Dan and Bethel and there he set up what Holy Scripture calls in derision, "calves." I suppose that his idea was to make images of a bull, the emblem of power, intending them to be the symbol of the Divine Being and that the people still intended to worship God, but to worship Him under the image of a bull. It is the same in Roman Catholicism to this day—the worship of God, the worship of Christ, by means of crucifixes, and emblems and symbols of various kinds. But when men once begin that kind of idolatry, there is no knowing where they will stop, for the worship of God through the medium of symbols soon grows into the worship of other gods, saints, "blessed virgins" and I know not what besides! They are pretty sure to be set up when once people begin to make use of outward and visible emblems of the Deity. So it was with these ancient Israelites. From worshipping the bull, which was meant to be a type of the Omnipotent God, they went on to the worshipping of "molten images of their silver and idols according to their own understanding." Brothers and Sisters, let us take warning from these idolaters and always keep to the simplicity of worship ordained by God in His Word. However comely and beautiful, or grand and imposing and, consequently, fascinating, any form of idolatry may be to some minds, let us utterly despise it if it is not according to the mind of God and the teaching of His Spirit as revealed in His Word.

3. *Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.* Those who will have gods of

their own making shall have but a brief enjoyment of them. He who truly worships the Everlasting God shall have an everlasting blessing! But he who worships gods that he has made himself—mere objects of this mortal day—shall have but a short day of it. He shall be as the early dew which glistens brightly, but is soon gone—or as the morning cloud which is banished by the rising of the sun.

4, 5. *Yet I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no god but Me: for there is no Savior beside Me. I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.* The Israelites drew near to God when they needed bread and water in the wilderness. God says, “I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.” And the Lord might say to His people nowadays, “I did know you when you were very sick, when you were very poor, when you were in great trouble. You sought Me then—how is it that you are trying to do without Me now?”

6-8. *According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten Me. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will tear open the rib cage of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.* When men forget God they may expect that they will meet with some terrible judgments. And especially God’s own people will find this to be the case with them if they forget the Lord. Our God is a very jealous God and when His children will set their hearts on other objects instead of upon Him, He will take care to embitter those objects of their affection to them—He will make their idols to be loathed by them. If God did not love us very much, He would think little of our faults, but just because He loves us so much, He cannot bear that any part of our heart’s affection should go away from Him. So, if He sees that we deal unfaithfully with Him, He will make us realize that sin is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing. His anger against us will be like that of a bear that is robbed of her whelps, or of a lion or leopard leaping upon his prey.

9. *O Israel, you have destroyed yourself: but in Me is your help.* “You have gone away from Me, but I will bring you back again. You have destroyed yourself by your sin, but I will restore you to My favor by My Grace. You may look within yourself for causes of repentance, but you must not look to yourself for the means of restoration. You must look to Me, your Savior and your God.” So this verse teaches us “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help.”

—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.**

SELF-DESTROYED, YET SAVED

NO. 2425

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 11, 1895.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 11, 1887.**

***“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help.”
Hosea 13:9.***

IT would be a very important subject for our meditation if we kept to the text and thought upon its great Truth of God—that the ruin of man is altogether of himself and the salvation of man is altogether of God. These two statements, I believe, comprehend the main points of a sound theology. There have been divisions in the Church over these points where there ought not to have been any. The Calvinist has said and said right bravely, that salvation is of Grace alone. And the Arminian has said and said most truthfully, that damnation is of man's will, alone, and as the result of man's sin, and of that only. Then they have fallen out with one another. The fact is, they had, each one, laid hold of a Truth of God, and if they could have put their heads together and accepted both Truths, it might have been greatly for the advantage of the Church of Christ! These two doctrines are like tram lines that you can travel on with safety and comfort, these parallel lines—ruin, of man; restoration, of God. Sin, of man's will; salvation, of God's will. Reprobation, of man's demerit; election, of God's free and Sovereign Grace. The sinner lost in Hell through himself, alone, the saint lifted up to Heaven wholly and alone by the power and Grace of God!

Get those two Truths of God thoroughly engraved upon your heart and you will then hold comprehensively the great Truths of Scripture. You will not need to crowd them into one narrow system of theology, but you will have a sort of duplicate system which will contain, as far as the mind of man, being finite, can contain—the great Truths revealed by the Infinite God. I am not, however, at this time going so much into the doctrinal point as to try and make use of my text for practical soul-saving purposes.

You notice in this text, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself,” how God comes to close terms with men. He speaks, calling the persons addressed by name, “O Israel,” and then He uses a singular pronoun, “you have destroyed yourself.” It is something like Nelson's way of fighting. When he came alongside the enemy, he brought his ship as close as he could, and then sent in a devastating broadside from stem to stern! So does this text—it seems to get alongside of the man, puts its guns right close up to him, and then discharges its volley—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.”

There is nothing said here that is at all flattering—"you have destroyed yourself." God bids a man look at himself as a blighted, blasted, ruined thing when He tells him that he is a self-destroyer! He has done it all! He has no need to ask, as Jesus did, "Who slew all these?" Your own red right hand has done it! O you guilty sinner, you have ruined yourself! See how plainly God speaks, how He lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and with His storm of hail sweeps away all refuges of lies—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

But though He does not flatter, observe that the Lord does not conclude His address to the sinner by leaving him in despair, for the second part of the text is, "In Me is your help." We should never so preach the Law as to show only the naked sword of Divine Justice—the sweet invitations and promises of the Gospel must come in after the dreadful verdict of judgement! Let the thunders roll, let the lightning set the heavens on fire, but conclude not till some silver drops have fallen and a shower of mercy has refreshed the thirsty earth! No, God will not have us preach only the Law and its terrors, but the Gospel must also be brought into our message—"You have destroyed yourself, O Israel: there is no concealing from you that grim and terrible fact. But in Me is your help: there is no keeping back from you that cheering and blessed information!" When these two things work together, breeding self-despair and hope in God, this is the way by which eternal life is worked in the souls of men!

I am going to speak, then, of those two themes and first, here is *a sad fact*—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." Secondly, here is *a hopeful assurance*—"In Me is your help." And, before I finish, I wish to notice, in the third place, *an instructive warning* which is given by this text as you read it in the Revised Version—"It is your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your Help." It is a warning to men not to fight against their own salvation, or contend against the only Helper who can aid them to any purpose!

I. First, then, here is A SAD FACT—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

Now, dear Friends, I believe that there is a message here to every one of us. The text speaks in tones of thunder to each *unconverted person* and says, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." But if any child of God has lost his first love, his joy, his comfort—if he has become a *backslider*—if he has fallen into a sad, melancholy condition, he has done it himself and the text tells him so! "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." If there is about any of us that which we have to mourn over by reason of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, the text puts its finger on the sore, and says, "you have destroyed yourself! You have, yourself, done all this mischief."

But, addressing myself mainly to those who do not as yet know the Lord, I want you, dear Friends, to notice that *this sad fact stared Israel in the face*—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." He could see it, he could feel it, he could not escape from knowing it, for this was the singular fact—that God Himself seemed to have turned against him. I read you, just now, those seventh and eighth verses where God says, "I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will

meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will tear open their rib cage, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.”

It happens to some men, as it has happened to many who have come under my observation, that they have gone on pleasantly in sin for a time, till, all of a sudden, the hand of God has gone out against them. They have been smitten with sickness—those same strong young fellows who never had any sickness and who thought that they could indulge their passions to the utmost without fear—have been, all of a sudden, laid low. Perhaps the hand of God has gone out against them in business. They were prospering. They added field to field. They could afford to spend money freely in various ways, but, by-and-by, the stream of business began to run low and then to dry up altogether! What they attempted did not prosper however hard they labored. They rose up early, they sat up late, they ate the bread of carefulness—but all went amiss with them. Whatever they did seemed to have a blight upon it. Truly, God met them as a lion and as a bear bereaved of her whelps!

At such a time as this, the man begins to see that there must be something wrong with him. He did not know it, before—perhaps he even thought that his prosperity was a proof that God was not angry with him! And he went on from sin to sin and said within himself, “Why, I do not suffer even as Christian people do! Surely, I must be right, after all, for I increase in riches and my eyes stand out with fatness.” Oh, if you are one of God’s chosen, there will come to you a day of darkness in which you shall not see your way along the road of sin! God will hedge up your path with thorns and dig deep ditches in your way—and you shall stumble and fall—and then shall you say, “I perceive that something is amiss with me. I see that I am on the wrong track. Oh, how shall I escape, how shall I get onto the right road?”

I say, again, when a man is in that condition, as Israel was in my text, then his sad state stares him in the face! You cannot convince the worldling that he is in an evil case when he is living without God and yet prospering! Oh, no—he is satisfied as long as he gets the things of this world—what cares he for the world to come? Therefore, one of the first means that God uses to awaken men from the dangerous slumber of their natural estate is to go to war with them and to be like one who is cruel to them—that He may tear them away from themselves and from their follies.

Notice, next, that while this grief stared them in the face, it was attributed to themselves, *it lay at their own door*—“O Israel, *you* have destroyed yourself.” There is always hope for a man when he knows this and confesses this. The worst of it is that, by nature, we lay our ruin at anybody’s door but our own! “It was all the fault of our family environment—how can we help it? It was God’s purpose, or it was the devil’s temptation.” We put the saddle anywhere but on the right horse! We will not accept this great and certain Truth, “O Israel, *you* have destroyed *yourself*.” Now, you can be sure of this, O Man, that the sin which will ruin you is your own sin! That for which you will suffer, that for which you *do* suffer is the sin which you, yourself, have committed—the evil

which you have willfully committed! There are some to whom this Truth of God has a special reference. Let me see whether I can identify them.

There are some of us who went into sin without any previous training whatever! Some of us were born of Christian parents and our earliest days were spent in a holy circle. We heard no evil language, we saw no evil example, we cannot remember anything that was wrong that crossed our path as children. Yet we went astray from childhood unto youth, pursuing evil as eagerly as did the children of the vicious! Wherever this is the case, does not the text come home with great sharpness, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself"? You cannot say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." You have eaten the sour grapes, yourselves, and set your own teeth on edge! Perhaps some, here, are the children of Christian ministers and they know where they spent last night—I do not. Perhaps some, here, were borne and trained by mothers whose purity was most exemplary—but they, themselves, though they never had an evil example, have plunged into sin as naturally as the young crocodile takes to the Nile! This is, with an emphasis, for a man to destroy himself!

So there are some who are not the victims of temptation, but they have deliberately gone into sin. I feel great pity for some that, from their peculiar constitution, seem as if their very flesh led their soul into mischief—from their birth they appeared to have a tendency towards such and such evils. We do not excuse these guilty ones, but, at the same time, are they as blameworthy as others who, without any particular pressure from outside or from within, nevertheless deliberately sin? Oh, my dear Friends, if you can sit down and look at sin coolly, and calculate and turn it over, and then, after weighing it in the scales, can go after it, then I must say, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." Yours was wanton, deliberate mischief! Who shall justify you before the bar of God at the great Judgment Day?

There are some who have to take a great deal of plotting and planning in order to be able to manage to sin at all. Their surroundings are such that they seem to be shielded and guarded against iniquities which are natural enough to others. They have to dodge the inspection of the household. They have to practice as many tricks to escape the eyes of wife or daughter as the burglar does when he tries to break into the house at night. Now, what shall I say of such who put all their wits to work to damn their souls—and are far more busy to ruin themselves than the greatest schemers and merchants are for a fortune? Yet there are many such and of these we have to say emphatically, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

Yes, and I have even seen them act thus against warnings given them with tears, warnings which have brought tears to their own eyes! They have pushed through the most loving obstacles downward to the Pit as if resolved to perish! And they have sinned against enlightenment, for Mr. Conscience has flashed his bull's-eye lantern in their eyes. They have stood, for a time, astonished at themselves, and have felt that they could not sin thus, yet they have soon said that they would—and they have pushed good Mr. Conscience to one side—and still pursued the down-

ward track. Oh, this is terrible! When a man acts thus, we must say of him, “you have destroyed yourself.”

Some will act thus distinctly against Providence. When God has stepped in their path and blocked them out of one sin, they have edged about, and gone to another! And when they could not effect their purpose. When it seemed as if the very earth and the stars in their courses would fight against them in their pursuit of sin, they have selected another road as if to baffle the God of mercy and destroy themselves whether He would let them do so or not! I am giving a terrible description, but I am painting sinners exactly as they are—I know I am! There are some here who will recognize their own portraits if they have any eyes left—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.”

Further, notice that in the text, *God, Himself, reminds the sinner of this sad fact!* Ought he not to have known it without being told of it? Yes, he should. Might he not have discovered it by listening to the Prophets who would have told him so? Assuredly he should! But God, Himself, breaks through all reserve and comes to this guilty sinner—and says to him, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself. See what has come of your iniquity? Did I not tell you it would be so? Look, and see for yourself.” It is not a man like yourself who tells you that it is so, but *God* who knows! God who never exaggerates! He tells you that you have destroyed yourself!

O my dear Hearer, it may be that while I am speaking to you in truth and soberness about this weighty matter, God, Himself, is speaking through my lips! Indeed, it is so! It is the Lord who says to you, “you have destroyed yourself; you have destroyed your innocence, you have destroyed your righteousness, you have destroyed your tenderness, you have well-near destroyed your conscience, you have destroyed your hopes, you have destroyed your best years, you have destroyed your usefulness, and now you have brought yourself to death’s dark door—

“Buried in sorrow and in sin.”

God Himself can say no less than this to you, “you have destroyed yourself.” God who loves men. God the tender-hearted and the generous. God who says, “How can I give you up?” Even He is forced to give this solemn verdict, “O Israel, you have not only hurt yourself, and wounded yourself, but you have damned yourself, you have destroyed yourself, you have ruined yourself! Your last hope is put out, like the last flicker of the candle, and you are left in the dark.”

It may be that some here will *confess the truth of this fact*. If so, bow your heads—solemnly bow before the living God and acknowledge that it is so, “Yes, I have destroyed myself.” It will be a bitter, bitter moment, and yet it will be the best moment you have ever lived, in which you sob out this confession, “O God, I have destroyed myself!” How I wish that I could make men act thus, but I cannot. We try to preach the Truth of God with all the earnestness we possess, but we cannot get the Truth into our hearer’s soul! On such a sultry night as this, you sit and listen to me with as much attention as you can in the closeness of the atmosphere, but O ungodly one, if this Truth of God really entered your heart, I question whether you would be able to keep your seat! It would fill you with an inward anguish and you would be ready to cry aloud, “What

shall I do, what shall I do, for I have ruined myself?" If you could see the pit that yawns for you. If you saw the chasm that is just before you—your foot is even now well-near over a bottomless gulf, yet you do not perceive it—if you did perceive it, it would be another matter for me to preach, and for you to hear this message, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself!"

II. I am very happy to be permitted by my text to now change my strain, praying that what has been already said may have its due effect and prepare the way for this more pleasing note. Here is, secondly, A HOPEFUL ASSURANCE—"But in Me is your help."

Notice that *this assurance came at a very fit time*. Just when the man was made to know that he had destroyed himself, *then* it was that God said to him, "But in Me is your help." What is the use of a Savior when you do not need saving? The point is to have a Savior when you are lost! And this is the glory of Christ, that He is a timely Redeemer who does not redeem those who are not slaves, but ransoms us when we are sold under sin! You will never know the Gospel till you have known the Law. If you have not felt the crushing power of the first sentence of my text, "you have destroyed yourself," you will not care for the cheering note that makes up the second sentence, "In Me is your help." Remember that when you have sinned—it is *then* that Christ washes you from sin. When you are lost, it is *then* that Christ saves you and if you are now full of sin, it is *now* that Christ can begin to bless you! If you now feel so leprous that there is not a sound spot in you, it is *now* that Christ can come and heal you!

"Oh!" you say, "if I did not feel as I now do, I think that Christ could heal me." He can heal you as you now feel, or as you do not feel—for if you are in such a condition that you *do not even feel*, but are brought to acknowledge that death has seized you, and seems to have petrified your very heart—yet where you are, and as you are, Christ is an all-sufficient Savior for you! If you have gone down seven pairs of stairs into the dungeon where the light never comes, yet Jesus can come to you, even there, and set you free at once! I do not know where to pick words strong enough to make this Truth of God quite plain and emphatic—*it is not your goodness that makes you fit for Christ*—it is your *badness* in which Christ shall be glorified by delivering you from it! The need may never be so great, but Christ can meet it! The distress may be never so urgent, but Christ can come and remove it! So, then, this assurance was hopeful because it came at a fit time. When Israel was destroyed, then God was his help!

Notice, next, that *it came as a contrast to their condition*—"you have destroyed yourself." Yes, yes, "but—but in Me is your help." "You have destroyed yourself. You can not save yourself. You have destroyed yourself, that is true, but then I have come, not to destroy you—not to do the work which you have done—you have done that effectually enough. There is no need for Me to come in and do more destroying. I have come to *undo* the work that you have done. I have come to give you a better righteousness than the one you have lost. I have come to give you a tenderness of heart far better than any you had by nature. I am come to give

you a new heart and a right spirit. I am come to work in you, again, all that you have destroyed! Yes, and to work in you something *better* than you have destroyed—to make you a new man in Christ Jesus. In Me is your help.” What a contrast is this to the condition of the one who has destroyed himself!

Observe, also, that *this assurance comes from God, Himself*—“In Me is your help.” O Soul, I wish that I could make you turn your eyes, once and for all, away from yourself and all that comes of yourself, for you will never get help there! I would have you look to God, to God in Christ Jesus, to God the Holy Spirit, to God the Divine Father—for if ever there is help for such an one as you are, that help must be in God! As an old friend said to me yesterday, “Nothing will do for you and me but Grace.” I said to him, “Yes, and that won’t do unless it is the Grace of God.” It must be God’s own Grace, redeeming us from all iniquity and working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, or else we can never be saved! But then God tells us that we *can* be saved, for though He says that we have destroyed ourselves, He adds, “But in Me is your help.”

Sitting in the pew, over yonder, is one who says, “Oh, but I am full of the most accursed sin!” I know that you are, but God is full of the most blessed mercy and in Him is your help! “Oh, but I am all failure, and shortcoming, and unrighteousness!” Yes, but God is all righteousness, and Grace, and faithfulness—and *there* is where your hope lies! “Oh, but I am powerless! I can do nothing!” I know that and I would have you know it—but the Lord is almighty and He can do everything! Cast yourself upon Him! This is faith—to go out of yourself to God, to get away from all this hampering mass of rottenness, this ruin, this destruction, the fallen manhood of the flesh and the self-confidence that grows like a fungus out of it—and come to the eternal God who is pure holiness—and rest in Him as He reveals Himself in the Person of His dear Son!

“I know,” says one, “that there is help in God.” You know something, but you do not yet know *everything*, for the text says, “In Me is *your* help.” Not only for Mary and for Thomas, but help for *you*. “In Me is *your* help.” “Surely,” exclaims one, “it does not mean *me*, for I am a destroyed one.” I tell you that it means *exactly* you, for this help is for the destroyed one—“You have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help.” “Possibly there may be help for So-and-So, who has a good natural disposition and has never gone astray as I have gone.” That may be. I do not know anything about him, but I have to deal with one, now, who has no good natural disposition and nothing whatever to recommend him. I have to deal with *you*, you destroyed one, you who are like an old ruin, broken and cast down, inhabited by moles and bats, a foul and filthy thing! You stand in the darkness, there, and it is Christ who comes to rebuild such as you are and make a Temple for Himself out of even *you*! I see you black and foul, not worthy to be picked off a dunghill, and it is such as *you* are that the splendor of Almighty Love has chosen, that in *you*, in all your rottenness and abomination, the glory of His Grace may be manifested by making something out of you though you are nothing—making a glorious righteousness to cover you though you are naked—and your very righteousnesses are but as filthy rags!

“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” Bury him! Bury the dead out of our sight! Cast him into the pit! “No,” says Mercy, “stop that dreadful procession! Let the bearers stand still. Christ comes to this dead young man and He says, ‘you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help.’” Look, the dead man lives! I see him sit upright! He is delivered to his mother and God is glorified in the resurrection of the dead. “You have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help.”

What do you say, Sinner? Will you have this help? “Have it?” you ask. “Have it? Yes, but I am not worthy.” Now, away with that nonsense! Have I not told you that the Lord comes to bless you not because of your worthiness, but because of His Grace? “What am I to do to have it?” You have nothing to *do* but *take* it! He freely gives it to you! “But surely there is something expected of me.” You are a fool if you expect anything of yourself but sin! All your expectation of good must be from God! You may expect great things of God, and then there will be great things worked in you, but what you have to do *now* is just to accept the infinite mercy of God and submit to Him as the clay on the wheel yields to the hand of the potter, that He may mold and fashion you, and make you to be a vessel of mercy fitted for His use.

God bless these words of mine to the salvation of some of you! I travail in birth for you till Christ is formed in you. I remember times when, if I had heard such an assuring word as this, when I was burdened with guilt and full of fears, I think I would have leaped forward to lay hold upon it! And if there are any such here, this message should be as though a rift were made in the clouds to let them see into Heaven. “In Me is your help,” says Christ on yonder eternal Throne! “In Me is your help,” says the Father in the splendor of His Glory! “In Me is your help,” says the Spirit who, like a dove, is hovering here, waiting to enter into some heart and work His gracious will!

III. I close with what I mentioned to you, the rendering of the Revised Version, which has much to be said in its favor. This gives us AN INSTRUCTIVE WARNING—“It is your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your help.”

Dear Friends, do not any of you fight against your only true Helper? Is not this a dreadful thing for anyone to do? We sometimes say of a man, “Now, you are standing in your own light. You know that it is only yourself that is hindering yourself.” We say this to the drunk who is earning good wages, and yet spending so much of his money in poisoning himself. We say to him, “You cannot keep on like this. You are ruining your health, you are robbing your family, you cannot prosper while you act thus, you are standing in your own light.” It is a very sad thing when this is the fact concerning a man’s *temporal* prosperity, but what shall I say of a man when he is his own *soul’s* destroyer, when he stands in the way of his own joy and peace through believing?

Let me close by beseeching you not to stand in your own light, any of you, or to act in antagonism to your only Helper. “How can we do that?” says one. Well, first, *by disbelieving the Gospel*. I have seen some do this very foolishly. I heard one say, the other day, “Well now, that is a very precious Gospel. I think, somehow, that I could believe it if it were not so

good as it is, but it seems too good to be true!” Well, if you keep on with that kind of talk, you will be very foolish, you will be standing in your own light! Suppose somebody were to come to your house and say to you, “You know such a mansion.” “Yes.” “You know that it has a beautiful park around it.” “Yes.” “Well, I have brought you the title-deeds of that estate. I am going to make you a present of it.”

Perhaps you would smile and say, “There are a great many practical jokes being played nowadays, and I suppose this is one of them.” But suppose that this person said, “No, this is a reality, it is no joke, it is a fact. Here are the title-deeds of this estate made out in your name.” Suppose that, month after month, you said, “It is too good to be true”? You would be very unwise. I think that if it were said to me, I would go and see, for I would say, “There are so many strange things that happen, nowadays, that one begins to expect the unexpected and, at any rate, I would sooner be made a fool of by being led to believe something more than is true, than I would make a fool of myself by not believing what is really true!”

If you were shut up in a prison, condemned to die tomorrow morning, and expected that at eight o’clock you would be hanged by the neck till you were dead—if someone stood at the prison door and said to you, “Here is a free pardon for you,” I can imagine your saying, “Don’t tantalize me. It is too good to be true!” But if you actually went out to be hanged, refusing the pardon because you thought that it was too good to be true—well, I do not know what I would say of you. The Gospel *cannot* be too good to be true! Whatever God says must be grandly good! It must be divinely, infinitely good! Do you believe it? Do not quarrel with God’s mercy because it is so great! Little mercy could not serve your turn. Therefore, do not cry out against it because it is so great, but come and accept it cheerfully, and say, “God be thanked for it! I will gladly receive this great favor which He so freely presents to me.”

Then, do not fight against God *by trifling with His mercy*. How often are persons impressed and awakened, yet they go straight into some silly or even wicked company! It is a terrible thing for some people that on the Sabbath they are often rendered serious by what they hear, and then on the weekday they go into amusements which distract them from better things and lead them on to evil things. And so the good Word of God is forgotten. Their goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew. What have any of you to do with mirth while you are unsaved? What have you to do with sightseeing till you have seen your Savior? There is not a moment you ought to waste, not an hour that you can spare, till you have found Christ and are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

Lastly, I pray you, do not fight against your best Friend, or contend against your only Helper *by hardening your hearts*. Ask to have them softened. Better still, whether hardened or softened, obey that blessed Gospel precept, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Remember how He, Himself, puts the matter, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Or as Paul put it, “If you shall confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has

raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart, man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.” Obey the heavenly message! Pause not, hesitate not, but hasten to obey the voice of Christ! And when this is done, then you shall find that despite your self-destruction, help enough was laid up in God even for you—and you shall sing forever to the praise of His Free and Sovereign Grace.

The Lord bless you, and this simple testimony of mine, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 13:1-14.**

Verse 1. *When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel.* When we are little in our own esteem. When we are full of fears concerning ourselves. When we dare not think of boasting, then it is that we grow! “When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel.”

1. *But when he offended in Baal, he died.* It is when, like Ephraim, we turn aside to other gods, when our heart goes astray from the Lord, that there is death—death to our joys, death to our confidence, death to our usefulness. No one knows what destruction there is, even in the least sin, to the most joyful Believer. It is like the hot breath of the Sirocco which scorches up every green thing. If, before this terrible blast, everything is like Eden, behind it all is as a desert. Let us read the whole verse again that we may lay to heart the lesson it teaches us. “When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.”

2. *And now they sin more and more.* That is the usual way of sin—it is a growing evil—its course is downhill.

2. *And have made there molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.* Their idolatry was such that they were not satisfied with the bulls that were set on high as images, but they had little imitations of these which they wore upon their persons, just as Romanists wear small crucifixes or crosses. These they carried about with them for their own private worship. Oh, what a tendency there is in sin to multiply itself! The idolaters were not satisfied with bowing the knee to false gods, but they said, “Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.” Superstition goes from one evil to another—there is no end to it! You may begin with what you call moderate Ritualism, but where you will end I cannot tell. Some go beyond the superstitions of Popery, itself! The only safe way is to worship the Lord our God and serve Him, alone, and purge out the idols from among us.

3. *Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.* If they make idols their gods, they shall be like their idols! Idols are but for a day—what is there in them of endurance? What is there in them of power? “They that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusts in them.” If we trust

in anything that we can see. If we trust in anything but God, then our hope shall be “as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away,” and we, ourselves, shall be like the chaff that is driven from the threshing floor by a whirlwind, or like the smoke driven out of the chimney by the blast!

4. *Yet I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no god but Me: for there is no Savior beside Me.* Now here is the wickedness of idolatry—that we have so good a God and yet must look after another! Here is the sin of trusting to an arm of flesh—that we have an almighty arm to lean upon and instead of doing so, we begin to look to a poor arm that has not strength enough to support itself, much less to support us! Are any of you children of God forgetting your God? Is your faith turning away from the great Invisible and the sure promises of His Word? Are you looking to the *creature*? Beware of it, I pray you! Whenever you do that, you are making a rod for your own back! If you forsake the Lord, to whom will you go?

5. *I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.* Look back upon days of your trouble, when God was very near to you. Do you not remember when He was everything to you? When you were poor, when you were sick, when you were despised, God knew you, then, yet now you sing—

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

6. *According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me.* What a terrible verse this is! After they had been filled, they turned away from the God that filled them! When they were poor and despised, then He was all to them! But afterwards, when, by His Providence, they grew rich and increased in goods, *then they forgot their God.* I have often seen it thus. It is a grievous evil under the sun. I have seen the man rejoicing in God, earnest and devout while he has been afflicted and poor. God has prospered him and then he has turned his back upon sacred things and made the *world* his joy. Is not this a horrible sin, a gross evil? I well remember one who used to steal into this House of Prayer on Thursday nights, glad to escape, a while, from the persecution in his own home. He had a hard time of it to be a Christian at all, but he came to be the possessor of his father’s estates and he has now no care for these things! He is a fashionable gentleman, now—he who once was glad enough to mix with even the poorest of God’s people and to find comfort among them! It is a sad thing when it is so and when the Lord has to say to any, “I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me.”

7, 8. *Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and I will tear open their rib cage, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.* For God is jealous and most jealous of those whom He loves best! He cannot endure that we should treat Him thus—He means to have our love by some means—and if He cannot have it by gentleness, He will have it by sterner methods. If the

Lord has chosen you, He will sooner be to you as a leopard and a lion than He will suffer you to live without Him. You must, you shall find your all in Him!

9, 10. *O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help. I will be your King.* If you have shifted Me from the Throne and set up an usurper, I will come and be your King even now.

10. *Where is any other that may save you in all your cities? To whom else can you look? Where else can you find peace?*

10. *And your judges of whom you said, Give me a king and princes? What is the good of them? Have they not all turned out to be a delusion?*

11, 12. *I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.* How sadly true this is! Sin seems to be bound up in our very nature. It is hard to find it—it is hidden away and when we discover some of it, and it is purged away—there is still more to be found! As hidden treasure may lie in a house for many a day and not be seen, so are there stores of corruption that seem hidden away in our nature, and are not easily discovered. What a gracious God we have to deal with, or else He would have swept us away long ago!

13, 14. *The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. I will ransom them from the power of the grave.* Oh, what great promises we get driven, like piles, into the marshes of our sin to make a foundation for God's Grace! Here, when the Lord says that we have destroyed ourselves and He notes all the blackness of our depravity, then He comes in with this gracious word, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave." You who believe in Jesus shall not die! No, not even the deadly force of sin shall hold you in your grave! There is a resurrection for the dead. There is a spiritual resurrection for you, Believers! When you mourn your death and cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" the Lord will answer you, "I will ransom you from the power of the grave."

14. *I will redeem them from death: O Death, I will be your plagues; O Grave, I will be your destruction: repentance shall be hid from My eyes.* Lord, work this quickening in Your people, tonight, and let us live in the fullness of Your Divine Love, and so anticipate the day when our bodies, also, shall be raised by Your glorious power!

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.**

CONSOLATION FROM RESURRECTION

NO. 2046

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1888,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be your plagues; O grave, I will be your destruction: repentance shall be hid from My eyes."
Hosea 13:14.

THIS verse stands in the midst of a long line of threats. Like a rock of mercy, it rises in the midst of a sea of wrath. Hence many critics have felt bound to see in it a continuation of threat. I am quite content to accept the united authority of the Authorized and the Revised Versions, and to believe that the mind of the Holy Spirit is fairly expressed in the grand old Bible of our fathers. I regard our text as a promise overflowing with delight.

While it does stand as a rock apart, this gracious Word is far from being the only one in the book of the Prophet Hosea. In the torrent bed of this Prophet's denunciations we find dust of the gold of promise. Hosea, in his style is jerky and abrupt—he says exactly what you do not think he is going to say. The Holy Spirit, speaking through him, interjects promises in the midst of threats, in wrath remembering mercy. If any should think that this passage is exceptional, let them read the rest of Hosea's prophecy. Let them pause for a minute over the eleventh chapter, resting at the eighth verse—

"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." Where was ever greater tenderness than this? When you get to the twelfth chapter, at the ninth verse, a still small voice is heard in the midst of the thunder—"I that am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt will yet make you to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast."

The fourteenth chapter is all of love and mercy—"O Israel, return unto the Lord your God. For you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips." Hear the gracious Word, verse four—"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him." So that our text, in its Christian interpretation, is not contrary to the general method of this prophecy. To find it here is very surprising. But it is after the manner of the Holy Spirit, when speaking by the Prophet Hosea.

Israel was coming to its very worst. The people were to be carried to Babylon and from there to be scattered to the ends of the earth. Yet the Lord, in His great love, lets them know that this was not to be a final and entire destruction. He would not utterly cast away the people whom He did foreknow, nor allow death to hold them in bondage forever. He would open their graves and bring them out and make them to know Jehovah. Therefore, He drops in this Word of promise when it was least expected.

I. I shall ask you this morning, first, to CONSIDER THE FACT WHICH IS HERE USED AS A FIGURE. The resurrection of the dead is here employed as a figure of that which the Lord was about to do for His people. At one time salvation from sin is called a creation and creation is a fact. Here it is resurrection from the dead and that also is sure to be accomplished in due time—we have the first fruits of it already. Brethren, there will be a special resurrection for those who are in Christ Jesus. “There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”

But for the members of the body of Christ there is a resurrection from among the dead. These are the many that sleep in the dust of the earth who shall awake to everlasting life (Daniel 12:2). They rise because they are one with Christ in His resurrection. His resurrection is the proof and the guarantee that they also shall rise in the day of His appearing. “If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin. But the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Rom. 8:10). Their bodies, which were redeemed as truly as their souls, is left during this life under mortgage to nature.

Therefore they suffer pain and weakness and ultimate death and decay—but their bodies, I say, being a part of the purchase of the precious blood, shall be raised again from the dead. That which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power. That which is covered with dishonor by the very fact of death and decay shall be raised in splendor, made like unto the glorious body of Christ. This is no poetic fiction but a literal matter of fact, even as was the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We hear our Redeemer say, “Your brother shall rise again,” and we accept it literally. Our dear ones whom we have laid in the grave shall come again from the land of the enemy. Concerning ourselves, also, we believe, as we just sang—

**“Sweet Truth to me,
I shall arise,
And with these eyes
My Savior see.”**

We accept the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead as the Revelation of Christianity. The immortality of the soul was seen before the appearing of our Lord in a dim and cloudy manner. But the resurrection of the dead was not discoverable by the light of nature and when it was at first preached, men called the preacher a “babbler.” They could not understand that such a thing could be. The philosophy of human nature rejected the resurrection, and rejects it still. Only by the Revelation of Christ do we know that the dead shall rise again.

This resurrection is connected with redemption—“I will ransom them from the power of the grave.” A ransom is the paying of a price for some-

thing. There was a price paid for us, to deliver us from the death which is the desert of sin. You know who paid it and how He paid it. Remember how He opened wide His hands and poured forth more than gold. Remember how His side was pierced by the spear, that the deep mines of His life—wealth—might be emptied out for us. Jesus our Lord has paid the ransom price.

Now are we “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). Another word is used in the parallel sentence of our text—“I will redeem them from death.” It refers to the redemption of an inheritance by the next-of-kin. “I know that my Redeemer lives” is the ground of Job’s confidence as to his resurrection and justification. My next-of-kin, to whom the right of redemption belonged in equity, has stepped in and has fully redeemed both my soul and my body. What a blessed Truth of God is this, that the ransom of the body is paid so that this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality!

Though the body remains for a while subject to vanity, yet the term of this subjection will soon run out, the ransom being already paid. Regeneration has liberated the soul and resurrection will do the like for the body before long. The margin has it, “I will ransom them from the hand of the grave: I will redeem them from death.” O Beloved, we come into the grave’s hand, as it were, and firm is the grip of the sepulcher. But our God says, “I will redeem them from the hand of the grave.” The grave holds the bones of the saints as with the grasp of an iron hand. But the redemption of our Lord Jesus will open the giant fist and set the prisoners free. Glory be to God for the sure hope of resurrection!

No mass of stone, nor superincumbent clay shall keep down these bodies of ours when our Savior’s angels shall “their golden trumpets sound.” Beloved, there remains nothing due upon the estate of our bodies for which they can be detained in the dust when the Lord Jesus comes to awaken them from their long sleep. They shall freely rise to be reunited with the disembodied but happy spirits to which they belong. We look for a resurrection from among the dead. “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power” (Rev. 20:5, 6).

This, according to our text, is worked entirely by Divine power. It must be so. For how could the dead contribute to their own lives? How can bodies which have been dissolved in the sepulcher reconstruct themselves? Here you have in the text the Divine Personality asserting itself four times—“I will ransom them,” “I will redeem them.” “O death, I will be your plagues.” “O grave, I will be your destruction.” Here we have “I will” four times. Who but He that made can re-make? But all things are possible to the Creator. We have heard many objections raised to the doctrine of the resurrection. Let them object as long as they please.

Grant us a God and nothing is impossible or even difficult. With a God who can work miracles nothing becomes incredible. Whatsoever the eter-

nal God decrees concerning the resurrection of His elect He will readily accomplish. For He is abundantly sufficient for it. What a triumph will the resurrection be for the Lord God! He has been pleased to give the special honor of it to His own dear Son. By the risen Christ we shall be raised again from the dead. We shall sing hallelujahs to Him that was slain. He by death has destroyed death and by His resurrection has torn away the gates of the grave. This is our Lord's doings and we adore Him because of it.

Observe, next, that by the resurrection, death itself is transformed and totally overcome. He says, "O death, I will be your plagues," as if death were personified and then itself plagued—its own arrows of pestilence being shot into itself. Beloved, death no longer kills but rather admits to a larger life. It no more destroys but rather it perfects—I mean not of itself but through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is no longer death to die. It is no longer punishment to the Believer but a dismissal from banishment.

You that are in your sins will die in your sins, and to you, death is death, indeed. But to the child of God, death is so altered that he who has the power of death, that is, the devil, is sore vexed. He is plagued by seeing the joy with which the Believer dies. It is a grand thing to see a man dying full of life—the river of his mortal life comes to an end but only by widening into the ocean of the Glory-life above. Satan gloated over the mischief which he had worked by death. But lo, it is through death that Jesus has destroyed him and delivered His people.

