

# THE LOADED WAGON

## NO. 466

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 24, 1862,  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is  
pressed that is full of sheaves.”  
Amos 2:13.*

THE other Sunday morning we went into the corn fields to glean with Boaz and Ruth. And I trust that many of the timid and faint-hearted were encouraged to partake of the handfuls which are let fall on purpose for them by the order of our generous Lord. We go, today, to the gate of the harvest field with another object—to see the wagon piled up aloft with many sheaves, come creaking forth—making ruts as the toiling horses drag it from the field. We come with gratitude to God, thanking Him for the harvest, blessing Him for so much of favorable weather and praying Him to continue the same till the last shock of corn shall be brought in and the farmers everywhere shall shout the “Harvest Home.”

What a picture is a wagon loaded with corn for you and of me, as loaded with God’s mercies! From our cradle up till now, every day has added a sheaf. What more could He do for us than He has done? He has daily loaded us with benefits. Despite the sad affliction in the North, we are nationally a favored people. Both in Providence and in gracious privilege, He has blessed us above all people that are upon the face of the earth. While other countries have been crushed by tyrants, ravaged by war, or left in the thick darkness of superstition, we are free—we are blessed with the light of Heaven—we have the Gospel in our streets, the Bible in our houses, and the Sunday as our choicest heritage.

O England! You are like a farm wagon creaking under the mercies of God! Brothers and Sisters, we are each of us like the cart that is pressed down because it is full of sheaves. The innumerable mercies of God are piled upon us high as the mountains, nor can our memory recount the tokens of the tenderness and loving kindness of the Most High. Let us adore His goodness and yield Him our cheerful gratitude.

Alas—and how many times shall I repeat that pathetic interjection—alas! alas! Alas—that such a metaphor should be capable of another reading? That while God loads us with mercy, we should load Him with sin? While He continually heaps on sheaf after sheaf of favor, we also add iniquity unto iniquity, till the weight of our sin becomes intolerable to the Most High, and He cries out by reason of the burden, saying, “I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.”

Our text begins with a “Behold!” and well it may. “Beholds” are put in the Bible as sometimes a hand is put in the margin of old books, to indi-

cate to the reader something worthy of notice. Or, again, “Beholds” are put in the Scriptures as signs are put out in front of houses of business to attract attention. There is something new, something important, something deeply impressive and worthy of attention, wherever we see a “Behold” in Sacred Scripture. I see this “Behold” standing as it were, like a maiden upon the steps of the house of Wisdom, crying, “Turn in here, O you that are wise, and listen to the voice of God while He speaks to you.”

Let us open our eyes that we may see. Let us fix both our eyes intently that we may “behold,” and may God make a way through our eyes and ears to our heart—so that deep repentance and self-aborrence may take hold upon us—because of our evil conduct towards our gracious God.

Now, it is to be understood, dear Friends, before we proceed farther, that our text is but a figure, since God is not to be oppressed by man. All the sin that man can commit can never disturb the serenity of His perfections, nor cause so much as a wave upon the sea of His everlasting calm. He does but speak to us after the manner of man and bring down the sublimities and mysteries of Heaven to the feebleness and ignorance of earth. He talks to us as a great father may talk to his little child, and He uses images which are rather adapted to human frailty than to Divine infinity.

Just, then, as a cart has the axles bent and—to use an old Saxon word—as the wheels “scream” under the excessive load, so the Lord says that under the load of human guilt He is pressed down, until He cries out, because He can bear no longer the iniquity of those that offend Him. We shall now turn to the first point, this morning. O that the Holy Spirit may make it pointed to our consciences!

**I.** The first and most apparent truth in the text is, that SIN IS VERY GRIEVOUS AND BURDENSOME TO GOD.

Be astonished, O heavens and be amazed, O earth, that God should speak of being pressed and weighed down! I do not read anywhere so much as half a suggestion that the whole burden of *creation* is any weight to the Host High. “He takes up the isles as a very little thing.” “He weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in balances.” Neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor all the ponderous orbs which His Omnipotence has created, cost Him any labor whatever in their sustenance. The heathens might picture Atlas as stooping beneath the tremendous load of the world—but the eternal God, who bears up the pillars of the universe, “faints not, neither is He weary.”

Nor do I find even the most distant approach to a suggestion, that *Providence* fatigues its Lord. He watches both by night and day. His power goes forth every moment. It is He who brings forth Mazzaroth in his season and guides Arcturus with his sons. He bears up the foundations of the earth! And He holds the cornerstone thereof. He causes the dayspring to know its place, and sets a boundary to darkness and the shadow of death. All things are supported by the power of His hand, and there is nothing without Him. If He withdrew His might, back to annihilation must all things go.

Just as in a moment, foam subsides into the wave that bears it, and is lost forever, so would the universe depart if the eternal God did not daily sustain it. Nor has this incessant working diminished His strength, nor is there any failing or thought of failing. He does all things, and when they are done they are as nothing in His sight. But strange, oh, passing strange, marvelous, miraculous among miracles, *sin* burdens God, though the world cannot! And iniquity presses the Most High, though the whole tremendous load of Providence is as the small dust of the balance.

Ah, you careless men, sons of Adam, you think sin a trifle. And as for you, you sons of Belial, you count it sport and say, "He regards not. He sees not. How does God know? And if He knows, He cares not for our sins." Learn from the Book of God that so far is this from being the truth, that your sins are a grief to Him, a burden and a load to Him, till, like a cart that is pressed down with sheaves, so is He pressed down by human guilt.

I think this will be very clear if we meditate for a moment upon what sin is, and what sin does. *Sin is the great despoiler of all God's works.* It was sin that turned an archangel into an archfiend, and angels of light into spirits of evil. It was sin that looked on Eden and withered every leaf in its garden and blasted all its flowers. Before sin had come, the Creator said of the newly made earth, "It is very good." But when sin had entered, it grieved God at His very heart that He had made such a creature as man. Nothing can despoil the beauty in which God delights so much as sin, for sin mars His image and erases His superscription.

Moreover, *sin makes God's creatures unhappy*, and shall He not, therefore, abhor it? God never designed that any creature that He made should be miserable. He made the creatures on purpose that they should be glad. He gave the birds their songs, the flowers their perfume, the air its balm. He gave to nature the smiling sun, and even to night its coronet of stars, for He intended that smiles should be His perpetual worship, and that joy should be the atmosphere which His creatures breathed. But sin has made God's favorite creature a wretch, brought down His most glorious offspring, made in His own image, to become naked and poor and miserable and lost.

Therefore God hates sin and is pressed down under it, because it makes the objects of His love unhappy at their heart. All the unhappiness that we have this morning comes directly or indirectly from sin. Iniquity is the mother of every human pang. Oh, how well may God hate it when He sees His own dearly beloved children made to wear furrows on their brow and tears in their eyes, because of this vile, this abominable thing called sin.

Moreover, remember, Beloved, that *sin attacks God in all His attributes.* Sin attacks Him on His Throne and stabs at His existence. What is sin, Sinner? Is it not an insult to God's *wisdom*? God bids you do His will. When you do the contrary it is because you do as much as say, "I know best what is good for me." You do in effect declare that infinite wisdom is in error, and that you, the creature of a day, can judge better than your

God what shall be the path of happiness for you. Sin impugns His *goodness*. By sin you actually declare that God has denied you that which would make you happy, which is not the part of a good, tender, and loving Father.

A generous God denies nothing to His creatures but that which is harmful. But inasmuch as you think sin to be pleasant and profitable, you cast a slur upon the benevolence and loving kindness of God. And when He is such a God, so full of tenderness that His very name is “Love,” this is no slight burden to His holy soul, to feel when He perceives you think you could do better for yourself than He is willing to do—and that He has cruelly robbed you of pleasure and denied you that which would be for your good. Sin cuts at the Lord’s wisdom with one hand and at His goodness with the other.

And see, sin also abuses the *mercy* of God. When you, as many of you have done, sin with the higher hand because of His long-suffering towards you—when, because you have no sickness, no losses, no crosses, therefore you spend your time in revelry and obstinate rebellion—what is this but taking the mercy which was meant for your good and turning it into mischief? It is no small grief to the loving Father to see His substance spent with harlots in riotous living. I tell you it is no slight thing to the Father of the prodigal to see Him wish to fill his belly with the husks the swine eat. This touches Him at the very quick. He cannot endure it, that His children should be thus degraded as to turn even the mercy which would woo them to repentance, into a ground why they should sin the more against Him.

Besides, let me remind the careless and impenitent this morning, that every sin is a defiance of Divine *power*. In effect it is lifting your puny fists against the majesty of Heaven and defying God to destroy you. Every time you sin, you know that sin will lead to your soul’s destruction. If, then, you beard the Omniscient One even to His face, and while under the hand that can crush you, you dare to revolt and to transgress, you do as much as dare and defy the Lord to prove whether He can maintain His Law or not. Is this a slight thing, that a worm, the creature of a day, should defy the God of Ages, the God that fills and upholds all things by the Word of His power?

Well may He be weary when He has to bear with such provocations and insults as these! Mention what attribute you will, and sin has blotted it. Speak of God in any relationship you choose, and sin has cast a slur upon Him. It is evil, only evil, and that continually. In every view of it, it must be offensive to the Most High. Sinner, do you know that every act of disobedience to God’s Law is virtually an act of *high treason*? What do you do but seek to be God yourself, your own master, your own lord? Every time you swerve from His will, it is to put *your* will into its place. It is to make *yourself* a God and to undeify the Most High.

And is this a little offense, to snatch from His brow the crown and from His hand the scepter? I tell you it is such an act that Heaven itself could

not stand unless it were resented. And if this crime were suffered to go unpunished, the wheels of Heaven's commonwealth would be taken from their axles and the whole frame of nature would be unhinged. Such a treason against God shall certainly be punished.

And to crown all, *sin is an onslaught upon God Himself*, for every sinner is an atheist at heart. Let his religious profession be what it may, he has said in his heart, "No God." He wishes that there were no Law and no Supreme Ruler. He desires that God might be forgotten. God is not in all his thoughts. Is this a trifle? To be a deicide? To slay God? To desire to put Him out of His own world? For the creature to declare war against the God that made him and to wish that God might cease to be—is this a thing to be winked at? Can the Most High hear it and not be pressed down beneath its weight?

Ah, I pray you do not think that I would make a needless outcry against sin and disobedience. It is not in the power of human imagination to exaggerate the evil of sin, nor will it ever be possible for mortal lips, though they should be touched like those of Elijah, with a live coal from off the altar, to thunder out the ten-thousandth part of the enormity of the least sin against God. Think, dear Friends! We are His creatures and yet we will not do His will! We are fed by Him. The breath in our nostrils He gives to us, and yet we spend that breath in murmuring and in rebellion.

Once more, we are always *in the sight of our Omniscient God*, and yet the Presence of God is not enough to compel us to obedience. Surely, if a man should insult the law in the very presence of the lawgiver—if the king were insulted to his face—that were not to be tolerated. But this is your case and mine. We must confess, "Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight." And we must remember that we are doing all this and we *know* what we are doing. We are not sinning like the Hottentot. We are not pulling God's Law to pieces like some blind New Zealander.

We, in England, sin against extraordinary light and sevenfold knowledge. And is this a light thing? Can you expect that God shall wink at us and pass by such offenses as these? Oh that these lips had language, that this heart could burn for once! If I could declare the horrible infamy of sin it would make the blood chill in even a haughty Pharaoh's veins, and proud Nebuchadnezzar might bow his head in fear. It is a horrible thing, indeed, to have rebelled against the Most High. God have mercy upon His servants and forgive them.

This is our first point but *I cannot teach it to you. Only God can teach it by His Spirit. O that the Holy Spirit may make you feel that sin is exceedingly sinful, because it is grievous and burdensome to God.*

**II.** Secondly, SOME SINS ARE MORE ESPECIALLY GRIEVOUS TO GOD. The connection of our text will help you to see the force of this observation. There is no such thing as a *little* sin, but still, there are degrees of *guilt*, and it were folly to say that a sinful *thought* has in it the same extent of evil as a sinful *act*. A filthy *imagination* is sinful—wholly sinful and

greatly sinful—but still the *act* has attained a higher degree of provocation.

Now, there are sins that especially provoke God. In the connection of the text we read that licentiousness does this. The people seem, from the 7<sup>th</sup> verse, to have gone to a very high degree of fornication and *lecherousness*. This sin is not uncommon in our day. Let our midnight streets and our divorce courts be the witness. Perhaps the saddest proof that society is far from pure is found in the fact that seducers and fornicators, if they are but gentlemen, may enter respectable society. Brand the miscreants, I say. If the woman is shut out as a harlot, what shall be done unto the lustful maker and cherisher of harlots? If Hell burns hotter at one time than another, it is for those who make what should have been a temple of the Holy Spirit into an instrument of rebellion against both man and God.

*Oppression*, too, according to the text, is another great sin. The Prophet speaks of selling the poor for a pair of shoes. And there are such who would grind the widow and the orphan to the last extreme and make their laborers toil for nothing. How many business men we have who never knew what “hearts of mercy” were? Men form themselves into societies, and then exact an outrageous usury upon loans from the unhappy men who fall into their hands. Cunning legal quibbles and crafty evasions of just debts often amount to heavy oppression and are sure to bring down the anger of the Most High.

Then again, it seems that *idolatry* and *blasphemy* are most certainly offensive to Him and have a high degree of heinousness. He says that they drank the wine of false gods, so if any man set up his belly as his god, or his gold, or his wealth, and lives to these, instead of living to the Most High, he has offended by idolatry.

Especially is *blasphemy* a God-provoking sin. For blasphemy there is no excuse. As George Herbert says, “Lust and wine plead a pleasure. There is gain to be pleaded for avarice, but the cheap swearer from his open sluice lets his soul run for nothing.” There is nothing gained by it. There can be no pleasure in cursing—blasting one’s limbs and damning one’s soul—this must be offending for offending’s sake, and therefore this is a high and crying sin. God does pardon it, He is willing to pardon it now—but it nevertheless weighs upon His heart and He cannot suffer it to go unpunished unless it be repented of.

Some sins make the Lord very weary of man. Now, I do not know who you are, many of you this morning, but I have no doubt there are some among you to whom this word may be a personal accusation. Do I address the lecherous, or the oppressive, or the swearer? Do I address the profane? Ah, Soul, what a mercy God has borne with you for so long. The time will come, however, when He will say, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries,” and how easily will He cast you off and appoint you an awful destruction.

Again, while some sins are thus grievous to God for their peculiar heinousness, many men are especially obnoxious to God because of the

*length* of their sin. That gray-headed man—how many times has he provoked the Most High? Why, those who are but lads have cause to count their years, and apply their hearts unto wisdom because of the length of time they have lived in rebellion. But what shall I say of you that have been half a century in open war against God—and some of you sixty, seventy—what if I said near upon eighty years? Ah, you have had eighty years of mercies and eighty years of forgetfulness. Eighty years of bounty, and eighty years of ingratitude and insult! O God, well may You be wearied by the length and number of man's sins!

Furthermore, God takes special note and feels a special weariness of sin that is mixed with *obstinacy*. Oh, how obstinate some men are! They *will* be damned. There is no helping them. They seem as if they would leap the Alps to reach perdition, and swim through seas of fire that they may destroy their own souls. I might tell you cases of men that have been sore sick of fever, malaria, and cholera. They have recovered from all—but have only recovered their health to return to their wallowing in the mire.

Some of them have had such troubles in business, thick and threefold. They were once in respectable circumstances, but they spent their living riotously and they became poor. They still struggle on in sin. They are growing poorer still—most of their clothes have gone to the pawn shop. But they will not turn from the gin shop and the haunt of vice. Another child is dead! Ah, has that man yonder a dead child at home? And the wife is sick and nothing but starvation looks the family in the face!

But they have gone on still with a high hand and an outstretched arm. This is obstinacy, indeed. Sinner! God will let you have your own way one of these days, and that way will be your everlasting ruin. But God is weary of all here who have thus set themselves to do mischief, and who against warnings, and invitations and entreaties, and light, and knowledge, have determined to go on in sin.

The context seems to tell us that *ingratitude* is intensely burdensome to God. He tells the people how He brought them up out of Egypt. How He cast out the Amorites. How He raised up their sons for Prophets and their young men for Nazarites. And yet they rebelled against Him! Oh, dear Friends, this was one of the things that pricked my heart when I first came to God as a guilty sinner—not so much the peculiar heinousness of my outward life, as the peculiar mercies that I had enjoyed. How many of us have been detestably ungrateful! What a life has our life been!

Oh, how generous God has been. Why there are some of us who never had a want. All our wants have been supplied. God has never cast us into poverty, nor left us to infamy, nor given us up to evil example. He has kept us moral, and made us love His House even when we did not love Him. And all this He has done year after year. What poor returns have we made! To you, His people, what joy He has given, what deliverances, what love, what comfort, what bliss—and yet after all this, to think that we should sin to His very face! Oh, well may He be as a cart that is pressed down, that is full of sheaves!

O my Hearers, I know I address some to whom this may come home very pointedly. What? When you were nearly drowned, were you snatched from the jaws of death? What? Were you rescued from sickness? Were you blessed with that godly mother, and did that companion plead with you? Have you a tender conscience? Do you feel that you cannot sin as others do, for something checks you? All this is God's love. But if you will still rebel against Him, despite all this, well may He arise in His wrath and shake Himself in His hot displeasure. He will not always strive with man. Justice shall soon have its day.

Let me observe, before I leave this point, that it seems from our text that the Lord is so pressed, that He even cries out. Just as the cart, when laden with the sheaves, groans under the weight, so the Lord cries out under the load of sin. Have you ever heard those accents? "Hear, O hearers and give, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me." Hear again—"Turn you, turn you from your evil ways. For why will you die, O house of Israel?" Better still, hear it from the lips of Christ, softened down to our own ears—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets and stone them which are sent unto you. How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not!"

Sinner, God is cut to the heart by your sin! Your Creator grieves over that which you laugh at. Your Creator cries out in His Spirit concerning that which you think to be a trifle. "O do not this abominable thing which I hate!" For God's sake do it not! We often say "for God's sake," without knowing what we mean. But here, see what it means—for the sake of God—that you grieve not your Creator—that you cause not the Eternal One, Himself, to cry out against you. Cease you, cease you, "from your evil ways. For why will you die, O house of Israel?" I now leave those two points to pass on very briefly to the next.

**III.** While it is true that sin is grievous to the Lord, it magnifies His mercy when we see that HE BEARS THE LOAD. As the cart is not said to break, but is only pressed, so is He pressed, and yet He bears. That hymn we sung just before the sermon has more in it than hard hearts will feel—

***"Lord and am I yet afire,  
Not in torments, not in Hell?  
Still does Your good Spirit strive—  
With the chief of sinners dwell?  
Tell it unto sinners, tell,  
I am, I am out of Hell."***

If you and I were in God's place, should we have borne it? No, within a week we should have burned the universe with fire, or trod it to powder beneath our feet. If God were like modern lawgivers—and here I find no fault with them, for the law of a commonwealth must be unyielding—but if the Law of Heaven were as swift to punish as the law of man, where would we be? I do not find you rising up to plead for the man who murdered his children, and from some fancied injury shot his fellow man. We



seem to say by a unanimous verdict, "The wretch is guilty, let him be punished."

What a universal howl has been going up this week against an offender who once stood fair in the midst of us, but who turned aside long ago unto iniquity. What man pleads for him? Who stands up and says, "Let William Roupell go unpunished"? Yet, here is God, and here are we whose offenses are ten times more heinous against God than any man's offenses can be against man—and yet He spares us. Remember, He has all the while full power to punish. He has but to wish and it is done—to lift His finger and we are crushed before Him.

How many servants wait around Him ready to do His bidding? As the Roman consul went out, attended by his lictors carrying the axe, so God is ever attended by His executioners, who are ready to fulfill His sentence. A stone, a tile from the roof of the house, a thunderbolt, a puff of wind, a grain of dust, a broken blood vessel, and it is over—and you are dead and in the hands of an angry God. Indeed, the Lord has to hold in the followers of His wrath and restrain the servants of His anger, for the heavens cry, "Why should we cover that wretch's head?" Earth asks, "Why should I yield a harvest to the sinner's plow?" The lightning and thunder say, "Let us smite the rebel," and the seas roar upon the sinner, desiring him as their prey.

There is no greater proof of the Omnipotence of God, than His long-suffering. It shows the greatest possible power for God to be able to control Himself, to be able to keep in an anger which naturally must boil, and restrain a fury which else must burn. Sinner, yet He bears with you. The angels have been astonished at it—they thought He would strike. But yet He bears with you. Have you ever seen a patient man insulted? He has been met in the street by a villain who insults him before a mob of boys. He bears it. The fellow spits in his face. He bears it still. Now he strikes him. He endures it quietly.

"Give him a charge," says one. "No," says he, "I forgive him all." The fellow knocks him down and rolls him in the ditch, but he bears it still. Yes, and when he rises all covered with mire, he says, "If there is anything that I can do to befriend you, I will do it now." Just at that moment the wretch is arrested by a sheriff's officer for debt. The man who has been insulted takes out his purse and pays the debt and says, "Now you may go free." Look! The wretch spits in his face after that!

Now you say "Let him feel what you can do. Let the law have its way with him." Is there any room for patience now? So would it have been with man. It has not been so with God. We have done much worse than this and He has acted much more nobly. And still, I say, He bears it all. Though like the cart, He is pressed under the load of sheaves, yet like the cart the axle does not break. He bears the load. He bears with impenitent sinners still.

**IV.** And this brings me now to pass over to the fourth head, on which I would have your deepest attention. Many here present, I fear, have never repented of sin. You have never seen it in the light of grieving God, or else

methinks you would not wish to grieve Him. But, perhaps some of you feel how evil a thing rebellion is, but you want to know how you can get rid of it.

This is our fourth head. Not only does God still bear with sin, but GOD, IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON, DID BEAR AND TAKE AWAY SIN. These words might have deep meaning if uttered by the lips of Jesus, "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." Here stood the great problem. God must punish sin, and yet He would have mercy. How could it be? Lo! Jesus comes to be the Substitute for all who trust Him. See how they pile on Him the sheaves of human sin! There are MY sheaves of sin—

***"My soul looks back to see,  
The burden You did bear,  
When hanging on the cursed tree,  
And hopes her guilt was there."***

Here are *your* sheaves, my Hearer—the sheaves of all His chosen, the sins of all who shall believe in Him! "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Yes, the Scripture has it, "He is the propitiation for our sin and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." There they lie, heaps on heaps, till He is pressed down like the wagon that groans as it moves along. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." See Him, He did "sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground." "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up His heel against Me."

They sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, a goodly price did they value Him. Nevertheless, He is taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare His generation? Herod mocks Him and makes nothing of Him. Pilate jeers Him. They have smitten the Prince of Judah upon the cheek. "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not My face from shame and spitting." They have tied Him to the pillar. They are beating Him with rods, not this time forty stripes *save one*—there is no "save one" with Him, for the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and "with His stripes we are healed."

Look at Him, like a cart pressed down with sheaves He goes through the streets of Jerusalem. Well may you weep, you daughters of Jerusalem, though He bids you dry your tears. They hoot Him as He walks along bowed beneath the load of His own Cross which was the emblem of your sin and mine. They have brought Him to Golgotha. They throw Him on His back, they stretch out His hands and His feet. The accursed iron penetrates the most tender parts of His body, where most of the nerves congregate. They lift up the Cross. O bleeding Savior! Your time of woe is come! They dash it into the socket with rough hands, the nails are tearing through His hands and feet.

He hangs in extremity, for God has forsaken Him. His enemies persecute and take Him, for there is none to deliver Him. They mock His nakedness. They point at His agonies. They look and stare upon Him with

ribald jests. They insult His griefs and make puns upon His prayers. He is now, indeed, a worm and no man, crushed till you can scarcely think that there is Divinity within. The fever gets hold upon Him. His tongue is dried up like a potsherd and He cries, "I thirst!" Vinegar is all they yield Him.

The sun refuses to shine and the thick midnight darkness of that awful midday, is a fitting emblem of the tenfold midnight of his soul. Out of that thick horror He cries, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Then, indeed, was He pressed down! Oh, there was never sorrow like unto His sorrow. All human griefs found a reservoir in His heart, and all the punishment of human guilt spent itself upon His body and His soul. Oh, shall sin ever be a trifle to us? Shall I laugh at that which made Him groan? Shall I toy and dally with that which stabbed Him to the heart?

Sinner, will you not give up your sins for the sake of Him who quivered for sin? "Oh," you say, "yes, if I could believe that He suffered for my sake." Will you trust your soul in His hands this morning? Do you do so? Then He died *for you* and took *your* guilt and carried all your sorrows, and you may go free, for God is satisfied, and you are absolved. Christ was burdened that you might be lightened. He was pressed with your sheaves, that you might find deliverance. I wish I could talk of my precious Master as He might speak of Himself. Or as John might speak, who saw Him and bore witness. He could tell in plaintive tones of the sorrows of the Man of Calvary. But such as I have, I give you. O that God would give you with it the power, the Divine Grace, the blessed compulsion to *believe* on Jesus, to believe on Jesus NOW!

**V.** For if not, and here is our last point, God will bear the load for a little while. But if Christ has not borne it for you and for me, then THAT SAME LOAD WILL CRUSH US FOREVER AND EVER.

I find that my text is translated by many learned men in a different way from the version before us—"I will press you as a cart that is full of sheaves presses your place." That is, just as a heavily loaded wagon pressed into the poor Eastern roads, and left there deep furrows—furrows you would hardly think of in a land where we understand road making so well. Just as deep ridges and ruts were cut into the Eastern roads by the loaded wagons, so will I crush you, says God, with the load of your sin.