God makes His dying people to be like the sun, which never seems so large as when it sets. All the glories of midday are eclipsed by the marvels of sunset. Watch the west! See how the clouds are mountains of gold and the skies are seas of fire. All the tapestries of Heaven are hung out to welcome the returning hero of the day to its rest beyond the western sea. So does the dying saint light up his dying chamber with heavenly splendor as he sets upon this world to shine in another. Thus the Lord plagues death, leaving the monster powerless to harm or even terrify the Believer.

As for the sepulcher, it is destroyed. "O grave, I will be your destruction." No grave shall detain one of the redeemed. The tomb is—

***"No more a morgue, to fence
The relics of lost innocence;
A place of ruin and decay
The imprisoning stone is rolled away."***

The grave is our bedchamber, which our Lord Himself has furnished for us by leaving in it His own grave clothes. It is a retiring-room whose odor is most sweet to love. For—

***"There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a blessed perfume."***

Death, you are not death! Grave, you are no grave! The names remain, but the nature of the things has altered altogether.

To close this first subject—this resurrection will abolish death and every possibility of it in the future. I notice that certain persons, in their anxiety to suck the meaning out of the word "everlasting," so as to avoid

everlasting punishment, have questioned the everlasting nature of Heaven. They have even gone the length of hinting that they are not quite clear that if Believers get to Heaven they will always remain there. Yes, and this is what it comes to. Nothing is safe from these revolutionists. They would tear away every Covenant blessing from the children of God in their zeal to make the punishment of sin a trifle.

To do honor to their own intellect, they would sacrifice the eternal blessedness of those washed by the blood of Christ! But it is not so. Jesus has said—"Because I live, you shall live also." As long as Christ lives we must live—as long as Christ is in Heaven we must be with Him where He is, to behold His Glory. So long as God is God His children, partakers of the Divine nature, must live forever and be forever blessed. Raised from the dead and taken up to Christ's right hand we shall henceforth fear no second death. When sun and moon grow dim with age and earth's blue skies are rolled up like a worn-out vesture, we shall enjoy an age like the years of God's right hand, like His own eternity. The great I AM shall be the bliss of every soul whom Christ has redeemed from the grave and this shall know no end.

To this the Lord sets His seal. Do you want to see the red wax and the Divine impression on it? Look at the close of the text, "Repentance shall be hid from My eyes." There does Jehovah declare His unalterable decree—it must and shall be even so. That His saints shall rise from the dead is the immutable decree of God. In all this, let us rejoice. Our future is bright with glory. These things are revealed to faith but they are not to be seen of the eye, nor even conceived in the heart, nor pictured by the imagination—

***"I know not, oh,
I know not, what joys await us there!
What radiance of glory!
What bliss beyond compare!"***

This much, however, we *do* know, that there is to be a rising for us, even as our Lord has risen and we shall be satisfied when we awake in His likeness. Constantly in Scripture is this resurrection used as the figure of God's delivering and blessing His people. And especially as the figure of regeneration or the giving of a new and spiritual life to those who were by nature dead in trespasses and sins. I intend to use it so in our next line of thought.

II. In the second place, IN THESE WORDS LIE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO LOOK FOR DELIVERANCE OUT OF GREAT TROUBLES. The encouragement comes in this way—God, who will surely raise His people from the dead by His own power, can and will as surely raise them from every kind of trouble and apparent destruction. If there can be any comparison of ease with omnipotence, it must be easier to raise Job from his dunghill, than to raise Job from his grave. If God, therefore, shall restore us from the sepulcher, He can certainly restore us from sickness, from poverty, from slander, from depression of spirit, from despair. That is clear—who shall doubt it?

God will delight to work the work of our deliverance. If He takes pleasure in raising a dead body, He will assuredly take pleasure in raising from their distresses those in whom He delights. The Lord rejoices in our joy. He does not afflict willingly but He blesses us joyfully. Therefore, we may rest assured that He will turn again, and have compassion, and raise us up from our despondency.

The ends and designs for which the Lord afflicts us are very gracious and we may expect that He will end the affliction when those designs are accomplished. When the Lord puts us into the furnace it is to refine us. And as soon as the dross is consumed He will bring forth the pure gold. He puts us under chastisement for our profit. And when that profit is accomplished, He will break the rod. We may assuredly expect that He who brings up dead bodies from the grave will bring His distressed people up from their troubles, when those troubles have worked their lasting good.

And now, to come to the text, we must traverse the same ground again—this deliverance comes through *redemption*. Beloved, He that redeemed Israel from all iniquity will also redeem Israel from all his troubles. That redemption price of the Lord covers every necessity of His people and supplies every mercy that they will need between here and Heaven. Do not, therefore, doubt or despair, because your troubles seem as if they would slay you, for the Angel who has redeemed your body from death will redeem you from all evil. He that will bring your body from the grave will love you up from the pit of trouble, even when you are ready to perish.

Redemption covers all and secures from every danger. He that died for you, lives for you and cares for you. You shall be supplied, not only with Divine Grace and glory but with food and raiment. “Your bread shall be given you; your waters shall be sure.” Oh, rest in the Lord; especially confide in the redemption of Jesus. Let the precious blood speak peace to you. For if He has bought your soul, He has bought all that goes with it and all that is needed for this life as well as the next. As well our temporal as our eternal concerns come under the protection of the blood, The Paschal lamb, whose sprinkled blood shielded the house wherein the Israelite was sheltered, also became to him food for his journey. He who provides Heaven will provide all necessaries on the road there.

This deliverance will also be God’s work. I have shown you that it was so in resurrection, concerning which the great “I will” is so prominent in the text. Now, if you are in great trouble, do not run to friends and acquaintances, nor reckon up your own strength—but make direct resort to God who quickens the dead. He that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus is He that can and will deliver you. He will raise up your mortal body without the help of man or of angel. And He can, apart from created strength, upraise you from your present woe. He is the God of salvation and unto Him belong the issues from death. His name is Shaddai—God All-Sufficient—trust Him fully.

When He made the heavens, who was there to help Him? What aid does He need in rescuing His servants? Oh, learn to wait only upon the Lord!

Do not think that I am talking mere words. No—trust in God must be real and practical and it must be simple and unmixed. “My Soul, wait only upon God. For my expectation is from Him.” Oh, how sweet it is to rest on God’s bare arm! Long have I known what it is to trust in God and at the same time to repose on the help of many friends. But now I know what it is to rest in Him unmoved when forsaken of many. I cling to that dear arm and find it all the help I need.

And now I will henceforth abide in my confidence in that lone arm. And should deserters all return and ten thousand friends rally to my side, I will not spare them a particle of my reliance but still cry, “My Soul, wait only upon God.” Behold the great hero of the conflict with the powers of darkness treads the winepress alone and of the people there is none with Him—let us associate none with Him in our faith. If you rest on God, alone, as the Rock of your salvation, you need never fear. Often does the Lord afflict us to this end, even as Paul says, “But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raises the dead.”

When the Lord delivers His people, His work is singularly complete, for He triumphantly turns evil into good. We shall yet exult over that which now casts us down. That which threatened to kill us shall increase our life and we shall hear our Lord say to it, “O death, I will be your plagues; O grave, I will be your destruction.” He will turn mourning into dancing, loss into gain, sorrows into joys. He will enrich you by your impoverishment. He will make you strong out of weakness. He will give you health by means of sickness. And fullness by emptying you.

Does the Adversary threaten to destroy you? You shall be more than a conqueror. Are you led away in bonds? You shall lead your captivity captive. Those who seek your ruin will unconsciously be doing the best thing that could be done for you. Their malice shall bruise your spices and cause their aroma to flow out. He that by shameful death wins greater glory, shall by your afflictions increase your greatness and comfort you on every side. The Lord will not only prevent the powers of evil from doing you harm but He will cause you to damage their empire by your patience. You shall be the plague of Satan and the destroyer of his strongholds. That which seemed to be the death and burial of your hope shall be the overthrow of your fears.

The Lord will do this so completely that He will make you sing concerning it. In the book of Hosea the Lord declared a fact in plain language. But when the work was done, the Lord, by His servant Paul, made it into a song for His chosen in that famous chapter of the Corinthians—“O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?” Let us catch the spirit of this lyric and translate it thus! “O poverty, where is your penury? O sickness, where is your misery? O weakness, where is your loss? O slander, where is your sting?” We shall before long look back upon all our afflictions with gladness and bless the Lord for them as for our chief blessings.

We may yet feel like that great saint who, when he recovered from sickness, cried, "Take me back to my sick bed again, for there have I enjoyed such fellowship with Christ as I never knew before." We may yet have to say, as certain saints of the Church of Scotland said, "Oh, that we were meeting among the moors and the hills once more. For never had the bride of Christ such fellowship with the Bridegroom as when she met Him in secret places." The Lord knows how to lift us high by that which cast us low and to make Psalms for our stringed instruments out of the dirges which drowned our music. The God of the resurrection has delivered, does deliver, and will deliver His people.

III. Time fails me and therefore I must hurry on, else I had loved to linger and expand. SEE HERE A DECLARATION THAT GOD WILL SAVE HIS CHOSEN FROM THEIR DEATH IN SIN. He that will raise our bodies from the grave will, according to His Everlasting Covenant, raise His chosen from their death in sin.

This must be so. If the Lord did not raise His people's souls from their death in sin, a resurrection of their bodies would be a curse rather than a blessing. Resurrection will be no benefit to those who die unregenerate. My Hearers, you will all rise from the grave. But I fear that some of you will rise to shame and everlasting contempt. That is an awful passage which I quoted just now from the Book of Daniel—think much of it. Therefore since God will not have His people rise to shame and everlasting contempt He will make their souls to rise first into newness of holy life. This regeneration must come to all of you, if you are to be partakers of the glory of Christ hereafter. You must be quickened, though you were dead in trespasses and sins. That fact suggests a question to each heart—have you received the Divine life?

If you are, indeed, made alive unto God, you will agree with me that this resurrection comes to us entirely through redemption. There is no quickening a dead soul, except by the process here described—"I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death." Did the Law of God, when you heard it, ever quicken you? No, it slew you. "When the commandment came, sin revived and I died." It made your death more apparent to you but it brought you no life. Did the eloquence of men, or human persuasion ever raise you from spiritual death?

You listened to it and you listened but you listened in vain. You were moved with human affections but these human affections passed away like the morning dew. Beloved, life only came to you when you received Christ Jesus, your Redeemer. Well do I remember when I first looked unto Him and lived! The life and the look came together. There is no receiving eternal life apart from believing in Him who is the Life. There is no life except by looking unto Jesus. Your uplifted eye must be fixed on the uplifted Savior crucified as the redemption of His people—life only comes to us through His redeeming death.

God Himself only makes us live by Christ Jesus. He is the Life. You cannot yourself create life. Nor can you renew it, except by coming to your Lord's dear wounds again. Oh, that we could dwell on Calvary! Oh, that

we never turned our eyes away from the Cross! Let me be crucified with Christ so as never to part from perpetual, conscious union with Him. In Him we died unto sin, in Him we were redeemed from death and the curse and in Him we live forever. Our resurrection from spiritual death is always connected with the precious blood once shed for many for the remission of sins.

You will follow me in this also—quickenings is always the Lord's work. Here He may repeat the "I will" of the text all the four times. We spoke of resurrection as solely the work of God—so must the implantation of spiritual life be the work of the Spirit of God and of Him alone. Never let us dream that we can make ourselves alive unto God or that we can quicken our unconverted friends. You could not make the simplest insect—how could you make a new heart and a right spirit? This is the finger of God—no, this needs the *arm* of God, as it is written—"to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The full power of God is needed to beget faith's life within the soul of man.

Further, keep up the parallel between regeneration and resurrection as seen in the text and notice that whenever the Lord raises His dear ones from the dead and makes them live, it is a great plague to death. He that has the power of death must often be grievously annoyed when he sees a dead sinner begin to live unto God. "I did reckon on him," says he. "I wrapped him up in the cerements of drunkenness, I shut him up in the dark sepulcher of ignorance. And yet he is alive!" "I did reckon on the debauched man," says he, "I saw him rotting in lasciviousness. He was so far gone in lust that he was given over by his friends. But my great enemy, Jesus Christ, has come here and made even the corrupt to live!"

Again and again the Adversary has to feel that Christ is his plague and that He will be his destruction. When Jesus raises men from the dead He shows who is Master and makes the Adversary know that his dominion is soon to fall. As in his lifetime on earth the Lord overcame both the devil and death by a word, even so it is now and His name is thereby greatly glorified. Those who are made alive, how greatly do they plague the enemy of souls when they begin to talk aloud of Free Grace and dying love? When black sinners show themselves washed in the blood of the lamb, when lips that used to curse, begin to sing hallelujahs and tongues that talked infidelity, begin to proclaim the testimony of the true faith, how the Prince of Darkness is afflicted! How the sepulchers of sin are destroyed!

Right well does the poet say—

***"Satan rages at his loss,
And hates the doctrine of the Cross."***

This work once done is an abiding work. I point again to the seal at the bottom of the text. "Repentance shall be hid from My eyes." God resolves that they shall live for He has redeemed them and His redemption price is too precious to be wasted. He has ransomed them from the grave and they shall never return to their grim prison again. They shall live to plague Satan but they shall not live to be overcome by him. What the Lord has done

He will not suffer sin, death or Hell to undo. Nothing shall lead Him to repent of His design, or turn from the purpose of His heart.

Jesus lifts His hand and says, "I give unto My sheep eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Man's work is superficial and therefore soon disappears. All that nature spins, nature unravels—all that is woven in the loom of human excitement will be rent to pieces by the hand of time and trial. But surely I know that what God does He does forever and it stands fast without a change. Oh, that He would this morning come and quicken dead souls! Pray, dear Brothers and Sisters, that it may be so!

The Lord will do as He wills. Does He not say, "I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion"? Oh, that He would have compassion on this great congregation at this moment and give them life! We heard the cry of human weakness just now when our sister was taken in a fit. I doubt not that our Lord heard it, too, and pitied the bodily infirmity—how much more will He hear the voice of our spiritual need and have pity upon our death in sin!

IV. What little time you can yet afford me, I will use in stating THAT HERE WE HAVE AN ASSURANCE THAT THE LORD CAN DELIVER FROM ANY OTHER FORM OF DEATH. I ask you now to think of a few matters very briefly.

The Jews—as an organized nationality are dead. They are a people scattered and divided under the whole Heaven. Truly might they say, as in the Prophet Ezekiel, "Our bones are dried and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts." We have no instance in history of a nation dying and coming to life again. Assyria, Babylon, these had their day and they failed and passed away. Where are they now? Can these empires live again? Persia, Greece, Rome—these vast dominions died morally and then they ceased to be a living power. Can they ever be restored? Impossible.

But because her God lives, Israel can never die. Israel will be a nation, yet again, and a glorious one. Restored to her own land and rejoicing in her own Messiah, who is "the glory of His people Israel," it shall be seen that the Lord has not cast off His people. It seems impossible. Our missions are, to a large extent, a failure. They become the ridicule of the ungodly because so little success attends them. Yet shall all Israel be saved. Shall not their restoration be as life from the dead? It shall. And because it will be like life from the dead, He that will raise dead bodies will raise poor Israel yet. The seed of faithful Abraham, who believed God that He could raise up Isaac from the dead, shall be raised out of their low estate. A nation of priests shall they be unto Him who of old made them the keepers of His oracles. O lovers of the seed of Abraham, be comforted concerning them.

In the next place, suppose the Church at large should decline to a spiritual death—and I am sure it does so just now—what then? The faults which are now so apparent may only be the beginning of worse evils. Brethren are prophesying that the Jesuits will ruin us and others that Rationalism will eat out the heart of the Church. I think both these sets of

prophets have a good deal to say for themselves. The signs of the times are much with them. But suppose error should become rampant in all our Churches, as it may. Suppose those who bear testimony should grow fewer and their voices should be less and less regarded, as they may be.

Suppose at last the true Church of Christ should scarcely be discoverable and that men should bury it and dance a courtly dance upon its grave and say, "We have done with these believers in atonement. We have done with these troublesome evangelical doctrines." What then? The Truth will rise again. The eternal Gospel will burst her sepulcher. "Vain the watch, the stone, the seal." Let us take comfort in the fact that God, who will raise the dead, will also raise up buried Truth and incarnate it again in a living Church, even though the world should exult that both doctrine and Church are down among the dead.

Some of you, perhaps, from the country, may happen to belong to Churches which have come near to death's door. That which is true of the Church at large is true of any individual Church. Have faith in God. He can trim the expiring lamp. Even to Laodicea, which He spewed out of His mouth, the Lord came, knocking at the door. They talk about shutting the doors of the Chapel. Has it come to that? Prayer Meetings, are they given up? Gospel preaching, have you almost forgotten the joyful sound? The Sunday school, has that become a farce? Does everything seem dead? Cry to the living God. Do not say to yourself, "Can these dry bones live?" They can, if the living God intervenes.

God, who made Ezekiel see the dry bones stand up as a great army, can make you see it. Be of good confidence. Have hope for Zion, for the Lord will restore her in answer to your cries. Take pleasure in her stones and favor her dust, for the time to favor her, yes, the set time has come. "When the Lord shall build up Zion He will appear in His Glory." Suppose I am now speaking to some child of God, who says, "I can believe all this. But, alas, I feel dead myself." We do sometimes faint and are full of fears and cry, "Will the Lord cast us off forever? And will He be favorable no more?"

We trust we do really love the Lord. But we get very dull at times and cry out—

***"Dear Lord and shall we always live
At this poor, dying rate—
Our love so faint, so cold to You,
And Yours to us so great?"***

We feel as if we could not pray. There is no singing in us. And we feel as if we could not feel. At times we are so dull and stupid that we cannot think ourselves to be enlightened of the Lord at all. For my own part, "I am more brutish than any man" at times, in my own esteem.

Be our case as it may, let not faith waver because feelings change. When you are down in the dumps remember that as the Lord will raise your dead body He can certainly revive your fainting heart. Trust in Him to restore your soul. This very morning, I hope, is ordained to be a resurrection morning to you. Before you leave this House of Prayer I hope the

silver trumpet of the Gospel will be heard like the trumpet of the resurrection and you will say to yourself, "I will leave my grave, for I live unto God." By God's Grace, leave the vaults and come into the upper air of trust and thanksgiving.

A man, finding himself imbedded in the snow, discovered, to his horror, that he could not move his feet, for they were frozen. Nor his hands, for they were stiff with cold. He would have given himself up, therefore, as certainly doomed to die, but he found that he could speak and here was hope. His tongue was not frozen so he began to call aloud. And he did not call long before helpers came and dug him out and thawed him back to life. If you cannot do anything else, my dear Friend, do cry aloud. Cry, "O God, help me! O Lord quicken me!"

Do any of you say, "Well, I never get into so sad a state. I am always lively"? I am very glad to hear it, if it is true. But I have heard that the statues in St. Paul's Cathedral are never afflicted with rheumatism. And the reason is because they have no life. I am just a little afraid that you also may have no changes and no fears because you have no spiritual life. God knows whether it is so or not. Look to it. I would sooner have the rheumatism and be alive than be without pain and be a statue. The most painful life is preferable to the stillest death.

But O you dying saints of God—you poor, fainting, perishing Believers—take hope this morning, for the Holy Spirit will revive you, even as Jesus says, "He that lives and believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Lastly, let us have that same hope about our unconverted friends. We want to see them born again during this week of special services. Let us begin by knowing what they are and what is their condition. Do not say, "I hope my boy will be saved, because I do not see much evil in him." Your boy is as spiritually dead by nature as anybody else's boy. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." And however good your flesh may be, it is only flesh and only flesh has come of it.

I beg you to regard every soul that is not begotten unto God as being dead in sin, else you will not go to the bottom of things and you will not go the right way to work. Next, go to the Lord and Giver of life and say, "Lord, I cannot make this dear child live. I cannot bring my unconverted husband to You. I will do all I can by teaching, persuasion and example. But O my Lord, I look to You to give the spark of Divine life."

Go to God with your anxiety for dead souls and cry, "Lord, quicken them!" In dependence upon the Spirit of God, preach the Gospel which is the vehicle of Divine life and you shall see them live. Have faith about those who are laid on your heart. God grant your faith a full and speedy reward, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

THE JOYOUS RETURN

NO. 2192

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 1, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods: for in You the fatherless find mercy.”
Hosea 14:1-3.

We are in the last chapter of the book of the Prophet Hosea. Throughout the book there has been thunder—sometimes a low rumbling, as of a distant tempest—sometimes peal on peal, as of a storm immediately overhead. And now the tempest has gathered all its force. Here it culminates. You expect the bolt of Heaven to destroy. Lo, instead thereof, a silver shower of mercy! The gentle drops come down plenteously and you hear them fall upon the tender herb like soft and low music. God does not say, “O Israel, depart accursed!” But instead thereof, in dulcet tones He cries, “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” In the midst of wrath He remembers mercy—

***“When God’s right arm is bared for war,
And thunders clothe His cloudy car,”***

even then He stays His uplifted hand, reins in the steeds of vengeance, and holds communion with Grace—“for His mercy endures forever,” and, “judgment is His strange work.”

To use another figure—the whole book of Hosea is like a great trial wherein witnesses have appeared against the accused and the arguments and excuses of the guilty have been answered and baffled. All has been heard *for* them and much, very much, *against* them—and the convicted stand at the bar to hear their sentence. Behold the Judge, instead of putting on the black cap to pronounce doom of death, stretches out His hands to the condemned and, in tones of pity, cries, “O Israel, return”!

This is a wonderful chapter to be at the end of such a book. I had never expected, from such a prickly shrub, to gather so fair a flower, so sweet a fruit! But so it is—where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound! No chapter in the Bible can be more rich in mercy than this last of Hosea and yet no chapter in the Bible might, in the natural order of things, have been more terrible in judgement! Where we looked for the blackness of darkness, behold a noontide of light!

While I am preaching from such a text, I feel the need of special help from the Holy Spirit. I lift up my heart for it. Will you not, my Brothers and Sisters, pray for me, that my Hearers may not only hear *my* voice, but may perceive the inward *voice of God* speaking to their hearts? The Lord Himself is the speaker of the text—it is Jehovah who says, “O Israel, return.” May many of you hear the voice of God and in that voice perceive an over-powering Omnipotence which shall turn your thoughts and souls into the right way, making you willing in the day of His power!

I ask you to consider, first, *the call to come to God*—“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” And, secondly, *the argument for coming*—“For you have fallen by your iniquity.” Thirdly, we shall dwell upon *the help in coming* which the Lord gives to those who are willing to obey. He says, “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.” In conclusion, we shall pray to see in many *the coming by this help*. May my unconverted Hearers return unto the Lord, and know the power of His restoring Grace!

I. First, notice THE CALL TO COME—“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” Oh, that the call may be made effectual this day!

It is a very instructive call, for it tells the sinner exactly what he has to do. Return—that is, reverse your course! The course you have taken is the opposite of that which you ought to have taken. Therefore, come back. You have gone from God—come back to God! You have been prayerless—begin to pray! You have been hardened—yield to the Word. You have been full of quibbling—believe even as a little child! Bring forth fruits meet for repentance and not the fruits of obstinate persistence in evil. To many there could be no better direction in spiritual morals than this word, “Return.” Do what you have not done—leave undone what you have been doing! Reverse the original. Take the other track! “Return!” is but a single word, but that word is full of meaning. There is to be a change, a total change, a coming back to God.

The word is also instructive because it says, Return *unto the Lord*.” Do not only *look* to God, but *return* to Him. Arise and go to your Father. Do not think about it, but do it! Do not return part of the way to this and to that good custom and salutary habit, but come right back to the Lord and rest not till you feel that you are in His arms. It is of no use for the prodigal to say, “I will arise,” unless he adds, “and go to my father.” It is of no use his quitting one far-off country for another! But it must be said of him, “And he arose and came to his father.” The best direction we can give to many a sinner is—Reverse your course of life and let your reversed course of life lead you to God, Himself. How surely will he need the abounding Grace of God for such a work as this! Virgil’s lines are true—

***“The gates of Hell are open night and day.
Smooth the descent and easy is the way.
But to return and seek the upper skies,
In this the task and mighty labor lies.”***

The call is very practical. It does not ask for sentiment, but for *action*—“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” Do not, as I have said before,

merely *think* of it, but resolutely and thoughtfully return! Do not speculate about *when* you will do it—let it be done now! Procrastinate no longer—quit halting and hesitating, once and for all. Cease to count the loss or the gain of it, but take the decisive step—“O Israel, return.”

I cannot help reminding you that this instructive and practical exhortation is also *a very pathetic call*. The “O,” with which it commences is not used as an oratorical embellishment. Loving entreaty breathes in it. He who speaks is in earnest and pleads with all His heart. It is God, Himself, who says, “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” It is not a chill command—cold and sharp, like the sword of the Lord in the day of doom. But, albeit, it has all the force of a command—it is a warm and tender entreaty from the lips of Love—“O Israel, return.” In that, “O,” I seem to hear at once the *weeping* of the Lord Jesus, the sounding of the heart of the great Father and the grieving of the Holy Spirit, “O Israel, return” is a sorrowful, tender, gentle, wooing voice which I beseech you to regard. Possibly some of you may have had to plead with one of your own children who has been very willful and has threatened to do that which would have been exceedingly injurious to him. You have said, “Oh, do not so, my Son! Oh, do not so, my Daughter!” And you have thrown your soul into your pleading. Even thus does God, with sacred pathos, with love welling up from the depth of His heart, plead with every sinner before me! And He words the pleading thus—“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.”

I would remind you, also, that, pathetic as it is, *it is a Divine call*. “O Israel, return!” Who says it? The Prophet? Yes, but more than the Prophet—He who pleads is the Prophet’s *God*. The first motion towards reconciliation is never from the sinner, but always from God. The sinner does not cry, “O Lord, my God, permit me to return”—no, but the Lord, Himself, who watches the wandering one and sees him falling to his ruin, cries out, in the freeness of His Grace, “O Israel, return!” What matters it to the Lord though a man should even plunge down to Hell? The Lord will be glorious, though the rebel perishes! The Lord has no need of men. Yet the Lord thinks much of wandering men and longs for their return. Out of the freeness and riches of His love, He calls them to Himself. He swears by His own life that He wills not the death of the sinner, but that he turn to Him and live. Because of His spontaneous love and pity, He cries, plaintively, “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” Listen, then, my Hearers! If it were *my* call, you might refuse it with small blame—but it is *God’s* call—shall your Maker call in vain? Will you add to all your sin, the turning of your back upon the God of Love? Shall Jehovah cry in pity to your souls and cry in vain? God grant it be not so! Here from this text, which, once written, remains, there sounds out of the eternal deep of boundless mercy this cry of Divine Grace—“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God!”

And so I will say no more about this call except that *it is evidently a very gracious one*. He puts it so, “Return unto the Lord *your* God.” If you, O Sinner, will return to the Lord, He will be your God! He will enter into covenant with you. He will give Himself over to you to be yours. Henceforth you shall have a property in Jehovah and all the wealth of His infi-

nite Nature shall be yours. You shall be able to say, "This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." That man has made a great speech who has truly said, "God is mine." There is more in calling God our God than if we could hold the title-deeds of both the Indies, or claim possession of the stars! God, in the infinity of His Grace, declares, "I will be their God."

I cannot preach as I would. Who can compass such a theme as this? Oh, that you were wise, that you knew what was good for you! Then would you answer to this call. O Sinner, how I wish that you were delivered from your madness! Then you would no longer turn your back upon your own blessedness, nor would you any longer reject the Lord your God to your own confusion. Your present course will lead you down to utter and entire destruction—therefore, pause, I pray you! No, I say more! Do not stay where you are, but return, return at once! See you not what a welcome God will give you? He says not, "Return unto your Judge," but, "Return unto your *God*." It is not written, "Return like an escaped prisoner to your jailer, return to the whip and to the stocks," but, "Return unto the Lord your God." This God shall be your exceeding joy! Albeit I cannot put my soul into such words as I could wish, I am sure that men who are wise and prudent will think upon these things and will be led to seek after the Lord, from whom all blessings flow. I remember how, when I perceived the freeness and preciousness of the Gospel, I ran towards it, being drawn that way by a strong desire for that which promised such great things to me! May many a man and woman out of the present company say, "I will answer to the Divine entreaty. Jehovah bids me return and return I will!"

II. Secondly, I beg you to notice THE ARGUMENT FOR COMING. "Return unto the Lord your God; *for you have fallen by your iniquity.*" What a wonderful argument is this! You are in an evil plight through sin, therefore return to the Lord your God. "But," says one, "I was afraid I might not come because I had fallen." See how your fear is anticipated? The case is reversed and your having fallen is made by the Lord into an argument why you should return to Him! "I am broken-down," says one. "I have fallen so badly that I shall never be worth a penny for any good work." Yet the Lord cries, "Return, for you have fallen." I hear one moaning, "I am broken to pieces by sin—I am like an old pot that has fallen on the stones. I am useless." For that very reason the Lord of Mercy bids you return! "Return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen." What ingenuity of mercy there is in the heart of God! See, He takes away the reason for despair and makes an argument for hope out of it! Because you are thus fallen, you have need to return—and God considers your *need*, not your merit! Because you are fallen, God's pity invites you to return. Use the word, "fallen," literally. If you are a fallen man, return! If you are a fallen woman—return! Why is it that the word, "fallen," has a force in reference to woman which it has not in regard to man? Surely a fallen man is as sad a sight as a fallen woman! But whether male or female, here is the argument for your returning to God—"You have fallen; therefore return." I pray you, yield to so gracious a plea!

Dear Friends, the argument is also this—*the cause of your evil plight is sin*. “You have fallen *by your iniquity*.” Sin is the root of the mischief. Do not say, “I was fated to be so.” “You have fallen by your *iniquity*.” It is true that you have fallen in Adam, but you have also fallen by your *own actual sin*, and you have enough to do to confess your own act and deed. Your own willful omissions and commissions have ruined you! You are wounded, but your own hand has given the injurious stab. “You have fallen by your iniquity”—blame no one or nothing else! That you are an unbeliever is your own fault—you will not come to Christ that you might have life. The way you follow is the way of your own choice—in which you follow the imaginations and devices of your own heart. All the misery of your present estate is due to *yourself*. “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself!” Feel that it is so and confess it before God, taking to yourself shame and confusion of face.

The only remedy for your evil case is to come back to God. If you have fallen by your iniquity, you must be set free from this iniquity—but you cannot free yourself. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” You have lain in the lye of evil till you are dyed ingrain with the scarlet of iniquity—and the color cannot be taken out except by a miracle of Divine Grace! Only God can take away the spots from the leopard, and the blackness from the Ethiopian, and the crimson from the deep-dyed wool! The Lord and only the Lord can work these marvels. Therefore you are called upon to “return unto the Lord your God,” for your only hope of restoration lies in God, Himself!

Your guilt should not make you hesitate, for the Lord knows all about it, and His invitation shows that He does so. He says, “Return; for you have fallen.” O my Hearer, have you tried to hide that fall? Are you sitting here and trying to forget your ruin? The Lord does not forget it and does not wish you to forget it! He sets it before your mind and bids you come to Him as a fallen person. The Lord Jesus Christ receives sinners as sinners. He does not want them to change their character and *then* come, but they are to come to Him for a change! Come simply as sinners—not as awakened sinners, or sensible sinners, or sinners with some other good qualification. As *sinners* come to Him who has come to save sinners! The Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins—He never gave Himself for our righteousness and, therefore, He would have us come to Him in all our defilement. Come in your evil habits, your guilt, your condemnation, your spiritual death and your corruption! Come just as you are. He delights in mercy—leave space for mercy to work. “Return,” He says, “for you have fallen by your iniquity.”

If you are in the worst case that any mortal was in, *you have the best possible Helper* to whom you are to return. If you go to Gilead for balm for your wound, you would turn that way in vain, for to the question, “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?” the answer is, of course, there is neither balm nor physician there, or else the hurt of the daughter of My people would long ago have been healed. You have gone enough to Gilead, now go to God! Human sources of help must fail you

and for that very reason we would persuade you to turn to God. There is no physician in Gilead, therefore, come along with you to Him whose touch is better than balm, who is, Himself, the health of souls. The very hem of His garment overflows with power, so that a *touch* will heal you!

Jesus has but to cast an eye on the most guilty and forlorn, and they live. Yes, if they do but cast an eye on Him, they receive eternal life! A legion of devils will flee at His word. Oh, what a blessing it is that there is such a mighty Savior! If anybody here perishes, it is not because the Savior is not able to save him. If any man here shall die in his sin, it can only be accounted for by the Savior's declaration, "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins." "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." How intensely do I pray that you may return to God, urged by these reasons, namely, that you are helplessly, hopelessly lost—and Christ is a mighty Savior—on whom your help is laid! I would that for this reason you would come to Him, even this very day! He will receive you even now, for He has said it—"He that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

III. Now let us see how our gracious God meets us and provides for us THE HELP IN COMING.

The Lord helps our ignorance and our fear. *He gives us direction as to what to bring.* Read the second verse. "Ah!" says the sinner, "I do not know what to take with me in approaching the Most High. I have no bullocks, no lambs, no incense. In my hand there is no price of money or merit." The answer is, "Take with you *words.*" Your heart is right; you are longing for salvation; you need not say, "How shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" "Take with you words"—you have plenty of them. The heart must be there, first, and then nothing more is asked than, "words." Cheap enough is this offering! Leaves of the forest are not so easy to come at. This is simple enough—He that has a tongue can bring words!

O man and woman, whatever else you *cannot* bring, you *can* bring words, for, indeed, you have multiplied words to sin! The Lord helping you to return, you need not hesitate for need of an offering, since He says, "Take with you words." This is but another version of our grand hymn—

***"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling.
Naked, come to You for dress,
Helpless, look to You for Grace.
Foul, I to the Fountain fly—
Wash me, Jesus, or I die!"***

And then, the Lord helps the coming sinner by *a direction as to where to turn.* "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." "I need to see the minister," says one. Turn to the Lord! "I desire to converse with a man of God." Turn to the Lord! We read in the book of Job, "To which of the saints will you turn?" My answer would be—Sinner, turn to the sinner's Friend and leave the saints alone! If you would be saved, turn not to Peter,

nor James, nor John—but turn to Him whom all these call, “Master and Lord!” “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.” Have you been in the habit of turning to a man who is called a *priest*? I pray you, do so no longer, for there is now but one sin-atonning Priest, and He is the Lord Jesus! Have you turned to *ceremonies*? Do you look for rest in *sacraments*? You look that way in vain, for they are not the way of salvation! Turn, rather, to the Lord as He is revealed in the Lord Jesus! Take with you words and turn to the Lord, Himself. Against Him you have sinned—to *Him* make confession. You need that His anger should be turned away. Seek, then, a free forgiveness from Him! It is His love that you need—go to Him for it and He will receive you graciously—and love you freely!

A further help is this. The Lord helps us to return to Him by giving a *direction how to pray*. A minister said to me last Thursday evening what I have often felt to be true—“We had need make coming to Christ very plain, for many people are so ignorant that they almost need to have the words of confession and faith put into their mouths. They need somebody to kneel down, side by side with them, and utter the very words that they should speak unto the Lord.” There is much more truth in this statement than inexperienced persons may think. So here the Lord does, as it were, put the words into the sinner’s mouth. “Take with you words, and say unto Him.” He says the words, that the sinner may make them His own, and say them after Him! In this condescending style He teaches the returning sinner how to pray. What a gracious God He is!

Suppose a case. A great king has been grievously offended by a rebellious subject, but in kindness of heart he wills to be reconciled. He invites the rebel to sue for pardon. He replies, “O King, I would gladly be forgiven, but how can I properly approach your offended majesty? I am anxious to present such a petition as you can accept, but I know not how to draw it up.” Suppose this great king were to say, “I will draw up the petition for you”? What confidence the supplicant would feel in presenting the petition! He brings to the king his own words! He prays the prayer he is bid to pray! By the very fact of drawing up the petition, the monarch pledged himself to grant it!

O my Hearer, the Lord puts it into your mouth to say this morning, “Take away all iniquity.” May you find it in your heart to pray in that fashion! That prayer is best which is offered in God’s own way and is of God’s own prompting! May you present such a prayer at once!

Here I find *two sentences of petition*. The first is—“Take away all iniquity.” Follow me and try to pray this prayer, “O You that takes away the sin of the world, take away all my iniquity. It is great, but pardon it, I pray You, for You did bear our sins in Your own body on the tree. By Your precious blood, wash away all my iniquity! Let me know that You have carried my transgression away, even as the scapegoat carried the sins of Israel into the wilderness of forgetfulness. Take away all iniquity by an act of pardon, I beseech You. Take it away, also, in another sense—Lord, take it out of my heart; take it out of my life.”

Dear Seekers, I pray you, do not look on one sin and say, "Lord, spare it!" Do not wish to have one sin left, but cry, "Take it away! Take it away! Take away *all* iniquity. However sweet, or fascinating, or deeply seated, Lord, take away all iniquity. If I have been given to the intoxicating cup, take it away! If I have been the slave of greed, take it away! If I have been subject to passion, or pride, or lustfulness, take it away! Whatever is my besetting sin, 'take away all iniquity!'" Do you wish to have one fair sin spared? It will be your ruin! Hew in pieces that Agag sin that comes so delicately. Let your cry be, "Take it away!" The taking away of it may cost you a right hand or a right eye, but still, shrink not, but cry, "Take away all iniquity." Have done with it *all*. It will be of no use to give up one poison. If you take another poison, it will kill you. All sin must go, or else all hope is gone! Return to God, but it must be with a prayer which shows that you and your sins have fallen out, never to be reconciled.

The next petition is, "Receive us graciously." Confess that a kind reception of you by God must be of Grace alone. Nothing but Divine Grace can open a door for our returning. Sinners cannot be received of the Lord on any other terms but those of mercy. We would not ask to be dealt with according to our merits, but we thank the Lord that He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. As to our sins, we cannot answer Him one of a thousand. The Lord must receive us graciously or reject us righteously. Are we not glad that sinners can be received in the name of Grace and find a welcome in the tender mercy of our God? Offer, then, this petition, "Receive us graciously." I am not merely content to talk to you about these gracious words—I want every soul here to use them in personal prayer. Oh, that the Lord would touch all lips, by His Grace, and lead them to say from the heart—"Lord, receive me. I return to You. Take away all iniquity and take me to Yourself! Receive me as a subject of Your Kingdom. Receive me, by Your Grace, into Your home of love. Receive me into the family of Your redeemed on earth and then receive me into Your mansion in Heaven. 'Receive us graciously.'"

These are two sweet petitions and they are fitly framed together. May the Holy Spirit constrain every heart to present them! May these be the words which every one of you shall take with him in returning to the Lord!

One sentence of promise follows these two of petition—"So will we render the calves of our lips." What are the "calves of our lips"? They are sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving! Yonder are the calves of the stall which men bring in sacrifice—they are struck down and they die at the altar. God does not ask us for bullocks which have horns and hoofs! He takes no pleasure in the blood of calves, or of goats. He desires a broken heart, true faith and humble love—these live at the altar. "Whoso offers praise, glorifies God." Let us bring Him our best thoughts, our best expressions, our best testimonies, our heartiest praises! These are not calves of our stalls, but, "calves of our lips." Let our gratitude be a living sacrifice and our conduct a constant testimony to the goodness of God. I think we can say, this morning—at least, I can—"Lord, if You will spare me, I will speak for You." I must do so during the rest of my life, or else I shall have to

change my ways and habits. I was thinking, as I came along this morning, that it is somewhere about 40 years since I first opened my mouth to preach for Christ and I can still say what I have often said—

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

Is there not some young man here who will begin at once to take up this service for the next 40 years? I wonder what young man it is that I may lay hands upon for Jesus? And some Christian woman—no, she is not a Christian, yet, but I call her such, for she is going to be—I am only anticipating a little—will she not now become a Christian and straight-away render unto the Lord Jesus the calves of her lips, by bearing her testimony to her family and among her acquaintances? Who will consecrate himself, this day, unto the Lord? While you cry to God for mercy as to the past, resolve that if you are saved, you will confess His name and so offer Him the calves of your lips! The Lord claims your hearts, first, and your lips next! You must confess Christ before men! Salvation is promised to a *confessed* faith—always remember that—“He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Faith should be confessed in God’s own way, by Baptism, and to that faith the promise is specially given.

Though I doubt not that some may be saved who do not make an open avowal of their faith, yet the promise runs as I have quoted it and I would not have you willfully forget the *command* implied in it. “He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is in Heaven”—so says the Lord Jesus. It is no more than His due, that we should take up our cross and follow Him. It is but a small thing, that if we trust in His name, we should bear His name! So you see, the Lord puts into our mouths, this morning, this resolve, that we will praise Him. “So will we render the calves of our lips.”

Now come *three sentences of renunciation*—“Ashur shall not save us. We will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods.” First, the natural, legal trust, so much esteemed among men, must go. Israel always used to fall back upon Assyria. If Egypt threatened the people, or if any other nation oppressed them, they sent a present to the King of Assyria to come and deliver them. But now they cry, “Ashur shall not save us!” The popular trust of the world is in self-righteousness in its various forms. You were going to be saved by your own repentance, reformation and future well-doing—but of this you must say—“Ashur shall not save us.” Are you trusting in sacraments? Give up so vain a confidence! They are not meant to save, but to instruct those who are already saved! Are you trusting in your hereditary godliness, your birthright religion? Away with so poor a foundation! Are you trusting in your prayers, your giving to the poor, your attendance on sermons, your honesty, your good nature? Set these on one side, and cry, “Ashur shall not save us!” All confidences must go except Jesus Christ,

whom God has laid in Zion for a foundation stone. On Him must we build and on no other, for, "Ashur shall not save us."

But, next, they gave up all carnal confidence of their own—"neither will we ride upon horses." The kings of Israel were forbidden to multiply horses because they were not used in commerce, but only for military purposes, and Jehovah would not have His people rely upon these creatures. Egypt might glory in horse and chariot, but Israel must not do so. Hence we find pious Hezekiah keeping this Law so strictly that Rabshakeh reviled him by offering to send 2,000 horses if he could set riders upon them. When we come to God, we must quit all trust in ourselves of every sort—in our tears, our prayers, our moral life, our excellent instincts—or anything else. "Some trust in horses and some in chariots, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." It may be you have fine horses of morality and religiousness; you have many virtues upon which you think you might fairly depend—give up these trusts! Have you been lately trotting out your horses before your own family and saying to your wife, "I am not like many men. I never drink too much, neither do I treat my household unkindly"? Put away these horses! You cannot come to God riding in pride. Say, "We will not ride upon horses." Put away every confidence in yourself, in whatever fashion it appears.

One more stroke of renunciation remains. Down must go the gods of our former estate. He that would come to the true God must have done with the false gods! If we have been living for any objectives but the Glory of God, we must do away with those objectives. If we have been paying religious reverence to anything but God, Himself, we must do away with it. "Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods." It seems strange that men should ever have said such a thing, but since they have said it, they must say it no more. God help everyone here to now make a complete renunciation of everything which usurps the place of God! Whether it is an object of trust, reverence, desire, fear, or love, we must cast it down and worship only God. He says to us, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." In the work of salvation, the work of our hands is out of court! Only God must be glorified.

The words close with *one sentence of faith*. My time fails me, and I cannot dwell upon it at length. "In You the fatherless find mercy." Dear orphan boys below me, here is a word for you! Remember it and love God because it is true—"In You the fatherless find mercy." God is the Father of the fatherless! Now, if God receives the fatherless, who have none to take care of them, and He becomes their God, we may be encouraged to come to Him, even in the most forlorn condition. Does God keep open house for those who have no home? Then I will go to Him! Does God take up those whom father and mother have forsaken? Then will I put my trust in Him! I saw on a board this morning words announcing that an asylum was to be built on a plot of ground for a class of persons who are described in three terrible words—HELPLESS, HOMELESS, HOPELESS. These are the kind of people that God receives—to them He gives His mercy! Are you help-

less? He will help you! Are you homeless? He will house you! Are you hopeless? He is the Hope of those who have no other confidence. Come, then, to Him at once!

IV. This last word should induce sinners to return to God and then we shall see before our eyes THE COMING BY THIS HELP. You that are great, good, full and inwardly strong, you will not return to God. You that are nothing and less than nothing—you that are fallen in your own sight, you that cannot help yourselves—you are likely to come! I pray that you may come at once. I have set before you an open door that no man can shut—will you not enter? Come to my Lord this day! Come, now, and say, “Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.” May God help us to be *doing* this rather than talking and hearing about it!

Let us come to God, for He will help us to come. You see He helps us by giving us words, but as He never helps men to be hypocrites, He will also help us to *feel* the words! He who gives us words to speak, will give us Divine Grace to speak them sincerely. Are not these words the true desires of your hearts? On your knees, when you get home, pour them out before God. In your pews while you are here, present these petitions in silence. Say, “Take away all iniquity, receive me graciously: so will I render the calves of my lips.” The Lord’s help will suffice, not only to teach us the manner of praying, but to give us the desire, the faith, the love, the resolve which make up this prayer!

Let your coming to the Lord be decisive and actual. You have meant it for years and yet nothing has been done. Some of you have been hearing me preach, now, for a quarter of a century! Think of that! I met, the other day, with one who heard me at New Park Street—and, at last, by our Master’s Grace, he has come out to confess his Lord after more than 30 years! Slow work this! Better late than never! Come, my Friends, are you going to stick in the mud forever? Will you lie outside the wicket-gate throughout another year? God grant you may cry right now, “Take away all iniquity: receive us graciously!”

Oh, that this might be the universal cry of all my audience at this hour! The text is not written as for one, but for many. “Take with you words.” The first verse is in the singular and speaks of, “you.” But the second is in the plural and speaks of, “us.” It is not, “Take away all iniquity; receive *me* graciously”—but—“receive *us* graciously: so will *we* render the calves of *our* lips. Ashur shall not save *us*.” Come along with you, then, the whole company of you who desire salvation! I call upon you who are sitting in this first gallery all around me! I call upon the dense mass in the area below! I call upon you who sit in the upper gallery! Oh, that we might all join in one common return unto the Lord! Let us call this day, “*The day of the joyous return.*” “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn, and He will heal us; He has smitten, and He will bind us up.” Who says, “No”? What? Will you choose your own destruction and persevere in the way of sin? I hope you will all say, “Yes,” and that the Holy Spirit will lead you to carry out the resolve.

The special call is to the fallen—"Return; for you have fallen." Come, you fallen ones, come and welcome! It is to the wandering, for to such is the command appropriate, which says, "Return."—

***"Return, O wanderer, to your home!
Your Father calls for you.
No longer now an exile roam
In guilt and misery—
Return! Return!"***

The call is to the forlorn and destitute—"In You the fatherless find mercy." You that are fallen, far off, fatherless and forlorn, come at once to God in Jesus Christ! Come now! Come! Come! Come! See how the Lord meets you! Read the fourth verse—I could almost kiss the lines as I gaze on them—"I will heal their backsliding." Come, sick one, here is healing for you. "I will love them freely." Come, unlovely one, here is love for you! "My anger is turned away from him"—though you have felt His wrath burning in your souls, it is gone forever! "I will be as the dew unto Israel"—before this service is quite over, some drops of dew shall have fallen upon your parched spirits and shall sparkle in your bosoms like diamonds glittering in the sun!

These later verses speak as if the gracious work were done. They describe a scene most bright, full of color and rich with perfume—as an accomplished fact! The chapter begins with an exhortation, but it runs into description, as if the people really had come and God had met them and had blessed them exceedingly! Lord, make it so at this very moment! May it not be merely that I have preached and that these people have listened most encouragingly, but may men be really saved through Your Grace! The Lord's people have been praying all the while, "God bless Your servant"—and now I shall look for fruit from this first of March!

The Lord grant that this March may come in like a lamb to many of you! May the lion go out of you! May a heavenly wind spring up and blow across this city and bring soul-healing with it! In this hope, I bid you again, "Come to Jesus." Jesus says, "If any man thirsts, let him come to Me, and drink." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty, come. And whoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely." The Lord gather you all into the arms of His Grace, for His Son's sake! Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 13 and 14.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 589, 600.***

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

THE ORPHAN'S FATHER

NO. 1695

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

*“For in You the fatherless finds mercy.”
Hosea 14:3.*

THE Lord God of Israel, the one only living and true God, has this for a special mark of His Character, that in Him the fatherless finds mercy. “A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation.” False gods of the heathen are usually notable for their supposed power or cunning, or even for their wickedness, falsehood, lustfulness and cruelty. But our God, who made the heavens, is the Thrice Holy One. He is the Holy God and He is also full of love. Indeed, it is not only His name and His character, but His very Nature, for “God is Love.” Among the acts which exhibit His love is this—that He executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed and, especially takes under His wings the defenseless ones—such as the widow and the fatherless.

This is very notable if you look into the subject in connection with Holy Scripture. We see this soon after the giving of the Law. We have the Law in the 20th chapter of Exodus—and in the 22nd chapter of the same book, close upon the heels of the Law—you have God’s Word concerning the fatherless. Listen to Jehovah’s words—they are strong and forceful—there is a thunder about their sound. “You shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If you afflict them in anywise, and they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.” These are the words of that Jehovah who spoke the Ten Commandments on Sinai! See how very near to the heart of our God lies the cause of the widow and the fatherless.

The Lord gave the Law a second time in the book of Deuteronomy. If you turn to the 10th chapter of that book, at the 17th verse, you will find such a statute as this—“For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regards not persons, nor takes reward: He does execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loves the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.” Those are two strong and striking proofs of the fact that the cause of the fatherless lies near to the heart of God! Laws were made on their behalf and among the rest was the institution of tithes. I have read some amazing statements upon the Divine right of tithes. It seems to be established in the minds of some that if God gave the tithes to Levi, He must, therefore, have given them to Episcopalian ministers—an inference which I fail to see! I should just as soon draw the inference that He had given them

to Baptist ministers! Certainly it would be no more illogical! The idea of our being priests, or Levites, in order to get compulsory tithes, would be too abhorrent to be entertained for a moment! But while I have often seen the Divine right of tithes stated and argued, I have never heard it urged that the tithes should go to those for whom God set them apart under the legal dispensation!

Now, if you will turn to Scripture, you will find that the tithe of all the produce of the land was to be given to the Levite, to the stranger, to the widow and to the fatherless—and whenever tithes come to be properly distributed, if there is any Divine right in it at all—it will most certainly be given to the widow and the fatherless! We should agree to its being given, in part, to the Levite when he turns up, but as we do not know who the Levite is, at present, we may keep his portion in abeyance till he appears! But the widow and the fatherless are still here among us! The poor shall never cease out of the land—and as the institution of the tithe was as much for *them* as it was for the tribe of Levi, let them have their share!

The tribe of Levi had certain rights because, while the other tribes had, each one, a portion, that tribe had no inheritance and, therefore, took out its share in having a part of the tithe and certain cities to dwell in. Read Deuteronomy 14:29—“And the Levite, (because he has no part nor inheritance with you), and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within your gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.” I do not know that Episcopalian clergymen have given up their earthly inheritances any more than Non-Conformist ministers. And I cannot, therefore, see that they have the Levite's claim—but I see clearly the right of the widow and the fatherless—and I pray that the day may come when they will get their share of what is undoubtedly theirs, if it is anybody's at all!

Another ordinance was made about the widow and the fatherless—that when the people gathered in the harvest, if they omitted a sheaf of corn, they were never to go back for it, but were to leave it for the widow and the fatherless. “When you cut down your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.” In gathering in the corn, the field was not raked, but all that fell was left to the widow and the fatherless. It was expressly commanded that when they gathered the grapes they were never to gather a second time, but were to leave the bunches to be ripened for the widow and the fatherless. “When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.”

Nobody was forgotten in the Divine rule when Jehovah was King in Israel; but special mention was continually being made of these two classes—the widow and the fatherless—and the poor strangers that happened to be within Israel's gates. “You shall be kind to the stranger,” said

the Lord, "because you were a stranger in the land of Egypt, and you know the heart of a stranger." I call your special attention to this, and beg you to look through Scripture and see how, again and again, God calls upon His people to take care of the widow and the fatherless. Job, that upright man whom God accepted, denied for himself the charge that he had ever forgotten the widow and the fatherless. And you know how, under the New Testament, it is written, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

It is established, then, that God, even the God of Israel, is One in whom the fatherless finds mercy! Let us take care of them, too. "Be you imitators of God as dear children," and select as the objects of your charity those whom God specially cares for. This, however, is not my subject at this time. I wish you to become, yourselves, objects of the Divine charity by coming to God as orphans and putting yourselves under His protection, that you, like the fatherless, may find mercy at His hands! If we are sad at heart, troubled in spirit, full of needs, full of wants and trials, let us be encouraged to come to God because in Him the fatherless find mercy! First, here is encouragement. Secondly, here is encouragement as to what to do. And, thirdly, here is encouragement as to what to expect.

I. First, here is ENCOURAGEMENT. Here is encouragement, though such as none spy out but needy ones. You notice that the people who said, "In You the fatherless finds mercy," are the people who had fallen by their iniquity and who were bid to return unto the Lord, saying, "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously." They were a people who renounced all self-confidence, and cried out, "Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods." They were a people with whom God's Holy Spirit had so dealt that they were stripped of their pride and made conscious of their guilt. *Then* it was that they spied out this precious fact, that in God the fatherless finds mercy!

A tear in the eye is a fine thing to clear it. He that never saw his sin has never seen the mercy of God. David never sang of the loving kindness and tender mercies of God so well as in that 51st Psalm, when he mourned his great sin. A broken-hearted sinner has a sort of instinct for finding out the tender points in God's Character. The ungodly man who is self-satisfied and has never been made to know the truth about his condition, often likens God to an austere man, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not harvested. But once let the man know his guilt and mourn it, and then he looks with all his eyes to God to spy out mercy in Him—and he is the man who delights to learn that God is merciful to the fatherless. This becomes a fountain of hope to him.

Have I here any sin-stricken sinner? Are you desponding and despairing? Did you come here feeling that there could be no mercy for you? Catch at this word. "In You the fatherless finds mercy." He is a merciful God; He is tender, kind, considerate. He evidently looks after the helpless and hopeless. He is the patron of those whom others desert. Widows

without friends, the fatherless without protectors—these are the care of God. May you not hope that He will care for you? May you not, in the depth of your sin and brokenness of heart, come to Him and say, “O Lord, I hear You are the Friend of the friendless, be a Friend to me”? It looks like a candle put in the window of your father's house to guide you home through the darkness. May God help you to see it—but I know that you will not care to see it if there is not a tear in your eyes, for none but the *needy* perceive this gracious Truth of God.

This encouragement is, moreover, one which is a strong inducement to cast away all other confidences. If God is the Friend of the fatherless, He may be a Friend to me! Would it not be well for me to trust Him and leave off trusting those other things that I have relied upon? You see how the text runs, “Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses.” These were their great trust and confidence! And then they go on to say—“Neither will we worship false gods, for we can see that the true God is kind, kind to the fatherless ones and, therefore, we may come and trust Him.” When a man gets some little hope, then he says to himself, “I will even venture to look to the Lord.” When the prodigal son in the far-off country had spent all his living, what was it that brought him back? Why, it was this thought—“How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare!” This made him resolve to go home again.

I know what the devil will do—he will tell you that there is no mercy for you. He is an old liar! There is abundant mercy for the greatest sinner! What does the devil know about it? He never sought mercy and he has never had any and never *will* have any, for he will never seek it! But for you, poor Soul, there is bread enough and to spare in your Father's house, so why do you perish with hunger? Why not arise and go to your Father? If God is the Father of the fatherless, this should induce us to hasten to Him and rest in Him. “May I trust in Jesus Christ?” asks one. “May I?” Of course you may! It is a sin if you do not and, indeed, the chief and most ruinous of sins!

Many of you are trusting in your sacraments and your priests, or in your good works and your prayers, or your own feelings because you think that you may not trust Christ. But you may! For He who takes the fatherless under His blessed wings invites you to come to Him. “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” If He had ever repulsed *one*, He might repulse *you*. But since the fatherless find mercy in Him—and all that come to Him find mercy in Him—come along with you and trust in the Merciful One at once! Furthermore, there is much encouragement in my text because it gives us a clear look into the heart of God. I always like to see how a man treats children. You learn a great deal about a man when you see that.

Some men abhor children and almost wish that they could exterminate them. As to the fatherless children they say, “Let them go to the workhouse—we cannot be troubled with them.” The gentle-hearted one never sees a little child in need without feeling the utmost pity. I feel more sorry for a suffering child than even for a man or a woman. Adults

have a measure of a power to help themselves, but if there is poverty in the house, the little one may pine away, but it cannot get relief. Little boys and girls have suffered much in this great city when their parents' home has been desolated by poverty, frequently caused by drink and other sins. Who knows the sufferings of the little ones when father dies? I confess it touches my heart that little children should suffer as they do. When men are wicked, one is almost thankful that there should be poverty following their sin to whip them out of it—but these *lamb*s—what have *they* done? Any tender heart feels this. Is not this a wonderful text which lets us gaze into the heart of God while we read, “In You the fatherless finds mercy”?

Great God, the seraphim adore You! Angels, day without night, in serried ranks stand waiting to do Your bidding! Your voice is the thunder and the glance of Your eye is the lightning. At Your bidding kings die, dynasties decay, empires are blotted out and yet, You care for little children and widows! It is very beautiful to me. I feel as if I could trust Him all the better for that and come with my daily burden and daily cares—yes, and my sins, too—and feel sure that He will not refuse me! This is the Father of Jesus, I am sure of it! Oh, how like the Son is to the Father, for if the Father is thus the children's Patron, what think you of the Son and of His likeness to His Father when He said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven”? Does not this encourage you to come, as you see the heart of God laid bare in the blessed statement of the text, “In you the fatherless finds mercy”?

There is this encouragement, too, that our cases are like those of the widow and the fatherless. The orphan has no father, no helper, no means of sustenance. And you, my Hearer, are in that state, without God. If there is no God, you have no father. If you have no God to trust to, you have no protector and you are undone! There is no light for you if God is not your light, no hope for you if Christ is not your hope. Do you feel that? Well, then, you are an orphan—you are a fatherless one. Come along, for Jesus has said, “I will not leave you orphans. I will come unto you.” Come to Him, and look up into the face of the orphan's Father and say, I plead that word of Yours, “In You the fatherless finds mercy.”

Lord, let me find mercy, for my case runs parallel with theirs! If there is a heart here that needs encouraging, it will spell out my meaning. But if you do not need it, and some of you do not, for you are fine fellows, full of your own righteousness, then I have nothing to say to you but this, “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

II. Secondly, for every poor, needy sinner here is ENCOURAGEMENT AS TO WHAT TO DO. First, if you want to find salvation, tonight, take the text as a sort of spiritual guidebook and plead your need! Do not say anything about your merits—the less said about them the better. Your position is like that of the Irish servant who said, when asked for his character references, that the gentleman at his last place told him he

would do better without his character than with it. You are just in that case, only that you will be asked for your character references and the best thing you can do is to say, "My character is as bad as it can be"—and then plead for mercy.

"Lord," it says in the text, "in You the fatherless finds mercy." It does not say that they are good and holy, but simply that they are fatherless. It does not say that they find rewards, but that they find mercy. "Lord, that is all I have to say to You. I am in need—I am in awful need—and because I am such a sinner, it makes my need all the worse, for that is where my need lies. I need righteousness; I need a new heart; I need a right spirit. I need a total change. I need everything, for I have nothing but sin and misery. O Lord, I only urge that as You help the fatherless, simply and only because they are needy, I pray You save me, irrespective of my character, for my need is great."

The next lesson for you is this—be sure to take a hold of this text by the handle and ask for mercy. "In You the fatherless finds"—what? Finds mercy! Mercy is the handle of the text! When you go to God, ask for mercy, not for justice. A mother once went to the Emperor Napoleon to ask for mercy for her son. He had committed some breach of the French Law and the emperor replied, "Madam, this is the second time the boy has offended. Justice requires that he should die," She answered, "Sire, I did not come to ask for justice. I beg for mercy." He answered, "He does not deserve mercy." "Sire," she said, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it. I ask for mercy." When she put it in that way, the emperor replied, "Well, then, I will have mercy."

My unsaved Hearer, you deserve to be in Hell tonight! It is of the Lord's mercy that you are not consumed. Do not dream of asking for *justice*, for justice will be your ruin—but get a hold of this word, "Lord, I ask for mercy"—and if something whispers, "Why, you have been a hardened sinner," say, "Lord, it is true. But, Lord, I ask for mercy." "But you have been a backslider." Reply, "Lord, that I have, but I ask for mercy on that account." "But you have resisted and rejected Grace." "Lord, that is true. And I shall need all the more mercy because of that." "But there is nothing in you to argue for forgiveness." Say, "Lord, I know there is not, and that is why I ask for mercy. I put it wholly on that ground. Display Your mercy in me, I beseech You." That is the way to plead! Mind you keep to it. That is the straight way. You will get Heaven, too, for you will get Christ, too, since His mercy endures forever! "In you the fatherless finds mercy."

Learn another lesson, you that need to get peace with God, at once, and I hope that some of you do. Cast your sin, trial and sorrow upon God. The text says, "In You the fatherless finds mercy," so the business of the fatherless ones is to come to God and just look to Him for mercy—and that is your business! Do not, I charge you, look to anybody else but the living God to help you. It is a snare, and a horrible one, for people to trust to priests! And I will say, in addition to that, to trust to ministers, to trust to any *man* whatever! I have known persons, when they have

heard an address and have been impressed, to say, "Oh, I shall find Christ in the enquiry room!" That enquiry room may be a snare to you if you talk thus!

You need to speak to the man who preached to you, do you? Do not speak to *him*—go directly to Jesus! "But I wish to see that good man who spoke to me the other day." Very well, so you may, by-and-by, but mind you, do not put that good man or that good woman in the place of Christ! The text says, "In You the fatherless finds mercy," and it is in Christ, and in Him, alone, that mercy is to be found! Go directly and distinctly to Jesus and, by the help of His Spirit, you can do that while sitting in the pew! God is everywhere. Let your spirit be conscious that God is present and now let your heart speak to Him. To Him confess your sin—do not pour that rubbish into the ear of mortal man! To God lay bare your heart and to Him, alone! It is not a fit sight for any human being. Tell the Lord Jesus all your needs and woes—and He will help you—for in the Son of God is the help of the sons of men!

Oh, that I knew how to speak these things, but they will surely go home to those who are in spiritual need! You that are *not* in need—you that are good, you that are self-righteous—will see nothing in the text for you. No, and there was not meant to be, for the Lord has a people that He will draw unto Himself—and these people are known by this—that they are weary of themselves. God's chosen people exercise the natural art of the weak, namely, *clinging*. They are made to feel their poverty and their need. And then, when they hear of the fullness of Christ, they hasten to lay hold on Him. Have you never noticed how the plants that God has made weak are all endowed with a natural faculty for clinging? One of the first things that the vine does is to put forth its tendrils for something to cling to. The hop, the wood vine, the sweet pea—they all have a little hook ready to lay hold on a support.

Now, if God is about to bless you at this hour, you have a little tendril that is being put out to find something to lay hold of—and as the gardener carefully puts his stick for the sweet pea, or as the farmer puts his pole for the hop, I have tried to set my text in your way. I would set the blessed Lord before you and say, "In Him the fatherless finds mercy, cling to Him! Cling to Him! It is your life to do it. Cling firmly!" The limpet by the seashore can do little, but it can cling! And so it does cling and very firmly, too. That is the one thing you can do, poor Sinner, and I pray the Holy Spirit to lead you to do it at once! God help you at this moment to cling to Christ! And if you do, you are saved, yes, saved at once! In Him the fatherless finds mercy. Cling to Him and you shall find mercy, too!

III. Now, lastly, here is ENCOURAGEMENT AS TO WHAT TO EXPECT OF GOD. "In You the fatherless finds mercy." What do the fatherless expect of us when we stand in God's place for them? When we take them into our Orphanage and try to be as a father to them? What do they expect of us? Well, I do not know that the younger ones have intellect enough to know all they expect, but they expect everything! They expect

all that they need and, though they do not quite know what they need, they leave it to us. They believe that all will be found that they require. I like a poor Christian who does not know all he needs, but yet knows that his God will supply all his needs. He trusts Jesus for all. He trusts his heavenly Father as a child—he does not know what he may require today, or require in the unknown future—but then his heavenly Father knows and he leaves it all to Him.

As our orphan boys grow older, however, they begin to have a perception of their needs, and they trust that they shall have everything provided which their own fathers would have provided for them, and more, perhaps. So is it with us when we come to the great Father. We say—All that I would provide for my children, if I had everything, and could give them all that wisdom could desire, my God will provide for me, for He will be a Father to me. If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, much more shall He, who has taken you into His family, though you once were fatherless, give all good things to you. You shall have food and raiment sufficient for this life. You shall have protection, guidance, instruction and tender affection.

You shall have a touch or two of the rod every now and then, and that is among your choice mercies! But you shall also have all the cherishing of His sweet love and, by-and-by, when you are fit for it, He will take you Home from school and you shall see His face—and you shall live forever in His House above, where the many mansions are. Oh, if you come and put yourselves, by a simple faith, into the blessed custody and keeping of God, He will admit you into His Salvation Orphanage and He will take care of you! And you shall find Him a better Father than you will be to your own children—a better Father than the best of fathers could ever be to the best beloved of sons!

“I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” I will not say more, but I should like to leave John's choice sentence as my last word. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” Blessed be Your name, O Lord, that we, also, have been led of Your Spirit to prove that in You the fatherless finds mercy!

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

GRACE ABOUNDING

NO. 501

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 22, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I will love them freely.”
Hosea 14:4.***

THIS sentence is a body of Divinity in miniature. He who understands its meaning is a theologian, and he who can dive into its fullness is a true Master in Divinity. “I will love them freely,” is a condensation of the glorious message of salvation which was delivered to us in Christ Jesus our Redeemer. The sense hinges upon the word “freely.” “I will love them *freely*.” Here is the glorious, the suitable, the Divine way by which love streams from Heaven to earth. It is, indeed, the only way in which God can love such as we are. It may be that He can love angels because of their goodness. But He could not love *us* for that reason. The only manner in which love can come from God to fallen creatures is expressed in the word “freely.” Here we have spontaneous love flowing forth to those who neither deserved it, purchased it, nor sought after it.

Since the word “freely” is the very keynote of the text, we must observe its common meaning among men. We use the word “freely” for that which is given without money and without price. It is opposed to all idea of bargaining, to all acceptance of an equivalent, or that which might be construed into an equivalent. A man is said to give freely when he bestows his charity on applicants simply on the ground of their poverty, hoping for nothing to gain. A man distributes freely, when, without asking any compensation, he finds it more blessed to give than to receive.

Now God’s love comes to men all free and unbought—without our having merit to deserve—or money to procure it. I know it is written, “Come, *buy* wine and milk,” but is it not added, “Without money and without price”? “I will love them freely.” That is, “I will not accept their works in barter for My love. I will not receive *their* love as a recompense for Mine. I will love them, all unworthy and sinful though they are.”

Men give “*freely*” when there is no *inducement*. A great many presents of late have been given to the Princess of Wales, and it is well and good. But the position of the Princess is such that we do not view it as any great liberality to subscribe to a diamond necklace, since those who give are honored by her acceptance. Now the freeness of God’s love is shown in this—that the objects of it are utterly unworthy, can confer no honor, and have no position to be an inducement to bless them. The Lord loves them freely.

Some persons are very generous to their own relations, but here, again, they can hardly be said to be free, because the tie of blood constrains

them. Their own children, their own brother, their own sister—if men will not be generous here, they must be mean through and through. But the generosity of our God is commended to us in that He loved His enemies, and while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for us. The word “freely” is “exceedingly broad” when used in reference to God’s love to men. He selects those who have not the shadow of a claim upon Him, and sets them among the children of His heart.

We use the word “freely,” when a favor is conferred *without its being sought*. It can hardly be said that our king in the old histories pardoned the citizens of Calais freely when his Queen had first to prostrate herself before him, and with many tears to induce him to be merciful. He was gracious, but he was not free in his grace. When a person has been long dogged by a beggar in the streets, though he may turn round and give liberally to be rid of the clamorous applicant, he does not give “freely.”

Remember, with regard to God, that His Grace to man was utterly unsought. He does give Divine Grace to those who seek it, but none would ever seek that Grace unless unsought Grace had first been bestowed. Sovereign Grace waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. The love of God goes forth to men when they have no thought after Him—when they are hastening after all manner of sin and wantonness. He loves them freely, and as the effect of that love, they then begin to seek His face. But it is not our seeking, our prayers, our tears, which incline the Lord to love us. God loves us at first most freely, without any entreaties or beseeching—and then we come both to entreat and to beseech His favor.

That *which comes without any exertion on our part* comes to us “freely.” The rulers dug the well, and as they dug it, they sang, “Spring up, O well!” In such a case, where a well must be dug with much labor, the water can hardly be described as rising freely. But yonder, in the laughing valley, the spring gushes from the hillside and lavishes its crystal torrent among the shining pebbles. Man pierced not the fountain, he bored not the channel, for, long before he was born, or ever the weary pilgrim bowed himself to its cooling stream, it had leaped on its joyous way right *freely*. And it will do so, as long as the moon endures, *freely, freely, freely*. Such is the Grace of God.

No labor of man procures it. No effort of man can add to it. God is good from the simple necessity of His Nature. God is Love simply because it is His Essence to be so. He pours forth His love in plenteous streams to undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving objects—simply because He, “will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.” It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

If you ask an illustration of the word “freely,” *I point to yonder sun*. How freely he scatters his life-giving beams. Precious as gold are his rays, but he scatters them like the dust. He sows the earth with orient pearls and bejewels it with emerald and ruby and sapphire—and all most *freely*. You and I forget to pray for the sun’s light, but it comes at its appointed season. Yes, on that blasphemer who curses God, the day arises, and the

sunlight warms him as much as the most obedient child of the heavenly Father. That sunbeam falls upon the farm of the miser, and upon the field of the churl.

That sun bids the grain of the wicked expand in its genial warmth, and produces its harvest. That sun shines into the house of the adulterer, into the face of the murderer, and the cell of the thief. No matter how sinful man may be, yet the light of day descends upon him unasked for, and unsought. Such is the Grace of God—where it comes, it comes not because it is sought, or deserved, but simply from the goodness of the heart of God, which, like the sun, blesses as it wills.

Mark the gentle winds of Heaven—the breath of God to revive the languishing—the *soft breezes*. See the sick man at the seaside, drinking in health from the breezes of the salt sea. Those lungs may heave to utter the lascivious song, but the healing wind is not restrained. Whether it is breath of saint or sinner, yet that wind ceases not from any. So in gracious visitations. God waits not till man is *good* before He sends the heavenly wind, with healing beneath its wings. Even as He pleases, so it blows, and to the most undeserving it comes.

Observe *the rain* which drops from Heaven. It falls upon the desert as well as upon the fertile field. It drops upon the rock, that will refuse its fertilizing moisture, as well as upon the soil that opens its gaping mouth to drink it in with gratitude. Look, it falls upon the hard streets of the populous city—where it is not required, and where men will even curse it for coming! And it falls not more freely where the sweet flowers have been panting for it, and the withering leaves have been rustling forth their prayers. Such is the Grace of God. It does not visit us because we ask it, much less because we deserve it.

But as God wills it, and the bottles of Heaven are unstopped, so God wills it, and Divine Grace descends. No matter how vile, black, foul, and godless men may be, He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. That free, rich, overflowing goodness of His can make the very worst, and least, deserving the objects of His best and choicest love. Understand me. Let me not leave this point till I have well defined its meaning. I mean this, dear Friends—when God says, “I will love them freely,” He means that no prayers, no tears, no good works, no almsgivings are an inducement to Him to love men.

No, not only nothing, in themselves, but nothing *anywhere else* was the cause of His love to them. Not even the blood of Christ. Not even the groans and tears of His beloved Son. These are the *fruits* of His love, not the *cause* of it. He does not love because Christ died—Christ died because the Father loved. Remember that this fountain of love has its spring in itself, not in you, nor in me, but only in the Father’s own gracious, infinite heart of goodness. “I will love them freely”—spontaneously, without any motive *ab extra*, but entirely because I choose to do it.

In the text we have *two great doctrines*. I will *announce the first one, and establish it*. And then I will *endeavor to apply it*.

I. The first great doctrine is this, that THERE IS NOTHING IN MAN TO ATTRACT THE LOVE OF GOD TO HIM.

We have to *establish this doctrine*, and our first argument is found in *the origin of that love*. The love of God to man existed before there was any man. He loved His chosen people before any of them had been created. No, before the world had been made upon which man dwells, He had set His heart upon His beloved and ordained them unto eternal life. The love of God, therefore, existed before there was any good thing in man. And if you tell me that God loved men because of the foresight of some good thing in them, I reply to that, that the same thing cannot be *both* cause and effect.

Now it is quite certain that any virtue which there may be in any man is the result of God's Grace. If it is the *result* of Divine Grace, it cannot be the *cause* of Divine Grace. It is utterly impossible that an effect should have existed before a cause. But God's love existed before man's goodness, therefore that goodness cannot be a cause. Brethren, the doctrine of the antiquity of Divine love is engraved as with the point of a diamond upon the very forehead of Revelation.

When the children were not yet born, neither having done good nor evil, the purpose of election still stood—while we were yet like clay in the mass of creatureship, and God had power to make of the same lump a vessel to honor or a vessel to dishonor—He chose to make His people vessels unto honor. This could not possibly have been because of any good thing in them, for they, themselves, were *not*, much less their goodness. Our Savior's words—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight," reveal not only the sovereignty, but the freeness of Divine affection.

Do you not know, dear Friends, in the second place, that *the whole plan of Divine goodness is entirely opposed to the old Covenant of Works*? Paul is very strong on this point—he expressly tells us that if it is of Grace, it cannot be of works. And if it is of works, it cannot be of Divine Grace—the two having no possibility of commingling. Our God, speaking by the Prophet, says, "Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them."

The Covenant of Grace is as wide as the poles asunder from the Covenant of Works. Now the tenor of the Covenant of Works is this—"This do and you shall live." If, then, we *do* the thing which the Covenant of Works requires of us, we live—and we live as the result of our own doing. But the very opposite must be the case in the Covenant of Grace. It can never be as the result of anything we *do* that we are saved under that Covenant, or else the two are the same, or at least similar. Whereas, the whole Bible through, they are set in contradistinction, the one against the other, as arranged upon opposite principles, and acting from different springs.

Oh, you who think that anything in you can make God love you, stand at the foot of Sinai and learn the only thing that can lead God to accept man on the ground of Law is *perfect* obedience. Read the Ten Command-

ments through, and see if you can keep one of them in the fullness of its spirit. And I am sure you will be compelled to cry out—"Your commandment is exceedingly broad. Great God, I have sinned." And yet if you would stand on the footing of what you are, you must take the whole ten, and you must keep them throughout an entire life—never failing in the slightest point—or else abhorred of God you must certainly be.