This is to be your doom, my Hearer, if you are out of Christ. Does it need me to enlarge upon this terror? I think not. It only needs that you should make a personal application of the threat! Divide yourselves now. Divide yourselves, I say! Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Then the threat is not yours. But if you believe not, whether you are standing in yonder aisle, or up there in those far-off galleries, I do advise you listen to me now, as if you were the only person here—a Christless soul must be a damned soul—a spirit that believes not in Christ is condemned already, because it believes not.

How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? Thus says the Lord unto you, "Consider your ways." By time, by eternity, by life, by death, by Heaven, by Hell, I plead with you—believe in Him who is able to

save unto the uttermost them that come unto Him. But if you believe not that Christ is He, you shall die in your sins. After death the judgment! Oh, the judgment, the thundering trumpet, the multitudes, the crowds. The books, the Great White Throne, the, "Come, you blessed," the "Depart, you cursed"! After judgment—to a soul that is out of Christ—Hell!

Who among us, who *among US* shall abide with the devouring flame? Who among *US*, who among *US* shall dwell with the everlasting burnings? I pray that none of us may. But we *must* unless we fly to Christ. Oh, I beseech you, my dear Hearer, fly to Jesus! I may never see your face again. Your eyes may never look into mine—but I shake my garments of your blood, if you believe not in Christ this morning. My tears entreat you, my lips would woo you. There is mercy for you! God has had patience with you. Let His long-suffering lead you to repentance. He wills not the death of any, but had rather that they should turn unto Him and live.

And this turning is simply this—trust Jesus with your soul, and He shall take your sin and you shall stand accepted in the Beloved. Will you? No, I know you will not—unless the Spirit of God shall constrain you. But at the least, if you will not, it shall not be for want of pleading and entreating. Come, it is mercy's welcome hour. I pray you, come! Jesus with pierced hands invites you, though you have rejected Him. You have stood against Him long—He knocks again—His undefeated, unconquerable love defies your wickedness and will have you.

Sinner, will you have Him or not? "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." God help you to come, God *make* you come, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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

# COMMUNION WITH CHRIST—A BAPTIZING SERMON NO. 2668

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 1, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,  
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1858.

*“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”  
Amos 3:3.*

THE expression, “walking together,” is often used in Scripture as a figure for communion. “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” Communion, if it is thorough and entire, implies *activity*. It is not merely contemplation, it is action and, therefore, inasmuch as walking is an active exercise, and walking with a man is communion with him, active communion with him, we see how walking comes to be the picture of true communion with Christ. An old Puritan said, “It does not say that Enoch returned to God and then left Him, but he ‘walked with God.’” All his journey through, he had God for his Companion and lived in perpetual fellowship with his Maker.

There is also another idea contained in the term, “walking together.” It is not only activity, but continuance. So, true communion with Christ is not a mere spasm—not just an excitement of ecstasy—but if it is the work of the Holy Spirit and if it is enjoyed by the healthful soul, it will be a continual thing.

It also implies *progress*, for, in walking together, we do not lift up our feet and put them down in the same place, but we proceed nearer to our journey's end. And he that has true communion with Christ is making progress. It is true that Christ can go no further towards excellence, for He has already attained perfection, but the nearer *we* get to that perfection, the more fellowship we have with Jesus—and unless we progress, unless we seek to be more childlike in faith, more instructed in knowledge and more diligent in service—unless we seek to have more zeal and fervency, we shall find that, in so standing still, we lose the Presence of the Master, for it is only by following on with the Lord that we continue to walk with Him. It will, therefore, very readily strike you how walking with a person is an excellent figure for communion with him and how the term, “walking with God,” is the best expression for fellowship with God. Hence, our text implies by its very form that two cannot walk together unless they are agreed. And it teaches us, therefore, that unless we are agreed with Christ, we cannot attain to the sweet state of communion with Him.

We, shall, first, notice *the agreement* here mentioned. We shall, secondly, try to notice *the necessity for this agreement*. And then, thirdly, we shall ask all Christians to *seek after this agreement with Christ* that they may have full communion with Him.

I am not addressing myself so much to the world outside as to the Church within. When we are preaching the Gospel of salvation, we preach that to the world. But communion is like the Holy of Holies! Salvation, itself, seems to be but as the court of the priests, but communion is the Innermost Place, that which is within the veil, and into that none but the Christian can be allowed to enter.

**I.** First, then, Christian, we shall endeavor to show you WHAT IS THE AGREEMENT which must exist between your Lord and yourself before you can walk with Him. We will do this in a very simple way. We shall keep to the figure and we shall see that there are certain things necessary to enable one person to walk with another.

First, then, it is quite certain that if we would walk with Christ, *we must walk in the same path*. Two men cannot walk together if one turns his head in one direction and the other turns his head the opposite way. If one should turn to the right and the other to the left, they cannot walk together, although they may arrive at the same end by different roads, but they cannot walk *together* unless they walk along the same road. It is true that they can have a little conversation even if they are some yards apart, but if one walks on one side of the road, and the other on the other, we would think that their communion was rather distant and their love rather cold. But, the nearer they walk on precisely the same road, the more are they enabled to hold fellowship with one another.

Now, child of God, albeit you cannot be saved by your good works, and your salvation does not depend upon your works, remember that your communion does! It is impossible for you to have fellowship with Christ unless you are obedient to His commands. Let a Christian err and he will be pierced with many sorrows. Let the child of God forsake the way of God, let him, as, alas, we oftentimes do, go down by the stile to By-Path Meadow, and he will not have his Master go down By-Path Meadow with him! If we will be self-willed and choose our own path, we must go our own path *alone*. If, for some seeming pleasure, or some fancied gain, instead of following the fiery cloudy pillar, we follow the will-o'-the-wisp of our own desires, we shall have to go alone, and in the dark, too! Christ will go with us anywhere where duty calls us. If duty should call us into the burning fiery furnace, the Son of Man will be there. If it should lead us into the lions' den, He will be there to shut the lions' mouths. He would not have gone there with Daniel if Daniel had sought, by neglect of duty, to avoid the threatened destruction. Although the Lord would go with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego even into the heat of the burning fiery furnace, yet, if they had bowed down to the image, He would not have gone with them. "If you walk contrary to Me," says the Lord, "I will walk contrary to you."

Here I must guard what I have said lest I should be misunderstood. I do not mean that Christ forsakes His people so as to *destroy* them—but He forsakes them so as to take away their communion with Himself. For again I repeat that, although salvation does not depend upon good

works, communion *has* this dependence—and cannot be enjoyed between Christ and the soul that is full of sin. A man may have much sin about him and yet be a saved man. And much of frailty and imperfection cleaves to us all. But if we are *living* in sin. If we are, in anyway whatever, breaking the commands of God—to the extent of our sin there will be just that extent of separation between our souls and Christ. Sin may not kill us, but it will make us sick. It will take Christ's right hand from under our heads. Take care, therefore, Christian, that you walk in the steps of your Master. Strive to be obedient to His Law. Live righteously, soberly and godly in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Be you like Caleb, who followed the Lord fully. Endeavor in every way to learn His will and then to do it. In all your Lord's appointed ways, pursue your journey. Remember all His ordinances, and perform His every precept. Resign yourself to His every dispensation. Be you not as the horse or mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near to you—but be you guided by the Lord's own eye. Run in the way of His commandments and you shall find them a delightful road! This is the first point—those who walk together must go the same way.

Further, in going the same way, *they must go with the same motive*. Two persons may be going the same way, but suppose they are going for very opposite reasons? There is a lawyer walking side by side with the man whom he is going to fleece. Let the poor man know that he is to be robbed at the end of his journey and there will not be any communion between the two travelers! Suppose two men are going together and one is about to bring an action against the other—there will not be any communion between them. Suppose they are going to fight with each other—there will not be any communion between them. Suppose the two are going to the same election, intending to vote for opposite candidates—they will not be likely to hold very sweet conversation with one another, albeit they may go in the same way. So, it is necessary that we should not only go in the same road, but *with the same motive*.

Perhaps you ask, "Is it possible that we can go with Christ in the same road, but yet not with the same motive?" Certainly, it is. You see a man who appears to be quite as holy as a Christian. He seems to be as obedient to the Lord as the man who really follows the Master. As for ceremonies, he is the very first to observe them. As for the duties of morality, he attends to them most scrupulously. But ask him why he does all this and he says it is because he desires to save his soul by it. Immediately, he and Christ are at arms' length! Christ calls such an one an antichrist and they are sworn enemies. You are trying to save *yourself*, are you? Then you are to be a savior, while Christ is a Savior? Then you and He are at enmity! But if you are traveling on this road to be saved by Grace, desiring to show forth your thanks with your lips and in your life, then you do not wish to rob Christ's kingly or priestly office of any of its dignity. You do not desire to set yourself up as another king in Zion. But if you are walking in this road with a motive contrary to Christ, you cannot hold any communion with Him.

There is very blessed communion with Christ to be enjoyed in the Lord's Supper, but if anyone comes to the Lord's Table merely with the

thought that it may do him good and save his soul, there is no communion with Christ for him because that is not Christ's objective. And it is the same with Baptism. That ordinance is a blessed means of communion with Christ in His death and burial, but if anyone desires to be baptized, supposing that the observance of the ordinance will save his soul, then there is no communion! If anyone attaches more to the act than Christ has commanded and, therefore, makes it our duty to fulfill it—the moment a man supposes any efficacy in the water and in the body being buried therein—then the communion ceases, for unless we come to anything with Christ's motive, or with a motive which is congenial to Christ's heart, we are not capable of walking with Him. Two cannot walk together unless they are agreed, not only in the way they walk, but also in the objective with which they walk in that way.

Once again, two persons may walk the same road, they may walk with the same purpose *and yet they may not be able to speak to each other unless they travel the same pace*. If one person shall travel home very swiftly, tonight, and another, who lives in the same house, goes creeping home very slowly, perhaps they will go down the same streets, yet they will say nothing to one another because one will be at home long before the other. So we must agree in the pace at which we travel. Why is it that many Christians hold no fellowship with Jesus? It is because they travel to Heaven so slowly that the Lord Jesus leaves them behind! They are so lukewarm, so cold, so indifferent—they have so little zeal, so little love—they have so little true desire to glorify God that the swift heart of Jesus cannot be restrained to tarry with them.

"Oh," says one, "I travel as fast as I can, but I am only a poor feeble creature! I often creep when I see others run and, when I do run, I often see others flying." Beloved, Christ does not measure your walking by the *speed* at which you go. If your *desire* is slack, the Lord Jesus will leave you and travel on before you—and you will probably find the whip of affliction behind you goading your soul to travel more swiftly! John Bunyan has a good picture. He says, "if you send a servant for medicines and he goes as fast as he can, perhaps he rides on a sorry jade of a horse and he cannot make it go fast. But the master does not measure the pace by the rate at which the horse goes, but by the rate at which the servant *wishes* the horse to go, and he says, "That man would go fast if he could. If you put him on a horse that had some mettle in him, he would be back and bring the medicines."

So is it with our poor flesh and blood. It is an ill pace at which we can ever go with such a sorry thing to ride on—but the Lord Jesus measures our pace, not by the actual distance traversed, but by our desires! When he sees us kicking and spurring, as it were, in prayer, pulling at the rein, and toiling to make our poor flesh and blood rise to something like devotion and zeal, He accepts the will for the deed and He keeps company even with us who are such poor disciples. But let our desires be cold, let us become lazy, let us do little or nothing for Christ—what wonder if the Lord Jesus says, "This man observes not My Words and keeps not My sayings. I will not sup with him and he shall not sup with Me. I will give him enough comfort to keep him alive. I will give him enough spiritual food to keep his soul from actually starving, but I will put him on a poor



diet until he turns to Me with full purpose of heart. And then I will take him to My bosom and show him My love.”

There is one more thing. You can suppose two persons traveling on the same road with the same intentions and at the same pace, yet they do not walk together so as to hold any fellowship with each other *because they do not like each other*. Where there is no love (and that, perhaps, is the fullest meaning of the text), there can be no communion. Unless two are agreed *in heart*, they cannot walk together. You know some of our very excellent Hyper-Calvinistic friends. Now, suppose one of them meets an Arminian—you cannot suppose for an instant that there could be any conversation between them unless it were some jangling and abuse of each other. Suppose some good strict Baptist Brother speaks to us, who have more enlarged principles. He smites us with his heavy weapons and cuts us down for the great sin of loving all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and welcoming to the Lord’s Table all whom we believe the Lord has received. But, so far as communion is concerned, our Brother would be obliged to go on the other side of the road. There must be, he thinks, a little distinction and a little difference kept up, for the honor of his own views. And we know that there are some Brethren who have a peculiar obnoxiousness of temper—they seem to be covered with bristles and sharp quills to prick and annoy any and every person who happens to come in their way. You cannot commune with them. It is impossible for you to walk in the same road with them, for you would feel it better to hold your peace all the way because they would be sure to misunderstand what you said. There must be an agreement in heart, an agreement in opinion, or otherwise two cannot walk together.