The Covenant of Grace does not speak on that wise at all. It views man as guilty, and having nothing to merit. And it says, "I will, I will, I will." It says not, "If *they* will," but "*I* will, and they shall. "I will sprinkle pure water upon them, and they shall be clean. And from all their iniquities I will cleanse them." That Covenant does not look upon man as innocent, but as guilty. "When I passed by, I saw them in their blood, and I said, Live. Yes, when I saw them in their blood I said, Live."

The first covenant was a *contract*—"Do this, and I will do that." But the next has not the shadow of a bargain in it. It is—"I will bless you, and I will continue to bless you. Though you abound in transgressions, yet I will continue to bless till I make you perfect, and bring you to My glory at the last." It cannot be, then, that there is anything in man that makes God love him, because the whole plan of the Covenant is opposed to that of works.

Thirdly, *the substance of God's love*—the substance of the Covenant which springs from God's love—clearly proves that it cannot be man's goodness which makes God love him. If you should tell me that there was something so good in man that, therefore, God gave him bread to eat, and raiment to put on, I might believe you. If you tell me that man's excellence constrained the Lord to put the breath into his nostrils, and to give him the comforts of this life, I might yield to you.

But I see yonder God Himself made Man. I see that God, that Man, at last fastened to the Cross. I see Him on the tree expiring in agonies unknown. I hear his awful shriek—"Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani." I see the dreadful sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son, who was not spared, but freely delivered up for us all—and I feel certain that it would be nothing short of blasphemy if I should admit that man could ever deserve such a gift as the death of Christ.

The very angels in Heaven with an eternity of obedience, could never have deserved so great a gift as Christ in the flesh, dying for them. And oh, shall we, who are all over foul and defiled—shall we look to that dear Cross and say, "I deserved that Savior"? Brethren, this were the height of infernal arrogance—let it be far from us. Let us rather feel that we could not deserve such love as this, and that if God loves us so as to give His Son for us, it must be from some hidden motive in His own will—it cannot be because of any good thing in us.

Further, if you will remember *the objects of God's love*, as well as the substance of it, you will soon see that it could not be anything in them which constrains God to love them. Who are the objects of God's love? Are they Pharisees, the men who fast twice in the week and pay tithes of all they possess? No, no, no! Are they the moralists who, touching the Law,

are blameless, and walk in all the observances of their religion without a slip?

No. The publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of Heaven before they do. Who are they who are the chosen of God? Let the whole tribe now in Heaven speak for themselves, and they will say, "We have washed our robes, (they needed it, they were black), and we have made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Appeal to any of the saints on earth, and they will tell you that they never could perceive any good thing in themselves. I have searched my own heart—I hope with some degree of earnestness—and so far from finding any reason in myself why God should love me, I can find a thousand reasons why He should destroy me, and drive me forever from His Presence.

The best thoughts we have are defiled with sin. Our very faith is mixed with unbelief. The most noble devotion which we ever paid to God is far inferior to His desserts, and is marred with infirmity and fault. Remember that many of those who are the true servants of God were once the very worst servants of Satan. Does it not surprise you that men who were the companions of the harlot are now saints of the Most High? The drunkard, the blasphemer, the man who defied man's laws as well as God's—such were some of us—but we are washed, we are cleansed, we are sanctified.

I never did meet, and I never expect to meet with any saved soul that would ever, for a moment, tolerate the thought of there being any goodness in itself to merit God's esteem. No! Vile and full of sin I am, and if You have mercy on me, O God, it is because You will, for I merit none. Further, we are constantly informed in Scripture that *the love of God and the fruit of the love of God are gifts*. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life."

Now, if the Lord stands bargaining with you and with me, and says, "I will give you this if—if—if—," then He does not love *freely*. But if, on the other hand, it is simply, purely, and *only* a gift bestowed as such, not for any recompense afterwards to be given—then the gift is a pure gift. It is a true gift, and so the text is warranted in saying, "I will love them freely." Now, the *gift* of God is eternal life, and dear Friends, if you and I ever get it, we must obtain it as a free gift from God—by no means as wages which we have earned—for our poor earnings will bring us death. Only God's gift can yield us life.

Everywhere throughout the Word, *the Lord's love is greatly and wonderfully commended*. We are told that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above our ways. If the Lord loved men for some loveliness in them, there would be nothing wonderful in it—you and I can do the same. I hope I can love a man who possesses moral excellence. You feel, each of you, that if a man's conduct towards you is grateful and good, you cannot but love him, or if you do not, it becomes a fault on your part.

With reverence let me say it—if there is something good in man, it is no wonder that God should love him. It would be unjust if He did not. If naturally in man there is any virtue. If there is any praise, if there is any

commendable repentance, or any acceptable faith—man *ought* to be loved. This is not a thing to amaze the ages, nor to set the angels singing, nor to move the mountains and hills in astonishment. But for God to love a man who is evil all over—to love him when there is every reason for hating him—when there is not a trace of goodness in him—oh, this is enough to make the rocks break their silence, and the hills burst forth into music!

This is the first doctrine. I cannot preach upon it as I would this morning, for my voice is very weak, and the pain of speaking distracts my mind. But it matters not how I preach upon it, for the subject itself is so exceedingly full of comfort to a really awakened soul, that it needs no garnishing of mine—choice dainties need no skill in the carver—their own lusciousness secures them rich acceptance.

But *what is the practical use of it?* To you who are going about to establish your own righteousness, here is a deathblow to your works and carnal trust. God will not love you meritoriously. God will love you *freely*. Why do you go about, then, spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? You may boast as you will, but you will have to come to God on a par with the worst of the worst. When you do come, you will have to be accepted—you that are the best of men—on the same terms as if you had been the foulest of the foul.

Therefore go not about, busy not yourselves with all this fancied righteousness—but come to Jesus as you are! Come now, without any works of yours, for you must so come or not at all. God has said, “I will love them freely,” and depend upon it, He will never love you in any other way. You may think you are toiling to Heaven, when you shall be only tunneling your way through mountains of self-righteousness down to the depths of Hell.

This doctrine offers *comfort to those who do not feel fit to come to Christ*. Do you not perceive that the text is a deathblow to all sorts of fitness? “I will love them freely.” Now if there is any fitness necessary in you before God will love you, then He does not love you *freely*—at least this would be a mitigation and a drawback to the freeness of it. But it is, “I will love you *freely*.” You say “Lord, but my heart is so hard.” “I will love you *freely*.” “But I do not feel my need of Christ as I could wish.” “I will not love you because you feel your need. I will love you *freely*.”

“But I do not feel that softening of spirit that I would desire.” Remember, the softening of spirit is not a condition—there are no conditions. The Covenant of Grace has no conditionality whatever. These are the unconditional, sure mercies of David—so that you, without any fitness—may come and venture upon the promise of God which was made to you in Christ Jesus, when He said, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” No fitness is wanted—“I will love them freely.”

Sweep all that lumber and rubbish out of the way! Oh, for Grace in your hearts to know that the Grace of God is free—is free to you without preparation, without fitness, without money and without price! Nor does the practical use of our doctrine end here. There are some of you who say, “I feel this morning that I am so unworthy. I can well believe that God will

bless my mother. That Christ will pity my sister. I can understand how yonder souls can be saved, but I cannot understand how *I* can be. I am so unworthy.” “I will love them freely.” Oh, does not that meet your case?

If you were the most unworthy of all created beings. If you had aggravated your sin till you had become the foulest and most vile of all sinners, yet, “I will love them freely,” puts the worst on an equal basis with the best! It sets you, that are the devil’s castaways, on a par with the most hopeful. There is no reason for God’s love in *any* man. If there is none in you, you are no worse off than the best of men—for there is none in them. The Grace and love of God can come as freely to you as they can to those that have long been seeking them, for “I am found of them that sought Me not.”

Yet once more here. I think this subject *invites backsliders to return*. Indeed, the text was specially written for such—“I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely.” Here is a son who ran away from home. He enlisted as a soldier. He behaved so badly in his regiment that he had to be drummed out of it. He has been living in a foreign country in so vicious a way that he has reduced his body by disease. His back is covered with rags. His character is that of the vagrant and felon. When he went away, he did it on purpose—to vex his father’s heart. And he has brought his mother’s gray hairs, with sorrow, to the grave.

One day the young lad receives a letter full of love. His father writes—“Return to me, my Son. I will forgive you all. I will love you freely.” Now, if this letter had said—“If you will humble yourself so much, I will love you. If you will come back and make me such-and-such promises, I will love you.” If it had said, “If you will behave yourself for the future, I will love you”—I can suppose the young man’s proud nature rising. But surely this kindness will melt him. Methinks the generosity of the invitation will at once break his heart, and he will say, “I will offend no longer, I will return at once.”

Backslider, without any condition you are invited to return! “I am married unto you,” says the Lord. If Jesus ever did love you, He has never left off loving you. You may have left off attending to the means of Divine Grace—you may have been very slack at private prayer—but if you ever were a child of God, you are a child of God, still, and He cries “How can I give you up? How can I set you as Adnah? How can I make you as Zeboin? My repentings are kindled together. I am God, and not man. I will return unto him in mercy.”

Return, Backslider, and seek your injured Father’s face. I think I hear a murmur somewhere—“Well, this is very, very, very Antinomian doctrine.” Yes, Objector, it is such doctrine as you will want one day. It is the only doctrine which can meet the case of really awakened sinners. “God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.”

II. Since it is written. “I will love them freely,” we believe that **NOTHING IN MAN CAN BE AN EFFECTUAL BAR TO GOD’S LOVE.**

This is the same doctrine put in another shape. Nothing in man can be the *cause* of God's love, so nothing in man can be an effectual hindrance to God's love—I mean such an effectual hindrance as to prevent God from loving man. How shall I prove it? If there is anything in any man which can be a bar to God's Grace, then this would have been an effectual hindrance to its coming to any of the human race.

All men were in the loins of Adam, and if there were a bar in you to God's love, that would have been in Adam—consequently, being in Adam, it would have been a block to God's love to the race altogether. If there is some sin in you, I say, which can effectually prevent God from showing Divine Grace to you, then that was in Adam, seeing you were in the loins of Adam. And it would, therefore, have been an effectual hindrance to God's Grace from the race in any of its members.

Seeing God's Grace found no barriers over which it could not leap, no floodgates which it could not burst, no mountains it could not overtop, I am persuaded there is nothing in you why God should not show His Grace to you. Besides, one would think that if there is a bar in any, *it would have prevented the salvation of those who are undoubtedly saved.* Mention any sin you like, and I will assure you upon Divine authority that men have committed such sins and have yet been saved.

Talk of a deed that has blackened the man's character forever—that deed of foul adultery and murder. Yet that did not stop God's love from flowing to David. And even if you have gone that length, and I suppose there is no person here who has gone farther—even that cannot prevent Divine love from lighting upon you. As God does not love because there is excellence, so He does not *refuse* to love because there is sin. Let me select the case of Manasseh. He shed innocent blood very much. He bowed before idols.

What was worse, he made his children to pass through the fire to the son of Hinnon, put his own child to death as a sacrifice to the false God, and yet for all that, God's love laid hold upon him, and Manasseh became a bright star in Heaven, though once as vile as the lost in Hell. If there is anything in you, then, that makes you think God cannot love you, I reply, Impossible! Surely your sins do not exceed those of the chief of sinners—Paul says he was the chief of sinners and he meant it. He spoke by Inspiration and there is no doubt he was.

Now if the biggest of sinners has passed through the strait gate, there must be room for the next biggest. If the greatest sinner in the world has been saved, then there is a possibility for you and for me—for we cannot be such great sinners as the very chief of sinners. But I will dare to say that even if we were, even if we could exceed Paul—even *that* could be no barrier. Man's sin, to say the most of it, is but the act of a finite creature—God's Grace is the act of Infinite goodness. God forbid that I should depreciate your offenses, they are loathsome, they are hellish in themselves.

Still they are only a creature's deeds, the deeds of a worm that today is, and tomorrow is crushed. But the Divine Grace, the love and the pity of God—oh, these are infinite, eternal, everlasting, boundless, matchless,

quenchless, unconquerable—and therefore the Grace of God can overcome and prove itself mightier than your guilt and sin! There is no bar, then, or else there would have been a bar in the case of others.

Would it not mar the sovereignty of God if there should be a man in whom there was something that would effectually prevent God's love from flowing to him? Then it would not be, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." No, it would be, "I will have mercy on those I *can* have mercy on. But there is such-and-such a man—I cannot have mercy on him, for he has gone too far." No, glory be to God for that sentence—"I will have mercy upon whom *I will* have mercy." The devil may say, "What? On that man, on that man! He has gone too far." "Ah, but," says God, "if I will it, he has not gone too far. I will have mercy on him."

I do not know that I ever felt more the boundless sovereignty of the Grace of God than when I looked that text in the face and saw it—not, "I will have mercy on those that are willing to have it." Or, "I will have mercy on penitents." No—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." And so, if God wills to save you, there can be no bar to it—or else that would be a marring and a limiting of the Sovereignty of God.

Would not this *be a great slur cast upon the Grace of God?* Suppose I could find out a sinner so vile that Jesus Christ could not reach him? Why, then the devils in Hell would take him through their streets as a trophy! They would say, "This man was more than a match for God. His sin was too great for God's Grace." What says the Apostle? "Where sin abounded," that is you, poor Sinner! "Where sin abounded." What sins you plunged into last night, and on other black occasions!

"Where sin abounded"—what? Condemnation? Hopeless despair? No, "Where sin abounded, *Grace did much more abound.*" I think I see the conflict in the great arena of the universe. Man piles a mountain of sin, but God will match it, and He raises a loftier mountain of Divine Grace. Man heaps up a still larger hill of sin—but the Lord overtops it with ten times more Grace. And so the contest continues, till at last the mighty God plucks up the mountains by the roots and buries man's sin beneath them as a fly might be buried beneath an Alp. Abundant sin is no barrier to the superabundant Grace of God.

And then, dear Friends, *would it not detract glory from the Gospel*, if it could be proved that there was some man in whom the Gospel could not work its way? Suppose that the Gospel, which is, "worthy of all acceptance," could not meet certain cases. Suppose I picked out twelve men who were so diseased that the Gospel remedy could not meet their case? Oh, then I think I should stop my mouth from all glorying in the Cross. I could no more say with the Apostle, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," for then it would not be the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

No, it would be the power of God to all except that dozen! But oh, as often as I come into this pulpit, it gives me joy to know that I have a Gospel to preach which is suitable to every case. A friend told me the other day that many notorious characters stole in at times. Thank God for that!

“Ah,” said some, “but they come only to laugh.” Never mind. Thank God if they come. “Oh, but they will make mockery of the Gospel.” No, the Lord knows how to turn mockers into weepers. Let us hope for the worst, and labor for the most hopeless.

The love of God has provided means to meet the most extreme case. They are twofold. The power of Christ and the power of the Spirit. Do you tell me that sin is a barrier? I answer, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleans from all sin.” The atonement of Christ is capable of removing from men all sorts, sizes, and dyes of iniquity. “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.”

“Ah,” cries one, “man’s hard-heartedness stands in the way of God’s love.” Beloved, the Holy Spirit is ready to meet the case of the hard heart. “Limit not the Holy One of Israel.” Is anything too hard for the Lord? You tell me that unbelief is a bar. I answer “No,” for cannot the Holy Spirit make the unbelieving believe? Yes, if the Holy Spirit once comes into effectual contact with the most unbelieving and obstinate spirit, it must believe at once. Look at the jailer, a few minutes ago he had been putting Paul in the stocks. What, what, what, what is this that comes over him? “What must I do to be saved?” “Believe,” says the Apostle, and he does believe, and becomes as pliant as a child.

Away with the men who think that man is master over God! If He willed to stop, at this moment, the most bloody persecutor, the most filthy and licentious man—if He willed to turn the blackest-hearted atheist into one of the most brilliant of saints—there is nothing in His way to stop Him. In a moment, Omnipotent love can do it. The means are provided, both in the blood of Christ for cleansing, and in the power of the Spirit for renewing the inner man. Therefore, I say it is established, beyond doubt, that there is nothing in man which can conquer Divine love.

“What is the practical use of this,” says one. The practical use of this is to set the gate of mercy wide open. I like always to preach sermons which leave the door of mercy on the jar for the worst of sinners—but this morning I set it wide open. A man has dropped in here who has been thinking for years, “I gave myself up to sin in my youth, and I have gone astray ever since—there is no hope for me.” I tell you, Soul, all that you have ever done is no bar to God’s love to you—for He does not love you because of anything good in you.

That which is black in you cannot prevent His loving you, if He so wills it. I tell you what I would have you do. I have seen those like you come to the foot of the Cross and they have said—

***“Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To You whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.”***

If you in your soul can now trust the love of God in Christ, you are saved! No matter whoever you may be, you are saved this morning, and you shall

go out of this house a regenerate soul—for, by God's Grace, you have believed in Jesus—therefore the love of God is come to you! All your past life is forgotten and forgiven. All your past ingratitude, and blasphemy, and sin, are cast into the depths of the sea. And, as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed your transgressions from you.

I have known the time when, if I had heard the sermon of this morning, faint and feeble though it is, I should have danced for joy. I feel an intense inward satisfaction and delight while preaching it, for I believe it is the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Christ died not for the righteous, but for sinners! He gave Himself for our sins and not for our righteousness. This old Lutheran doctrine—justification by faith in Christ—this grand doctrine which shook old Rome to her very foundations, methinks must give poor sinners comfort and peace.

I know that many will see nothing in it. Of course none but the sick see any value in the healing medicine. I know there are some here who will think the sermon is not for them. Oh, may the Spirit of God make some accept this comfort. But they will not, unless the Spirit of God makes them. Too many of us are like foolish patients who will not take the physician's medicine—and he has need to hold us and thrust it down before we will take it. This is how the Lord deals with many—not against their will—but yet against their will as it *used* to be. He gives them the medicine of His Divine Grace and makes them whole.

To sum up all in one. What I mean is this—there have straggled in here, this morning, the poor working man, the struggling mechanic, the young vain dresser, the man who leads a fast life, the wretch who leads a coarse life, the woman, perhaps, who has gone far astray. I mean to say to such—you are lost—but the Son of Man is come to seek and to save you. I say to you, sons and daughters of moral parents, who are not converted but perhaps feel yourselves even worse than the immoral—I say to you that you are not past hope yet.

God will love you freely, and this is how His love is preached to you—“Whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” Come as you are! God will accept you as you are! Come as you are, without any preparation or fitness! Come as you are, and where the Cross is lifted high with the bleeding Son of God upon it, fall flat on your face, accepting the love manifested there, willingly receiving this day the Divine Grace which God willingly and freely gives.

As sinners, without any qualification! As sinners, as undeserving sinners, my Lord will receive you graciously and love you freely! Amen.

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

BACKSLIDING HEALED

NO. 920

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 13, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"I will heal their backsliding."
Hosea 14:4.***

WHICH rings with the more sonorous voice, the knell, "their backsliding," or the marriage peal, "I will heal"? All through the Scripture records there is revealed a vehement contest between man's sin and God's Grace—each of them striving to become more abundant than the other. Sin, like a dragon, pours forth floods from its mouth, and God's mercy, as a shoreless ocean, rolls in greater majesty. Sin abounds, so that none can measure its heinousness or power. But where sin abounds Grace does much more abound. In the text sin abounds—"their backsliding." There is a comprehensiveness in that word, a dreadful abyss of iniquity. But Grace abounds yet more, "I will heal their backsliding." Here is a height and depth of Grace like the God from whom it came—incomprehensible and infinite!

I shall ask you, this morning, in order that we may get the full measure of benefit which this text may bestow upon us, under the teaching of God's Spirit, first, to notice the words of the text one by one. Secondly, to consider the blessing of the text. And then, thirdly, if we are led of the Holy Spirit, let us not leave this House of Prayer till we have gained the realization of the text.

I. First, then, let us take THE WORDS OF THE TEXT, "I will heal their backsliding." We shall call your attention first, to a word of humiliation, "backsliding." The very sound of it ought to arouse our spirits. And the consciousness of having fallen into it should make us lay our mouths in their dust, and confess that we are unclean. Backsliding is among God's people very common. Not common, perhaps, in its highest degree—God forbid it should be—but in its earlier forms. From its commencement in backsliding—of thought, and heart—on to backsliding in act, I fear the disease is so rife among the people of God that there is scarcely one of us who has not at some time or other suffered from it.

And I fear that the most of us might confess, if we judged our own hearts rightly, that in some measure we are backsliding even now. The proper condition for a child of God is walking in the light as Christ is in the light, and so having fellowship with Jesus. Our right condition, and our only safe standing is to abide in Him, and to have His Words and Himself abiding in us. But too often we follow afar off—we are living in very limited and remote fellowship with our Redeemer. These things ought not to be. There is no necessity that they should be, but alas! Alas! Alas! Search the whole Church through, and you shall find them in multitudes, and in some you shall perceive signs of the most sorrowful decay through an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

Think, Beloved, each one of you who are Christ's, how much you may have backslidden of late. Have you not become lax in prayer? You maintain the *habit* of it, and you could not give that up, but you have not that *power* in prayer you once had. You still read the Word, but maybe the Scripture is not so sweet to you as it was before. You come now to the Communion Table—you have not learned to forsake the assembling of yourselves together there. But oh, the face of the King, in His beauty! Have you seen that as you once did? Perhaps you are still doing a little for His cause, but are you doing what you once did or all you might do?

Instead of going on unto perfection, is not your growth stunted? Must you not confess that you are not a runner towards Heaven so much as a loiterer in the road there? Do these accusations evoke no confessions? I fear the most of us, if we came to search, would have to say, "I do remember when the love of my espousals was upon me, and my heart was warm with love to Christ. But now, alas! How slow are my passions in moving towards Him! O that I could feel once again the glow of my first love, and that my spirit did rejoice in Him as on the day of my conversion."

I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, if you have to make such acknowledgments, whether you would have believed such things of yourselves when you first came to Christ? If a Prophet had told me that I should be so ungrateful to the dear Lover of my soul, I should have said, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" Bought with His precious blood, and delivered from going down to the pit in those younger days of our attachment, we thought we should evermore closer and closer cleave to our Deliverer. No sacrifice appeared too great, no duty too irksome, if Jesus did but command it.

Yes, we have sorrowfully failed in many respects, and have need to, with deepest sorrow of heart, confess our backsliding and bemoan ourselves before God. But I will not dwell longer upon that word. Such lamentations may end when the heart grows tender. If we see sin sufficiently to make us bewail it, we may then look away from it, for the next word which we shall consider is a word of consolation—"heal." "I will heal their backsliding." There is consolation in the very fact that the Lord, here, looks upon the grievous sin of backsliding under the image of a disease.

It is not said, "I will *pardon* their backsliding," that is included in the term, but "I will *heal*" it—as though He said, "My poor people, I do remember that they are but dust. They are liable to a thousand temptations through the Fall, and they soon go astray. But I will not treat them as though they were rebels, I will look upon them as patients—and they shall look upon Me as a physician." Why there is consolation in the very fact that God should condescend, for Jesus' sake, thus to look upon our loathsome, abominable, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sin as being, not so much a condemning iniquity in His sight, but as a disease upon which He looks, pitying us that we should endure the power of it.

And then observe—having looked at backsliding as a disease, He does not say, "I will put this diseased one away." Under the legal dispensation he who had leprosy, or any contagious disease, must be put without the camp, but it is not here said, "I will banish them for their backsliding." O my dear Friends, if we had been put out of God's Church, if we had never

been suffered again to come to His Table, we confess we have richly deserved to have it so, but it is not so written here. It is not, "I will put them in quarantine. I will expel them out of the goodly land, and from among My people." No—"I will heal their backsliding."

Nor does He say, "I will destroy them, because of their backsliding." Some will have it that God's people may sin, partially and finally, so as never to be the Lord's Beloved again. They say they can sin themselves out of the Covenant. But we have not so learned Christ, neither have we so understood the Fatherhood of our God—

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

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," on His part towards His people. "The God of Israel says He hates putting away." No, it is not, "I will strike their names out of the Book of Life." It is not, "I will disinherit them, seeing they have proved unfaithful to Me," but, "I will heal their backsliding." That is to say, whatever their sin may have been I will overcome it, I will drive it out, I will restore them to their first condition of health. I will do more, I will so heal them that one day without spot or wrinkle or any such thing they shall see their Father's face." A word of consolation!

The next is a word of majesty. It is the first word of the text, "I will heal their backsliding." "I." It is Jehovah Himself who here speaks, the Omnipotent, to whom nothing is difficult. The All-Wise, to whom nothing is secret. He has not promised that their backsliding shall be healed by unknown means, but that He, Himself, will heal it. Suppose He had said, "I will let them alone, and see to what their backsliding will turn. It may be, perhaps, after a period it will work out all its venom, and the wound will be cured." No, my Brethren, had we been left to ourselves, our wounds have become corrupt, and our spirit would have utterly perished. We have gone astray like lost sheep, and one of the ways in which lost sheep go astray is this—they never think of returning. The shepherd must seek them, or else they will wander further and further from home.

Note well that the Lord does not say in the text, "My Word shall heal their backsliding," or, "I will send My minister to heal their backsliding." He does graciously use His Word—it is His ordained means of blessing His people—and He condescendingly employs His ministers, unworthy though they are, to do much service for His children. But after all, it is neither the Word nor the minister that can do *anything*—only when the Lord puts His hand to the work is it done effectually. "I will heal their backsliding."

Just as Jesus, Himself, going among the sick folk scattered healing here and there, and made yonder lame man leap as a hart, and yonder dumb tongue to sing, opened blind eyes, drove out fevers and chased away devils—even so it is Your touch, Immanuel—it is Your Presence, You Savior of sinners, that does heal us of all our sins. He Himself took our sicknesses, and therefore He knows how to deliver us from them. Is not His name Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord that heals you? And has He not said, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell there shall be forgiven their iniquity"?

It is Jehovah that says it! Then rest assured the work will be done. Has He said, and shall He not do it? It is Jehovah that says it! However des-

perate our soul is in sickness, it shall be recovered. For is anything too hard for the Lord? “I will heal their backsliding.” Blessed be His name! When you and I feel our backsliding, if it had been said that the backsliding should be healed by any ordinary means, we should have replied, “Not mine. No, Lord, mine is a case beyond all others, hopeless, helpless, incurable.” But when it is said, “I will heal,” how it takes away all power to be unbelieving, for what cannot the Lord do?

What diseases cannot He chase away? He can speak even to the dead and make them live! Therefore let us have hope in Him, for however far we may have gone, and however broken our heart may be concerning it, He can bind up all our wounds and make each broken bone to sing—and this shall be the song—“Lord, who is like unto You, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and remembering not the backslidings of your people?” Thus we have had three out of the five words of the text—one for our *humiliation*. The second for our *consolation*. And the third for our *adoration*, since it reveals the majesty of God.

Another word is in the text, which I shall venture to lift up out of the background in which it dwells ordinarily, “I will heal their backsliding.” Here is a word of certainty. “I will”—“I will heal their backsliding.” But why will He heal? Why does He say so positively that He “will”? Here is no perhaps. No perhaps. The men in Nineveh went to God with nothing to encourage them, but, “who can tell?” But the children of God come to Him with “shalls” and “wills” to plead. I pray you, Backslider, if you desire to return to the Lord this morning, observe the certainty of the text, and plead it. God who says “I will,” is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent.

If He says, “I will,” you can say, “Lord, fulfill this word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.” But why will God heal His people? He will because He has assumed the office of physician, and for a physician to fail in his attempts reflects upon him no honor. Every patient that the physician loses is so much loss to the fame of his skill. “I will heal their backsliding,” says God. “I have undertaken to save them, and I will go through with it. I have made with them in Christ a Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and I will not suffer one of these, My little ones, to perish, and I will heal their backsliding.”

Are they not His children? Now, if a physician failed to exercise his skill on a stranger, yet surely he will not upon his own child! There is nothing in the whole compass of pharmacy that the child should not have. There is nothing in all the art of surgery which the surgeon would not exercise upon his own beloved child if he has need of it. Of ALL His children the Divine Father says, “I will heal their backsliding.”

Beloved, we have cost our God too dear for Him to suffer us to perish, and perish we must without healing—therefore He will heal us. On every child of God the Father sees the marks of the Redeemer’s blood. Every heir of Heaven carries about with him mementoes that touch the Father’s soul, for He remembers well the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and the groans and cries of the Well-Beloved. You who believe in Jesus cost too much—He cannot let you die. The Lord has loved you too long to let you

perish, for before the foundation of the world His heart went out towards His chosen. From of old His delights were with the sons of men.

Before you were fashioned and curiously worked in the lower parts of the earth, you lived in the heart of God, and lay upon the bosom of your Redeemer with Whom, even then, you were accounted as one in the Covenant of Grace. "I will heal their backsliding." No disease shall slay them, no sin shall fester in them so as to destroy them. I, Jehovah, who have chosen them, who have redeemed them and called them by My Grace, I will heal them." Heaven and earth may pass away, but this Word shall not pass away. Oh, the blessed certainty of the Divine Word!

There is yet a fifth word in the text, and that is a word of personality. "I will heal their backsliding." That is to say, the backsliding, first, of all His Israel. He is speaking of Israel. "I will heal their backsliding"—His own peculiar people—His own elect ones. He Himself shall and will heal them. He will not suffer one of them to become sick with sin that it shall be fatal to them. That we may know whether we share in this promise we may judge from other words which precede the text. Those of whom He spoke were willing to come to Him and say, "Take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, and love us freely."

If there is any man here who desires to be forgiven for Christ's name's sake because of the Free Grace of God. If there is any here bemoaning his iniquity and desirous to return unto his God. If there is any soul who now sincerely closes in with God's way of salvation, and would gladly find deliverance from every sin—such a man may be assured that he is one of those of whom God has said, "I will heal their backsliding."

Do you hate your backsliding? Do you, like David, cry, "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"? Do your sins pain you? Have they become a very plague to your heart? Oh, then He will heal your backslidings! Are you earnest in prayer? Do you cry out that He would have pity upon you? Can you weep the penitential tear? Has He looked on you as He looked on Peter, and can you go out and weep bitterly, if not with actual drops that distil externally from the eyes, yet with inward drops that fall within from the still of the heart?

If so, He that breaks hearts always means to heal them. He never yet gave a wounded and a contrite spirit but what He was sure, before long to bring to it a better balm than Gilead ever knew, and to let the blood of Jesus speak better things than that of Abel, even peace eternally within that wounded spirit. "Their backsliding"—take the word and turn it to the singular and make it in the first person—say, "Lord, heal *my* backslidings! Heal those I know not of, 'cleanse You me from secret faults.' I do know some of them, and I mourn them. Deliver Your servant as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness." So you see the text has a meaning in every one of its words. I have drawn already five lessons from the five words which it contains.

II. But we pass on to try and bring out more clearly THE BLESSING OF THE TEXT. "I will heal their backsliding." That blessing must be measured, first, by the evil from which it delivers "backsliding." Backsliding is treated as a disease. Let us speak awhile upon that fact. Let us say, con-

cerning backsliding, that it is one of the most dangerous things into which a child of God can fall. It endangers all present joy. It greatly injures usefulness. And it imperils the future. No professing Christian falls into the great open sin all at once—much backsliding has gone before.

See the tree blown down by the strong winds. Nine times out of ten, if you look carefully at it, you will see that insects have been at work at it years before, and rotted it. And, therefore, when at last the trial came, it only consummated what had long been going on. When, some years ago, many of our greatest commercial houses suddenly collapsed, and bankruptcies were so terribly frequent, you do not imagine that they lost their money all in a day! In the investigation of their accounts it was proved in many cases that ten, or even twenty years before, the firms began to go back in the world.

Little by little, as a rule, backsliding leads on to overt apostasy and sin. No, no—so mature a servant of the devil as Judas is not produced all at once. It takes time to educate a man for the scorner's seat. Take care, therefore, of backsliding because of what it leads to. If you begin to slip on the side of a mountain of ice, the first slip may not hurt if you can stop and slide no further. But, alas, you cannot so regulate sin! When your feet begin to slide, the rate of their descent increases, and the difficulty of arresting this motion is incessantly becoming greater. It is dangerous to backslide in *any* degree—for we know not to what it may lead.

It is a defiling thing to backslide, for a man cannot lose the intensity of his love to Christ and holiness without becoming thereby worldly and impure in heart. You cannot be less in prayer without being less like God. Sin is quite certain to seek a dwelling for himself in any heart where the Spirit of God is not actually present. Let your God withdraw His manifest fellowship, and sin is sure to come in to fill up the vacuum. Backsliding mars the whiteness of the righteousness of saints and blots their beauty. And as it is defiling, so is it contagious. One Believer cannot be living a life of little Grace without weakening those Believers who come into contact with him.

I know some holy men (I wish to be more like they) who are a blessing to all with whom they converse. Wherever they are, like an Oriental perfume, they spread a fragrance all around. Their lives are like the star in the east which led men to Christ. Their graciousness reminds us of the blessing of Asher, whose promise was that he should dip his foot in oil—for wherever they go they leave the tokens of the unction of the Holy One behind them. But the dark side to this picture is the fact that if we decline in Grace, our backsliding has a down-dragging tendency on others. The whole army is impeded by the lagging of a single regiment.

The old naturalists used to speak of a creature they called a remora, which they believed could fasten with its suckers upon a sailing vessel and hinder its progress. Backsliding Christians are just such remoras to the good ship of the Church, they are barnacles upon her, and impede her voyage—

***“One sickly sheep infects the flock,
And weakens all the rest.”***

When there is a parliamentary train crawling along in front, even the limited express mail is hindered. When one professor acts in a worldly, care-

less, indifferent, or covetous spirit, he encourages others to do the same—and the example soon multiplies itself.

I wish I could make you see what a backslider is. I am afraid I cannot, but a simple illustration may help you. Do you remember that fine, athletic young man who was for years among us, and was almost envied for his robust health and remarkable vigor? Exertion was to him a pleasure. He rejoiced as a strong man to run a race. Strong as an oak, upright as a palm tree, and comely as a cedar—you had but to see him to admire him. Alas, we miss him from his usual seat, and his place of daily service knows him no more. He cannot mix in our assemblies, and never will again. He rises very late in the day, and the slightest motion is labor to him. He has a horrible deep-seated cough, and he is reduced to a skeleton.

His cheeks are sunken. There is a peculiar brightness of the eyes, but, with the exception of that, there is nothing about him that reminds you of what he was. And, if you should take a stranger to see him, you would say, “You cannot imagine what that young man used to be.” His mother weeps to think that this is her son, once the image of manly power. It pains her inmost heart to know that this is certainly her boy, her once strong and healthy boy. Yet he is not dead—no, but it is grievous to see how near death he has come, and with what difficulty he breathes. How weak are his lips, how languid is his pulse, how small his appetite!

The strong man is now weaker than a little child. In fact, man as he is, his father has to take him in his arms and carry him up and down stairs, for he cannot otherwise come out of his chamber. Here is a sadly truthful picture of what a Christian may become in *spirit*. He may suffer *spiritual* consumption, and decline from weakness to weakness till life barely retains its hold. He shall not die—for his life is bid with Christ in God. But he may gradually backslide until he is weak as water, and full of doubts and fears, and a thousand ills. The backslider has no strength for *service*. He renders nothing to the Church, but rather requires other Christians to watch, and help, and tend him.

He wants comforts and cordials, but from them all he has little or no enjoyment—he lives, blessed be God, he lives—but it is a struggling, unhappy, meager life. His religion gives him little rapture and very much anxiety. Few are the promises that he feeds upon, and many are the threats that haunt him. He will be saved, yet so as by fire. God forbid that you or I should run the frightful risks that backsliders run who thus walk wide of Jesus Christ and dwell far below the elevated region where spiritual health is sustained. May our souls prosper and be in health. And may we follow the Lord fully and evermore abide in Him.

What a mercy it is that, while we have to give such a distressing description of what backsliding leads to, we can turn to the text and find it written, “I will heal their backsliding”! Consumption, when it once comes to be really consumption, is, beyond all doubt, utterly incurable by ordinary medicine. And, though many remedies may assist the sufferer and prolong life, yet, as a rule, consumption is the herald of death. And so backsliding is quite incurable by any *human* means, and would be the forerunner of total apostasy were it not for Divine Grace. When a man’s

heart begins to fall from God—like a stone falling from a tower, it descends at an ever-increasing ratio—and none can call it back again to the place from which it fell. Or stop it in midair, except that Divine Hand which can suspend the laws of gravity, arrest the course of sin, and restore the falling one to his place.

“I will heal their backslidings.” I understand, then, the glory of this blessing to lie in this—that though backsliding is of all things most dangerous, most defiling and injurious, and in itself most deadly—yet falling into it, you need not despair. On the contrary, if we have fallen into it, listen hopefully to the Voice which says, “Return, O backsliding children,” backed up as it is by the promise, “I will heal their backsliding.”

That we may see this blessing in a still clearer light, let us notice the healing itself. What is the healing of backsliding? It may be said to lie in two things, namely, forgiveness of its sin, and release from its power. That eminent man of God, Bishop Reynolds, who has written upon the last two chapters of Hosea, says there is a fourfold healing of backsliding, and I think he is correct. First, as we have said, backsliding is healed when all the sin of it is forgiven. Dwell on that a minute. You have been a backslider. Perhaps you are so now, but God, even the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, can purge you with hyssop, and you shall be clean!

Your leprosy shall depart and your flesh shall become fresh as a little child. “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins.” Oh, the blessedness of this! If sin returns upon you, child of God, that Fountain filled with blood, which washed you once, has by no means lost its power. You may wash again, Backslider.

The Mercy Seat is not removed, nor is the permission to approach it revoked. My heart delights to think I may go to Jesus as a sinner, if I cannot as a saint. I want a Savior now as much as ever I did. I want new pardon for new sin. I thank the Master for having taught us to say every day, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Even those who can say, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” with a full assurance begotten in them by the filial spirit of Divine Grace, yet have need to ask that sin may be forgiven. We want *daily* pardon, and we shall have it. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The next fact of healing is the removal of all the injurious effects which sin has caused. A man does not backslide without feeling a tendency to go further into sin—contamination is sure to ensue. Backsliding deprives a Christian of many of his privileges. It hides the face of Christ. It darkens the Sun of Righteousness, or rather blinds our eyes to His brightness. It robs us of all present joys. It grieves the Holy Spirit and causes Him to withdraw from us in a measure. Now when it is said, “I will heal their backsliding,” it means this—“I will take away from them all the pollution which their sin has caused, all the injury which their sin has done to their

moral and spiritual nature. I will give back to them all that they lost by giving way to evil.”

But, “I will heal their backsliding” means thirdly, “I will take away those judgments which I have sent upon them in consequence of their backsliding.” The Ephraimites were subject to invasions by cruel tyrants because they had revolted from the Lord, but as soon as they repented, God took away the oppressors and so healed their wounds. Now you, perhaps, dear Brother and Sister, have been a long while under the rod, and you have said, “Lord, when will You comfort me?” Perhaps His answer is, “I will comfort you when you have fully confessed your wanderings, and forsaken your idols.” Hear that rod and Him that has appointed it. Many a child of God suffers long series of losses and crosses, the cause of which will be found in the fact that he has not fully turned to the hand that smote him.

The Lord will bring His people back. And if one blow does not do it, they shall have another. And if that is not enough, they shall be smitten with many stripes till at last, with weeping and lamentations, they shall return unto the Lord their God. You know not how many temporal griefs would vanish away like smoke before the wind if your heart were but more humble before the Most High. “I will heal their backsliding,” that is, “I will take away the temporal chastisement with which I have visited them.”

Then, again, the fourth kind of healing is the restoration of lost comfort. Instead of the despondency which the Believer feels, when, day and night the hand of God is heavy upon him, he shall yet rejoice in the Lord. God’s children always have to smart for sin. If they were ungodly they might sin and enjoy the sweet of their stolen waters. But if they are in very deed the Lord’s own people, smart must follow sin. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

Hear how David cries out, how hoarse his voice is in that fifty-first Psalm, and all through those seven Penitential Psalms how he dips every verse in the brine of his repentance! He did not find it a profitable or a harmless thing to commit unrighteousness. And so, Brethren, you and I, if we are God’s children, will be sure to find that backsliding is a root that bears gall and wormwood. Yet, after his mournful confession and deep soul travail, David received the consolation of God, and his tongue sang aloud of God’s righteousness.

He said, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.” And God *did* restore it, and the bones which had been broken were made to rejoice. This is conclusive healing of our backsliding—when we receive beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. Do not believe, O penitent wanderers, that His mercy is gone forever. He is ever mindful of His Covenant, and He will restore your souls, and lead you in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. My Brothers and Sisters, if the sin is once drowned, your sorrow shall be assuaged. If you remove the cause, the effect shall follow. Did you once leap like David before the ark, or like Miriam dance to the timbrel of triumph? And have your knees grown stiff, and do your hands hang down through sin?

May the Lord help you to break off your sin by righteousness, and the weak hands shall be strengthened, and the feeble knees shall be confirmed. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing—for the Lord will again say unto your soul, “I am your salvation.” Your Sun may seem to have gone down, but unto you that fear the Lord He shall arise with healing beneath His wings. Only return unto the Lord, and He will restore to you “the years which the locust has eaten,” for He has said it, and He will make it good in its fullest extent—“I will heal their backsliding.”

Now, Brethren, consider the mode in which this backsliding is healed, for that is part of the mercy. It very frequently happens that by Divine Grace the healing of backsliding is brought about in God’s Providence by severe afflictions. The previous chapters to this one all go to show how God can act as a lion or a leopard, or as a bear robbed of her whelps, when His people wander into sin. But I shall not dwell on that point, only I would say that the severest trial that ever happens to you, if it brings you to your God, is a surpassing blessing. I would not, and I dare not, pray that the Lord would keep me from all future affliction and pain.

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your word.” This is true of all Believers. The Cross is our best earthly heritage. Whenever we imagine that we have won the crown we should remember that it would be an unseasonable mercy, for this is not a palace, but a battlefield. But when we feel the Cross it is a seasonable blessing, suitable for followers of the Crucified. “In the world you shall have tribulation.”

The connection of the text leads me to remark that our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus heals our backslidings, as a usual rule, by presenting to our minds a fresh sense of His great love. The next sentence seems to say that, “I will love them freely.” I never find that my heart is so moved to return unto her rest as when she feels that the Lord has dealt bountifully with her. When I remember that I am still His child, my soul cries, “I will seek again my Father’s love.” If I believed the doctrine of the final falling of the saints, I fear I should feel no motive urging me to return unto my Lord. I fear I should feel the hardening effect of slavish fear, and like Hagar, flee into the wilderness.

If the prodigal son had once suspected that he was disinherited and was no more a child, he would have given up all thoughts of return. And though he confessed that he was not worthy to be called a son, yet he knew he *was* a son, and so back he came, and his father received him. We are willing to confess that to cast us away would be just, as we are considered in ourselves. But the fact that He has not cast away His people whom He did foreknow draws us with invisible but invincible bonds back to our Lord.

Yes, oftentimes the child of God, when he is cold in heart, has been revived and refreshed by some such thoughts as these—“He is still faithful to me, though I am faithless to Him. Jesus bought me with His blood, and He will not lose me. In His Heaven I shall dwell, notwithstanding all this unworthiness of mine. O my Heart, how can you be so like an iceberg to

Him when He has loved you despite your innumerable faults? How can you give your eternal Benefactor so base a return?"

The great furnace of Christ's love sends out sparks which fall into our hearts, and then they also begin to glow—

***"Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy yet reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners spare?"***

Does He bid me return to Him, and does He say, "I am married unto you?" "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?" Oh, then, while God's heart of mercy is moved, our repentings are kindled, our soul melts while our Beloved speaks! Our stony heart is like the rock which gushed with water. The mountains flow down at His Presence! As when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil.

We feel revenge against sin, and sacred jealousy is aroused. Then we return unto our first Husband, and our first love! With weeping and with supplications we return, and with desire we desire Him in the night—

***"Love, mighty love, our soul subdues;
We fly into our Savior's arms;
Her former vow our heart renews,
Ravished afresh with mercy's charms.
Love is the cord that draws us home,
The bond which holds our spirit fast;
Forbids us over again to roam,
And captivates us to the last."***

It sometimes happens that the healing of our backsliding is as sudden as it is gracious. When we awoke this morning we were all startled to find how suddenly the ground had been covered with snow. I should not wonder when we leave this place if we shall be almost as much startled to find how soon the snow has disappeared under the rapid thaw.

The Lord who casts forth His ice like morsels can cause His wind to blow so that the waters flow. Have you ever found it so in the little world within? Your heart has been dull and dead, and by a word Jesus has quickened you! "Or ever you were aware, your soul made you like the chariots of Amminadib." Blessed be God, His cures can be worked in a moment! He can raise His children from their graves of backsliding and redeem them from death. Pray that so glorious a work may be worked in you, my dear Brother or Sister. Let me pause awhile to give you space to breathe the prayer—

***"Come, Lord, on wings of flaming love,
My spirit to upraise;
Fly like the lightning from above,
And fill my soul with praise."***

Even if restoration from backsliding be gradual, Brethren, as sometimes it is—and attended with much mourning and much sorrow—yet is the blessing still so choice that no words of mine can ever express its value. And so I leave it with your hearts to do what my lips cannot.

III. The third point was to be THE REALIZATION OF THE BLESSING of the text, but our time is gone. Therefore let me hope that you have already obtained it, or will not rest till you have.

If you would be savingly and thoroughly revived from backsliding, earnestly desire it. "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God." Set your face towards God. Resolve upon obtaining renewal by His Grace. Then next make a confession of your fault. "You have fallen by your iniquity." Acknowledge your grievous fault and be humbled for it. It is a mark that God is recovering a soul when it is deeply, penitential, humbled. I have noticed that whenever any who have been excommunicated from this Church have been restored, in every case they have walked in lowliness, and won all our hearts by their contrition and little esteem of themselves.

Whenever those who have grievously transgressed apply to be received again, and at the same time complain of the sentence of the Church, and of the conduct of the members, I feel that I dare not advise my Brethren to loose them from the sentence. For if they were really penitent, they would find no fault with others, but with many tears would lament their own shortcomings. It is one mark of Grace when the backslider puts his finger on his mouth as to the fault of his Brethren, feeling, "It is not for me to say a word against any, I am so involved in fault myself, that I dare not throw a stone."

If you would have your backsliding healed, be much in prayer. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." Backsliding begins in forsaking prayer, and recovery will begin in renewing supplication. If you would be recovered, cast away your false confidence. "Ashur shall not save us. We will not ride upon horses." Turn Mr. Carnal Security out of doors—he is your enemy and God's enemy—be rid of him! Renounce your idols—"We will not say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods." You cannot recover from backsliding while you love any child or friend inordinately, or while anything stands in your heart before Christ. You will never be right while your money holds an undue position in your minds, or while your position in society is more precious to you than Christ. Away with your idols, or they will cry, "Away with Christ." Either give them up, or give up hope.

Lastly, return again by simple faith to God in Christ, remembering that in Him the fatherless find mercy. If you are like an orphan, having none to help or to provide for you, and feel your spiritual destitution, then, in confidence in the abounding Grace of God, return to Him and live. O Brethren, let us all seek to get nearer to Christ! Let us all take the eagle's motto, "Higher, higher, higher." Soar yet beyond. Let us seek to attain what we have not as yet known. And as for the things which remain, let us hold them fast that no man take our crown. "What we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

Let us not decline from our first love, but rather, "not as though we had already attained, either were already perfect," let us forget the things which are behind, and press forward to that which is before, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. The Lord bless His Church richly, and send His dew upon Israel. And make us all to grow in Divine Grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For His name's sake we ask and expect it. Amen.

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

GRACE REVIVING ISRAEL

NO. 342

DELIVERED AT TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD CHAPEL,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

“I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread and his beauty shall be as the olive tree and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”
Hosea 14:5, 6, 7.

In reading this passage, does it ever fail to charm you? How full of beauty and how full of poetry it is! Every word is a figure. Fair flowers that adorn and corn that enriches the fields. The olive tree and the vine. The scent of the wine of Lebanon and all rich things are here gathered and clustered together, to set forth the beauty of Israel under the reviving influences of God’s favor. And as this one portion of Sacred Writ is full of poetry, the like holds good of all the Word of God. There is no book so poetic in its character as the Book of Inspiration.

We had rather, for poetry’s sake, lose all the books that have ever been written by all the poets that ever lived, than lose the sacred Scriptures. Yes, if a collection could be made of all the gems of all the noted books—could they all be bound into one volume—there could not be found so many beauties as lie here. Some of them are hidden and others of them are manifest in this most blessed volume of Divine Revelation. Altogether apart from the sublimity of the matters treated and the glory of the doctrines, the style itself is enough to make the book precious to every reader.

It is a wondrous book. It is the book of God—yes, as Herbert says, “The god of books.” It is a book full of stars. Every page blazes with light, from almost every sentence there beams forth some beautiful metaphor, some glorious figure.

In expounding the words of the text, we shall observe, first, the promise of Divine Grace made to Israel, notwithstanding, Israel’s sin—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” Secondly, the influences of Divine Grace, sweetly set forth in different metaphors. And thirdly, the elect of Divine Grace upon those around—“they that dwell under his shadow shall return. They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”

I. Here is A PROMISE OF GRACE MADE TO THE CHRISTIAN—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” I need not remind you that the Christian, (under the similitude of Israel, as I shall presently show you), is here compared to a plant. But this plant cannot be watered by any water that is to be found on earth, a plant which needs heavenly watering, even the dew from above.

Hypocrites may be watered by natural religion. Formalists may get their supply from the wells and springs of earth. But the Christian is a plant which can only be supported by dew from Heaven. He feels that though the river of Egypt might be turned to his roots, he could not grow. Though all the water in its floods and though the ocean itself might be brought to irrigate him, yet he could get no genial moisture, no true growing power, from all that could be had on earth. He needs to have his dew from Heaven.

“Well,” says God to Israel, “you are of yourself dewless and sapless and motionless and you have no moisture. You can not obtain any of your own, nor can mortals give it you. But stand still where I have planted you and I will water you every moment. I, the Lord will keep you, I will be as the dew unto you.” That Eastern figure, dew—for it is essentially Eastern and not so well to be understood in this country—has in it several beauties.

You will notice, first of all, that Divine Grace, like the dew, often comes down imperceptibly into man’s heart. When did the dew tell us that it was about to fall? Who ever heard the footsteps of the dew coming down upon the meadow grass? Who ever knew when it was descending? We see it when it has fallen. But who saw it come? And so with Christianity—it is very often imperceptible in its operations.

True, it is sometimes like the rattling hail, pelting on the windows—the sinner knows when it comes by stormy convictions and by troubled feelings within. But quite as often, the work of Divine Grace in man’s heart is like the “still small voice,” which few hear and of which even the man, himself, is partially unconscious. He may not be, as to its operation perhaps, but as to its nature—feeling that there is *something* in his heart, though not positively sure that it really comes from God. Christian! Despise not spiritual things because you hear them not. Much that God does, He does in silence.

There is a plant which bursts with the sound of a trumpet. But full many a flower called beautiful, opens in silence and no man hears the sound thereof. There are some Christians who seem bound to make a noise in the world—they were made for that purpose. But there are far more who have to blush unseen—whose glory it is not to “waste their sweetness”—though to perfume “the desert air,” and to make it sing and blossom like the garden of the Lord. Beloved, you may perhaps fancy that you have not Divine Grace because it has not come upon you in terrible excitements and in awful convictions. I beseech you, do not distrust the power of Divine Grace because it has stolen imperceptibly into your hearts. Mark the promise—“I will be as the dew unto Israel,”

Again—if the dew is sometimes imperceptible, it is always sufficient. If God waters the earth with dew, foolish would be the man who should go afterwards to water after his Maker. And God’s Divine Grace, when it comes upon a man’s heart, is all-sufficient. What He gives unto Israel, His own chosen people, is always enough for them. They sometimes think they want something more. They never really do, and what else they want, or think they want, is better for them still to want. God is sufficient.

And the dew, too, when it is required, is constant. God may, if He pleases, withhold the dew, that He may make a nation fear before Him. But He usually sends the dew in its appointed time and each morning beholds the pearly drops shed forth from the hand of God. And so, Christian, God will be your dew. As you want Divine Grace—so shall you find it—

***“All needful grace will God bestow,
And crown that grace with glory too;
He gives us all things and withholds
No real good from upright souls.”***

But it is superfluous for me to tell you what is the meaning of this figure. You all know it ten times better than I do, or at least you ought, for I am sure this text has been preached many times and you are always hearing the metaphor used.

Like many of God’s metaphors it is so simple, so glorious, it arrests our attention at first sight—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” Instead of explaining, therefore, allow me to question you concerning it. Are you, my dear Friends, of the number here mentioned who belong to Israel? You ask me what is meant by Israel. I reply that historically Israel means God’s elect, His chosen ones—“Israel have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” But as you cannot tell that you are God’s elect, except by signs and wonders, I must tell you another meaning of Israel—Israel means a man of prayer.

The name of “Israel” was given to Jacob, because he “wrestled with the angel and prevailed.” Are you a man of prayer? Come now, answer the question, each one of you, for yourselves. Are you men of prayer and women of prayer? Alas, some of you may use a form of prayer, but it has no life in it. You ask, do I object to forms of prayer? I answer, no. I believe that sometimes forms of prayer, molded according to the mind of the Spirit, are offered up with the vital breath of the same Spirit of God. Far be it from me to say that because you use a form of prayer, therefore you do not pray at all.

This, however, I remind you, your form of prayer is merely a vehicle that moves not except as it is drawn. Of itself it is like a steam engine, motionless till the furnace is heated. Or rather, it is like the carriage which is drawn by the steam engine, being linked thereto with chains. A *form* of prayer is a heavy material thing which prayer has to drag after it. It is no help to prayer, but rather a burden to it. There may be prayer with the huge cumbrous thing called the form attached but the form is distinct in every sense from the power. The prayer is the spirit, the life, the desire, the wish, the agonizing panting with God to obtain the blessing.

I ask you not whether you use a form of prayer, or whether you utter extemporaneous prayers. You may speak extemporaneously in prayer and talk as much nonsense, yes, and a great deal more than you would if you used a prescribed form. You may avoid formality and become frivolous. It is not uttering spontaneous words that is prayer any more than repeating a litany. But I ask you, do you *pray*? If you are prayerless, then you have no right to call yourselves God’s elect. God’s people are a praying people. They are an Israel, a wrestling race. And only unto them the promise is made—“I will be unto them as the dew unto Israel.”

Yet one more hint—Israel may represent those who have chosen a better portion—who have given up the mess of pottage—who have sold that to “the men whose portion is in this life,” and are looking to the recompense in another world. Are you, my Hearer, one of those who is content with a mess of pottage? Is it enough for you if your dish is filled with dainty meat, your wine-cup full, your income steady and your back clothed with goodly raiment? And do you then care nothing for the things to come? Is your whole soul set on the things of earth?

Then I warn you—though you may *talk* about being elect, you are none of God’s elect unless you have set yours affections on things above and not on things on the earth. If you are trying to make the best of things in *this* world, rejecting, or even slighting that one object which ought to be your primary concern—to make the best of the *next* world and do not leave this in God’s hand for Him to take care of—you are none of His. Unless you have renounced the pottage and taken Christ to be your all and Heaven your portion, you have no well-founded hope and you have no right to take this promise to yourself—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

But you who abhor the world, you who spend your time in prayer—you may take this to yourself. And in your most barren and dry moments, you may urge this at the Mercy Seat—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

II. THE INFLUENCES OF DIVINE GRACE IN THE SOUL ARE HERE SET FORTH IN METAPHOR—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” What is the effect? Although grace is imperceptible in its coming, it is discernible enough in its fruits.

The very first effect of Divine Grace in the heart is that it makes us grow upward. We shall “grow as the lily.” This refers to the daffodil lily, which on a sudden, in a night, will spring up. There may have been no lilies at all in a field, but after a shower of rain, the lilies may be seen springing up everywhere and the ground will appear perfectly covered with their yellow hue. Mark, that is what Divine Grace does in a man’s soul. Wherever Divine Grace comes, its first operation is to make us grow *up*. It is a remarkable fact, that young Christians grow upward faster than any other Christians. They grow upward in their flaming love, mighty zeal, ardent hopes and longing expectations.

Sometimes, indeed, our old friends step in and say, “Ah, young man, you are growing a great deal too fast. You are springing too rapidly upward. You will have a bitter frost to nip you a little presently.” Very well, that is true enough. But that frost will come quite soon enough, without any of your frosty breath going before it. Let the young grow when they can. Do not give them a piercing nip with your frozen fingers. Let them thrive while they can. You may tell us we shall hurt our constitutions and by-and-by we shall not be so zealous. Nevertheless, let us alone till our constitutions are hurt, suffer us to be zealous while we can.

You know very well, with all your prudence, you would give a king’s ransom if you could tomorrow have your juvenile ardor over again. And yet you quarrel with us because we grow upward. Why it is the effect of Divine Grace to grow upwards. The very first thing that Divine Grace does for us is to make us grow upward in love. Oh, what sweet love that is that we have in the early morning of life!

There is not a Prayer Meeting, but we are there. There is not a lecture, but oh, how sweet it is to us! There is scarce a good deed to be done, but we must be engaged in it. We are so earnest, we are growing so fast. "They shall grow as the lily." That is the promise. So when you see the promise fulfilled, my dear aged friends, do not be peevish or rebuke the young people because they grow up and flourish in the courts of the Lord's house.

There is a second effect. After they have been growing upward, they have to grow downward. While "he shall grow as the lily," he shall, "cast forth his roots as Lebanon," also. God will not have His people all flower and foliage. He wants them also to take deep root and throw out strong fibers. After a few years, when we have been growing up in ardent piety, it usually happens that some doubt crosses the mind, or some affliction comes, which, if it does not chill our ardor, yet sometimes checks our energy and we do not grow so fast as we should. Well, what is the effect? Are we really hurt or injured thereby?

I think not. Growing down is quite as good as growing up. I will not say it is better. The most blessed growth in Divine Grace is to be growing up *and* growing down—to be rooted in humility and yet growing up in zeal. But usually the two do not come together. Sometimes we grow up and at other times we grow down. We are such poor mortals—we cannot attend to two things at once. As sure as ever we take to shooting up, the devil comes and tries to prevent us from growing down. And if we are growing down, he generally tries to keep us from growing up.

Well, if we cannot do two things at once, what a mercy it is that we can do one at a time, by God's grace! After having grown up, the Christian grows down—"he casts forth his roots as Lebanon." That is, he gets less in his own esteem. He was *nothing* once, but he now begins to be less than nothing. He thought humbly of himself before. But now he thinks worse of himself than ever he did—if you ask him, now, what is his character—although he said he was, "a poor sinner and nothing at all" before, now he will tell you that he thinks he is the poorest of sinners, for he has not grown one atom the richer all the time he has served his Lord. He is still poor in spirit and perhaps poorer than ever he was. Blessed is it to grow downward!

And let me remind you, my dear Friends, that growing downward is a very excellent thing to promote stability. Perhaps that is the exact meaning of the passage. When we are first brought to God, we are like the lily, wafted about by the wind. Afterwards we grow downwards and become firm. I am fully convinced that the prevailing lack of this age is not so much in respect to growing upwards as growing downwards. Whenever I look abroad on the aggregate assemblies of religious people, I am obliged to hold a large number of my hearers in supreme contempt.

Are you not one day crowding to hear me preach what I think the Truth of God is, and another day cramming a place where a man is preaching the very opposite to what I hold to be true? The fact is, some of you have no idea of what fundamental Truth in theology is. The popular cry is for liberality of sentiment and if a man happens to say a hard word against anything he thinks essentially wrong, he is accounted a bigot at once.

Many of you shrink from the imputation of bigotry, as if it were more awful than heresy in regard to the faith.

You would as soon be called a common informer as be called a bigot. I beseech you, do not be appalled at a taunt. Do not be a bigot, but do not be ashamed of being called one. A man ought to have stable principles and not be ever shifting about from one set of opinions to another. He ought not to be hearing a Calvinistic minister in the morning and saying, that is good—and then going in the evening to hear an Arminian minister and saying, that is good, too.

We are often told by some ministers in their drawing rooms that God will not ask in the Day of Judgment what a man believed, for if his life has been correct, it will not much matter what doctrines he held. I am at a loss for the authority on which they base such laxness. I wonder who told them that was the Truth of God. I have read my Bible through and I have never found a text that could absolve my judgment from its allegiance to my Maker. I hold that to believe wrongly is equally as great a sin in the sight of Heaven as to *act* wrongly. Error is a crime before God and though there is liberty of conscience, so far as man and man are concerned, there is no liberty of conscience with God. You are not free to believe the Truth of God, or to believe error—whichever you prefer at the time.

You are bound to believe what God says is Truth. And on your soul's peril is it, that you believe two things that are contrary, or confound the positive and the negative, where faith is the evidence of justification and unbelief the seal of a sinner's doom. Methinks God will say to you at last, "Man, I gave you brains. I endowed you with reason. How could you suppose yourself less responsible for the use of your brains than for the use of your tongue?" One man says, "Yes." Another says "No." And because it is the fashion to call out, "Liberality, liberality, liberality," you do assent to both and joining the crowd you are sincere in neither.

You ought rather to say, "I believe that what I hold is true and if I did not, I should not avow it and believing it to be true, I cannot hold that the opposite is true, nor can I be continually going to hear one doctrine at one time and another at another. My conscience demands that I distinguish between things that differ."

My dear Friends, do try to grow down. Strive to get a good hold of the rocky doctrines of Free Grace. Do not give them up—keep fast hold of them. When you believe a thing upon genuine conviction, do not shrink from the avowal, because an ill name is applied to it. Say rather—

***"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart."***

Well, what next? After a Christian has become confirmed in his doctrine and has received the Truth of God in the love of it, what next? Why the next thing is, he makes a profession. "His branches shall spread." He has been a lily straight up, with no branches at all. But now his roots have struck deep into the ground, like the cedars of Lebanon. And the next thing he does is to send forth branches. He says, "I am a Christian. I cannot keep it a secret, I must let somebody know I am a

child of God.” He goes to a Prayer Meeting and he is asked to pray. There is one branch spread.

He goes to join a Church. There is another branch. He sits down to the Lord’s Supper—there is another branch. And so the little lily, which was at first but a tiny plant, now grows into a tree and his branches spread. That is a blessed effect of Divine Grace, believe me, when it leads you to come forth from your obscurity and let the world know what you are. I have no patience with some of you who talk about being *secret* Christians. I should think a man a deserter if he were to say, “Well, I am a soldier, but I do not want anybody to know it.” I should think that he did not belong to one of our good regiments surely, or he would not be ashamed of his colors.

But there are many nowadays that you scarcely know whether they are Christians or not. Shall I tell you why? The awful fact is that they are NOT Christians. “No man lights a candle and puts it under a bushel.” You know what the consequence would be if he did—it would burn a hole through so sure as it was a candle. And no man can have Divine Grace in his heart and keep it a secret. I am sure it must come out. It is one of the things that cannot be concealed. You shall not tell me you can walk into worldly company and never let it be known that you are a Christian—hat you can live for months in a house and keep it a secret that a Christian is living there.

If that is the case, I tell you the angels do not know it. For it is not a fact. He that is a child of God will be discovered—his conduct will be different from the rest of men. “Your speech betrays you,” said the maid to Peter. And our speech will betray us, if we are Christ’s disciples. I beseech you, let me stir you up, my young Friends, to make a more open profession of your faith. The Savior has done much for you. Do not be ashamed of Him, I implore you, but begin to make a profession of Christ Jesus, your Lord.

Having joined the Church and made a profession, what is the next effect of Divine Grace for the Believer, then? Why it is to make him beautiful as “the olive-tree.” The most beautiful thing in the world is a Christian. Shall I tell you what kind of beauty he has? His beauty is the beauty of an olive tree. And that consists, first, in its fruitfulness. The most beautiful olive tree a man can grow is the one that bears the most. And the most beautiful Christian in the Church is the one that abounds most in good works.

Besides, the olive is an evergreen and so is the Christian. He has an olive-green beauty. He has a beauty which does not fade away, as it does from other trees, but lives forever. Ah, my Friends, we sometimes put one of our members before others because of his wealth and at times we show a little partiality to another because of his eloquence and to another because of his talents—but I take it that God ranks us all according to our *fruitfulness*. The most beautiful tree in a garden is the one that bears the most fruit—and there is a promise given to a Christian that after his branches have spread, his beauty shall be as the olive tree. That is, he shall grow and be laden with fruit.

The olive tree, I have told you before, is evergreen. And so is the beauty of the Christian. Alas for the beautiful Christians we have in some of our places of worship on Sunday! Glorious Christians! Oh, if they could be packed up and sent to Heaven just as they are, or provided their appearances were true indications of their state, what a blessed thing it would be! But alas, alas, on the Monday they have not the same sort of dress they had on Sunday and therefore they have not the same kind of actions. Oh, dear Friends, there is so much more Sunday religion in these days!

Now, I like a Monday religion and a Tuesday religion and a Wednesday religion and a Thursday religion and a Friday religion and a Saturday religion. I do not think the religion of the pulpit, or the religion of the pen, is to be relied upon. I think it is the religion of a draper's shop, the religion of a corn exchange, religion in a house, religion in the street and the religion of a fireside, that proves us to be God's children. But how would some of you come off if you were weighed in these balances? Fine fellows, with your feathers on, on Sunday. But poor creatures when you are in your undress, in your religious casual attire on Monday! You are not well arrayed then. But ah, if you were Christians, you would be always well arrayed—yes, you would be always beautiful as the olive tree.

Again, "His smell shall be as Lebanon." Now, I take it, the smell means the report which will go out concerning a man. As you walk up Lebanon, it is said that the flowers of the aromatic herbs there cast up a most delicious perfume. You need not touch a flower—you can smell it at a distance. And so with the true Christian. Without seeking for it, he will obtain a blessed name among his Brethren and some name also among the world. "His beauty shall be as the olive tree." Once more, "His smell shall be as Lebanon."

Did you ever know a flower at all concerned about its odor, or about what people would think of it? Did you ever hear a rose have a lawsuit with a thorn, because the thorn said the rose did not smell sweetly? No, certainly not. The rose went silently on, casting up its perfume and left Mr. Thorn alone. Now, at times, with all ministers and with all Christians, there will be all manner of reports and hard sayings. But I have found a great gain by letting the fellows alone. When they are tired, they will have done, I dare say. And I am sure they will not much hurt us. If there is anything amiss in us, we are much obliged to them and we will try and mend it.

But if they have lied about us, it is a satisfaction to us, as far as we are concerned, to know that they are liars and we pray God that they may not have a portion in "the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." Beloved, you never need to be very much concerned what men say of your character—only take care that in the midst of reproach you are without guile or guilt. Live, live, live—that is the way to beat all slanderers and all calumniators. Keep straight on with what you think is right and in due time your light shall burst forth as the morning and your brightness as the sun in His strength. "His beauty shall be as the olive tree and his smell as Lebanon." Wherever the Christian goes he will cast a perfume

about him. And when he is gone, he will leave some savor behind which will be remembered.

III. Thus far we have spoken concerning the benefits of Divine Grace to the Christian himself—more briefly I will now address you CONCERNING THE BENEFITS OF DIVINE GRACE TO OTHERS.

The text says, “they that dwell under his shadow shall return.” I am sure, my dear Friends, if you have Christian principles in your heart, you will not like a selfish religion. Though you will hold it to be a duty continually to examine yourself and to see that you also are sound in the faith, you will not confine your religion to yourself. You may perhaps take the maxim that Christianity should begin at home, but you will never think of improving on it by thinking that it ought to end there.

I like an expansive religion. I should not like to attend a Chapel where all the preaching was meant for me—where all I heard comforted me. I should not like to go where there was not a scrap for me, but all for my Brethren. Nor where there was not something for the poor sinner. I could not afford to attend a place where I should always hear that which was exclusively for the saint, or exclusively for the sinner. If a man left half his congregation without a word, I should doubt whether he would give me the right one. But there are some people so selfish that, provided they go to Heaven, it is enough—they are in the Covenant. They are the dear people of God—generally dear at any price. A peculiar people—awfully peculiar they are, certainly—they are so different from other people—there is no doubt about that.

They say it is equal whether God ordains man’s life or man’s death. They would sit still to hear men damned and I do believe they would sing a song over Hell itself and hail its jubilee. They seem to have no feeling for anyone but themselves. They have dried the heart out of them by some cunning sleight of hand. They have taken away the marrow from the bones of godliness and wrapped themselves entirely up in self. But true Christianity will be expansive and care for others.

Come, then, you men of generous hearts, you of glowing charity—here is a promise for you—you have some who dwell under your shadow. Are you a minister? Your people sit under your shadow on the Sabbath. Are you a father? Your children come and dwell under your shadow. Are you a master? Your workmen dwell under your shadow. You have often prayed for their salvation. You have often yearned for the conversion of their souls. Mother! You have often pleaded for the deliverance of a daughter from her sin. “They that dwell under his shadow shall return.” If you want to do good to your neighbors and to bring them to Christ, put your own heart much upon the Savior. The more of Christ a man has, the more useful will he be in his day.

If you were to look at all the ministers that have been useful, you will not find they were distinguished by great talent so much as by great *grace*. God can bless a poor unsophisticated countryman to the salvation of hundreds if he has Divine Grace—and a man ever so learned may preach in vain, with great periods and stupendous sentences, if he has not Divine Grace. Seek, then, to prove that promise—“I will be as the dew unto Israel,” and so doing, you will get this other promise fulfilled—“They

that dwell under your shadow shall return, shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine—the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”

I have no time to dwell upon these points—“they shall revive as the corn,” or “they shall return.” But I must just make a remark upon that sweet thought—“they shall grow as the vine.” We will transplant the Eastern metaphor into Western soil. Vines, with us, grow up by the side of walls, they could not grow up themselves if there were not some prop against which they could lean for support. Now, I have often thought this is an explanation of that text—“Train up a child in the way he should go.”

Try all you can by God’s grace to train up your child like you would a vine. And here is the promise. “It shall grow as the vine.” Oh, I have thought, what a pretty sight it is to see an aged Christian, who, in his youth, was a Sunday-School teacher, still a member of the Church and there are nine or ten young men in the Church, perhaps, and they walk up and down the Chapel and go and talk to him and comfort him. Do you not see how that is?

Why, when the young man was a strong oak, he let those pieces of ivy grow around him. And those young Christians entwined and grew around him like the vine and now he has become an old man the wind would come and blow the oak down. But the ivy that is twisted around it shields him from the blast and keeps him upright. So with aged Christians, when they have served their God well in their day and generation they shall have comforts from others who have grown around them like the vine and shall be sheltered by them in their old age.

May those of us who are young always seek to cheer the aged! Let us never despise them. Let us try as much as we can to grow around them, that we may tower upwards by their means and that they may be comforted by our adherence. “They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine.”

Lastly, “The scent thereof shall be as Lebanon.” The Christian man shall not allow others to grow up by him—unless by a godly conversation he shall spread the sweetness of perfume wherever he goes. I know some dear saints of the Lord who, if they come to my house for five minutes, leave a refreshing savor behind them for five weeks. They come and talk to me of the things of the kingdom and I have not forgotten their sweet influence on my spirit for a long time after they have gone.

It is said of the wine of Lebanon, that if you pour some into a glass the flavor of it will remain for a long time after the wine is gone. And you know of old wine casks, that it is long before the taste of the wine departs out of them. So with the old Christian. He has got a savory conversation. He talks of the things of the kingdom and leaves a perfume behind him which lasts for weeks afterwards and you say, “Oh, how I wish that man of God would come to my house again. What a sweet savor there was about him!”

This is not the case with everyone. Many of you, when you go and see your friends, sit and tittle tattle all the afternoon and on the Lord’s Day you break the Sabbath as much as if you had sought diversion in the park, although you cry out so much against those who go there. How many there are who utterly waste their time by unprofitable chat in their own houses! Let me solemnly warn you concerning this—“They that feared

the Lord spoke often one *to* another”—not *about* one another. When you meet together, there is too little talk about Christ Jesus, the glory of His kingdom and the greatness of His power. Ministers come in for their share of fulsome praise or offensive scandal, but Brethren, these things ought not to be.

Beloved, if you are true Christians—that is the point—you will leave a scent behind you in your conversation. And when you are dead, there will still be a sweet savor left. Ah, there was good old wine in this pulpit once. There was good old wine in this House of God once and I can see the stains of it here now. Yes, there is the perfume of holy Whitfield in this place tonight—I am sure there is. I can fancy his shade looking down this evening upon this hallowed spot. I am sure he rejoices to see the multitude keeping the Sabbath here. And there is to me, somehow, a kind of solemn awe throughout this place. I wonder how I dared to come here, to stand where he once stood, “whose shoes latchet I am unworthy to unloose.”

Oh, dear Friends, it is something to leave a scent behind you as long as he has done. You may all do it in a measure. In one of Whitfield’s sermons, (I like to read them continually, for I can find none like them), he speaks of some young man who said, “I will not live in my old father’s house, for there is not a chair or a table there but smells of his piety.” That is what you should endeavor to do, to make your house so smell of piety, that a wicked man cannot stop in it. To make it so holy, that without obtrusively telling your sentiments, it should make ungodly men uncomfortable in it.

You should so live that your name in your private circles, if not elsewhere, may be mentioned with honor and it may be said of you, “Ah, he was one who reflected his Master’s image and who sought to adorn the doctrine of God his Savior in all things.”

I may have spoken to you in what you may think an odd style tonight, but I have spoken earnestly. Right on I never pretend to preach to you eloquently, but I have only thrown out thoughts I wish you to remember, and God grant that you may find them to your profit.

But I am well aware that I am preaching to a great many who know nothing about the things of which I have been speaking. What shall I say to them? Oh, my dear Hearers, I should like to strike beneath the floor of this pulpit and get Whitfield to rise up and preach to you for five minutes. How he would plead with you! How he would stretch forth his hands, the tears rolling down his cheeks and how he would cry out in his usual impassioned manner, “Come, Sinners, come. God help you to come to Jesus Christ!” And then he would go on to tell you how the heart of Christ is big enough to take big sinners in and how the blackest and the filthiest—the devil’s castaways even—are welcome to Christ.

And I think I see him pressing the poor convicted sinners into the fold. I think I see him doing as the angels did with Lot, taking them by the shoulders and saying, “Run, run, for your life! look not behind you, stay not in all the plain!” I cannot do it as he could. But, nevertheless, if these lips had the language which the heart would speak, I would plead with you for Jesus’ sake, that you would be reconciled to God. I have, I trust,

some here who are crying for a Savior. They feel they want Him. God has brought them to this state where they feel their need of Him.