O Believer, have you agreement of heart with the Lord Jesus? Do you love Christ and do you think a great deal of Him? Do you ever seek to magnify Him and speak well of His name? Do you think Him the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely? And do you feel that He also has a good opinion of you? Has He said to you, “You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you”? Has He spoken soft words to your heart which have caused you to think that His heart of compassion has yearned over you? Ah, then, communion is easy with you and your Lord, for your two souls are bound up in the same bundle of life and, therefore, it is possible for you and Christ to walk together! Are you and He of the same opinion? Are Christ’s Words your doctrine? Have You been taught to give up all divinity except that which came from Jesus? Can you say of Him, “He is my only Rabbi, my only Teacher in the Law and the Gospel. At His feet, with Mary, I could sit and receive His Words and believe all that He has uttered to be the very Truth of God”? If so, Believer, communion between you and Christ is easy, for, when two agree in thought, intention, way and affection, then they can walk together.

I have taken so much time for this first point that the other two must be very briefly hinted at.

**II.** The second point was to be THE NECESSITY FOR THIS AGREEMENT.

First, Christ will not walk with us unless we are agreed with Him *because if He did so, it would be a slur upon His own honor*. No, more than that, it would be a denial of His own Nature! Should Christ come into

concord with Belial? Should He make Himself free and communicative with those who indulge the lusts of the flesh and who disobey His commands? It would look ill if the King's Son should walk arm in arm with traitors! We should not think it a good sign if we saw the highest in the land herding with the lowest. Christ keeps good company and if we do not have our hearts purified by the Holy Spirit, He will not come to us at all. He will not abide even with His own children so long as they harbor sin. Invite the devil into the front parlor of your heart, and Christ will not come. No, it would be a derogation of His own dignity, an insult to His own Character to do so. Give your heart up to the indulgence of some ambitious desire and you cannot insult the Savior by inviting Him to come to you. In our own houses we do not invite two persons who are at enmity, and is it likely that Christ will come where sin is reigning, or pampered, or indulged? No, Brothers and Sisters, He knows there is sin in the best human heart, but, as long as it is kept down and as long as He sees that our desires are to overturn it, He will come there. But when He sees sin petted and fed in the place which ought to be His own palace. When He sees self-righteousness and self-security harbored there, He says, "I will not return until they have repented of their sin."

There is another reason why you cannot commune with Christ unless you are in agreement with Him and that is *because you, yourselves, are incapable of it*. Unless your soul is in agreement with Christ. Unless, in motive, aim and will, you are, as far as possible, like your Master, you cannot rise to the dignity of fellowship with Him! Fellowship with Christ is a high privilege—no man can attain to it as long as he indulges evil purposes, or low desires. The heart must be assimilated to the likeness of Christ. It must be cleansed and renewed by the Holy Spirit, or else it loses its wings and is unable to mount to the high places of the earth where Christ shows His people His love.

There is another reason why Christ will not commune with us unless we are agreed with Him, namely, *for our own good*. Christ cannot and will not hold sweet fellowship with His people unless they are in harmony with Him. If Christians swerve from Christ's path and backslide from His ways—and Christ were still to indulge them with love feasts—they would not realize their sin and would still continue in it. Let a father indulge the erring child with all the usual display of his affection. Let him put away the rod. Let him never use a harsh word at all, but treat the sinning one with the same love as another who is dutiful and obedient—how is it to be expected that the child would ever forsake its faults? If Christ should give the same love, the same enjoyments in sin and after sin, as He does in duty and after duty, His people would scarcely recognize their sins and they would continue in them. But just as the Lord is pleased to make pain the tell-tale of disease, so that a headache becomes an indication of something wrong within the system, so does He make the absence of His own fellowship the tell-tale by which we may know that there is something within our soul that is hostile to Him—something that must be driven away before the sacred Dove will come, with wings of comfort, to dwell in our hearts. "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" No. That is impossible.

**III.** Now, thirdly, I want to urge all Christians to SEEK AFTER THIS AGREEMENT WITH CHRIST.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, in order that you may agree with Christ, I have first to remind you that *the perpetual indwelling of the Holy Spirit must be with you*. Unless the same Spirit that dwells in Christ shall dwell in you, your agreement can never rise to such a height as to admit of any depth or nearness of union. Take care continually to seek the unction from on high, the indwelling of the Holy One of Israel! In the measure in which your heart has been endued by the Divine influence and baptized by the holy fire of the Spirit—in that proportion will your soul be in agreement with Christ and your union be true, close and lasting. Take care of that.

And then, next, under that Divine influence, *look well to all your motives*. Seek not to have any aim to get honor to yourself, or honor to your fellow men. Take care that in all you do, you do it with a single eye to your Master's honor, for, unless your eye is single, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If you will win the sunlight of your Master's face, you must seek His Glory and His Glory alone.

Then, if you would have union with Christ, take care, in the next place, *that you do all in dependence upon Him*, for if, in the affairs of your soul, you set up in business for yourself, Christ will be at enmity with you. Seek not only to turn your eyes to Him for direction, but also for support. And look to Him in your prayers, in your preaching, in your hearing and in everything, for so shall Christ and your soul be agreed and you shall have fellowship with Him.

And, lastly, *be continually panting after more holiness*. Never be content with what you are. Seek to grow. Seek to be more and more like Christ! And then, when that desire for holiness is strongest, you will have the same desire that Christ has, for His desire is that you should be holy, even as He is holy. And His command is, "Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect." And when your desires are Christ's desires, then shall it be possible for you to walk with Christ, but not till then!

I long to have a Church in complete agreement with the Lord Jesus Christ, for that would be a Church against which the gates of Hell could never prevail! If a church is merely founded by a man, the man will die and the church will perish. If a doctrine is only taught by a man and you receive it on his authority, his authority will pass away as all earthly things must. But, if it is of God, woe unto them that fight against it, for they can never prevail against Him! Woe unto him that dashes himself against this stone, for he shall be broken in pieces! And if it is rolled upon him, it shall grind him to powder! Let us be sure that a church is a Church of God in her doctrines, in her ordinances, in her prayer and praise—and we may know that she shall be like the stone we read of in Daniel, "cut out of the mountain without hands." None shall be able to break her, but she shall break all opposers in pieces and she shall fill the earth!

Now there are some friends who are about to walk with Christ into this pool of Baptism. Can two walk here unless they are agreed? You may walk into this pool, but you cannot bring Christ with you unless you are

agreed with Him. If you come without agreement with Christ, you will make a slip of it in your life, or else go back and walk no more with Him and be offended with Him. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, unless your two hearts are agreed, unless Christ and your heart are made one, you will fall out with one another before long! Christ will not long be at peace with you, nor will you be at peace with Christ. Your profession will be short-lived, after all, unless it is a true and real one—the expression of the inner heart. I pray that your profession tonight may be a sincere one, that you may testify to the world a true, saving and entire agreement with your Lord and Master. And if any of you are not agreed with Christ, I beseech you, though you have come so far, come no farther! Go not into this pool till you are thoroughly agreed with Christ! I charge you, in the name of the living God, as you shall have to stand before His bar at last, play not the hypocrite! Be sincere, for, if you give yourselves not wholly to Christ, you are doing like those who come unworthily to the Lord's Table—who eat and drink condemnation to their own souls—for he that is plunged into the Baptismal pool as a hypocrite, is immersed unto his own damnation!

But, O, you humble followers of Jesus, you have testified to us your fellowship in the faith! Be not afraid, now, to confess it before men—and may God acknowledge all your names, at last, among the followers of the Lamb, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 9.**

[Regular readers of the Sermons will probably notice that this Exposition was given by MR. SPURGEON before he delivered the discourse published last week—Sermon #2667, Volume 46—*A Pressed Man Yielding to Christ*. It was too long to be issued then, so it is appended to this shorter Sermon for which no Exposition had been preserved.]

**John 9:1-2.** *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from his birth, And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* The procedure of these disciples is very much like that of many people in these days—they are much more ready to ask questions about sufferers than they are to sympathize with them. If the hearts of the disciples had been in a right condition when they saw this blind man, they would have said, “Lord, cannot this poor man's eyes be opened?” But, instead of talking like that, they were full of idle curiosity which prompted them to raise metaphysical difficulties and to ask foolish questions. So they wanted to know how it was that the man came to be born blind. Was it in consequence of some sin on the part of his parents, or through some sin of his own in a previous state of existence, (for some of them seem to have had even that foolish notion), or was it because of some sin of his which God foresaw that he would commit and, therefore, laid this affliction upon him from the hour of his birth?

**3.** *Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* That is to say, this blindness was not the result of special sin in any individual, but God in-

tended that His works of mercy and of Grace should be manifested through his affliction. It is a cruel thing when every form of malady or disease is traced to some fault in the person who has to suffer from it. This is evil! I had almost said *infernal*, for Satan himself could hardly devise a more false and wicked thing than to say that because a man is a special sufferer, therefore he must have been a special sinner! It is not so, for, often, some of God's truest children—some of those who live nearest to Him—are those who keep the night watches through pain, or they are bedridden from year to year, or are deprived of some of their limbs, or in some other way are full of suffering. This is in order that in their case, also, the works of God should be manifest in them as they were in this poor blind man.

**4.** *I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day.* “I have no time to go into these questions with you merely to satisfy your curiosity. ‘While it is day,’ I must go on with the work which I was sent into the world to do.”

**4-7.** *The night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing.* There was no long discourse to be delivered while this poor man was waiting to see what would happen to him. Our Lord spoke just a few words to His disciples and then went at once to the miracle He intended to perform. “When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.” Our Savior sometimes works without means. At other times by means and, occasionally He uses means which, at first sight, appear not to be the best to produce the designed result. To put clay on a blind man's eyes does not seem a very likely operation for giving him sight. And, oh, dear Friends, when God uses us as His instruments and makes us to be like this clay upon the poor blind man's eyes, I am sure that there is much about us that might make us feel as if we would rather hinder than help! And when we do the best we can, what is there in us that is of any value?

I think I once saw the pen with which Milton was said to have written part of *Paradise Lost*. Poor pen! It could not remember the great poet, could it? Yet, he had used it to noble purpose. As I looked at it, I did not think of ascribing a single stanza of that matchless poem to the pen with which Milton wrote. So, Beloved, we are the pens that the Lord uses when He means to write His messages of Grace upon the hearts of saints and sinners. But we are such poor pens, such feeble instruments to be held in His hand that we wonder He can ever make use of us! This blind man did exactly as he was told to do. What a blessing it was for him that he received the clay on his eyes and simply went and washed it off again as the Savior told him! That was all he had to do—and then he came back seeing clearly! Oh, if sinners were only attentive to Gospel directions—and then were obedient to them without adding to them or taking from them—how many more blind eyes would be very speedily opened and how greatly would Christ be glorified!

**8, 9.** *The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him. But he said, I am he.* With that downright simplicity and shrewdness which marked his whole character, the man said, "I am he." He did not go beating about the bush at all, but he straightway acknowledged that he was the man of whom they were speaking.

**10, 11.** *Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A Man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight.* I admire the brevity of his statement, the boldness of it and the simple *naiveté* of it. The way in which he told the story did not embellish it in the least degree. In fact, it could not have been embellished without spoiling it. And when you, dear Friends, are giving an account of your own conversion, describing the way in which salvation became yours, tell it as simply and plainly as you can. It will never be so well adorned as when it appears in its own naked simplicity and beauty. I commend this man's example to all of you who have to give your testimony before you are admitted as members of the Church. When speaking of your conversion, put the narrative in as plain and simple a form as this man adopted.

**12-14.** *Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.* Therefore, this act of Christ would be something horrible in the eyes of the Pharisees. They would make out that Christ, when He made the clay, had turned brick maker on the Sabbath, thus violating the traditions of the fathers, just as, on another occasion, they said that He allowed His disciples to go threshing on the Sabbath, when they gathered ears of corn in the field, rubbed them between their hands, and ate the grain because they were hungry. The Rabbis regarded that as an act of threshing, and a very serious violation of the Law of God! And now that Jesus had Himself made clay, and opened a man's eyes with it, they held up their hands in holy horror—no, in *impious* horror—that Christ should do such a thing on the Sabbath!

**15.** *Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see.* He makes his story shorter as he goes on telling it. These people were unworthy of the words he spoke to them and, therefore, he gave them as few as possible.

**16, 17.** *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because He keeps not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a Man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They said unto the blind man again, What say you of Him, that He has opened your eyes? He said, He is a Prophet.* That was as much as he then knew. By thoughtful consideration he had come as far as to know that Jesus must be a Prophet.

**18-21.** *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you*

*say was born blind? How, then, does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now sees, we know not; or who has opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.* They also were shrewd. They did not wish to get themselves into trouble and, therefore, they said as little as they could. They referred the Pharisees to their son who was quite able to answer them.