Sinner! If you want Christ, Christ wants you. If you have a desire after Christ, Christ has a desire after you. What are you doing? Say, poor Soul, will you take Christ just as He is? Come! Throw out all *your* righteousness. Come! Pack up all your goodness and cast it out of doors. Take Jesus, Jesus only, to be your salvation. And I tell you, though you are black as night and filthy as a demon, while you are yet in the land of the living, if you do now take Christ as your Savior, that Christ will be enough for you, enough to clothe you, enough to purge you, enough to perfect you and enough to land you safely in Heaven.

But if you are self-righteous, I have no Gospel for you except this—

“Not the righteous, not the righteous.

Sinners, Jesus, came to save.”

Sinners, of all sorts and sizes! Sinners black, sinners blacker, sinners blackest! Sinners filthy, sinners filthier, sinners filthiest! Sinners bad, sinners worse, sinners worst! All you who can take to yourselves the name of sinners! All of you who can subscribe to that title! I, in God’s name, preach to you that, “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.”

And if by faith and prayer you are enabled to come to Him this night, there is not a sinner who feels his need of a Savior who may not this night have that Savior. God has given Him first and He will not deny Him second. He who is freely proclaimed in revelation, is freely commended to you in ministration—

“True relief and true repentance,

Every grace that brings you near.

Without money,

Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”

Oh, God, save souls! O God! Save souls! Amen! Amen!

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

THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 17, 1879.

“His beauty shall be as the olive tree.”
Hosea 14:6.

[This Sermon was one of several preached by Mr. Spurgeon after various visits to the Riviera. He had intended to prepare a volume upon the olive, but illness and the pressure of other work prevented. He had revised nearly half of the manuscript of this discourse and the revision of the remainder has followed as closely as possible the lines laid down by him.]

OUR present objective will be to bring out the resemblance in point of beauty between the godly man and the olive tree. But please note that the parallel does not hold good of all who profess and call themselves Christians—it is only true of those whose backsliding has been healed—to whom the Lord has been as a refreshing dew. It is the Believer in a healthy, growing and useful condition whose beauty is “as the olive tree.”

Things of beauty were evidently intended to be gazed upon. God created beauty on purpose that it might enchain our eyes, rivet our attention and command our thoughts. Whether it is the beauty of a tree or the beauty of a man, it was meant to be a joy forever, but this it cannot be if it is left unnoticed. Beautiful objects are intended to be thought upon and spoken of—and we shall not be doing ill if we now consider and commend a Christian. We shall be doing no dishonor to the Master if we admire the disciple, if we confess, at the very outset, that our whole intent is not to magnify Believers, but to glorify God in them. There is no beauty in anything which charms our eyes but what the Creator has put upon it and, assuredly, there is no spiritual beauty about any man but what the Holy Spirit has worked in him, “for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” If the olive tree is beautiful, we are not so doting as to fall down and worship it! And if a man is made comely by the Grace of God, we do not worship the man, but we praise the Lord on his behalf! Glory be to God who has done such marvelous things for poor human nature that he has made it lovely—so lovely that even He, Himself, beholds a beauty in it, for remember that the text is not only the word of a Prophet, but the word of Jehovah, Himself, who says, “I will be as the dew unto Israel...and his beauty shall be as the olive tree.”

Having spent many months under the olive trees of the Riviera, my soul has them still in remembrance. From morning till sunset I have rested in the peaceful groves—at one time basking in the sunshine, and soon seeking the shade to escape the heat of the sun which gave to the invalid, summer in the months of winter! The very color of the olive tree rests the eyes. I delight in its emerald gray, its silver green, its unique foliage—and the song of the birds which sing among its branches refreshes the ears! As I have looked upon the olive trees and thought of them over and over again, my mind has sought for matter whereby I might edify the people of God. My observations have always been made with that desire. And as I now present them to my readers, it is with many prayers that they may minister Divine Grace to those who read them.

I. The Believer in a healthy spiritual state, refreshed by the Holy Spirit as with the dew of Heaven, has a beauty like that of the olive tree in this respect, that IT IS A BEAUTY WHICH GROWS UPON YOU.

Louis Figuier, in his, "*Vegetable World*," says peremptorily, "The olive is of a sober grayish green aspect and without beauty, having a rugged stunted aspect." We object to this verdict, but we freely admit that at first sight, there is little or nothing attractive about the olive tree. We have even heard persons pronounce it an unsightly tree which has quite disappointed them. We were sure that they had never sought its company and conversed with it hour after hour as we have done, or they would not have spoken so slightly of what we have found, "a gracious tree for fruit, for leaf, for flower." Truth to tell, it is not the most shapely of the sons of the forest. And though the trees, as we are told in Jotham's parable, sought it for a king, it does not, like Saul, lift its head above its fellows. Neither does it, like Absalom, claim to be praised beyond all others for comeliness. It is not a tree which would at once strike the beholder with admiration, like some giant oak, or lofty elm—nor charm him with its elegance, like a weeping willow—nor astonish him with its grandeur, like a cedar of Lebanon. In order to perceive its beauty, you must linger a little. You must look and look again! And then, if you do not at last feel a deep respect for the olive, and a quiet delight in its beauty, it must be because you are not of a thoughtful spirit, or else because you have little poetry in your soul. The more familiar you become with the olive tree, the more will you take pleasure in it!

Now all this is also abundantly true of the lively Christian who is full of the Grace of God. He may not at first charm you. Your prejudices may lead you to avoid, if not to oppose him. He appears to be somewhat singular and, perhaps, rugged. He differs materially from the rest of mankind, for he does not run with the multitude—and you are apt to think that his singularity is an affectation. Possibly, at first, he is somewhat cold and distant in his manner towards you. That is the way of many

Christians until they know those to whom they are speaking, for they do not wish to cast their pearls before swine. As you watch them, you will perhaps, at first sight, see more of their imperfections than of their virtues—it being a habit with them not to parade their own attainments either by wearing professional phylacteries or by sounding a trumpet before them. They often put their worst foot foremost out of the very desire not to be seen of men in any Pharisaic fashion. Persevere, however, in observing the spiritual man and you will surely see much that is beautiful about him. Look and look again and, perhaps in time you will come to admire as an excellence that which you now think to be a defect! Be not in a hurry—the best things are not usually glittering and superficial in their attractions. A Christian is assuredly the noblest work of God! In Heaven, itself, there stands nothing superior in the way of a creature to a man of God! And on earth there is nothing that can match him. Watch, therefore, the believer in Jesus, for his moral beauty will repay your study.

The olive grove is, to my mind, supremely lovely when the sun darts his beams through it in long slants of brightness so that you see here a golden lane of light, and there a mass of silver shadows directly beneath the trees. I do not know anything that charms me more than to look into the spotted shadow and light created by the irregular planting of a forest of olive trees! They are all the more delightful because of their disorder and the varied dark and bright hues which meet the eyes and gratify them with their exquisite checkered work. In like manner, when Christians enjoy the Light of God's Countenance and it is sunny weather with them, then will you see their beauty if you have true spiritual insight! When their faith is flourishing and their hope is beaming—then their love is full of freshness and the joy of the Lord flashes on them—then, if you have a spiritual eye for such beauty as angels care to gaze upon, you will wish to be numbered with good men and to mingle in their sacred society!

Perhaps the finest idea of the beauty of olive trees is obtained when you see them in a mass. Stand upon the open common at Bordighera and look beneath you towards Ventimille and Mentone, marking where the mountains shelve to the sea and all their sides are clothed with olive groves—and you will clap your hands with delight! Before you is a very sea of olives, with billowy waves of silver brightness reaching as far as the eyes can see—with here and there a stately palm rising up above them all. Even thus, when we shall be privileged to look upon the entire Church of God gathered in one countless multitude at the last, what a sight it will be! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing out before the Lord and the mountains and the hills shall join their rapturous song. What a sight will that complete Church be to the pure eyes of holy men

when they see all the trees of the Lord's right hand planting standing together in one glorious garden far excelling Eden before the Fall! Yes, the perfection of the Church of God and of each individual member of it will be seen at the last when the separated ones shall be gathered together in one great general assembly and the beauty of holiness shall be over them all! Till then, let us always believe that Christians are lovely objects to look upon. Some seek the company of the rich and the great, but it is cold comfort that any will gain from mere rank and birth. Some delight in the society of the witty, but their sparks, though they glitter for a moment, are too soon extinguished to minister comfort to mourning spirits. Some delight to associate with those who are highly esteemed among men, but surely, he is wiser who selects his companions from those who are precious in the sight of the Lord! O Beloved, whatever others may say of the people of God, and of the Church of God, let us each one say—

***“There my best friends, my kindred, dwell,
There God my Savior reigns.”***

There, then, is the first point of resemblance between the beauty of a Christian and the beauty of the olive tree. It grows upon you—the more you are with the excellent of the earth, the more will you delight in them!

II. Secondly, in both the case of the olive tree and of the Christian, IT IS A BEAUTY OF A VERY SOBER KIND.

The color of the olive foliage is a gray green or, if you will, an emerald drab. I do not quite know how to speak of it, but would remind you that it belongs to the same family as the ash and is of somewhat similar color, only of a lighter green—one side of the leaf being much paler than the other. I have heard giddy people observe that the olive groves are very dreary. These are the ladies and gentlemen who prefer the fashionable esplanades where they can display their finery—or the deadly gambling saloons of Monte Carlo where they can ruin others, or be themselves ruined! Everyone to his taste—ours lies in another direction! In an olive grove, where all sounds are hushed but the singing of birds, I prefer to sit the whole day with a good book, or even without one, and muse the hours away and feel a deep serenity of soul akin to the everlasting rest. Truly, good Lord—

***“The calm retreat, the silent shade
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by Your kind bounty made
For those that worship Thee.”***

If you want to see true beauty, you will find it in the olive gardens, but it will be of a serious quiet type—not the luxurious beauty of the orange or the lemon with their apples of gold, nor that of the goodly cedar with its regal dignity, nor even of the stalwart oak with its glory of strength! Much less of the flowers of spring which in the land of the olive rival the hues of the rainbow—but an unobtrusive, calm, rugged beauty, dearest

to those who seek restfulness of heart and shrink from “the madding crowd’s ignoble strife!”

Thus far the true Believer and olive are like to the letter. There is nothing showy about him, but much that is serious and reposeful. He has thought of things and gone to the root of the matter. He has sorrowed under the burden of sin and the delight he has known in being delivered from it is a deep mysterious joy. His happiness does not display itself like the anemones and wild tulips which grow in such profusion on the terraces of Mentone, but it is content with more subdued tints which will last when flowers and their comeliness will be forgotten! The true Christian is not always smiling—he can laugh as every honest man can and should—but he is not a constant giggler and hunter after childish merriment as many are. His is real, substantial, thoughtful happiness which can bear the test of meditation and examination. He can give a reason for the hope that is in him. He does not need to dance and fiddle in order to enjoy himself. His joy is made of nobler stuff. It is such merriment as angels have when they see prodigal sons returning and rejoice before the Father’s face! Give me the quiet delight of the genuine Christian. Oh, that some professors had more of it! Not so fast, good Friend, take your joy more calmly! Not quite so much fire and fury—pause for a little thought at least now and then. If you go too fast, today, you will be out of breath before tomorrow! You are so very joyful, disappointment, I fear, will tame you into despondency! “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” Believe and act according to the common-sense guidance of faith and go calmly through the world as God enables you, for if you do, you will have the beauty of the olive tree—and what more would you have?

III. Thirdly, the beauty of the olive and the beauty of the Christian are alike in this respect, *they are ever-abiding*. You saw yonder plane or beech, a few months ago, adorned with luxuriant foliage. But there came a chilly blast and the leaves began to fall—and when you passed the other day, the tree was like a vessel in a storm under bare poles—not a green leaf was to be seen! In these wintry days you will see the trees lifting their naked arms into the frosty air as if they longed to be clothed once more. Not so the olive! Its leaf is always green and its branch never bare. No wintry wind ever strips its boughs and though it looks more full of foliage at some periods than at others, yet it always seems well clad and in flourishing condition! Perpetually it clothes the bare hills as with the downy feathers of the dove’s breast and knows no nakedness. Such is the true Christian—he is evermore as a green olive tree in the courts of the Lord. You shall find him not always alike, happy, but always blessed! Not always alike, restful, but still at peace! Not always alike, useful, but still fruitful—always rejoicing in a blest estate such that even at his worst, he would not change with the proudest sons of earth! His

branches may be at times disturbed and tossed about, but his heart is not troubled, nor his joy taken from him! At bottom, he still believes in God, rests in the Covenant promises and rejoices in Christ Jesus!

Many professors know nothing of this constancy of joy. They rejoice for a season and then lose their first love. Like the deciduous tree which puts on its greenery in the early spring, but is stripped in winter, so do they lose their zeal, love, earnestness and joy. This is not as it should be with you who profess to be God's children! This is not having the dew of the Lord upon you! Final perseverance is the test of vital godliness! To continue in the Truth, grounded and settled—to abide in Christ Jesus, to constantly bring forth the fruits of the Spirit—this it is to be a Christian! Constancy is the beauty and glory of a Christian. We all like the man of whom we can say that we know where to find him, but there are some whom we never know where we can find them. And if we did, they would not be worth finding. He is the man who really adorns his profession who is consistent and persistent, who abides steadfastly in the Truth which he has received and is not “carried about with every wind of Doctrine.” The Lord grant unto us the Grace to have a perpetual spiritual health which shall be our beauty, just as constant greenery is the beauty of the olive tree!

IV. Let us now notice, in the fourth place, that the beauty of the Christian is like that of the olive tree IN ITS DELIGHTFUL VARIETY.

Each season, each day and, I might almost say, each hour, the olive presents a new aspect.

I have recently watched olive trees almost every day for three months and they always appeared somewhat different, varying in color and tint as the day was cloudless, overcast, or decidedly wet. Even the position of the sun caused a change in their appearance! And a little wind turning up the silver side of the leaves presented a new phase of beauty. After a shower of rain, the green appeared predominant, but on a hot and dusty day, the gray was in the ascendant. In the evening, they sometimes seemed dark or drab. And another time they wore a silvery sheen. Like certain other colors which vary with the light, the tint of the olive leaf is peculiar in yielding to its surroundings. I cannot describe it, for it seems as if it follows the mood of Nature and blends it with its own. I do not think I am very fanciful, but it seemed to me that this tree was in wonderful sympathy with the weather, the sun, the sky, the clouds, the morning and the evening!

Even thus, Believers in Christ Jesus, if they are the right kind of Believers, when you come to know them, have peculiar lights and shades and differences of mood and temperament—but in each variation there is beauty. The true Christian is a Christian in all his moods and, therefore, is worthy of careful observation. When he is brightly happy, see how

Grace sobers him! And when he has a heavy heart, see how that same Grace brightens his spirit. Watch him in the world and see how unworldly he is—observe him in the midst of his Brothers and Sisters and note how unreserved he is, even as a child is at home. On his knees or at his work in the house of God or in his own house, in controversy or in communion, at rest or in labor, he is always the same! Yet you constantly see a new phase of his character and scarcely know which one pleases you the most. There are sometimes strange lights glowing around Christian character and if you study the biographies of the godly, or watch the living saints, you will continually find fresh charms in them. I am old enough to be weary with observing the imperfections of my Brothers and Sisters in Christ—I prefer to spy out their excellences and to take delight in them. I find it better to think too well of God’s people than to think too ill of them—and better to commend them and to help them by commending them, than to censure them and dispirit them by the censure. Do you the same! You will see some beauty even about the feeblest of God’s own people if you will but watch them long enough—and especially if you will study the lives of the saints given to us in the Inspired Word—you will not fail to see lights and shades which are only new forms of the same “beauty of holiness.”

The olive tree changes with the seasons. Just before I left Mentone, it had put forth new shoots and slender branches which drooped like the boughs of the weeping willow. In a few weeks, that same olive will be covered with a vast multitude of flowers—little white stars, countless in number—somewhat like the flowers of the lilac. Near each leaf, they tell me, there is a bunch of blossoms with a host of very tiny flowers. The whole tree becomes one great mass of bloom and whitens the ground with a snowfall of flowers. A very lovely sight is the olive tree in bloom! I do not doubt, however, that the peasants like best to see the fruit. The brown beads of the ripened olive have a beauty, too, and when these are gone, the foliage is still attractive. It does not matter to an olive tree whether it is spring, summer, autumn, or winter—it is a thing of beauty and joy all the year round and every day of the year! And such is the Christian when the dew of the Lord is upon him! He has his changes, but he does not lose his beauty, though men do not always have the eyes to perceive it.

Look at David, especially as he is revealed to us in the Book of Psalms. There you see him like a green olive tree in the courts of the Lord. Look at the blossoms of joy that are on him, covering him with a beauteous garment of praise! When you read the 103rd Psalm and similar joyous odes, he seems to be smothered with the delicious bloom which yields a most pleasing perfume of thanksgiving! Watch him at another time, when he is putting forth the green shoots of holy desire—his heart thirsting af-

ter God as the panting hart thirsts for the water brooks, his inmost soul longing to drink a deep draught of the Divine Grace that comes from the Most High! Then see him at another time when, as an old man, his fruit grows ripe and you observe his rich experience full of unction, bearing fruit unto the Lord. Everywhere David is beautiful, except when he sins—and so are all those who seek to follow David's Lord and make Him their All-in-All.

Some Christians seem to be always the same. I wish I could always be the same by being always at my best, but it is very bad to always be the same at your worst! And I know some professors who appear to be just like that. They have a faulty string in their harp, yet they always want to play on that string whenever we are with them! Indeed, they seem to think that that particular string of theirs is the one upon which we all ought to play. And if our harp strings do not happen to be faulty like theirs, they fancy that our harp can scarcely be right—that our spot is not the spot of God's children. Yet you know that if one child in your family happens to have a defect somewhere or other, you would not think it essential or desirable that all of your children should have the same defect! It is well that they should all have the family likeness, but there is no need that there should be a family deformity peculiar to them all! Yet some Christians seem to think that there is such a need. I hardly think that many Christians are always at their worse, though, in another sense, I hope some are, because if they are ever worse than I have seen them, they must be bad, indeed! But I do wish we could all be always as we are at our best—only then I would wish that we could be something even better than that and keep on advancing “till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Yet it may be that these varying modes of feeling and ways of looking at things are, after all, as far as they are not sinful, the various parts that help to make up the complete beauty of the Christian character!

V. Now, fifthly, (I hope you will not be wearied with so many divisions. I cannot help having them, for the olive tree has so many branches)—another point of resemblance between the olive and the genuine, lively, healthy Christian—and another point of beauty in each case is INDIVIDUALITY.

I think no one ever saw two olive trees that were exactly alike. They are wondrously varied. The twists and turns of the branches, the singular way in which they grow down where you think they never can grow and the equally remarkable way in which they do not grow where you think they should—the curious shapes and the shapeless shapes that they take, I cannot describe to you—it would be necessary for you to see them to understand what I mean. Sometimes some of the branches seem

as if they were turned to serpents, coiling themselves around the bigger branches. The olive trees always appear to me to be in an agony—twisting and turning like one in excruciating pain as if they remembered the griefs and woes of Him who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood when He agonized beneath the shade of the olives in Gethsemane!

The trunk of the olive is often split into many separate parts and each part seems to be full of vitality. You scarcely ever see one that appears to be entire—they are rent and torn as though sundered by volcanic eruptions—and they are turned into all manner of shapes so that no one of them is like its fellows! Here and there one sees a young tree that seems, for a while, to have a definite shape and to grow up in some sort of comely form. But you see another by its side, still smaller, which has not grown three feet above the ground before it takes a twist and goes down again, and then comes up again, once more, forming letters something like a W, or an S, or a V, but never reaching the shape that you would have thought it might have done!

This individuality in the olive tree is a part of the charm of the olive grove. And so it is among Christians. There are certain sets of professing Christians about who are very much of one type. You must have noticed them if you have gone about with your eyes open. There is a Methodist type, a Particular Baptist type, a Bible Christian type, a Church of England type and many others. Somehow or other, they are cut and trimmed according to certain prescribed rules and regulations—like the lines of little olive trees that we pass on our way to Mentone which have nothing of the grandeur and glory of the beautiful olive groves with which we are familiar. The more we get out of this attempt at securing uniformity, the better will it be for us and for the whole Church of God! Egyptian art laid down certain laws that had to be kept—the nose must bear such-and-such a proportion to the mouth, and the eye must be of just such-and-such a form and so on—and, therefore, Egyptian art remained forever where it was. True art knows that there must be individuality and that no rule can be made of universal application!

It is so among Christians. Here is one man who is naturally of a cheerful spirit, yet he condemns himself because he does not mourn like his sorrowful Brother over yonder. But, my dear Friend, God did not intend you to be like he is! Here is another Brother who is naturally of a very desponding spirit and he often blames himself because he has not the exhilaration that he sees manifested in others. My dear Friend, you were not to be as they are and it is no use for you to try to imitate them! Be yourself, for that will be much better! I have sometimes compared myself with my fellow Christians until I have felt not only humbled, which is a good thing, but I have been despondent, which is a bad thing! I have found that the better plan is to remember that in a great house there are

many different kinds of vessels and they are not all of the same size or shape because they are not all to be put to the same use! In a large garden there are various orders of flowers, but they are not all of the same color, neither do all exhale the same perfume, neither do their seeds, when they come to perfection, all assume the same form! So is it among Christians—there are some who sing sweet, solemn melodies with a strain of despondency always running through their matchless music, for to me it seems the sweetest of all harmonies. There are others who are more like the lark. As they sing, they soar! The Countess of Huntingdon was a singer of this sort and, therefore, she sang—

***“Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above.”***

Well, shall I chide the lark because it is not a nightingale, or the linnet because it sings not like the canary or the goldfinch? No, let every bird have its own distinct note. Let every flower have its own special hue. Let every tree have its own peculiar form and let all the Lord’s people grow as they are guided by the Divine Nature that is in them! And then one shall grow in this shape and another shall grow in that style, and others shall grow differently from either of them! Although there is not one olive tree that is exactly like another, yet all the olives are olives and you never mistake them for any other tree. And, in like manner, though no one Christian is exactly like another in all respects, yet they are all Christians and you should not be able to mistake them for worldlings! The all-important matter is not that you should be like I, or that I should be like you, but that both of us should be like Christ! “Ah, but then,” you say, “we shall be like each other, shall we not?” No. It is strange, but it is quite true that Christians may be like Christ and yet very little like each other. There may be a thousand minor diversities in the imitators of the one great Exemplar—and the individuality of everyone of them shall be as definite as the identity of the whole of them as followers of Christ!

VI. Sixthly, much of the beauty of an olive tree and much of the beauty of a Christian is found in the fact that **THE OLIVE TREE IS FULL OF LIFE, AND SO IS THE CHRISTIAN.**

In the olive, it seems to be always a struggling life. It is true that it is full of life, but as you get a glimpse of some olive trees, you say to yourself, “That tree must have had a hard time of it.” The gnarled and knotted old trunk is split up just as if an axe had been driven through it. You can see the white wood inside and on the surface the rugged bark appears in places as if it were rotten, yet you find that it is still alive. Then you see the branches that grow out of these various divisions of the trunk, twisting, twirling and wriggling in and out as if they lived in perpetual agony, for they have to draw oil out of the flinty rock. It would involve much hard labor for men to accomplish that task, yet the olive tree is continually doing it, yielding the precious oil which not only makes the face of

man to shine, but which supplies him with food and light the whole year round! This the olive tree often does in a sterile soil where there appears to be no nourishment for it whatever. It seems as if the olive tree, though always in an agony, is always full of life. It is not an easy matter to kill an olive tree—even if you hew it down, yet leave the stump, or a portion of its roots in the ground—it will begin to sprout and grow again. If you let the tree stand for a thousand years or more, it will still bring forth fruit in old age! And when it is, at last, worn out and decayed, its children will have grown up into a fruitful grove all around it!

The olive must live and it will live! And, to my mind, it is one of the beauties of the olive tree that under the sternest circumstances, it seems invincibly to live. And that is also the glory of a true Christian. He must live and will live. The Grace of God within him will enable him to live when men would think he must die. Persecute him, but the axe, or the stake, or even the lions have no terrors for him. Try to crush the Church of Christ and the more you try to crush it, the more it will live and flourish! Seek to exterminate the Christians and in the futile attempt you shall multiply them like the stars of the sky or the sands of the seashore! There is no way of killing the Life of God when it is once implanted in the heart of a Believer in Jesus! All the devils in Hell, if they set all their demoniacal powers to work to blow out the feeblest light that ever glowed in a Christian's heart, could not put it out even if they took an age to do it! The Christian must live, must grow and must bring forth fruit unto God! I love, therefore, to study the lives of Believers and to watch the struggles of the saints of God. You may study this conflict in your own heart and see how the Divine Life within you struggles on under affliction, adversity, trial and temptation—but conquers all! You may watch it also in your fellow Christians who are poor and despised, who have to suffer much sickness, pain, weakness and who, perhaps, are bed-ridden year after year—yet you will see how the Divine Life still lives and triumphs over all obstacles! Is there not a wondrous beauty in it upon which we delight to look and for which we praise God with all our hearts?

VII. Now, seventhly—and coming to the number of perfection, we come to that which the olive tree might well regard as its greatest beauty, namely, ITS FRUITFULNESS. “Oh, yes!” the peasant says, “the olive is a beautiful tree, for it bears its berries full of oil and the olive crop is the best crop that can possibly be grown.” There is no known root or seed that can be grown by the most skillful farming that can produce anything like so much return in a year as the olive does with little or no labor from its proprietor! It simply stands still and makes him rich. When he eats his bread, he uses no butter or animal fat as we do, but he spreads a little olive oil upon it and so is nourished by it. When he lights his lamp at night, he does not use the pungent petroleum that we burn—but he

takes some good sweet olive oil and so gets all the light he needs! Mosquitoes and other insects sting him, or he has some irritation of his skin and he anoints his flesh with oil and obtains immediate relief. When he is sick, or his body is wounded, he anoints himself with oil and it proves to be one of the best medicines in the world! And, at any rate, it is not so disagreeable as some of the medicines of modern invention. If he is working a machine, the olive oil helps to prevent both the danger and the discomfort caused by the friction. In fact, the man puts the tree to so many uses that he says it is a lovely tree because its fruitfulness helps him in so many ways.

In like manner, the most beautiful Christian in the world is the most fruitful one. Our old proverb is true, “Handsome is that handsome does” and, in the sight of God, those who do the most good works and who thus most glorify their Father who is in Heaven, are the most lovely of all Christians. It is not every Christian who is lovely in this way, but if you have the “dew” of which this Chapter speaks, if the roots of your spiritual nature are refreshed by the river of the Water of Life and if, by blessed fellowship with God and the entire consecration of your body, soul and spirit to Him, you bring forth an abundance of fruit unto God, then you have the beauty of the olive tree whose greatest glory is its fruitfulness!

You may, perhaps, have stood in an orchard in the autumn when the apples are getting rosy red and are weighing down the boughs, so that they would break if the owner did not prop them up. Or you may have been in a cottager’s garden and he has said to you, “Look at that tree, Sir. Ain’t it a beauty?” Possibly you had not been thinking of the beauty of the tree, for you were admiring some of the lovely flowers that were growing at your feet—but the cottager does not care much about them—but he does care about those apples which are so abundant. After a good look at the tree so well laden with ruddy-cheeked fruit, you agree with him, for there is a practical beauty in the tree’s fruitfulness. Try to have that beauty, dear Friends! To be commended for the eloquent way in which you speak, or for the elegant way in which you dress, or for the admirable way in which you practice deportment is praise that is empty as the wind! But to be useful in your day and generation—to glorify God by doing something to benefit your fellow creatures, instructing the ignorant, helping the poor and needy, bringing the lost and erring ones to the feet of Jesus—this is a practical kind of beauty that is worth having! Let your beauty in this respect, be as the olive tree.

VIII. Eighthly, THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE OFTEN LIES IN ITS PROGENY.

The writer of the 128th Psalm says of the man who fears the Lord and walks in His ways, “Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of your house: your children like olive plants round about your table.” If

you have ever been in the olive groves you must frequently have noticed around the parent olive tree, two, three, four, sometimes as many as eight, ten, or 12 little trees all growing up from the old root—some of them also beginning to bear fruit and standing there ready, when the old tree in the middle is taken away—to do all they can to supply its place. I have occasionally seen an olive tree felled and the white trunk left flat like a table, with several little trees growing all around it—and that sight seemed to bring the text I just quoted very vividly to my mind, “your children *like olive plants round about your table.*” May your children, Beloved, be like young olive trees springing up around your table to bring forth fruit unto God when you have done with fruit-bearing! Or even like the old and young olive trees, may you all be fruitful together! It is to me a very beautiful sight to see a godly man succeeded by gracious sons and daughters. It is a privilege beyond comparison, a delight beyond description to see those whom you have nursed and nurtured come under the nurture and admonition of the Lord and be so taught in His ways as to become true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ! The aged Apostle John wrote, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in Truth.” Do not you, dear parents, desire this joy for yourselves? I believe you will have it if the dew of the Lord is upon your souls.

I have frequently heard it said that many children of professing Christian parents do not turn out well. How is this? We know that Solomon said, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Now I do not wish to say anything unkind or too severe, but I have noticed that in many such cases the children have *not* been trained up in the way they should go! The father was a very good man—so people said—yet he never had family prayer! How could he train up his children aright without it? No prayer in the family? Why, the training of a tree on a wall requires that you should have some shreds of cloth and some nails so as to fasten securely every little branch or shoot as it comes out! And I call family prayers our shreds and nails to help to train up our boys and girls as they begin to grow. Besides, if a professing Christian finds his children turning out ungodly, let him ask himself this question, “Did I ever personally pray with my sons? Did I ever personally plead with my daughters? Have I been loving and kind in my conduct towards my children?” If you cannot say, “Yes,” to these and similar questions, then you did not train your child up in the way he should go!

I verily believe that there are many fathers who make religion nauseous to their children. A young man said to me, “My father is a good man, but he will never let his children have any sport or mirth, and he condemns everybody who indulges in anything of the kind. His religion consists in saying, You shall not! You shall not! You shall not! You shall not!” Well, that may be Mosaic, but according to the religion of Jesus

Christ, there is something else beside the negative! There is a positive joy and a real delight in true religion—and where that is set before our young people in a proper spirit, we may expect that God's Grace will bring them to desire the same joy and delight for themselves! We have proved that God often gives us the happiness of seeing that instead of the fathers, shall be the children whom He makes princes in the earth. He who loved Abraham loved Isaac, and loved Jacob, and loved Joseph, and loved Ephraim and Manasseh, for although Grace does not run in the blood, it often runs side by side with it. And when you once get God to be Friend of your family, it is not easy to get Him out of it. If His Grace calls the father, is it not likely to also call the son, and the grandson, and the children's children's children—not only unto the third and fourth generation, but as long as the earth remains? Yes, blessed be His name, it shall be so and this is one of the beauties of the life of a Christian—that his beauty is perpetuated through his progeny as he stands like an old olive tree with the young olives growing up around him and so “his beauty shall be as the olive tree.”

IX. Now, ninthly, I must remind you that THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE SOMETIMES SUFFERS DECREASE.

At Mentone, I went up a valley between the mountains and I came to an olive garden which certainly did not charm me by its beauty. The natives had been lopping the olives and they had cut them most mercilessly, hacking away huge branches here and there and leaving the poor trees standing there piteously lifting up their mutilated arms to Heaven as though they were imploring someone to take pity upon them and deliver them from their present wretched condition! Why had they been lopped and cut about like that? Simply because some of the branches had ceased to yield fruit, so they had to be cut away. And then, where one old branch was cut off, there might come five or six smaller branches, all of which would, in due season, bear olive berries! So all that cutting and hacking and hewing was intended to improve the olive and make it much more beautiful by making it far more fruitful than it would otherwise have been.

Christians do not look very pretty when they are thus lopped. You had better not come to see some of us when we are full of aches and pains, when the brain is so weary that we cannot think, when the breath is short and the throat is so dry that we cannot sing the high praises of our God! Do not say concerning any of your dear relatives who are very, very ill, “I cannot see much that is Christlike about them.” Ah, dear Friend, they are under the rod and about the only thing a child can do when he is under the rod, is to cry! At least that is what I used to do when I was under the rod and I suppose that is what most of you would do under similar circumstances—there is not much else that seems in season

then. The olive certainly does not look very lovely when it is being lopped, but remember this text, “Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” So, then, you may expect to find fruit *afterwards*, and you may expect to see the beauty of the Christian *afterwards*, and not while they are under the pruning process. “Father!” said a child, “Did you not cut those fruit trees this morning?” “Yes, my Child, I did.” “Why did you cut them, Father?” “To make them bring forth more fruit.” “I thought so, Father, so, after dinner I ran down the garden to see if they had brought forth fruit, but there is not a single pear or apple on any of them.” “No, dear Child,” replied the father, “it is not immediately after the cutting that the fruit comes. We must wait till its proper season, and then I hope we shall see it.” You all know how to interpret that little parable! Do not expect to see the full results of sickness and trial immediately, but believe that in due time they will be seen.

X. Lastly, dear Friends, to me the very choicest beauty of the olive grove is that IT ALWAYS REMINDS ME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

This is also the point in which every Christian who has the dew of the Lord upon him has a beauty like that of the olive tree, namely, that he reminds those about him of his Master! They take note of him that he has been with Jesus. When you are under the olives, you cannot help thinking of Gethsemane, of the dark night in the garden, of the disciples asleep, and of our Savior, Himself, in an agony of grief. A poetess sweetly sings—

***“But you, pale olive, in your branches lie
Far deeper spells than Prophet groves of old
Can ever enshrine. I could not hear you sigh
To the wind’s faintest whisper, or behold
One shiver of your leaves dim silvery green
Without high thoughts and solemn of that scene
When in the Garden the Redeemer prayed.
When pale stars looked upon His fainting head
And angels ministering in silent dread
Trembled, perchance, within your trembling shade.”***

Well, just as all right-minded people would be sure to think of Christ when under the olive groves, so ought we to compel men, whether they are right-minded or not, to think of the Lord Jesus Christ when they come into association with ourselves! Not because we are always talking about religion, but because we are always practicing it. And as frequently as we can, adding suitable verbal expression to the practical testimony of our lives—speaking and singing of our Beloved Lord whose name should never long be off our tongue!

We should so act when we are provoked, bearing it so gently that observers should be compelled to say, “How Christlike they are!” We should, when offended, so readily, so truthfully, so thoroughly forgive the offenders that if they do not say, they should at least *feel*, “How Christlike they are!” We should be so unselfish, so generous, so anxious to serve others and to please them rather than ourselves. We should be so kind in our judgment, so truthful, so tender, so upright, so calm, so strong, so brave and yet so free from all Phariseeism and affectation that men should not have to look at us long before they would be obliged to say, “They have been with Jesus. They never learned that lesson anywhere but at the feet of the Crucified.”

The Lord bless you, dear Friends, and give you faith in Jesus! And then, by His Spirit, impart to you all this beauty of which I have spoken—and a great deal more of which no tongue can adequately speak—even the beauty of holiness—and so your beauty shall be as the olive tree! God grant it for His dear Son’s sake! Amen and 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.**

IDOLS ABOLISHED

NO. 1339

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

“Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?”
Hosea 14:8.

IDOLATRY was the great sin of the 10 tribes represented by Ephraim. Indeed, it is the sin of the entire human race! When we speak of idolatry we need not think of blocks of wood and stone and men bowing down before them, for our native land swarms with idolaters. Neither need you go into the streets to find them. Stay where you are and look into your own hearts—you will find idols there. This is the one easily besetting sin of our nature—to turn aside from the living God and to make unto ourselves idols in some fashion or another. The essence of idolatry is this—to love *anything* better than God, to trust *anything* more than God, to wish to have a god other than we have, or to have some signs and wonders by which we may see Him, some outward symbol or manifestation that can be seen with the eyes or heard with the ears rather than to rest in an invisible God and believe the faithful promise of Him whom eye has not seen nor ear heard.

In some form or other this great sin is the main mischief in the heart of man. And even in *saved* men this is one of the developments of remaining corruption. We may very easily make an idol of anything and in many different ways. No doubt many mothers and fathers make idols of their children. And so many husbands and wives idolize each other and we may even make idols of ministers, even as there were idol shepherds of old. Equally is it certain that many a thoughtful man makes an idol of his intellect. Many another makes an idol of his gold, or even of that little home wherein he enjoys so much content. The ignorant papist holds up his crucifix and worships that—and that is one of his idols.

But men who are better instructed often take the Bible and read it and, failing to get through the letter into the spirit, they trust in the mere act of Scripture reading and make even the Word of God, itself, to become an idol to them through their resting in a mere creed, or in Bible reading—not pressing through it to spiritual hearty worship of God, Himself. Anything, however holy, which comes between us and the personal dealing of our soul with God, as He is revealed in Christ Jesus by faith and love and hope, becomes an idol to us!

There are idols of all sorts, more or less intrinsically valuable. Just as in material substances one idol is made of wood, another of stone, another of silver and another of gold so that these idols differ in value and yet they are all idols, so may men, according to their different grades of mind, make an idol of this or of that or of the other, every man according

to his own fancy. Many of these idols may, in themselves, be considered good enough—but when they are made into idols they are none the better for that—a golden idol is just as obnoxious to God as a wooden one! And so the dearest and best thing on earth, if it is allowed to come between us and God, as an idol, becomes an abomination in the sight of the Most High.