**22-24.** *These words spoke his parents because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed, already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner.* They thought that they could smooth the man over, so that he would say no more. “We know”—we who know everything, we who are the rulers and teachers of the people—“we know that this Man is a sinner.” That might have closed the mouths of many men but, on that occasion, they had before them a person who could not easily be made to believe all they chose to say—a sharp, shrewd man who had keener eyes in his head, even when he was blind, than they had while they could see!

**25.** *He answered and said, Whether He is a sinner or not, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.* “About that point, I am perfectly certain, whatever question there may be concerning anything else.”

**26-28.** *Then said they to him again, What did He do to you? How opened He your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: why would you hear it again? Will you also be His disciples? Then they reviled him.* As they could not answer him, they reviled him. It is the old plan which is still followed by certain lawyers, “No case. Therefore abuse the plaintiff.” “They reviled him.”

**28, 29.** *And said, You are His disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses: As for this—*They did not say, “fellow,” because they meant something worse than that, something which they could not express. “As for this”—

**29, 30.** *We know not from where He comes. The man answered and said unto them, Why here is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He comes, and yet He has opened my eyes!* They were the gentlemen who said, “We know,” and they wanted, a little while before, to silence him by parading their superior knowledge! So now he turns upon them, and says, “Herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He comes, and yet He has opened my eyes!”

**31.** *Now we know that God hears not sinners.* He meant men who are living in known sin, impostors and deceivers. Of course, God would not hear sinners of that stamp.

**31-33.** *But if any man is a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began it was not heard that any anyone opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing.* This was bravely spoken. The man did not, at that time, know the Godhead of the Savior, but he felt that He must have come from God, that He was one of God’s servants, or messengers, or Prophets. Therefore he avowed what he knew. Dear Friends, always act up to the light you

have enjoyed. If you have starlight, thank God for it, and acknowledge it before men, for then He will give you moonlight. And if you have moonlight, walk by it, thank God for it, and acknowledge it and He will give you sunlight. And when you have sunlight, walk in it, and, one of these days, you will come to that Light which is as the light of seven days, the Light of God Himself!

**34.** *They answered and said unto him, You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us?* Their dignity was touched! Their superlative wisdom lifted them so much above this poor man that they said, with the utmost disdain, “Do you teach us?”

**34, 35.** *And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out.* Oh, if there are any of you who are suffering persecution for Christ’s sake, who have been cast out of any company because of what He has done for you, I do not think you need any sweeter comfort than this one line—“Jesus heard that they had cast him out.”

**35-37.** *And when He had found him, He said to him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen Him, and it is He that talks with you.* I scarcely remember a time that, up to this time, the Lord Jesus had given such a manifestation of Himself to anyone except to the Samaritan woman at the well! When she mentioned the Messiah, He said to her, “I that speak unto you am He.” And here He reveals Himself to this man as the Son of God, which was somewhat more than that woman probably meant by the term, “Messiah.”

**38.** *And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.* Which proves that the man was not a Unitarian. “He worshipped Him” who had opened his eyes. And we, also, will worship Him forever and ever, blessed be His holy name!

**39-41.** *And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind, also? Jesus said unto them, If you were blind, you should have no sin: but now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains.* It would have been better for them if they had known their blindness and applied to Him who could give them sight and forgive their sin!

—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.**



# PREPARATION FOR REVIVAL NO. 597

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY OCTOBER 30, 1864  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Can two walk together, except they are agreed?”  
Amos 3:3.*

THE Believer is agreed with God. The war between the most holy God and His offending creatures is over in the case of blood-washed sinners. It is not suspended by a truce, but ended *forever* by a peace which passes all understanding. The Believer is fully agreed with God concerning the Divine Law—he confesses that, “the Law is holy and just and good”—he would not have it altered if he could. He rejoices in the way of God’s testimonies more than in all riches. Yes, in His Precepts does he take delight, praying evermore, “O let me not wander from Your Commandments.” He joyfully acknowledges that the Judge of all the earth rules mankind by a Law in which there is no injustice, by statutes which subserve the best interests of the governed while they secure the Glory of the great Governor.

The Christian “consents unto the Law that it is good.” He is agreed with God, moreover, that a breach of the Law should be visited with penalty—he would be unwilling that sin should go unpunished. He feels that the sanctions of Law, however terrible, are absolutely necessary and require to be severe. Above all, he is agreed with God in that great Atonement for sin which God Himself has ordained and provided in the Person of Jesus Christ. Gazing upon the matchless sacrifice of Calvary—while the Lord is content, the Believer is satisfied—where God finds satisfaction for His injured honor, the Believer finds the noblest object of admiration and adoration.

You love Golgotha, O Judge of the earth. And Your people are perfectly agreed with You in this. And so the Christian is at one with God in His love of holiness—he delights in the Law of God after the inward man. Sin, which is abhorrent to the Most High, is obnoxious to the Christian in that measure in which he is enlightened and conformed unto the image of Christ. Great God, You have unsheathed Your sword and bathed it in Heaven for the destruction of all evil and Your redeemed are on Your side, abhorring that which is evil and resolving to fight under Your command till the last sin shall be cut off. You have uplifted Your banner because of the Truth and around Your standard the soldiers of the Cross are rallying! Your battle, O Most High, is the battle of the Church! Your foes are our foes and Your friends are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight.

I trust that most of us who are here in the name of Jesus feel a deep, sincere and constant agreement with God. We have been guilty of murmuring at His will. But yet our newborn nature evermore at its core and center knows that the will of the Lord is wise and good. And we therefore

bow our heads with reverent agreement and say, "Not as I will, but as You will. The will of the Lord be done." Our soul, when through infirmity is tempted to rebellion, nevertheless struggles after complete resignation of her wishes and desires to do the will of the Most High. We do not covet the life of self-will—we sigh after the spirit of self-denial—yes, of self-annihilation that Christ may live in us and that the old ego, the carnal I, may be altogether slain.

I would be as obedient to my God as are those first-born sons of light, His messengers of flaming fire. As the mercury feels the mysterious changes of the air and sensitively moves in accordance with the atmosphere, so would I, being surrounded by my God, evermore perceive His wishes and will and move at once in obedience to them. Our strength shall be perfect when we have no independent will but move and act only as we are moved and acted on by our gracious God. I hope that at this hour we can truly say that notwithstanding our many sins, we do love the Lord our God. And if we could have our will this morning we would follow His commands without the slightest departure from the narrow path. We are in heart agreed with God.

The text reminds us that this agreement gives us power to walk with God. May we be enabled to claim this privilege which Divine Grace has bestowed on us—power to walk with God in daily, habitual, friendly, intimate, joyous communion. Believer, you can walk with God this very day! He is as near to you as He was to Abraham beneath the oaks at Mamre, or Moses at the back of the desert. He is as willing to show you His love as He was to reveal Himself to Daniel on the banks of Ulai, or to Ezekiel by the streams of Chebar. You have no greater distance this day between you and your God than Jacob had when he laid hold upon the Angel and prevailed. He is your Father as truly as He was the father of the people whom He covered by day with a cloud and cheered by night with a pillar of fire.

And though no Shekinah lights up a golden Mercy Seat, yet the Throne of Grace is quite as glorious and even more accessible than in the days of old. He shall hide you in His pavilion, as He did His servant David—yes, your hiding place shall be in the secret of the tabernacle. Enoch's privilege was not peculiar to him—it is your birthright—claim it! Noah's high honor of walking with God was not reserved for him alone. It belongs to *you* also, shut in as you are in the Ark of the Covenant and saved from the deluge of Divine wrath.

It should be the Christian's delight to be always with his God—walking with Him in unbroken fellowship. Enoch did not take a turn or two with God, as Matthew Henry observes, but he walked with Him four hundred years! O that we might cease to be with our God as wayfaring men who tarry but for a night—may we dwell IN God and may He dwell in us. Walking implies *action*. And our actions should always be in the Lord. The Christian, whatever he eats, or drinks, or does, should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him. Walking has in it the thought of *progress*. But all our progress should be with God. As we are rooted and grounded in Christ so we must ask to grow up in Him, ever abiding in our highest moments with God and never imagin-

ing or conceiving any progress which shall remove us from humble confidence in Him.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, it may be that your heart is agreed with God and yet you have lost for a time your walking with Him—be not at ease in your soul till you have regained it! Search your own heart by the light of the Word and of the Holy Spirit. And when you know yourself to be agreed with God—through Him who is our peace—hesitate not to draw near with holy confidence to your Father and your God! In spite of all your past wanderings He welcomes you to walk with Him, seeing that you are agreed.

At this season we, as a Church, have had our hearts set upon a revival of religion in our midst. Many of us will be greatly and grievously disappointed if such a revival shall not take place. We have felt moved to cry for it! I think I may say we have been almost unanimously thus moved. Already there are signs that God is visiting us in a very remarkable manner—but our souls are set upon a greater work than we have ever seen. Now, dear Friends, we need as the first and most essential thing in this matter that God should walk with us! In vain we shall struggle after revival unless we have His Presence.

If, then, we desire to have His Presence with us, we must see to it that we are perfectly agreed with Him both in the design of the work and in the method of it. And I desire this morning to stir up your pure minds to heart-searching and vigilant self-examination that every false way may be purged from us, since God will not walk with us as a Church unless we are agreed with Him.

The first remark, then, of this morning is simply this—we desire in this matter to walk together with God. And in the second place if we would have Him with us we must be agreed with Him. Therefore, thirdly, we desire to purge ourselves of everything which would mar our perfect agreement with God and so prevent His coming to our aid. I do ask the prayers of God's people that He may enable me to speak to profit this morning, for if ever I felt my own unfitness to edify the saints, I do so just now—I will even confess that if I could have had my own choice, I should have left it to someone else to address you this morning. My harp is out of tune and the strings are all loosened, but the Chief Musician understands His instruments and knows how to get music out of us—and in answer to prayer He will doubtless sustain us and give you a blessing.

**I.** Let us, first, AVOW OUR DESIRE THAT IN OUR PRESENT EFFORT WE MAY WALK WITH GOD. Otherwise our strivings after revival will be very wearisome. I know of nothing more saddening than to attend a Prayer Meeting where the devotion is forced and the fervor laborious—where Brethren puff and strain like engines with a load behind them too heavy for them to drag. It is painful to detect an evident design to get up an excitement and wind up the people to the proper pitch when the addresses are adapted to foster hotheadedness and the prayers to beget superstition.

God's true saints cannot but feel that to gain the Graces of the Spirit by fleshly vehemence is sad work. They retire from such a meeting and they say, "How different is this from occasions when God's Spirit has been really at work with us!" Then, like a ship with her sails filled with a fair

wind, floating majestically along without tugging and straining, the Church, borne onward with the breath of the Divine Spirit, with a full tide of Heaven's Grace, speeds on her glorious way. "If Your Presence go not with me, carry us not up therefore," was the request of Moses.

And I think we may rather deprecate than desire a revival if God's Presence is not in it. Lord, let us stay as we are, crying and groaning, to see better days, rather than permit us to be puffed up with the notion of revival without Your own power in it! Let us have no special Prayer Meetings merely for the sake of them. But let us, O let us receive special blessings as the result of prayer—if You do not intend to help us now let us weep in secret—but let us not rejoice in a mere name if the substance is lacking!

During a course of meetings by which we desire to excite the hearts of Believers to a deeper interest in spiritual things, if there is not a gracious power in them, you will soon perceive a dullness, a flagging, a heaviness, a weariness stealing over the assembly. The numbers will decline, the prayers will become less fervent and the whole thing will degenerate into a hollow sham or a mournful monotony. To come up from the wilderness is hard climbing unless we lean on our Beloved. O You who are our Beloved and adorable Lord, lest our souls grow weary in well-doing and faint for heaviness, be pleased to let us enjoy communion with Yourself!

Not only is there weariness in our own attempts, but they always end in disappointment, unless God walks with us. You may pray and pray and pray, but there shall be no conversions, no sense of quickening until the Spirit's working is distinctly recognized. The minister shall be just as much a preacher of the mere letter as ever he was. The Church officers shall be as formal and official as ever they were. The Church members shall be as inconsistent and as indifferent as they were likely to be. The congregation shall be as uninterested and as unmoved as they were in the worst times unless the Spirit of God works with us.

In this thing we may quote the words of the Psalmist, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He gives His beloved sleep." O Friends, it is well to have a holy industry and a devout perseverance! It is well to strain every nerve and put forth every effort! But *all* this must end in the most sorry, heart-sickening failure unless the Lord rends the heavens and come down. I am telling you what you all know and what, I trust, you feel—but it is what we are constantly forgetting—for many are they that go to war at their own charges and so become both bankrupt and defeated. And many are they who would build God's House simply by stress of *human* effort, and they fail because God is not there to give them success.