O Brothers and Sisters, when you cannot trust the Providence of God, but feel as if you must have something of visible substance to lean upon, you idolize your savings, or the money you covet! When you cannot take the bare promise of God and dare not risk everything for God, but need something over and above the Word of God to rest in, you idolize your own selfishness! When you must have marks and signs and evidences of the things which God has plainly declared—and will not believe God unless you have corroborative proof—you are playing the idolater's part! Yet human nature continually craves for more than God All-Sufficient because it is so carnal that it will not trust the Invisible One. It is, therefore, a supreme work of Grace when God brings any man to say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" I ask your attention to four points.

I. And the first is this—I want you to notice THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THIS PREDICTION. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" God speaks of Ephraim as if Ephraim *would* do and *must* do what He declared it should do. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" But who was this Ephraim? If we look at him as an individual, he represents the 10 tribes of Israel at the time when they were wedded to strange gods. Ephraim is a man and, therefore, he has a will of his own. He is a depraved man and, therefore, he has an *obstinate* will. And yet God speaks about Ephraim as positively as if he had *no* will, and states that he shall say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

It would be very difficult to say what the wind will do—very hard to say what the waves will do. But man's will is more changeable and uncontrollable than the winds and the waves! Yet God speaks as if Ephraim were absolutely in His hands and He tells us what Ephraim shall say, and, in fact, what Ephraim shall *feel*. It is wonderful—is it not?—that God, who knows the inconstancy and willfulness of humans, thus speaks about the mind of man and *declares* what he shall say and what he shall feel?

Now, in all this it is to be observed that there is no violation of the human will. Men are not blocks of wood, nor lumps of unconscious clay! God has made man a creature that wills and determines and judges for himself and He deals with him as such. There are persons who seem to fancy that whenever we speak of God as being Omnipotent in the realm of mind and speak of His declaring what men shall do and feel, that we, therefore, deny free agency. By no manner of means! We are never prepared, for the sake of one Truth of God, to deny another! And we do as heartily believe in free agency as we do in predestination!

It has never been our custom to murder one Truth of God in order to make room for another! There is room enough for two Truths of God in the mind of the man who is willing to become as a little child. Yes, there is

room in a teachable heart for 50 Truths of God to live without contention! God treats men as men and as intelligent creatures. Having granted them power of judgment and will, He treats them as such, and He does not use that force upon the soul which it would be legitimate to use upon a piece of metal if it had to be bored or to be melted! Nor does He even use such force as it is legitimate to use upon “an ox and an ass which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.”

No, no! Under Heaven there is no man whose will God has ever violated! He has made the saved man’s will all the freer by the constraints which Grace has put upon it! Grace does not *enchain* the will, but *frees* the will! And when a man sincerely says, “What have I to do any more with idols?” though that speech is totally contrary to all the intent of his former life, yet he says it with the full consent of his heart! No, he never said anything more willingly than he says this, when God, by Divine power has, “made him willing in the day of His power!” I wonder whether you are able to grasp, dear Brothers and Sisters, and lay hold of these two great Truths of God—first, that man is made a creature responsible for all his actions, *and* a free agent so constituted that God, Himself, will not violate that free agency!

And yet this other Truth of God which we will maintain with all boldness—that God is as Omnipotent in the region of mind and free agency as He is in the realm of mere matter! He looks upon the hills and they smoke. He touches the earth and it trembles. The sea obeys Him and pauses where He bids it stay. Yes, earthquake and tempest are entirely under His control! Nobody who believes in an Omnipotent God doubts these things. But it is equally true that God enlightens the dark understanding with a flash of His Spirit. It is true that God removes the iron sinew of the obstinate will. As to the affections—when the heart is like stone, cold, dead, heavy, immovable—He has a way of turning the stone to flesh. He can do what He wills with men and when His Spirit puts forth all His power, though men may resist, yet there is a point beyond which resistance absolutely ceases and the soul is led in joyful captivity to the conquering Spirit of the blessed God!

Now, somebody will again say, “But how do you make this consistent? You now talk contrary to the statements you made before.” No, my dear Brother, I do not. They are *both* true—man is free, yet God is a Sovereign in the world of free minds—working His own way and speaking, thus, positively, without *if* or *but* or *an*. Don’t you know that He will have His will and man’s will shall *willingly* bow to His will, for He alone is Lord? Let me read you God’s wills, God’s wonderful wills, as they stand in this chapter, “I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely for My anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel. He shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?”

God speaks about men as if they were absolutely puppets in His hands and yet, at the same time, in other places He puts them upon their personal responsibility—both the doctrines are true! It is not yours or mine to ask how they are to be reconciled, much less to cast either of the Truths of God away! But let us hold them both fast, for these two shall be a clue through many a mystery of intricate doctrine and lead us into the light of God on many a dark saying. I rejoice to hear the almighty Lord speak thus divinely of what man shall do! And I adore the amazing wisdom and power which can rule over free agents!

II. But now, secondly, in our text we see A MARVELLOUS CHANGE. “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?” Who is this Ephraim? Why, if you read the book of Hosea through you will find him turning up continually. Ephraim—Who was he? Who is this that says, “What have I to do any more with idols?” I will tell you. It is that same Ephraim of whom the Lord had said, “Leave him alone: he is given unto idols.” This is different talk, is it not? At one time he is “glued” to his idols, for that is the word used in the original—*glued* to them as if he was stuck to them and could not get away at all.

But *here* he is saying, “What have I to do any more with them?” What a change it is! Is that the same man? Yes, the same man. But mark what the Grace of God has done for him. See, also, how resolute he is. He speaks plainly and positively, “What have I to do any more with idols?” Is this the same man that we read of in a former chapter, “Ephraim is a silly dove without heart”? Yes, he was “a silly dove without heart,” but now, this same Ephraim, is saying, “What have I to do any more with idols?” He is speaking as if he had received a new, enlightened, bold and decided heart! This is a change, is it not?

The man who was glued to his idols and full of vacillation whenever better things came before him, is now clean separated from his former trusts and made to hate them! He no longer vacillates and hesitates, but takes his stand and asks with glorious promptitude, “What have I to do any more with idols?” It is a great change! And it is such a great change as many of *us* have undergone! And it is such a change as everybody here must undergo or else they shall never see the face of God with acceptance! Conversion, which is the first fruit of *regeneration*, makes such a difference in a man that it is as though he had been dead and buried and were now raised from the dead into newness of life! It is as much a change as if the man were destroyed and then were made a new creature in Christ Jesus!

I wonder whether you have all felt such a change as this? I sometimes meet with persons who claim to be Christians and Believers and all that, but they have never experienced any change that they can remember from their babyhood. Well, dear Friend, there *must* have been such a change if you are a Christian! I will not say that you ought to know the day and the hour, but, depend upon it, if you are now what you were when you were born, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! If there has not been a turning, you are going the wrong way! Every man must be

turned from the way in which father Adam set his face, for our face is towards sin and destruction, and we must be turned right round so as to have our faces towards holiness and everlasting life.

Where there is not such a turning, there is the most solemn cause for heart-searching, humiliation and for the seeking of salvation! Have you undergone a great transformation? The necessity for it is no fantasy of mine, remember. It is that most solemn word of the New Testament—"You must be born again." There must be a complete and total change in you, so that the things you once loved you come to hate and the things you hated you are made to love—as great a change as there was in Ephraim who was formerly glued to his idols and then came to abhor them!

I pray you all search and see whether such a difference has been made in your hearts by the Holy Spirit—for a mistake here will be fatal. If you have never undergone such a renewing, let the prayer be breathed that the Holy Spirit may now renew you in the spirit of your mind. And if you hope that such a change has taken place upon you, then may God grant it may be a real abiding conversion, so that you may remain in Grace and go from strength to strength till the idols are utterly abolished and your whole nature shall become the temple of the living God! Thus, we have two remarks—a sovereign prediction and a marvelous change.

III. Thirdly, there is in our text AN IMPLIED CONFESSION. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" "Any more with idols?" Then, Ephraim, you have had a good deal to do with idols up till now? "Yes," he says, with tears in his eyes, "that I have." Hypocrites mean less than their language expresses, but true penitents mean much more than their bare words can convey. The confession of the text is all the more hearty because it is tacit and, as it were, slips out unintentionally. Listen earnestly dear Hearers, for, perhaps, some of you may be worshipping idols now.

We will go into the temple of your heart and see whether we can find a false god there. I go into one heart and, as I look up, I see a gigantic idol! It is gilded all over and clothed in shining robes! Its eyes seem to be jewels and its forehead is "as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires." It is a very lovely idol to look upon. Come not too close, do not examine too severely, nor so much as dream of looking inside the hollow sham! Within it you will find all manner of rottenness and filthiness, but the outside of the idol is adorned with the greatest art and skill—and you may even become enamored by it as you stand and gaze upon it! What is its name? Its name is *self-righteousness!*

Well do I remember when I used to worship this image which my own hands had made till one morning my god had his head broken off and, by-and-by, I found his hands were gone. And soon I found that the worm was devouring it and my god that I worshipped and trusted in turned out to be a heap of dross and dung—and I had thought it to be a mass of solid gold with eyes of diamonds! Alas, there are many men to whom no such revelation has been given. Their idol is still in first-rate condition. True, perhaps, at Christmas time it gets a little out of order and they feel that they

did not quite behave as they ought when the bottle went round so freely—but they have called in the goldsmith to overlay the idol with new gold and gild the chipped places afresh!

Have they not been to church since then? Did they not go on Christmas morning to a place of worship and make it all right? Have they not repeated extra prayers and given a little more away to charity? So they have furbished their god up again and he looks very respectable! Ah, it is easy to tinker him up, my Brothers and Sisters, until the Ark of the Lord comes in! And then all the smiths in the world cannot keep this god erect! If the Gospel of Jesus Christ once enters into the soul, then, straightway, this wonderful god begins to bow himself and, like Dagon, who was broken before the Ark of the Lord, self-righteousness is dashed to pieces!

But there are thousands all over this world who worship this god and I will tell you how they pray to it. They say, “God, I thank you that I am not as other men are,” and so on—not exactly in the Pharisee’s language, but after the same style. “Lord, I thank you that I pay everybody 20 shillings in the pound and have brought up my children respectably. God, I thank you that I have been a regular church-going or chapel-going man all my life. God, I thank you that I am not a swearer, nor yet a drunk, nor anything of that kind. I am far better than most people and if I do not get to Heaven it will be very bad for my neighbors, for they are not half as good as I am!”

In this manner is this monstrous deity adored! I am not speaking of what is done in Hindustan, but of an idolatry very fashionable in England! The god of self-righteousness is lord paramount in millions of hearts! Oh, that every worshipper of that god may be led to say, “What have I to do any more with this abominable idol?” Another sort of god I have seen in the human heart is the idol of *darling sin*. A person not long ago said—“Well, I suppose there is a good deal in religion, but, you see, I am on the turf and I could not leave it. How could I? I could not, of course, become a Christian, and yet be known to be a betting man.” Yes, the betting ring was his god. The running horse is as favorite a deity as were the calves of Bethel.

Another man says, “Yes, yes. I should be glad to be a Christian, but, you see, I love the bottle. I must occasionally enjoy a drop too much. Not often, you know, but now and then at convivial meetings, holidays and bonfire nights. A man must be drunk sometimes, must he not? And where’s the harm? I could not give it up.” They do not say so in actual words, but that is what they mean, thousands of them! They must still keep Bacchus for their god and offer him their sacrifices. And, ah, what sacrifices they make! How they ruin health and destroy life, itself, beggar their children, make their wives wretched—and all to worship this dung-hill god of drink!

Others have some other darling sin. I need not mention all. In fact I could not, for the cheek of modesty would tingle if we were to mention certain of the vices which men and women feel that they could not cease from. They would gladly be saved *in* their sins, but not *from* their sins.

They would worship God after a fashion, but the first place must be given to this darling lust of theirs. O Sir, I care not what idol it is, but if there is *anything* in this world that you love better than Christ, you can never see the face of God with joy! If there is any sin that you would persevere in, I beseech you change your mind about it and cut it off though it is a right hand! Pluck it out though it is a right eye! It were better for you to enter into life maimed and with one eye than having both hands and both eyes to be cast into Hell fire! Darling sins must be renounced if Christ is to be enjoyed!

Behold how idolaters disagree—one adores righteous self and another worships *sinful* self—but both idols must be utterly abolished! In some men's hearts I see the love of pleasure. That god is seated on the throne of many hearts. They are overcome, not so much by the grosser sins, as by their natural levity and trifling. They cannot think. They do not *want* to think. They say they are, "dull," if they have to be quiet for awhile. They like to be always amused, gratified, excited. Now, there is a measure of recreation which is as good as medicine to both body and soul. And there are proper recreations to be had. God has provided innocent pleasures and we shall do well to accept them with gratitude from our heavenly Father.

But to be a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God is to be dead while you live! To make your belly your god, to live to eat and drink, to be just meat-digesters and wine-strainers, to be living here merely to enjoy yourself—butterflies flitting from flower to flower, gathering no honey, but merely seeking pleasure—this is evil! Sirs, this is a god that will not be worshipped by one who knows the love of the real God, for his god is his pleasure and pleasure is not his god. He casts aside, full often, things that he might otherwise have allowed himself to enjoy, that he may honor and glorify his Savior the more.

Many worship the golden calf. They indulge no vice and pursue no pleasure except their one vice and their one pleasure which is their greed of gold. If you want to awaken all their energies, jingle a guinea near them! This they pursue as the hounds pursue the fox, never resting. They fear they will be poor when they are old. They make themselves poor when they are young. And, lest they should be starved at last, they starve themselves to the last! We have known some to whom honor, love, uprightness, integrity, religion have all been nothing whatever, so long as *gain* could be had by sacrificing them. The great fabric of their fortune has rolled along, like the car of Juggernaut, crushing everything that has been in its way.

Widows might weep and orphans might lament. The groans of those whom they oppressed might go up to Heaven and the iniquities which they have perpetrated might go before them unto judgment—but it was nothing to them. They were adding field to field and house to house and getting richer and richer—they lived for that and for that they seemed content to die. O God, convert the man who worships gold! Milton, you know, describes the demon of greed as—

“Mammon the least erected spirit that fell

From Heaven, for even in Heaven

***His looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than anything Divine or holy else enjoyed
In vision Beatific."***

This vice is very degrading and well does Milton place Mammon in Hell and say—

***"Let none admire
That riches grow in Hell.
That soil may best
Deserve the precious bane."***

Now, when the Lord delivers a man from the power of the devil, he cries, "What have I to do any more with making wealth my idol?" He grows content, becomes the Lord's steward and uses his substance in the service of Jesus.

We must go round these temples as quickly as we can and not stop long in any one of them, for they are not very sweet—some in the temple of their hearts have set up unlawful attachments. They form connections which are forbidden by the Word of God. For instance, I have known some who profess to be Christians—God knows whether they ever were or not—who have put altogether out of court the command of our Lord not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. They have followed the dictates of the flesh by joining in marriage with the ungodly. It is a dreadful thing to be married to one from whom you know you must be soon separated forever—one who loves not God and, therefore, can never be your companion in Heaven!

If that is your case, already, your prayers should day and night go up to Heaven for the partner of your bosom, that he or she may be brought to Christ. But for any young person willfully to form such a tie is to set up an idol in the place of God! Weeping and wailing will come of it before long! Any form of love which divides the heart from Jesus is idolatry and, alas, I fear the idols are as many as the trees of the field! Lord, remove them far from us! A great number of persons worship an idol called the praise of men. They speak after this fashion, "Oh, yes, you are right enough, but, you see, I could not do it." Well, why not? "Why, I do not know what my uncle would say about it, or I could not tell how my wife would like it. I am not sure if my grandfather would be pleased with me."

The fear of relatives and the dread of public opinion hold many in mental and moral bondage—and the fear of men holds many more. I pity those who dare not do what they believe to be right! It seems to me to be the grandest of all liberties, the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free! The liberty to do and dare anything which conscience commands in His name. But numbers of people have to ask other *people* to allow them to breathe, to allow them to think, to allow them to believe anything! And there is nothing they are so frightened of as Mrs. Grundy. The little society in which they live is all in all to them. What will So-and-So think of it? The working man dares not go to a place of worship because the carpenters in

the shop would be down upon him. The men that work with him would be saying to him, "Halloa! What? Are you one of those Methodist fellows?"

Many men who are six feet high are cowards and are afraid of some little body half their height! They are afraid that some worthless fellow would make a joke at their expense—and to be joked at seems to be something dreadful! O poor souls! Poor souls! All the jokes they are likely to get will be very lukewarm water compared with the scalding hot cauldron into which some of us have been plunged into year after year—when we could not speak a word without having it misinterpreted—and could not utter a sentence without being belied! Yet they shrink from their little persecutions as if they were a great martyr!

We are alive, after all the assaults which were made upon us, and not much the worse for them—and so will you be, too, dear Friends—if you have the heart and the courage to do and dare for the Lord Jesus Christ! This idol of the fear of man devours thousands of souls! This is a blood-thirsty idol! It is as cruel as any of the idols of the Hindus—this "fear of man which brings a snare." Some of you know that you are altogether mean in spirit and dare not do what you know you ought to do for fear somebody or other should make a remark about how strange and how odd you are. God help you to have done with that idol!

Thus we have considered the implied confession that we have had most evil dealings with idols.

IV. The last point is to be THE RESOLUTE QUESTION, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Let us put it this way, "What have I to do any more with them? I have had enough to do with them. What have my sins done for me, already?" Brothers and Sisters, look at what sin has done for us and all our race! It made that beautiful Eden, which was our garden of delight, to be a wilderness! It has made us to be the children of toil and sorrow! What has sin done for us? It has stripped us of our beauty! It has put us away from God! It has set the flaming cherubim with the drawn sword to keep us back from coming near to God as long as we live in sin.

Sin has wounded us, spoiled us, killed us, corrupted us! Sin has brought disease into the world and dug the grave and bred the worm. O Sin, you are the mother of all the griefs and groans and sighs and tears that ever befell men and women in this world! O wretched Sin, what have we to do any more with you? We have had more than enough of you! And have not you and I, personally, had quite enough to do with our idols? I had enough to do with my self-righteousness, I do boldly say, for, oh, how I loathe to think that I should ever have been such a fool as to think that there was anything *good* in me—to think that I could ever have dreamed of coming before God with a righteousness of my own!

Oh, how I abhor the thought! God forbid for one single moment that I should ever be other than ashamed of having boasted in anything that I could do, or feel, or be! Do you not feel yourselves humiliated at the remembrance of such pride and presumption? What have you to do any more with the idol of righteous self? Nothing! We can never bow down before that any more! With regard to other idols, have you not smarted

enough about them? The convert who was once a drunk will say, "I have had enough to do with the cup of intoxication. Who has woe? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. The men of strength to mingle strong drink." The winebibber has had enough to do with that. He has paid heavy smart money and now he has done with rioting and excess forever.

The man who has plunged into vice will often have to say, "It has injured me in body, mind and estate. What more can I have to do with it?" "Ah," said one to me the other day, "when I lived in sin it was so expensive that it will take me years to recover what I have wasted upon the devil and myself. I am not the man for the service of God that I could have been if it had not been for that." Ah, we have all had enough of it—more than enough of it! There is no cup of sin, however sweet it was in the day of our unregeneracy, but we feel that we want no more of it—not even with all its beaded bubbles sparkling on the brim when it moves itself right. We are sick of it—sick to the death and the very name of it causes nausea in our soul. What have I to do any more with idols when I consider what idols have done for me?

But there is another view of it. "What have I to do any more with idols?" Do you see? Can you bear to look upon that strange sight yonder—three crosses set upon a hill. And on the center one a wondrous Man, in fearful agony, nailed to the wood. If you look at Him you will see that there is such a mixture of majesty in His misery that you discover Him, at once, to be your Lord! Lo, it is the Bridegroom of your soul—your heart's best Beloved! And He is nailed up there like a felon hanged to die! Who nailed Him there? Who nailed Him there, I say? Where is the hammer? Where did the nails come from? Who nailed Him there?

And the answer is—Our *idols* nailed Him there! Our sins pierced His heart! Ah, then, what have I to do any more with them? If I had a favorite knife and with it a murderer had killed my wife, do you think I would use it at my table or carry it about with me? Away with the accursed thing! How I should loathe the very sight of it! And sin has murdered Christ! Our idols have put our Lord to death! Stand at the foot of the Cross and see His murdered, mangled body, bleeding with its five great wounds and you will say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" The vinegar and gall, the bloody sweat and death pangs have divorced my soul from all its ancient loves and wedded my heart forever to the Well-Beloved, even the King of kings! "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Nothing separates a man from sin like a sense of the love and the sufferings of Jesus! Redeeming Grace and dying love—these ring the death-knells of our lusts and idols—

***"Soon as faith the Lord can see,
Bleeding on a Cross for me,
Quick my idols all depart,
Jesus gets and fills my heart!"***

Now, you may remember, again, that we must have no more to do with idols, for the same sins which put our Lord to death will put *us* to death if

they can. O child of God, you never sin without injuring yourself! The smallest sin that ever creeps into your heart is a robber seeking to kill and to destroy! You never profited by sin and never can. No, it is poison, deadly poison to your spirit. Do not, therefore, tolerate it for an instant. What have you to do with it? You know it is to be evil, only evil, and that continually. You know that it injures your faith, destroys your enjoyment, withers up your peace, weakens you in prayer, prevents your example being beneficial to others—and for all these reasons what have you to do any more with idols?

Moreover, what have you to do any more with idols, now that you are a child of God—now that you are an heir of Heaven? A poor boy sits down and plays with bits of mud in the street and makes dirt pies with his little friends. One day there comes up a king's messenger who has discovered that this is a lost child from the palace! The child is taken home and washed. He is clothed in royal apparel and is told that he is a prince and that he is heir to a kingdom! Will he go back and play with the dirty boys in the street, again, and be a gutter-child, a street Arab? No, not he! He will be trained to something nobler and more befitting his position.

And though you and I once loved the sin that others love and found amusement where others find it, we have now, by faith, received power to become the sons of God! We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ! What have we to do any more with idols? What manner of people ought we to be whom the Lord has adopted into the royal family of Heaven? Within a few months some of us will be in Heaven—perhaps within a few weeks. What have we to do with idols? Even while we are here, the Lord has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. What have we to do any more with idols? This day are we accepted in the Beloved, the elect of God, justified by faith—our names are engraved on the palms of Jesus' hands! What have we to do any more with idols? Truly, the question answers itself. We have *nothing* to do with them except to loathe them! And whenever they are set up in our hearts, even for a *moment*, we are to break them down by the power of the Eternal Spirit.

Now Beloved, if God has worked a great work in you and changed your hearts so that the idols you once worshipped you now detest, I would ask you to keep away from the idols all you can. If you have nothing to do with them, do not go into the places where they are held in honor. "What have I to do any more with idols?" If I knew that a street was infected with small-pox, I should not go out of my way to ride down it! I had rather go round about to avoid the plague. Let it be so with your once darling sin! Get as far away from it as you can, even as you would keep clear of a leper! You have nothing more to do with idols, therefore do not enter their temples or make a league with their worshippers.

It is an old Rabbinical tradition with regard to the Nazarites that as they were not to drink wine so they were bid not eat the grape, nor go through a vineyard. The old proverb was, "O Nazarite, go about, go about, but go not through a vineyard lest you be tempted to eat of the grape and

afterwards to drink of the juice thereof.” There is a great spiritual and moral lesson here for us. Keep as far away from sin as ever you can! If you have learned to say, “What have I to do any more with idols?” avoid the very *appearance* of evil and all those communications which corrupt good manners.

The ale house, the dancing saloon and the theater are not for you. I loathe to hear Christian people say, “What do you think of this-and-that foolish amusement? Do you think I might go as far as that?” Well, my dear Friend, if you enjoy anything that has any filth in it, I question whether you know anything about the love of God at all! You remember Rowland Hill’s observation to the person who said he liked to go the theater. The person said, “Well, you know, Mr. Hill, I am a member of the Church. And I do not go to the theater often. I only go once or twice a year, just for a treat.”

“Ah,” said Mr. Hill, “you are a great deal worse than I thought you were! Suppose it were reported commonly that Mr. Hill fed on carrion and was very fond of eating rotten meat. And suppose somebody came to me and said, ‘I hear, Mr. Hill, that you are very fond of eating carrion.’ ‘Oh, no,’ I say, ‘Not at all. I do not regularly feed on it, I only eat a dish of it once or twice a year for a treat!’ Then everybody would say, ‘You are fonder of it than we thought. For if poor creatures have to eat it every day because they cannot get anything better, their taste is not so corrupt as yours who turn away from wholesome food and find rottenness to be a dainty dish.’”

If you can find your pleasure and delight where sin of the worst kind is always very near at hand, where religion would be out of place and where Christ, your Master, would not be expected to come, you have not learned to say with Ephraim, “What have I to do any more with idols?” Run away from anything which has the least taint of sin and may God help you to do so even to the end! Is this in order that you may be saved? God forbid! I am only speaking to you who are saved already!

If you are not saved, the first thing is to have a renewed heart by faith in Jesus Christ! And after that we lay no bondage on you and exact no tax from you by way of duty—but it will be your *joy*, your *delight*, your *privilege*—to keep near to your Master and to say, “What have I to do any more with idols?” God bless you for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

THE GREAT CHANGE

NO. 2474

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 19, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 18, 1886.**

*“Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found.”
Hosea 14:8.*

THIS passage is in very vivid contrast to what Ephraim had previously said, as it is recorded in the early part of Hosea's prophecy. If you turn to the second chapter, and the fifth verse, you will find this same Ephraim saying, “I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.” These lovers were the idol gods and Ephraim was determined to go after them, for she ascribed to them her various comforts, her bread and her water, her wool and her flax, her oil and her drink. So desperately set was this Ephraim upon going after her idols that God had much ado to drag her away from them, for that second chapter continues, “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them.”

So, you see, this people had been desperately set upon following after idols, yet, before the prophecy is ended, we find this same Ephraim saying, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” What a change the Grace of God works in the heart! It reverses the action of the entire machinery of our being. It puts, “No,” for, “Yes,” and, “Yes,” for, “No.” It is a radical change—that which we hated, we come to love—and that which we loved, we come to hate. Whereas we said, concerning this and that, “I will,” and, “I shall,” the Grace of God makes us change our note and we say, “I will not, by God's Grace. I will not act as I said I would, for what have I to do anymore with idols?”

At the beginning of this discourse, I would like to put to each one whom I am addressing this question, “Have you, my Friend, ever experienced this great and total change?” Remember, if you have not, it is imperatively necessary that you should if you desire to be numbered among the Lord's people. “You must be born again,” and this being born again is not the evolving of some good thing out of you that is already there, but hidden away, but the putting into you of something which is *not there!* It is the quickening of you from your death in sin. It is a change in you as great as was worked upon the Person of our Lord Jesus

when, after lying dead in the grave, He was brought to life. Nothing short of this new birth, this resurrection, this thorough, total, radical change will make you fit to enter Heaven! You have no right to expect that you will ever stand within yon gates of pearl unless you have been created anew in Christ Jesus! He that sits on the Throne of God says, "Behold, I make all things new." And He must make *you* new, or else into the new Kingdom where there is a new Heaven and a new earth, you can never come! No, you cannot even see that Kingdom, for our Lord's words are as true, today, as when He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Let that searching thought remain with you and try yourselves by it.

But now I shall take you at once to the words of the text, that we may think of the change which was worked upon Israel, or Ephraim. We will consider, first, *the character of this change*—"Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?" Then, secondly, let us note *the cause of this change*. And thirdly, *the effect of this change*.

I. First, then, we are to consider THE CHARACTER OF THIS CHANGE.

Ephraim had been drunk with her idolatry. The Israelites were never content with idols of one sort—they went to Moab, to Egypt, to Philistia, to Assyria, to the Hittites and to any other *ites*—to borrow idols. They introduced fresh idols from distant countries. They were never satisfied with the *number* of their images, yet now, when God has effectually worked upon their hearts, they say, one voice speaking for all, "What have I to do anymore with idols?"

Notice, that *this change was a very hearty and spontaneous one*. Ephraim did not say, "I should like to worship idols, yet I dare not." She did not say, "I should like to set up engraved images, but I must not." On the contrary, she, herself, said, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" I wish that some people whom I might mention understood what conversion means. They say to us, "So you do not attend the theater—what a denial it must be to you!" It is nothing of the kind, for we never have a wish or a desire to go there. What have we, the twice-born, to do with these vain things of the world?" Oh, but the drunk's cup—it must be a very great piece of self-denial to you to forego it!" On the contrary, it is loathsome to us! We have come to feel as if the most nauseous medicine that could be mixed would be sweeter to us than that cup! What have we to do anymore with idols?

So, each thing that is evil becomes to the real convert a disgusting and distasteful thing. He does not say, "Oh, how I should like it! How I long for it! What a hungering I have after it!" If he detects in himself the least hankering after evil of any kind, he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But as far as the work of God's Spirit has been worked upon him, he has a thorough hearty severance and divorce from those things which he once loved. He has as great a horror of them as once he had a desire for them. Now he sings—

***"Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me.***

***Once I admired its trifles, too,
But Grace has set me free.
Its pleasures now no longer pleases,
No more content affords.
Far from my heart are joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord!
As by the light of opening day
The stars are all concealed,
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is revealed.”***

I say again, the change is a very spontaneous and hearty one. Ephraim shall herself freely say, “What have I to do anymore with idols? I have done with those things and I am glad to have done with them. Oh, that I had done with them once and for all!” I asked a convert, this last week, a question which, perhaps, I have asked a dozen others, “My dear Brother, are you perfect?” “No, Sir,” each one has said, “I am not.” Then when I have enquired, “Would you not like to *be* perfect?” the answer in every case has been, “Yes, indeed I would. It would be Heaven on earth if I could but be perfectly holy. Oh, that I were clean rid of sin!” So we sing, with Cowper—

***“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,
And worship only Thee.”***

Let the idols go! Smash them all up, break them in pieces like potters’ vessels! If there is a lust, if there is a passion, if there is a joy, if there is a desire that is not according to the mind of God, away with it! We cannot endure the evil thing and want to get rid of it. Ephraim shall say, and shall say it cheerfully, spontaneously, heartily, “What have I to do anymore with idols?”

Observe, also, that *this change is the work of God’s effectual Grace*. Notice the wording of the text—“Ephraim *shall* say.” It is *God* who says, “Ephraim *shall* say.” Perhaps you ask me, “Did you not say that Ephraim said this voluntarily, spontaneously, with all her heart and of her own free will?” Yes, that is so. But the Holy Spirit, without violating the freedom of man’s will, is the Master of that will! There used to be great wars and fights among Christian people about free will and Free Grace. And when I read the reports of those controversies, I am struck with the great amount of the Truth of God that was spoken on *both* sides. When I hear a man stoutly affirm that if there is any good thing, it is all of the Grace of God, I know that it is so. But when another declares that man is a free agent and that if he acts virtuously at all, his free will must consent to it and that this condition is essential to the very making of virtue, is not that also true? Certainly it is! And why should we not believe both?

Ephraim cheerfully says, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” And yet, at the back of that is the great mysterious energy and work of the Holy Spirit bringing to pass the eternal purpose and decree of God so that they are fulfilled! For God to work His will with mere materialism, with dead blocks of wood or stone, with rivers or with tempests is but or-

dinary Omnipotence! But for God to leave men absolutely free and responsible agents and never to interfere with the freedom of their agency, and yet for Him to accomplish His eternal purposes concerning them to every jot and tittle, this is, if I may so say, Omnipotent Omnipotence! This is almighty power carried to a climax! It is just so with the Grace of God—we spontaneously quit our sin—but it is because almighty Grace is working within us to will and to do of God’s own good pleasure! “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?” because God, in His effectual Grace, has weaned her from her idols!

Notice next, dear Friends, that *this change is always a very personal one*. Ephraim says, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” She does not say, “What have the nations to do with idols?” That would be a wise question, but, as a rule, national or general religion does not amount to much. We say with Mr. Bunyan, “Those are generals, Man, come to particulars.” Believe all the Truth of God with the general company of those who hold it, but mind that you come to *particulars* and say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” Do not ask, “What has my *mother* to do with idols? What has my *brother* to do with idols? What has my *neighbor* to do with idols?” but, “What have *I* to do with idols?” If all other men go into sin, I must not. I ask each believing one to whom I am speaking to feel, “God has done so much for me that I must turn away from sin. To me, willful wickedness would be a horrible thing. I must quit all iniquity. Whatever all the rest of the world may do, I must not go with the multitude to do evil—I must loathe it and leave it. ‘As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ ‘Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?’” Abhor selfishness and egotism, but, at the same time, be very personal and individual about your own religion! You were born alone and you will die alone—and you have need to be born again individually and personally. And it must come to a personal transaction between yourself and God, so that you can, for yourself, say, as we did in our singing—

**“‘Tis done! The great transaction’s done—
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine!
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine!
High Heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear
Till in life’s latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear.”**

“What have I to do anymore with idols?” The change here implied must be spontaneous and hearty. It must be the result of Divine Grace and it must be personal.

And then, dear Friends, it must also be *a truly repentant change*—“What have I to do anymore with idols?” There is, in that question, a confession that the speaker has had to do with idols! Let the time past suffice us to have worked the will of the flesh. Brother, if you are resolved to serve God, through His Grace, yet before you begin that service, remember how you have, in the past, served the devil! Quit not your old ways

without many a tear of regret and many a blush of deep humiliation, for whatever you may do in the *future*, you cannot undo the *past*. Your wasted time, your injured faculties, your angered God, your friends you influenced for evil by your example—you cannot blot out all these—therefore, at least stay a while and shed penitent tears over the graves of your dead sins and ask your God to help you to feel that you have had enough of your evil ways, sin and neglect. Say, “What have I to do anymore with idols? I have had far too much to do with them already. O Satan, O Self, O World, I have served you all too long and now, my God, with deep regret for all the past, I turn my face to You!”

This change must also be, dear Friends, *life-long*. Notice two words in our text, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” Where the Grace of God really converts a man, he is not converted merely for the next quarter of a year, with the possibility of afterwards falling from Grace. That is a *human* conversion which can always come to an end! But if God converts you, you can *never* be unconverted! As conversion is the work of the Spirit of God, it is clear that it must need the same power to *undo* it as first *did* it. He who has made you a Christian will keep you a Christian! And unless a stronger than He shall come in and undo His work, you shall never go back to your old idols!—

**“Where God begins His gracious work,
That work He will complete,
For round the objects of His love,
All power and mercy meet.
Man may repent him of his work,
And fail in his intent;
God is above the power of change,
He never can repent.
Each object of His love is sure
To reach the heavenly goal,
For neither sin nor Satan can
Destroy the blood-washed soul.”**

Oh, how I love to preach this glorious doctrine of everlasting salvation! The salvation that only carries you a little bit of the way to Heaven, I never thought worthy of my acceptance. I would not have it as a gift and I never thought it worth preaching to you. I remember hearing one of the revival preachers say that there are some who go on the road to Heaven and just take a ticket to the next station. Then they get out and take a new ticket and rush back to the train! And so they keep on. “But,” said the man, “when I started, I took a ticket all the way through.” *That* is the way to travel to Heaven! When you start, get a ticket all the way through! Listen to these words of Christ, “My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me and I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” Listen, also, to these words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria—“Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water

springing up into everlasting life.” O my Brothers and Sisters, God does not play at saving men, first doing the work and then undoing it! If He saves you, you are saved! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” There is the Gospel which we are sent to preach to you so that, when once converted, truly converted, you will say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?”

Perhaps someone asks, “Yes, but do not some professors go back and yet you say that if men, after making a profession of religion, live in sin, they shall be saved?” Certainly we say nothing of the kind! We say, on the contrary, that if truly converted they will *not* live in sin, but if the work of Grace is worked in them, they will be kept from sin. Or if they shall, through sudden temptation, fall, they shall be speedily restored—weeping and sighing they shall be brought back to the good way. We never said that men could *live in sin* and yet go to Heaven! That were damnable talk, not fit for a Christian to utter! But he who is truly saved is saved once and for all and he can say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” Throughout the rest of his life he will have done with them, he will have quit them. He will burn his bridges behind him, never to go back to the country which he has quit once and for all. This is a salvation worth having! Therefore, I pray you, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be a partaker of it!

Yet once more, notice that *this is a very thorough change*—“What have I to do anymore with idols?” O you who have done with idols, remember that you are also done with the idol temples, you are done with the false priests, you are done with the so-called “sacred thread” and other idolatrous tokens! You are done with *everything* pertaining to idolatry! You who once were drunks have done forever with the public-house and the drunk’s cup! You who once were lascivious, if the Grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with fornication, what have you to do with any kind of uncleanness? You who were, before, dishonest, if the Grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with the tricks of trade? What have you to do with fraudulent bankruptcies? What have you to do with cheating and lying? Let each true Believer cry, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” Be gone, sin and Satan, bag and baggage! What has a man, who is bought with the blood of Christ, to do anymore with idols? He quits them once and for all, by God’s good Grace!

I find that the rest of my text would take up far too much time for me to expound it fully, so I shall have to content myself with the second division of the subject.