Yet more—supposing that in our attempt at revival we should not be favored with the Presence of God? Then prayer will be greatly dishonored. I take it that when a Church draws near to God in special prayer, asking any mercy, if she does not receive that mercy on account of some disagreement with God, then her belief in prayer is, for the future, greatly weakened. And this is a most serious evil—for it loosens the girdle of the loins of God's saints. Anything which makes men doubt the efficacy of

prayer is an injury to their spirituality. And thus upon the largest scale God's Church will suffer loss if her prayers shall remain unanswered. We must go on! It would be ruin to forbear or to turn our backs.

As a Church we must now conquer or die! How can I again stir you up to supplication if, on this occasion, your prayers should be in vain? I shall come into this pulpit with but a faint heart to speak of my Master's faithfulness if He does not give you evidences of it. Ah, my Brethren, when you are lifting up your voices in intercession, I cannot expect to mark your earnestness nor to behold your faith unless that faith shall be *confirmed* just now by a shower Divine mercy! To the world at large the non-hearing of prayer would be a ready argument—either against the existence of God—or else against the reality of His promises! I hope such a thing as this will not occur.

“Aha! Aha!” says the enemy, “see what has come of it all! The people cried but they cried in vain. They met in large numbers. They approached the Mercy Seat with tears and groans but no result has come of it. There have been no more conversions than before and God's strength has not been put forth.” Would you desire that such a calamity as this should occur? The true soldiers of the Cross in our Israel would almost as soon lay down their necks as that God's honor should thus be attained in the presence of His foes!

Moreover, every attempt at revival of religion which proves a failure—and fail it must without the Presence of God—leaves the Church in a worse condition than it was before, because of the lack of any stir at all. Then God's people fall back into their former lethargy with an excuse for continuing in it! Or if a false stir is made, a reaction follows of a most injurious character. I suppose the worst time in the Christian Church is generally that which follows the excitement of a revival. And if that revival has had no reality in it, the mischief which is done is awful and incalculable. If no excitement shall come at all the mischief is still as great—God's people, being disappointed—have little heart to listen to further exhortations to future zealous action. They become content with their Laodicean lukewarmness and it becomes impossible to bestir them again.

If a revival should apparently have success and yet God is not in it, perhaps this is even *worse*. The wildfire and madness of some revivals have been a perfect disgrace to the common sense of the age, let alone the spirituality of the Church! I know and speak not without facts when I declare that some Churches have been seriously deteriorated and permanently injured by large admissions of excited but unconverted persons—so that the only thing a fresh pastor could do was to begin afresh and purge the Church book throughout, sweeping off scores of carnal persons. The beginning anew being almost hopeless, because after the sudden outburst of passion about religion has passed there follows a season in which religion is treated with indifference, if not with disdain! I had rather see a Church asleep than see it awake into the fever of fanaticism—better that she should lie still than do mischief.

O dear Friends, we have felt in our souls not that we *may* have revival, but that we *must* have it. And when we think of the incalculable damage that shall be done to us all if the Lord does not visit us, I am sure we

must again draw near to the angel and wrestle afresh—with this determination—that we will not let him go unless he bless us. We may be confirmed in our anxious desire to have the Lord walking with us in this thing when we consider the blessings which are sure to flow from His Presence.

Ah, what holy quickening shall come upon every one of us. The preacher will not have to lament that he has so little power in prayer—both alone and in your presence he shall be strengthened to intercede as an angel of God! You shall not have to mourn that the service lacks its former sweetness. You will feel the blessedness you knew when first you saw the Lord. You will not have to mourn that you are cold and dead, that your songs languish and that your prayers expire. Instead, every action shall be fraught with vigor! Every thought shall glow with earnestness! Every word shall be clothed with Divine power! Let God arise, and doubts and fears shall betake themselves to their hiding places as the bats conceal themselves at the rising of the dawn.

Let the Lord visit you, and difficulties which frown like Alps will sink to plains. Let Him arise, and all your enemies shall flee before you as the smoke before the wind! The heavens shall drop with showers of mercy, and even your sins and all their guilt shall shake as Sinai shook at the Presence of the God of Israel. A Church with God's Presence in it is holy, happy, united, earnest, laborious, successful! She is fair as the moon before the Lord and clear as the sun in the eyes of men! She is terrible as an army with banners to her enemies. If God shall be pleased to be with His Church, then direct good shall visit our congregation.

We used to say at Park Street, that there were not many seat-holders unconverted. The like is to a great extent true here. The immense increase of our Church gives us the hope that the day will come when there will not be a single seat unoccupied by a Believer—but it is not the case yet. I suppose the Church is about half the congregation now. There are some, however, that from the very first have listened, but so far as salvation is concerned, they have listened in vain—they have been moved to tears, they have made good resolutions. But after ten or eleven years of ministry they are just where they were—except that they have accumulated fresh guilt.

Some desire to be Christians but they harbor some darling lust. We know some who used to feel under the Word but do not feel now. The voice which once was like a trumpet now lulls them to sleep! Some have made a compromise—one day they serve God and another day they serve their sins—like the Samaritans who feared the Lord and served other gods. Now let our cries be heard for the Master's Presence and we shall soon see these brought in! Hearts of stone shall be turned to flesh. The iron of the Word shall break the northern iron and steel! Jehovah Jesus shall ride victoriously through those gates which have been barred against Him and there shall be shouting in Heaven because the Lord has gotten Him the victory!

Wider blessings will follow. A Church is never blessed alone. If any one Church shall stand in the vigor of piety, other Churches shall see their example and make an advance towards a better state. Here we have around us many Churches—hills which God has blessed. But they, like

ourselves, have a tendency to slumber. Let God pour out His Spirit here and the shower will not be confined to these fields but will drop upon other pastures and they shall rejoice on every side! Our testimony for God rings through this land—from one end of it to the other! Our ministry is not hidden under a bushel nor confined to a few. Tens of thousands listen every week to our word. And if the Lord shall be pleased to bless it, then shall it be as ointment poured forth to load the moral atmosphere with a savor of Christ Crucified!

One nation cannot feel the power of God without communicating some of its blessing to another. The Atlantic cannot divide—no tongue or language can separate us. If God blesses France or Switzerland, the influence shall be felt upon the Continent. If He should bless our island, all the whole earth must feel His power here! Therefore do we feel encouraged mightily to pray! O, my Brethren, the world grows old—man's faith is getting weary of long waiting. The false prophets begin again to appear and cry lo, here and lo, there.

But the Lord must come—of this are we confident—in such an hour as we think not, He may appear. How would we have Him find us at His coming? Would we have Him find His servants sleeping? His stewards wasting His goods? His vinedressers with neglected vines? His soldiers with swords rusted in their scabbards? No, we would have Him find us watching, standing upon the watchtower, feeding His sheep, tending His lambs, succoring the needy, comforting the weary, helping the oppressed!

Gird up your loins then, I pray you, as men that watch for their Lord! If my words could have the power in them which I feel they lack, I would stir you up, dear Brothers and Sisters, to seek unto the mighty God of Jacob that when the Son of Man comes, if He finds no faith upon the earth elsewhere, at least He may find it in us—if zeal shall be extinct in every other place, at least may He find one live coal yet glowing in our bosom! For this we want His Presence, for without it we can do nothing.

**II.** This brings me, in the second place, to observe, that IF WE WOULD HAVE THE PRESENCE OF GOD, IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE SHOULD BE AGREED WITH HIM. We must be agreed with God as to the end of our Christian existence. God has formed us for Himself that we may show forth His praise. The main end of a Christian man is that having been bought with precious blood, he may live unto Christ and not unto himself.

O Brethren! I am afraid we are not agreed with God in this! I must say it, painful though it is, there are many professors and there are some in this Church who at least appear to believe that the main end of their Christian existence is to get to Heaven—to get as much money as they can on earth and to leave as much as they can to their children when they die! I say, “to get to Heaven,” for they selfishly include that as one of the designs of Divine Grace. But I question if it were not for their happiness to go to Heaven, whether they would care much about going if it were only for God's Glory, for their way of living upon earth is always thus—“What shall I eat? What shall I drink? How shall I be clothed?”

Religion never enters their thoughts. They can judge and weigh and plot and plan to get *money*, but they have no plans as to how they can serve God. The cause of God is scarcely in their thoughts. They will pinch

and screw to see how little they can contribute in any way to the maintenance of the cause of the Truth of God or to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. They will so far condescend to consider religion as to think how they can profess it in the most economical manner but nothing more.

You will not hear me speak so foolishly and madly, as if I thought that it were not just and laudable in a man to seek to make money to supply the wants of his family, or even to provide for them on his own decease. Such a thing is just and right—but whenever this gets to be the *main* thought—and I am persuaded it is the leading thought of too many professors, such men forget Whose they are and Whom they serve! They are living to themselves. They have forgotten Who it is that has said, “You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold.” Oh, I pray God that I may feel that I am God's man, that I have not a hair on my head which is not consecrated, nor a drop of my blood which is not dedicated to His cause, and His cause only!

And I pray, Brothers and Sisters, that you may feel the same—that selfishness may totally die out of you—that you may be able to say without any straining of the truth, “I have nothing to care for nor to live for in this world but that I may glorify God and spread forth the savor of my Savior's name.” We cannot expect the Master's blessing till we are agreed about this. This is God's will—is it our will today? I know I have around me many faithful hearts who will say, “My desire is that whether I live or die, Christ may be glorified in me.” If we are all of that mind, God will walk with us.

But everyone who is of another mind and of a divided heart is a hindrance and an injury to us in our progress. It would be no loss to lose such persons but a spiritual benefit to the entire cause if this dead lumber were cast out. When the body gets a piece of rotten bone in it, it never rests, till, with pain, it casts out the dead thing—and so with the Church. The Church may be *increased* by dead members but when she begins to get vigorous and full of life, her first effort is with much pain, perhaps with much marring of her present beauty, to cause the dead substance to come forth.

And if this should be the case, though we shall pity those who are cast forth, yet for our own health's sake we may thank God and take courage. If we would have God with us we must be agreed as to the real desirableness and necessity of the conversion of souls. God thinks souls to be very precious and His own words are, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” Are we agreed with God in that? Our God thinks souls to be so precious that if a man could gain the whole world and lose his soul he would be a loser. Are we agreed with Him there?

In the person of Christ, our God wept over Jerusalem—He watered with tears that city which must be given up to the flames. Have we tears? Have we compassion? When God thinks of sinners it is in this wise—“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?” Can we bemoan sinners in that way? Do we stir our souls to an agony of grief because men will turn from God and will willfully perish in their sins?



If, on the contrary, you and I selfishly say, “We are safe, it does not matter to us whether others are brought to know Christ,” we are not agreed! God will not work with us—and such of you as feel this indifference, this cursed lethargy—*you* are our curse, our burden, our hindrance! God forgive you and stir you up to feel that your heart will not rest unless poor sinners are plucked as brands from the burning! Are we agreed here?

In the next place, if we would have the Lord with us we must be agreed as to the means to be used in revival. We are agreed that the first means is the *preaching* of Christ. We do not want any other doctrine than that we have received—Christ lifted up upon His Cross as the serpent was lifted up upon the pole. This is the remedy which we, in this House of Prayer, believe in. Let others choose sweet music, or pictures, or vestments, or baptismal water, or confirmation, or human rites—we abhor them and pour contempt upon them! As for us, our only hope lies in the doctrine of a Substitute for sinners—the great fact of the Atonement! The glorious Truth of God that Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save sinners! I think we are agreed with God in this, that the preaching of Christ is the way by which Believers shall be saved.

God’s great agency is the Holy Spirit. We are agreed, Brethren, that we do not want sinners to be converted by our persuasion—we do not want them brought into the Church by excitement. We want the Spirit’s work and the Spirit’s work alone. I would not bend my knee once in prayer, much less day by day, to win a mere excitement. We have done without it and we shall do without it by the Grace of God. But I would give my eyes if I might but know that the Holy Spirit Himself would come forth and show what Divinity can do in turning hearts of stone to flesh! In this thing, I think that we are agreed with God.

But God’s way of blessing the Church is by the instrumentality of all her members. The multitude must be fed, but it must not be by Christ’s hand alone. “He gave the bread to the disciples and the disciples, to the multitude.” Are you all agreed here? I am afraid not. Many of you are engaged in works of usefulness and I will make this my boast this day—that I had never thought that I should meet with a people so apostolic in their zeal as the most of you have been! I have marveled and my heart has rejoiced when I have seen what self-sacrifice some of the poorest among you have made for Christ! What zeal, what enthusiasm you have manifested in the spreading abroad of the Savior’s name!

But still there are some of you who are doing nothing whatever. You have a name to live, but I fear that you are dead. You are very seldom at a Prayer Meeting—even some Church members and persons whom I know are not kept at home by business but by sheer indifference to the cause of God! Some of you are never provoked to zeal and to good works. That you come and listen to us, is something. And for what you do we are grateful. But for what you do *not* do—over this we mourn because we fear that we are restrained in our efforts for the spread of the Savior’s kingdom—as a Church we are not agreed on God’s plan.