II. This was to be, you will remember, THE CAUSE OF THIS GREAT CHANGE.

The first cause of this change is *the Grace received*. In the previous part of the chapter, we find the Lord saying, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him.” Then our text naturally follows, “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?” We cannot get you to give up sin, however earnestly we may exhort you to forsake it, but if, by God’s Grace, you receive Christ as

your Savior, then you will abandon sin as a natural consequence! What is the best way to keep chaff out of a bushel measure? Fill it full of wheat! And when the heart of a man is full of Christ, there will be no room for the world, the flesh or the devil! These evil things cannot find an entrance where Christ has full possession. When God is as the dew of our soul and we receive freely of His Grace, then we do not need telling, urging and driving, but we at once say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?”

Another cause of this great change lies in *our perception of the beauties of the Lord*. I do not quite know whether what I am going to say is the exact teaching of the text, but I think it is. It is very difficult, sometimes, in these prophecies, to know *who* is speaking. There are often dialogues and the dialogues are not always so clearly marked that we can tell who is the speaker. I have always thought, when I have read this chapter, that it was the Lord who said, “I have heard him, and observed him,” but on thinking the passage over very carefully, I am not quite sure that it is so. Let me give you another version, which I met with in two verses by an unknown poet, and then see whether this is not the meaning of the passage—

***“I have heard Him and observed Him,
Seen His beauty rich and rare,
Seen His majesty and glory,
And His Grace beyond compare.
What have I to do with idols,
When such visions fill my eyes?
How be occupied with shadows
When the Substance passes by?”***

Does the text mean, then, “I will have nothing more to do with idols, for I have heard my God and I have observed Him? I have heard Christ speak and I have observed the excellence of His Character”? This much I know—whether that is the teaching of this passage, or not—nothing weans the heart from idols like a sight of Christ! O you worldly Christians, who are getting to be so fond of this world, I am sure that you have not seen your Master lately! If you had, the world would sink in your esteem. O you who are beginning to be fond of human wisdom, you cannot have heard Him speak of late, or else He would be made of God to you, wisdom—and everything else would be folly! O you who are seeking to live for self and for earthly gain, your heads have not been lately pillowed on the Savior’s bosom! You have not recently looked into those dear eyes which are more radiant than the glories of the morning! You cannot have known the fragrance of those garments which smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia, or you would never be enamored by this poor, foul, unsavory world!

“I have heard Him, and observed Him—what have I to do anymore with idols?” “I have heard Him say, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love.’ I have observed Him go up to the Cross and lay down His life for me—what have I to do anymore with idols?” When you, as the bride of Christ, love your first Husband as you should love Him, then your wan-

derings will be at an end. When all your heart goes after the Well-Beloved and He enraptures you with manifestations of His love and of His Grace, *then* will you say, “What have I to do with idols—I, so favored, so enriched with Divine blessings, who am on the road to Heaven, who am so soon to see the face of Him I love—what have I to do with idols?”

That seems to me to be a grand meaning perfectly consistent with earnest Christian experience, so I leave it with you. This great change, then, is worked in us by the Grace of God and by a sight of the true beauties of our Lord.

But now, taking the text as it is generally understood, you will get another meaning. One cause for this great change is *the sense of answered prayer*. Ephraim shall say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” And God says of Ephraim, “I have heard him.” I remember, even as a child, God hearing my prayer. I cannot tell you what it was about, it may have been concerning a mere trifle, but to me, as a child, it was as important as the greatest prayer that Solomon ever offered for himself! God heard my prayer and it was thus early established in my mind that the Lord was God. And afterwards, when I came really to know Him—for, like the child Samuel, I did not then *know* the Lord, I only felt after Him in prayer—afterwards, when I came to cry to Him intelligently, I had this prayer answered and that petition granted, and many a time since then. I am only speaking what any of you who know the Lord could also say—many a time since then He has answered my requests. I cannot tell you all about this matter. There is many a secret between me and my dear Lord. This very week I have had a love-token from Him which, if I could tell you about it, would make your eyes wonder and fill with tears! I asked and I received, as manifestly as if I had spoken to my brother in the flesh and he had said, “Yes, there, take all you need.”

Well now, I always find that, in proportion as I am conscious that God is hearing my prayers, my heart says, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” If I can have from my God whatever I ask for, why need I cringe and bow my knee to men? If I have but to go to God and wait upon Him and He will give me the desire of my heart, what have I to do with fretting, fuming and being anxious? What have I to do with idols? If there is everything in Christ and that everything is to be had for the asking, what have I to do with idols? It is wonderful how you are weaned from the dry breasts of the world when you can drink in all that your soul desires from the living God! If God, the Jehovah of Hosts, is no more to you than the gods of the heathen, or the gods of the men of the world, why, then, you will have to do with idols! But if your God is the God that hears prayer and if you live in His Presence and speak to Him—and He speaks to you. If you keep up perpetual communion with Him so that God can say to you, “I have heard him and observed him”—then I am sure that you will also say—“What have I to do anymore with idols?”

If I am addressing any poor soul that has been craving mercy from God, one who has been crying for months to God to give him forgiveness through Jesus Christ, why, dear Heart, if you will only believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ, you shall get all that you are asking—you shall receive peace, pardon, joy and rest! And then you will say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?”

“Oh,” says one, “my dear Sir, I have been trying to overcome sin and I cannot!” I know *you* cannot, but if you begin by receiving Christ, by praying to God and getting the answer, *then* you will be able to say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” You want to first *wash yourself* and *then* come to the Fountain. That will not do! You must come, black as you are, and wash and be cleansed. You want to get rich spiritually and *then* come to God to enrich you. No! You must come to Him, poor! Come without anything of your own, just as you are, and trust the boundless mercy of God in Christ Jesus! He will give you all you need and then you will say, “What have I to do anymore with idols, for God has heard me, and He does observe my soul?”

You see, then, some of the ways in which this very great and wonderful change is worked. I have had to omit many other points on which I meant to speak, but I pray that this change may be worked in each of you. Do not wait to have the change worked and *then* come to God, but come to God *for* it! If you have a broken heart, come to Christ with it! But if you have not a broken heart, come to Christ to break your heart! If you feel your sin, come to Christ to have it forgiven, but if you do not feel your sin, come to Christ that you may be made to feel it! If there is any good thing in you, thank God for it, and come to Him for more. But if there is no good thing whatever in you, come without any good thing and let Christ begin at the very beginning with you, in all your emptiness, need, spiritual beggary and loathsomeness! Come to Him just as you are, for He still says, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” May His sweet Spirit graciously attract each of you till you shall be drawn to Him and so drawn from your idols! And to Him shall be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 34; HOSEA 14.**

Psalm 34:1. *I will bless the LORD at all times.* “At dark times and bright times when I am alone, and when I am in company. When I feel like doing it and when I do not feel like doing it. ‘I will bless the Lord at all times.’”

1. *His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* “I will not only feel it in my heart, but I will give expression to it with my mouth. Those who do not care for this blessed employment may leave it alone, but as for me, ‘His praise shall continually be in my mouth.’”

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.* “I will ride the high horse when I begin to talk of the goodness of God—‘My soul shall make her boast in the Lord’—and whereas boasters are generally very vexatious to humble-minded people, this kind of boasting shall please them. ‘The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.’”

3. *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.* Come, my Brothers and Sisters, I cannot perform this happy service alone! It is too much for me all by myself. This bunch of grapes is too heavy to be carried by one. “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.”

4. *I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* Should not the prayer-hearing God be praised? If He hears the cries of His people, should He not also hear the praises of His people? It is not one, only, to whom God has thus listened, but many can say with the Psalmist, “I sought the Lord, and He heard me.”

5, 6. *They looked to Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* It is God’s delight to hear the cry of poor men! Sometimes He passes by the rich and great, and gives heed to the poor and desolate. It is our need that has the loudest cry with God—if our necessities are urgent, our prayer will be powerful.

7. *The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.* God’s children are always attended like princes—legions of angels form their bodyguard. The Angel of the Lord and companies of holy angels with Him pitch their celestial tents round about them that fear God!

8. *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him.* Try Him, dear Friends, and prove for yourselves how good and gracious He is—“O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him.”—

**“Oh, make but trial of His love!
Experience will decide
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in His truth confide!”**

9. *O fear the LORD, you His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him.* He will supply all their wants. You need not fear for anything else when you once fear God.

10. *The young lions lack, and suffer hunger.* They are strong, fierce, crafty and unscrupulous, yet they still suffer hunger—

10. *But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.* Though they are neither cruel, nor cunning, nor strong, “they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” What a promise for you to plead in prayer, dear Friends! If you are in any need, do not hesitate, but by an act of faith take this gracious Word of God and plead it with the promise-keeping God! “Have You not said that, ‘they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing’? Then, Lord, do as You have said.”

11-13. *Come, you children, hearken to me. I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile.* He who can manage his tongue can manage his whole body, for the tongue is the rudder of the ship. And if that is properly held, the vessel will be rightly steered. If you would escape the quicksands and the rocks,

look well to your tongue! Keep it from evil, that it speaks neither blasphemy against God nor slander against your fellow men. And keep your lips from guile, that is, from deceit, from double meanings, from saying one thing and meaning another, or making other people think that you mean another—an art all too well understood in these days. God make us plain-speaking men, who say what we mean, and mean what we say! When, by the Grace of God, we are taught to do this, we have learned a good lesson.

14. *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.* If it runs away from you, run after it. Never run into or after a quarrel, but always run after peace—“Seek peace, and pursue it.”

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.* The Lord is always watching them and He is always listening that He may hear everything they say, especially when they cry to Him.

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.* He will not only destroy the wicked, but He will blot out the very memory of them! They may become great and famous in their wickedness, but they shall not be kept in memory, as the righteous are. As Solomon says, “The name of the wicked shall rot.”

17, 18. *The righteous cry, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit.* Men do not care for broken hearts, but God does. “Give me a sound heart and a brave heart,” says man. “Give me a broken and a contrite heart,” says the Lord. If you have such a heart as that, be not afraid to draw near to your God, through Jesus Christ, for He is already near you!

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.* Many who read this verse admit that the first part of it is true—“Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Yes, but the latter clause is also true—“but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” Do not omit either portion of the passage, for one part is as true as the other!

20. *He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken.* God’s people shall suffer no real, lasting, vital injury. You may have flesh wounds, but as to the bones of your spirit, as it were, the *solid* part of it, “not one of them is broken.”

21. *Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.* They shall want nothing else to make an end of them but their own sins—“Evil shall slay the wicked.”

22. *The LORD redeems the soul of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.* Now we are going to read the last chapter of the Book of the Prophet Hosea, the first of the minor Prophets.

Hosea 14:1. *O Israel, return to the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.* When we fall by sin, we must regain our comfort by going back to the place where we lost it. “Return to the Lord your God for you have fallen by your iniquity.” Then, to help us return, God, through His servant, actually makes a prayer for us.

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.* “What words am I to take?” asks the poor convicted sinner. “I cannot put words together.” Here are the words put into your mouth—

2. *Say to Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* Come with humble confession, come with sincere repentance, come with earnest supplication, come trusting to the Grace of God, come bringing your heart with you and rendering it to God as a living sacrifice!

3. *Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, You are our gods: for in You the fatherless finds mercy.* If you come to God to be saved, you must bring no other savior with you! What an encouragement is given to us to come to God! He calls Himself the Father of the fatherless. O you whose soul is orphaned, you who are left disconsolate in a world of grief, come to Him in whom the fatherless find mercy, for so shall you find mercy!

4, 5. *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew to Israel.* “Swiftly and mysteriously will I come and refresh him.”

5. *He shall grow as the lily.* Quickly, beautifully—

5. *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* He shall be as permanent as he is fair, like a cedar as well as like a lily.

6. *His branches shall spread.* The dew of the Lord imparts influence to men—it gives them, as it were, branches, with which they cast a wide shadow.

6. *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree.* The beauty of fruitfulness. God grant all of us this beauty!

6. *And his smell as Lebanon.* Oh, to stand in holy repute among men, so that there is a fragrance going forth from us, like the sweet odors from the wild thyme and other products of Mount Lebanon!

7. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* When God blesses men, He also blesses those round about them. Your children, your servants, your neighbors shall all be the better if the Grace of God comes to you. So may it be!

8, 9. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—377, 657, 658.

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

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

WHERE TO FIND FRUIT

NO. 557

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 28, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“From Me is your fruit found.”
Hosea 14:8.***

THE text has a double significance. It may indicate the fruit upon which we feed, or the fruit which we are enabled to produce. If it shall mean the first, there is much of comfort in it. The Lord has compared Himself, in His condescending mercy, to a green fir tree in the sentence which precedes the text. The fir tree in the East yields a most goodly shade. Neither the burning heat of the sun nor the drops of pouring rain can pass through the dense foliage and therefore it affords a welcome shelter to the traveler. But shade is not enough for a man—he requires food—and the fir tree fails in that respect, for it yields no repast for the hungry.

To complete the picture, therefore, when the Lord deigns to compare Himself to a green fir tree, He adds, “From Me is your fruit found.” Our gracious God is like a fir tree for shade, but like the apple tree among the trees of the woods for fruit. We sit under His shadow with great delight and His fruit is sweet to our taste. Living souls must have food to feed upon, or however well housed they would be comparable to the king of Israel in the besieged city of Samaria. He sat in his palace of ivory, he wore his mantle of purple and placed the crown of gold upon his head. But what good was his splendor when neither barn floor nor winepress could relieve his hunger?

In vain are all other blessings if the soul receives no nourishment from on high! Jesus must not only be our *life*, but the Bread of Heaven by which that life is sustained. Glory be to His name! He is All in All to His people—we may gather fruit from Him which shall satisfy the cravings of the soul. According to Master Trapp, some read this passage, “In Me is your fruit ready.” Certain it is that at all times, whenever we approach God, we shall find in Him a ready supply for every need.

The best of trees have fruit on them only at appointed seasons. Who is so unreasonable as to look for fruit upon the peach or the plum at this season of the year? No drooping boughs beckon us to partake of their ripening crops, for Winter’s cold still nips the buds. But our God has fruit at *all* times—the Tree of Life yields its fruit every month. No! Every day and every hour, for He is “a very present help in time of trouble.” Another translator reads the passage, “In Me your fruit is enough.” Whatever may

be the accuracy of the translation, the sentiment, itself, is most correct. In God there is enough for all His people.

And well there may be, since in Him there is infinity. “I have enough, my Brother,” said Esau when he met Jacob—“I have all things,” said Jacob in reply. None but the Believer can say, “I have all things,” and therefore only he can be sure of having enough. Ishmael had his bottle of water and went away into the wilderness. But it is written that Isaac abode *by the well*—how happy is the soul which has learned how to live by the well of his faithful God! For the water will be spent in the bottle, but the water will never be spent in the well. Christian, remember the all-sufficiency of your God! Let that ancient name, “El Shaddai”—God All-Sufficient—sound like music in your ears!

As some translate it, “The many-breasted God,” yielding from Himself the sustenance of all His creatures. As we find the text translated, we have it, “From Me is your fruit found,” but the particle “from” does not mean *apart* from, but *out of me*. And to prevent misunderstanding, I shall not err if I read it in, for this is the force of the word in this place. The text speaks of fruit being found, implying, perhaps, that we must look for it—not because there is little, or here and there a cluster, like the grape-gleanings of Abiezer—but because the Lord will be enquired of by the house of Israel and would exercise our faith by making us search for the needed benefit.

It is of essential service to us to make us *seek*, and therefore we have the promise of *finding* to excite our diligence. Christian, look up longingly! Is your spirit hungering? Look up to your God now with intense desire! Come before Him with earnest, vehement pleadings, and you shall find in your God whatever your heart desires. Mark that little word “your.” As if the Lord had said, “It is yours already. I have freely given it. It is your fruit. I bear it, but I bear it for *you*. Every golden apple, every luscious cluster, I will bestow on you. You can not ask Me for anything which I have not given you. For behold, I have given you My Son and, ‘in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.’ ”

Believer, have you not learned the sweet logic of the beloved disciple, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” In the Everlasting Covenant God has made over—not only all created things—but Himself unto His people. “I will be their God and they shall be My people.” “God, even our God,” says the Psalmist. Is not that a delightful expression, “Even our God”? And so, as God is your own, His fruit is your own. Every outgoing of power, every outflow of love is yours already. “In Him is your fruit found.”

Surely this word “your” is as a little golden cup filled with a rare cordial—he who drinks of it shall forget his misery and remember his poverty no more. Let us not fail then, dearly Beloved, to receive boldly that which

is our own by Covenant engagement and faithful promise. What do you want this morning? Surely out of the “twelve manner of fruits” there shall be something which will suit your necessities! Stand not back through shame or fear, but come boldly to the Throne of the heavenly Grace. Thus much for the first sense of the text.

But we do not intend to use the words in that signification this morning. We think that understanding the text the other way—“From Me is that fruit found which Grace produces *in* you”—it will be a very fitting sequel to the sermon of last Sunday morning. You will recollect we spoke upon the withering of the fig tree which mocked the Savior with its leaves but yielded Him no fruit.

There may be some who were alarmed under that sermon and even Believers who were shaken by it. Such anxieties will do none of us any hurt, especially if they lead us to pant after fruitfulness. Our text, following upon the other, will direct earnest seekers where to find fruit. There are three sorts of preachers, all useful in their way, the doctrinal, the experimental and the practical. We will try to blend the three this morning and so handle the words doctrinally, experimentally and practically.

I. First. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. The doctrine of the text is twofold. First, that the Believer’s fruit is his own—it is called “your fruit.” Secondly, that though it is the Believer’s own, yet it proceeds entirely from his God.

1. The first doctrine is that true fruit is a Believer’s own. You will think this a very trite remark, but it is one which needs to be made in these days for there are certain persons who talk of man as if he were not a thinking, intelligent, free agent. They forget his will, judgment, reason and affections—they leave out of their consideration everything, in fact, which constitutes the man, and then speak of the operations of Grace as though they were manual works upon wood or stone.

For what I can see, according to their way of talking, the Grace of God might just as well have produced holiness in monkeys as in men, for men are generally represented as merely passive existences to be moved by them to gratitude, or repentance, or faith, as horses are groomed in a stable or led out to be exercised. Be it never forgotten that our God deals with men as intelligent beings, having will and reason and all the other powers which make man a responsible creature. He does not ignore our manhood when He converts us by His Grace. He uses *means* fitted for our constitution as men, “I drew them with the cords of love, with the bands of a man.”

Good works are a Believer’s own. It were an ill thing for him if they were not! To what could we compare him but to those dead sticks with fruits tied on them which women sell to little children? A sorry picture for a branch of Christ’s vine! The Believer produces fruit from his own inner self when Grace has renewed him. And if his holiness were not really the

outgrowth of his new heart and his renewed nature it would be no sign of spiritual life. It is not fruit *tied* on us, but fruit *growing* out of us which proves us to be engrafted into Christ.

True fruit is the Believer's own because he wills, through Divine Grace, to do good works. If I performed what looked like a good work against my will, I do not see how it could be truly a good work as far as the doer is concerned. If a man could be compelled to virtue while his heart staggered away to sin, would he not be really transgressing? There is a gracious willingness towards the right thing bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit. No, there is not only a *will* to holiness, but a *desire* after it. The true Christian longs after holiness and usefulness. He hungers and thirsts to do the will of his Father who is in Heaven.

Like his Lord in some measure, it is to him his meat and his drink to do the will of Him who sent him. He can say, "The zeal of Your house has eaten me up." He is constrained, but mark, it is not a physical constraint, for "the love of Christ constrains us." So you see, Beloved, good works are a Believer's own because he is willing to do them and desires to perform them. They are his own, again, because he actually does them. The Holy Spirit does not repent, nor feed the hungry, nor clothe the naked, nor preach the Gospel. He gives *us* Grace to do all these, but we ourselves do them.

If the poor are fed, it must be by these hands. If souls are edified, it must be by these lips. We do not fold our arms and shut our mouths and then bring forth fruit unto God. We do not find ourselves taken up by the hair of our head as the Prophet Habakkuk was said to have been, according to the Apocrypha, and so carried away whether we will or not, to perform a deed of charity. All Glory be to the Holy Spirit, but He is *not* glorified by making Him appear to be a physical force instead of the great *spiritual* Worker.

We do, my Brethren, bring forth fruit which is properly our own when we consider ways of usefulness, meditate methods of working, plan designs of good, act out deeds of mercy, persevere in labor and continue in service before God. I will tell you why I am absolutely sure a Believer's works are his own, namely, because he grieves over them. The best works he ever performs he feels are his own because they are imperfect. If there is anything good in them, he ascribes it wholly to the fact that they proceeded from God. But, inasmuch as there is something imperfect in them, he is obliged to say, "Ah, yes, this is *my* fruit. If it had been God's fruit, independent of me, it would have been *perfect*. But inasmuch as it is *imperfect*, I am compelled to see that I had a hand in it. The stream was clear enough as it came from the Fountain, but flowing through the wooden spout of *my* nature, it is become in some measure defiled and so far, at least, is mine."

Dear Friends, the whole analogy of fruit bearing must show to you that the Christian does bring forth fruit unto God—real fruit from his inner self. And if any of you think that you are going to attain to holiness by simply being passive, you are wonderfully mistaken. If you imagine you will be a Pilgrim by sitting down at the wicket gate, or be carried in a sedan chair to Glory, you will find yourselves left behind. No, we must fight if we would win! We must travel if we would reach the Celestial City! We must wrestle and fight and *pray*.

The Word of God does say, “It is God that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure,” but it does not stop there, it bids us for this very reason, “Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” The passive first, but then the *active*. We must lie as dead at Jehovah’s feet to be quickened, but being quickened, what then? Why then we walk in holiness and in the fear of God! We are first of all made trees of the Lord’s right-hand planting and we receive Grace from Him. And then through His Grace, we ourselves do really bring forth fruit. The Truth of God is clear enough—prove by your energetic strivings that you understand it.

2. The essential part of the doctrine lies here—that all a Believer’s fruit proceeds from his God and that in several senses from the Divine purpose. If you are holy, it is because He has called you to holiness. If you have good works they come to you, according to the word of the Apostle concerning good works, “which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”

When you see a costly vase which is the admiration of all eyes, you know that whatever of beauty there is in that vessel was originally in the artist’s plan. If you have examined his sketches you have seen every elegant line and every graceful figure. Even so, Beloved, if you have been sanctified it is according to the eternal design which was settled in Grace and wisdom before the skies were formed. All our fruit springs from our God as to *calling*. You were dead in trespasses and sins. There were no good works in you by nature and there never would have been, except that He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in your heart to give you the knowledge of God and then to turn you from dead works to serve the living and true God. You owe everything to your calling.

The tree which is loaded with fruit owes its fruit, first of all, to its having been chosen to be in the garden. And next, to its having been planted there. In our case, had we been left to grow in the wide wilderness we should have brought forth no fruit unto God. But He took us up out of the place of barrenness and put us in the rich soil which Jesus had watered with His own bloody sweat, and therefore we bring forth fruit. Our fruit is found from God as to *union*. The fruit of the branch is really traceable to the root. Cut the connection and the branch dies and no fruit is hereafter produced.

By virtue of our union with Christ we bring forth fruit. Every branch of grapes has been first in the *root*. It has passed through the stem and flowed through the sap vessels and fashioned itself externally into fruit, but it was *first* internal in the *stem*. So also every good work was *first in Christ* and then was brought forth in us. O Christian, prize this precious doctrine of union to Christ! Hold it firmly because it is the source of every atom of fruitfulness which you can ever hope to know. If you were not joined to Jesus Christ no fruit could ever be in you. Our fruit comes from God and from God alone, as to Providence.

When the dewdrops fall from Heaven, each one may whisper to the tree and say, "From me is your fruit found." When the cloud looks down from on high and is about to distil its liquid treasure, it may thunder to the earth beneath, "From me is your fruit found." And the bright sun above all others, as he paints the cheek of the apple, or swells the berries of the cluster, may well say to all the trees of the garden, "From me is your fruit found." The fruit owes much to the root—that is essential to fruitfulness—but it owes very much, also, to external care.

Beloved, how much we owe to God's Grace in Providence! We are great debtors to His common Providences in that He makes all things work together for good. But His Grace-Providence, in which He provides us constantly with quickening, teaching, correction, consolation, strength, or whatever else we want—to this we owe our all of usefulness or virtue. Our fruit is found in God as to the matter of farming.

The knife which the gardener takes from his pocket might talk to the tree and say, "Much of your fruit is found in me. You would not yield such an abundance if it were not for my sharp edge. I make you bleed a little as I take away your superfluous shoots, but you had not such goodly clusters if it were not of me." So is it, Christian, with that pruning which the Lord gives to you. "My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Thus the text may be read in very many ways. They will all come to one—that we have nothing, except as we receive it from above. "What have you which you have not received?" I may say, to conclude this head, that all our fruit is found in God, because He will, having been the Author of it, get all the Glory of it. Of all our spiritual life He shall have the praise, for it is all due to Him and if He gives us a crown at the last we will cast it at His feet.

Brethren, you know this doctrine well enough without my enlarging upon it. You know how constantly Scripture teaches us that we can do nothing without Christ. We can sin. We can ruin our own souls. We can bring forth the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah—but anything which is lovely and honest and of good repute must come from Him

who is glorious in working. You have no question or quibble about this. "You has He quickened." You trace your life to Him.

You does He quicken day by day. You owe the *continuance* of your life to Him. You know as a matter of doctrine that, "in Him we live and move and have our being," and that, "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." I need not confirm this doctrine—no argument is required. You have never erred from the Truth in this respect. You could not be Christians if you did, for I hold this to be a fundamental Truth, in all godliness, that salvation from first to last is of the Lord. Salvation is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Let us heartily praise Him whose workmanship we are.

II. We come now to THE EXPERIENCE. Experimentally we have proof that all our fruit is in God. Let me remind you of your experience when you were the servants of the flesh. What fruit had you in those days? What repentance did your natural mind bring forth? What faith in Christ did your unrenewed soul ever beget or foster? What love to God ever stirred your carnal heart? What affection for the brotherhood possessed your alienated spirit? You must say that at that time you were without God, and without hope, and certainly without fruit. "What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?" A painful remembrance of your former estate compels you to feel the Truth of the Lord's Word, "In Me is your fruit found."

Again, when the Law began to work in your heart and you were in a state of bondage, having enough of Light to see your darkness and enough of Life to mourn your death—what fruit had you, then, when you were under the Law? The Law told you what you should do—did it enable you to do anything? The Ten Commandments set before you a perfect rule—but was it not "weak through the flesh"? You had a very clear perception of the Justice and Righteousness of God—did the perception reconcile you to justice or to holiness?

Let me ask you, did the Law of God ever make you love Him? Did the awakenings of your conscience which proceeded from it ever lead you to trust in Jesus Christ? They may have been overruled to this purpose, but the Law works wrath and as long as you were under it, it rather produced sin in you than righteousness. Such was Paul's experience, "When the commandment came, sin revived and I died, for I had not known lust, except the law had said, You shall not covet." As a child might never care to run into the street, but being told not to do it, he straightway does it by reason of the perversity of his nature—just so it is with us by nature.

The forbidden thing our flesh lusts after. All the enmity of carnal nature is provoked to yet greater sin by the Law. That which should have been a bit, becomes a spur. Cold water quenches fire and yet when poured on lime, produces a vehement heat. So the Law acts contrary to its own nature by reason of the depravity of the human heart. Thus were you, my

Brethren, led by a very sorrowful experience to feel that from Christ must come your fruit. For none could be produced by the efforts of the flesh backed up by the most earnest resolution and most devout prayer and driven onward by the whip of the Law.

A sweeter experience has proved this to you. When did you begin to bear fruit? It was when you came to Christ and cast yourselves on the great Atonement and rested on the finished righteousness. Ah, what fruit you had then! Do you remember those early days? Did not your faith and love, and zeal form a garden of nuts, an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits? Then, indeed, the vine flourished! The tender grape appeared, the pomegranates budded forth and the beds of spices gave forth their smell. Have you declined since then? Even if you have, I charge you to remember that time of love.

Jesus remembers it, for He says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me into the wilderness." He recollects that time of the singing of birds when the voice of the turtle was heard in your land. Would God this were with you forever! He has not forgotten it—do not *you* forget it—but seek to enjoy it still. Your fruit began, you know it did, when you came to Jesus Christ!

My Brethren, when have you been the most fruitless? This is another part of experience. Has not it been when you have lived farthest from the Lord Jesus Christ? When you have slackened in prayer, when you have departed somewhat from the simplicity of your faith? When your graces engrossed your attention instead of your Lord? When you said, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved," and forgot where your strength lies? Has not it been, then, that your fruit has ceased?

Some of us know that we have nothing out of Christ by terrible soul-emptying and humbling of heart before the Lord. Brethren, it is no pleasant thing to be clean emptied out. But such times have happened to some of us, when we have felt that if one prayer would save us, if the Holy Spirit did not aid us, we were damned. If one good thought would take us to Heaven, we could not reach it. The vileness of our heart has been so clear before our eyes that had not it been that there was a mighty God to trust, we should have given up in despair—

***"How seldom do I rise to God,
Or taste the joys above!
Corruption presses down my faith,
And chills my flaming love.
When smiling mercy courts my soul
With all its heavenly charms,
This stubborn, this relentless thing,
Would thrust it from my arms."***

In such seasons we do well to cry, "Quicken You me, O Lord, according to Your word." Then you feel that to will is present with you, but how to perform that which is good, you find not. It is a very easy thing for me to

exhort you, but sometimes I do not find it very easy to do *myself* what I exhort *you* to do. And there are times with us, dear Friends, when, though we know our interest in Christ, we are wretched under a deep sense of the creature's fickleness, sinfulness and death. Our moan is, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When you have seen the utter emptiness of all creature confidence, then you have been able to say, "From Him all my fruit *must* be found, for no fruit can ever come from *me*."

We shall find from Scripture, I am sure, and let our past experience confirm it, that the more we depend upon the Grace of God in Christ Jesus and wait upon the Holy Spirit, pleading that His influences may operate in our hearts, the more we shall bring forth fruit unto God. If I could bear fruit without my God, I would loathe the accursed thing, for it would be the fruit of pride—the fruit of an arrogant setting up of one's self in independence of the Creator. No! The Lord deliver us from all faith, all hope, all love which does not spring from Himself! May we have none of our own manufactured graces about us.

May we have nothing but that which is minted in Heaven and is therefore made of the pure metal. May we have no Grace, pray no prayer, do no works, serve God in nothing except as we depend upon His strength and receive His Spirit. Any experience which comes short of a knowledge that we must get all from God is a deceiving experience. But if you have been brought to find everything in Him, Beloved, this is a mark of a child of God. Cultivate a spirit of deep humiliation before the Most High! Seek to know more your nothingness, and to prove more the Omnipotence of the eternal God.

There are two books I have tried to read, but I have not got through the first page yet. The first is the book of my own ignorance and emptiness and nothingness—what a great book is that! It will take us all our lives to read it, and I question whether Methuselah ever got to the last page. There is another book I must read, or else the first volume will drive me mad—it is the book of God's All-Sufficiency. I have not got through the first word of that, much less the first page. But reading the two together, I would spend all my days. This is Heaven's own literature, the wisdom which comes from above.

Less than nothing I can boast and yet, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." Having nothing yet possessing all things. "Black as the tents of Kedar," yet fair as the curtains of Solomon—dark as Hell's most profound night and yet, "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners."

III. We now arrive at the PRACTICAL POINT.

1. First then, dear Friends, let us look to Jesus Christ for fruit in the same way in which we first looked to Him for shade. That sounds like something you have heard a great many times before. Very well, but have

you really understood it? To give an illustration—you want to overcome an angry temper. You are given to outbursts of passion—you try to overcome that. How do you begin? It is very possible there are even Believers here who have never tried the right way.

How did I get salvation? I came to Jesus just as I was and I trusted Him to save me. Can I kill my angry temper in the same way? It is the *only* way in which I can ever kill it! I must go to Christ with it and say to Him, “Lord, I trust You to deliver me from it.” This is the only deathblow it will ever receive. Are you covetous? Do you feel the world entangle you? You may struggle against this evil as long as you like, but if it is your besetting sin you will never be delivered from it in any way but the Cross.

Take it to Christ. Tell Him, “Lord, I have trusted You and Your name is Jesus—‘You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins’—Lord, this is one of my sins. Save me from it!” Do not take Jesus Christ with the blood only and without the water—that is to have only half a Christ. Pray to be forgiven, but ask also to be *sanctified*. Sing with Toplady—

**“Let the water and the blood,
From Your riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”**

I know what some of you do. You go to Christ for forgiveness and then you go to the Law for power to fight your sins. “O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the Truth? Tell me, did you receive faith by the Law, or by the operation of Grace? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?” The only weapon to fight sin with is the spear which pierced Christ’s side. Nothing can kill the viperous brood of Hell but drops of Jesus’ precious blood! Take your sins to Christ’s Cross, Sir, for the old man can only be crucified *there*—we are crucified with Him—we are buried with Him.

If I am dead to the world, I must be dead with Him and if I rise again to newness of life, I must rise in Him. Ordinances are nothing without Christ as means of mortification. Baptism is nothing, except as we are buried with Him in Baptism unto death. The Lord’s Supper is nothing, except as we eat His flesh and drink His blood and have communion with Him. And your prayers and your repentances and your tears—the whole of them put together—are not worth a farthing apart from Him. Every flower which grows in your garden will wither and the sooner it is blasted and withered the better for you—only the rose of Sharon will bloom in Heaven. “None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good,” or helpless *saints* either. You must overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

2. Another practical observation is this—let us cultivate those Graces most which bring us most to Christ, for these will be the most fruitful. Let me look well to my *faith*. Let me see that I keep it purely stayed on Him, having no supplementary confidence, but resting wholly and absolutely

upon the finished work of my Lord. Let me see to my *love*. Let my Lord be to me altogether lovely. Lord, help me to sing, "My Beloved is mine and I am His." Sometimes graciously enable me to sing, "He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner over me was love. His left hand is under my head and His right hand does embrace me."

Faith and love are the great fruit-bearers. A gardener says, "There is such-and-such a twig, I must not cut that off because it is to the young wood that I am looking for my summer fruits." So he takes care of it. There is, Believer, a growing faith and growing love to which you must look as the fruit-bearing shoots, because they pre-eminently link your soul to Christ and most evidently have communion with Him. Cultivate those things which lead you most to Him.

3. A third practical piece of advice. Be most in those engagements which you have experimentally proven to draw you nearest to Christ, because it is from Him that all your fruits proceed. Any holy exercise which will bring you to Him will help you to bear fruit. Do you find prayer the channel of Jesus' manifestations? Do you find yourself profited in the public means of Grace? Is it the breaking of bread which we love to celebrate every Sunday, which is most precious to you? If so, wherever Jesus Christ lays bare His heart to you, there be found. And if there is any one means of Grace which has been more rich to you than another, use it with the greatest perseverance. Use them all, dear Friends, do not neglect any, but especially use those most which bring you nearest to your Lord.

4. Lastly, let none of us—whether we are the Lord's people or not—let none of us ever insult Christ by thinking that we are to bring fruit to Him as a recommendation to His love. "From Me is your fruit found." Now there may be some saint here who has lost his evidences and he dares not approach the Throne of Grace as he used to, because, he says, "I have sinned—I must produce fresh fruit before I dare come." My dear Friend! My dear Friend! Bring fruit to Christ? How can you talk in so legal a fashion?

All the fruit you ever will have, you must first get *from* Him! Come to Him as you are and get your fruit out of Him. Never suppose that you must bring Christ a present or else you must not come to Him. He does not want your money! If He takes it He will give it back to you in your sack's mouth. He will receive your fruit as an *offering*, but never as a reconciliation. There are those here this morning who are not converted as yet. They are saying, "I dare not seek the Lord, I dare not trust Christ. I know the Gospel is trust Christ and you are saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned. But I must not trust Him, I am a drunkard, I have been a swearer, I am a Sunday-breaker, I will wait until I am better and *then* I will come to Christ."

Why how can you talk like this? "*From* Him is your fruit found." If there is any fruit, you must come to Jesus Christ *for* it! Am I, if I am poor and

ragged, am I to buy a new coat before I may beg a garment? What a strange proposal that I should do for *myself* what Christ came to do! How can that be reasonable? If I saw a man standing outside the baths and wash houses and he should say, "Well really, I've just come home from my work and am as black as a sweep, but I dare not go into those baths until I have washed my face first," I should say, "How foolish! It is in the bath that your washing is to be found."

There is no fitness needed for Christ but that which is *in* Christ—*nothing* needed in *you—everything* is in Him! To use the old proverb, "Why carry coals to Newcastle?" Who would think it a profitable business for our London merchants, in the cold winter time, when the price of coal is very high, to charter all the ships they can and send them laden with coals to Newcastle? If they did so, you would think them mad! And yet there are many sinners penniless, comfortless, with no good thing of their own who want to bring good works to Jesus! This is carrying coals to Newcastle with a vengeance.

Oh, folly! Folly! Folly! Go with your ship all black and empty—sail up the harbor and the pit's mouth will soon yield to you an abundance of precious store. Go to Jesus as you are! Do you want faith today? Repentance? Grace? Go to Christ for it! Go to Him, resting on Him, dependent on Him, believing that He is ready to save you, to begin, to carry on and finish your salvation!

He will be as good as you ever believe Him to be and infinitely better. If you can believe Him princely enough to put all your sins away and to cover you with His righteousness, He will do it! Never man thought too well of Christ. If you can get a big thought of Christ, you big Sinner—if you can believe on the eternal Son of the eternal Father, who once poured out His blood in streams on Calvary—you are secure. God help you. Amen.

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