And we shall continue to be restrained until every man in the Church can say, “I will consecrate myself this day unto the Lord of Hosts. If there

is anything to be done, be it to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, here I am—

***“There’s not a lamb among His flock,  
I would disdain to feed.  
There’s not a foe before whose face  
I’d fear His cause to plead.”***

Yet again, dear Friends, are we agreed this day as to our utter helplessness in this work? I caught a good sentence the other day. Speaking with a Wesleyan minister, I said to him, “Your denomination during the past year did not increase—you have usually had a large increase to your numbers. You have never been so rich as now. Your ministers have never been so well educated. You have never had such good Chapels as now and yet you have never had so little success. What are you doing? Knowing this to be the fact, what are you doing? How are the minds of your Brethren exercised with regard to this?”

He comforted me much by the reply. He said, “It has driven us to our knees. We thank God that we know our state and are not content with it. We have had a day of humiliation and I hope,” he said, “some of us have gone low enough to be blessed.” There is a great truth in that last sentence, “low enough to be blessed.” I do fear that some of us never do go low enough to be blessed. When a man says, “Oh, yes, we are getting on very well. We do not need any revival that I know of,” I fear he is not low enough to be blessed. And when you and I pray to God with pride in us, with self-exaltation, with a confidence in our own zeal, or even in the prevalence of our own prayers of themselves, we have not come low enough to be blessed!

An humble Church will be a blessed Church! A Church that is willing to confess its own errors and failures and to lie at the foot of Christ’s Cross is in a position to be favored of the Lord. I hope we are agreed, then, with God, as to our utter unworthiness and helplessness so that we look to Him alone! I charge you all to be agreed with God in this thing—that if *any* good shall be done, any conversions shall occur—all the Glory must be given to Him. Revivals have often been spoiled, either by persons boasting that such-and-such a minister was the means of them, or else, as in the case of the North of Ireland, by boasting that the work was done without ministers. That revival, mark you, was stopped in its very midst and seriously damaged by being made a kind of curiosity and a thing to be gazed at and to be wondered at by persons both at home and abroad.

God does not care to work for the honor of men, either of ministers or of laymen, or of Churches, either. And if we should say, “Ah, well, I should like to see the Presence of God with us that we may have many conversions and put it in the Magazine and say that is how things are done at the Tabernacle,” why we should not have a blessing that way! Crowns! Crowns! Crowns! But all for Your head, Jesus! Laurels and wreaths! But none for man—all for Him whose own right hand and whose holy arm has gotten Him the victory! We must all be agreed on this point and I hope we are.

**III.** And now to conclude. LET US PUT AWAY ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH OFFEND OUR GOD. Before God appeared upon Mount Sinai, the

children of Israel had to cleanse themselves for three days. Before Israel could take possession of the promised rest of Canaan, Joshua had to see to it that they were purified by the rite of circumcision. Whenever God would visit His people, He always demands of them some preparatory purging that they may be fit to behold His Presence—for two cannot walk together unless that which would make them disagree is purged out.

A few suggestions then, as to whether there is anything in us with which God cannot agree. Here I cannot preach to you indiscriminately but put the task into the hand of each man to preach to himself. In the days of the great weeping we read that every man wept apart and his wife apart, the son apart and the daughter apart—all the families *apart*. So it must be here. Is there pride in me? Am I puffed up with my talent, my substance, my character, my success? Lord purge this out of me, or else You can not walk with me, for none shall ever say that God and the proud soul are friends! He gives Grace to the humble. As for the proud, He knows them afar off and will not let them come near to Him.

Am I slothful? Do I waste hours which I might usefully employ? Have I the levity of the butterfly which flits from flower to flower but drinks no honey from any of them? Or have I the industry of the bee, which, wherever it lights would find some sweet store for the hive? Lord, You know my soul, You understand me. Am I doing little where I might do much? Have You had but little reaping for much sowing? Have I hid my talent in a napkin? Have I spent that talent for myself instead of spending it for You? Slothful souls cannot walk with God. “My Father works,” says Jesus, “and I work.” And you who stand in the marketplace idle may stand there with the devil—but you cannot stand there with God! Let every Brother or Sister who is guilty of this purge away their sloth.

Or am I guilty of worldliness? This is the crying sin of many in the Christian Church. Do I put myself into association with men who cannot by any possibility profit me? Am I seen where my Master would not go? Do I love amusements which cannot afford me comfort when I reflect upon them—and which I would never indulge in if I thought that Christ would come while I was at them? Am I worldly in spirit as to fashion? Am I as showy, as volatile, as frivolous as men and women of the world? If so—if I love the world—the love of the Father is not in me! Consequently He cannot walk with me, for we are not agreed.

Again, am I covetous? Do I scrape and grind? Is my first thought not how I can honor God but how I can accumulate wealth? When I gain wealth do I forget to make use of it as a steward? If so, then God is not agreed with me—I am a thief with His substance—I have set myself up for a master instead of being a servant and God will not walk with me till I begin to feel that this is not my own, but His! And that I must use it in His fear. Again, am I of an angry spirit? Am I harsh towards my Brethren? Do I cherish envy towards those who are better than myself, or contempt towards those who are worse off? If so, God cannot walk with me for He hates envy and all contempt of the poor is abhorrent to Him.

Is there any lust in me? Do I indulge the flesh? Am I fond of carnal indulgences by which my soul suffers? If so, God will not walk with me—for chambering and wantonness and gluttony and drunkenness separate a

Believer and his God—these things are not honorable to a Christian. Before the great feast of unleavened bread a Jewish parent would sweep out every piece of leaven from his house. And so anxious would he be and so anxious is the Jew at the present day, that he takes a candle and sweeps out every cupboard no matter though there may have been no food put in there at any time. He is afraid lest by accident a crumb may be somewhere concealed in the house. And so, from the attic to the cellar he clears the whole house through to purge out the old leaven. Let us do so, too.

I cannot think you will do so as the effect of such poor words as mine. But if my soul could speak to you and God blessed the utterance, you would. For my own part I cry unto my Master that if there is anything that can make me more fit to be the messenger of God to you and to the sons of men, however painful might be the preparatory process, He would graciously be pleased not to spare me of it. If by sickness. If by serious calamities. If by slander and rebuke more honor can be brought to Him, then hail and welcome all these things! They shall be my joy! And to receive them shall be my delight! I pray that you utter the same desire—“Lord, make me fit to be the means of glorifying You.”—

***“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol is  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only You.”***

What? Do you object? Do you want forever to go on in the old dead-and-alive way in which the Churches are just now? Do you feel no sacred passion stirring your breast to anguish for the present and to hope for the future? O you cowards who dread the battle, slink to your beds! But you who have your Master’s Spirit in you and would long to see brighter and better days—lift up your heads with confidence in Him who will walk with us if we are agreed!

My text has a main bearing upon the unconverted—I think of preaching from it this evening to those who are not agreed with God and who cannot walk with Him. I pray that they may be reconciled unto God by the death of His Son. And the most likely means to accomplish this will be by your earnest and fervent prayers. O Lord, hear and answer for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Mr. Spurgeon’s Sermon on “Baptismal Regeneration” (Number 573 in this volume) has now reached the 180<sup>th</sup> thousand. It is felt to be important that it should be still more widely circulated and friends are urged to make an earnest effort to scatter it far and wide.]

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# THE VOICE OF CHOLERA

## NO. 705

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 12, 1866,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Can two walk together, except they are agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing? Will a bird fall in a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is evil in a city, will not the Lord have done it.”*  
**Amos 3:3-6.**

WE have all felt grieved when reading our bills of mortality to observe the mysterious spread of cholera in our great city. It is high time that it should be made the subject of special prayer, and that the nation should seek unto the Lord for its removal. While as yet there has been but comparatively little of the evil, we should be humbled under it, that we may be spared a greater outbreak. There are different ways of looking at this disease. Men viewing it from one point of view have frequently despised those who have regarded it under another aspect.

Occasionally Christian men indignantly express themselves concerning those who speak of cholera as the product of ascertained and governable causes to be checked and even prevented by due attention to the laws of health. I have never shared in that indignation. It seems to me that this disease is, to a great extent, in our own hands and that if all men would take scrupulous care as to cleanliness, and if better dwellings were provided for the poor, and if overcrowding were effectually prevented, and if the water supply could be larger, and other sanitary improvements could be carried out, the disease, most probably, would not occur. Or, if it did visit us occasionally, as the result of filth in other countries, it would be in a very mitigated form.

I am thankful that there are many men of intelligence and scientific information who can speak well upon this point, and I hope they will never cease to speak until all men learn that the laws of cleanliness and health are as binding upon us as those of morality. So far from a Christian man being angry with those who instruct the people in useful secular knowledge, he ought rather to be thankful for them and hope that their teaching may be powerful with the masses. The Gospel has no quarrel with ventilation, and the Doctrines of Grace have no dispute with chloride of lime! We preach repentance and faith, but we do not denounce whitewash—and as much as we advocate holiness, we always have a good word for cleanliness and sobriety.

We would promote with all our hearts that which may honor God, but we cannot neglect that which may bless our neighbors whom we desire to love even as ourselves. On the other hand, it is even more common for those who look to natural causes alone to sneer at Believers who view the disease as a mysterious scourge from the hand of God. It is admitted that it would be most foolish to neglect the appointed means of averting sick-

ness—but sneer who may, we believe it to be equally an act of folly to forget that the hand of the Lord is in all this. The singular manner in which this disease seizes frequently upon unlikely persons and turns aside from its expected path should show us that there is an unseen hand which directs its gloomy circuit.

Let the wise man work below, but fix his hope above. Let him cleanse and purge away the hotbeds of death, but let him look up to the Lord and Giver of Life for success in all his doings. It is not my business this morning to describe the sanitary aspect of the subject. This is not the day nor the place, but I shall claim a full liberty to enter into the theological view of it, and if that should happen to excite the contempt of the practical man, we shall be more grieved for his narrowness of mind than for his contempt of us! We do not despise him, but wish him God speed in his reforms, and he should not despise us, but recognize in us his true allies.

We believe that God sends all pestilences, let them come how they may—and that He sends them with a purpose, let them be removed in whatever way they may. And we conceive that it is our business as ministers of God to call the people's attention to God in the disease and teach them the lesson which God would have them learn. I am not among those, as you know, who believe that every affliction is a *judgment* upon the particular person to whom it occurs. We perceive that in this world the best of men often endure the most of suffering and that the worst of men frequently escape. And therefore we do not believe in judgments to particular *persons* except in extraordinary cases. But we do, nevertheless, very firmly believe that there are *national* judgments, and that *national sins* provoke national chastisements.

As to individuals, their punishment or reward is reserved for the *next* state—but nations will not exist in the next world—there is no such thing as a judgment of *nations*, as such, at the Last Great Day. That will be the judgment of *individuals* one by one. The trial and punishment of nations takes place in *this* state, and it is here that we are to look for the judgment of God upon national sin.

Upon the present visitation as a national chastisement we shall speak this morning. I shall not detain you with further preface but conduct you at once to the questions of the text.

**I. THE FIRST QUESTION** is a metaphor taken from the traveler: “Can two walk together except they are agreed?” which means, being interpreted, that it is no wonder if God does not continue to walk with a sinful people. It is not to be expected that when a nation falls out with God, God should continue to bless it. Two travelers have been walking together for some little time, but all of a sudden they fall to angry words and after awhile one strikes the other and maltreats him. You cannot suppose that the person thus attacked will continue to walk with him who maliciously assaults him. They must part company.

Now, when God walks with a nation, that nation prospers, but if that nation falls to words with God, quarrels with Him about His will and Law, and rushes perversely into sinful courses—if there are some in it who would have no God at all, who do their best to extirpate His very name from the earth which He Himself has made—then we cannot expect that God should continue to walk with such offenders! Brethren, let me ask you soberly, without fanaticism, to consider whether there has not been enough in England, and especially in this great city, to make God angry

with us? Has there not been grievous disagreement between the dwellers in this city and God? Has there not been enough to make Him say, "I will walk no more with this people. I will chasten them sorely, and send heavy judgments upon them"?

We will not speak of those sins of this city which are common to all other places. But let me ask whether the drunkenness of England is not enough to provoke God to strike it with all His thunderbolts. If it is said that there is as much drunkenness elsewhere, I reply that possibly there may be places found which are quite as besotted, where the gin palace blazes with glaring lights at every corner, and the gates through which drunkards reel to Hell are opened at every turn. It may be so, but I must still hold that there is no other country where drunkenness is carried on to such an extent under so strong a protest—for drunkenness happens to be a sin against which not only the pulpit, the press, and the bench are continually exclaiming—but tens of thousands of earnest, indefatigable, courageous, self-denying men are both, by their example, and their teaching, denouncing this vice.

We certainly have no deficiency of protests against excess of drink, for there are few companies in which the most sweeping censures are not frequently heard. There is not a place throughout the world where drunkenness is so vehemently and abundantly cried down as in England! There is no place where there is established so strong a public sentiment against this degrading form of self-indulgence. There has been much done, not, I say, only by those who preach the Gospel, which lays the axe at the root of *all* sin, but also by those who dedicate their strength to the sawing off of this particular limb from the great tree of evil.

This vice, then, is known by every man to be a vice, and is no longer winked at as a venial offense. It wears upon its front the damning mark—it is no longer misnamed conviviality, and excused as an amiable weakness. The public mind, to a great extent, is enlightened upon the subject of strong drink, and consequently this sin of drunkenness is more God-provoking in this country than in any other. There may be countries where there is just as much drunkenness, but none in which the protest is more clear and plain! And we all hold that sin is increased by the measure of light against which a man commits it, and that when an evil practice is by the common consent of mankind denounced and put down, it becomes the more atrocious on the part of those who still pursue it.

Alas, alas! This drunken city may well expect that God should visit it! Moreover, we know enough—and we do not wish to know more of the evil which the moon sees—of the debauchery with which certain of the streets of our city are reeking. We thank God it has never come to such a pass in England, that we nationally recognize and systematically regulate lasciviousness so that it may be indulged in with comparative impunity. But there can be no sort of doubt that among all classes and ranks of men there is enough of lewdness to bring down Heaven's wrath upon our city! The sins of the flesh are sure to be visited before long by that God who loathes iniquity, and in whose nostrils fornication is a stench. He will not forever endure this abounding sin, for it is committed, be it remembered, in a country famous above all others for its love of home and its estimation of the joys which cluster around the family hearth.

We have not the pestilential influence of a licentious court and a degraded public opinion, but this sin is carried on in the teeth of a general

reverence for purity. Shall not God visit London for the sins which nightly pollutes her streets, festers in gilded halls, and riots amid revelry and music? Like a terrible monster, the social evil drags our daughters down to destruction, and our young men to the gates of the grave! And while this lasts we need not wonder if God's health-giving Providence should refuse to walk with us, for He cannot be agreed with a people who choose the way of filthiness.

Constant neglect of the worship of God is a sin for which London is peculiarly and pre-eminently guilty. In some of our country towns and villages the accommodation in places of worship is even larger than the population! And I know places in England where there is scarcely a soul to be found at home at the hour of public worship—certainly not more than absolutely necessary to nurse the sick, care for the infants, and protect the doors—for the whole population turns out to attend a place of worship. But in London the habitual *forsakers* of public worship are probably in a large majority! It must be so, because we know that even if they wished to go, the provision of seat room is most lamentably short of what they would require, and yet, short as it is, there is not half so much need of churches and chapels in London as there is of inclination to go to either the one or the other.

The masses of our people regard not God, care not for the Lord Jesus, and have no thought about eternal things! This is a Christian city, we sometimes say, but where shall be found more thorough heathens than we may find here? In Canton, Calcutta, or even Timbaktu, the people have at least a *form* of worship and a reverence for some idea of a god, but here tens of thousands make no pretense of religious worship. I protest unto you all that whereas you think Christianity to be well-known in our streets and lanes, you only think so because you have not penetrated into their depths—for thick darkness covers the people.

There are discoveries yet to be made in this city that may make the hearts of Christendom melt for shame that we should have permitted such God-dishonoring ignorance—that in the very blaze of the sun, as we think our country to be—there should be black spots where Christian light has never penetrated! O London! Do you think that God's Sabbaths are forever to be forgotten? That the voice of the Gospel is to sound in your ears and forever to be despised? Shall you forever turn your foot from God's House and despise the ministrations of His Truth, and shall He not visit such a city as this?

This dreaded cholera is but a gentle blow from His hand, but if it is not felt, and its lesson are not learned, there may come, instead of this, a pestilence which may reap the multitude as corn is reaped with the sickle! Or He may permit us to be ravaged by a pestilence worse than the plague—I mean the pestilence of deadly, soul-destroying error! He may remove the candle of His Gospel out of its place and may take away the bread of life from those who have despised it, and then, O great city, your doom is sealed!

Brothers and Sisters, if there is any one thing which yet provokes God above all this, it is the fact that we have once again, as a nation, permitted downright Popery to claim to be our national religion! Dark is the day and dismal is the hour which sees the ancient superstitions defiling the houses which are at least nominally dedicated to the God of Heaven. In our Established Church the Gospel is no longer dominant, albeit that a



little band of good and faithful men still linger in it, and are like a handful of salt amid general putrefaction. We have no longer any right to speak of our national Protestant Church—it is not Protestant—it tolerates barefaced Popery, and swarms with worshippers of the god whom the baker bakes in the oven, and whom they bite with their teeth!

Not many streets from this building in which we are assembled you may have your candles, and your incense, and your copes, and your albs with all the other pomp and vanities of the detestable idolatry of Rome. That Romanism against which Latimer bore testimony at the stake has been suffered to hold its mummeries and practice its fantastic tricks in the name of this nation until it counts its deluded admirers by tens of thousands! That monster which stained Smithfield with gore and made it an ash heap for the martyrs of God has come back to you! The old wolf that tore your fathers and tore their palpitating hearts out of their bosoms you have allowed to come back into your houses—and you are cherishing it and feeding it with your children's meat!

Once again the harlot of Babylon flaunts her finery in our faces almost without rebuke. Do not tell me it is not Popery! It is the same Antichrist with which your fathers wrestled—and a man with but half his wits about him may see it to be so—and yet this land bears it, and rejoices in it, and crouches at the foot of a priest once more! Our great ones, our delicate women, and dainty lords, are once again the willing vassals of priest-craft and superstition. And amid all this, if anyone speaks out, he is assailed as *uncharitable*, and abhorred as a troublemaker in Israel! Is it for nothing that God has favored this land with the Gospel? Must all her light be turned to darkness? Must all the gains of the valiant men of old be lost by the sloth and cowardice of this thoughtless generation?

In days of yore, men like Knox and Welch in Scotland, and Hugh Latimer, and John Bradford fought like lions for the Truth of God, and are we to yield like cowardly curs? Are the men of oak succeeded by the men of willow? The men who cried, "No Popery here!" now sleep within their sepulchers, and their descendants wear the yoke which their fathers scorned! Shall not God visit us for this? I would that a voice of thunder could arouse this slumbering generation! I am for liberty of conscience for every man—I would have, by all manner of means, the Catholic as free to practice his religion as anyone else!

I would have religion left to its own native power for its support, and would allow no church to offer to God what it had taken from an unwilling people by the legalized robbery of a church-rate and tithe! But, above all things, if we must be doomed to have an Established Church, I pray God it may not forever be a den of superstition and the haunt of Papist heresies! If the Church of England does not sweep Tractarianism out of her midst, it should be the daily prayer of every Christian man that God would sweep her utterly away from this nation—for the old leprosy of Rome ought not to be sanctioned and supported by a land which has shed so much of her blood to be purged from it!

Can two walk together, then, except they be agreed? And as these things cannot be supposed to be agreeable to the mind and will of God, we cannot wonder if there should be a plague upon our cattle, and then a plague upon men, and if these should come sevenfold as heavy as they have ever come as yet!

**II. THE SECOND QUESTION** of the Prophet is, "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing?" Amos had observed that a lion does not roar without reason. By this question he brings forward the second Truth of God, that when God speaks it is not without a cause, and especially when He speaks with a threatening voice.

My brethren, our God is too gracious to send us this cholera without a *motive*. And He is, moreover, too wise, for we all know that judgments frequently repeated lose their force. It is like the cry of, "Wolf"—if there is no meaning in it, men disregard it. God therefore never multiplies judgments unnecessarily. Besides, He is too great to trifle with men's lives. We heard of some twelve hundred or more who died in a week in London, but did we estimate the aggregate of personal pain couched in that number—the aggregate of sorrow brought to so many hundred families? The aggregate, too, of eternal interests which were involved in those sudden deaths?

Time and eternity, both of them big with tremendous importance, were wrapped up, just so many times in those hundreds who fell beneath the Mower's scythe. Do you think the Lord does this for nothing? The great Lion of Vengeance has not roared unless sin has provoked Him. Since I have already indicated our great public sins, I should like to ask Christians present how far they have been concerned in them. You who profess to be people of God, and who recognize God's hand in this visitation, I ask you how far has justice found provocation in *you*?

What have you had to do, professing Christians, with the drunkenness of this city? Are you sure that you are quite clear of it? Have you, by your teaching and by your example, shown men that the religion of Jesus is not consistent with drunkenness? Have you tried to put down this vice, or are you in some degree a fellow criminal—an accomplice before or after the fact? Oh if you have been guilty, I pray you seek to be purged of this sin! You cannot wipe out all the national iniquity, but if each man reformed himself of this vice, by God's Grace, this great evil would cease. Let each Christian look at home. How far, you professors of religion—how far are you clear in the matter of sins of the flesh? Has there never been any lightness of speech about these sins?

When merriment has become uproarious upon impurity, have you ever joined in such laughter? And what about your course of conversation? Have you always been free—I will not say from the grosser acts of sin—I scarcely like to ask you such a question, but have you been clear from everything that verged upon it? Have you heard ringing in your ears the precept, "Be you holy, for I am holy"? Has the Holy Spirit by His mighty Grace kept you from indulging in unclean words and thoughts? Have you in any way fallen into lightness of talk and thought, and so helped to increase the flood of this evil? Oh, my Brothers, who among us must not confess to some guilt when we remember the Savior's words, "He that looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart"?

Let us bow our heads in penitence, and seek to the God of all Grace that He would not roar over this, His prey, but be pleased to purge us from it that we may be clean in His Presence! And so with the other sins which we have indicated. Have we all borne our earnest, fervent protest against them? Have we been negligent of the House of God, or has our continual meeting for public worship cleared us of this? I think most of us

are clear here, but I know there are some professors who neglect the assembling of themselves together, who spend their Sunday occasionally, at any rate, where it ought not to be spent, and who thus by their lax example increase the general forgetfulness of God.

And as to this Anglican Popery—have we spoken out about that? Or do we lend it our direct or even *indirect* support? God grant that if we have not repudiated it we may do so, and holding the Truth of God in the love and power of it may we come out of Babylon, lest we be partakers of her plagues in the day when God shall visit her in His wrath.

Such, I think, was what Amos indicated by his second question.

**III. THE THIRD QUESTION** is this: “Will a bird fall in a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for him?” The first question was taken from travelers, the second from wild beasts, and the third from fowlers. You see the bird aloft in the sky. All of a sudden it flies to the ground and is taken in the net. Now Amos says it would not be taken in the net unless a net had been designedly laid to catch it. It is taken because the snare was *meant* to take it—and Amos means to remind us that men do not die without a design on God’s part.

It is the same thought as before, but it is held up in another light. The bird is not taken in the net without the design of the fowler—and men do not fall into the net of death without an intent on God’s part. Death, with all which it involves on earth and in eternity, is not sent by God without a reason. Forever banished from the Christian’s conversation is the word “chance.” “It repents me greatly,” says Augustine, “that I ever used that heathenish word, “*fortuna*,” for *fortune* or chance is a base heathenish invention. God rules and overrules all things, and He does nothing without a motive.

Brothers and Sisters, the falling of a sparrow to the earth is in the Divine purpose and answers an end. Every grain of dust that is whirled from the threshing floor is steered with as unerring a wisdom as the stars in their courses, and there is not a leaf that trembles in the autumn from the tree but is piloted by the plan and purpose of the Lord. Surely, then, in so great an event as death, involving, as we have already said, so much of pain to the person falling, so much of bereavement and sorrow to the families of those who are struck, we cannot believe but what God has a purpose.

The insatiable archer is not permitted to shoot his bolts at random—every arrow that flies bears this inscription, “I have a message from God for you.” When God permits disease to walk through the streets at night, to stretch out his mighty but invisible hand and take away here a child, and there an adult, and consign to the grave those who might have otherwise long survived, you will not believe that the Lord commissioned so dread a messenger without intending to answer some end by his errand. Let us conclude most surely that a purpose, consistent with the love and justice of God, lies hidden in the present harvest of death.

**IV.** Now follows a **FOURTH QUESTION**: “Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? By which he means that the fowler does not remove the net until he has caught his bird, so that this fourth question implies that inasmuch as God had a purpose in sending tribulation, we may expect that He will not remove it until that design is answered.

Whatever God has to say to London, if it is heard at once He need not speak again, but if it is not heard the first time, there shall come a second voice, and yet another. The fowler takes not away his net unless some bird is caught, and God takes not away the trouble which He sends unless He has answered His design by it. If you ask me what I think to be the design, I believe it to be this—to waken up our indifferent population—to make them remember that there is a God! To render them susceptible to the influences of the Gospel, to drive them to the House of Prayer. To influence their minds to receive the Word, and moreover to startle Christians into energy and earnestness that they may work while it is called to-day.

My reason for selecting this subject at all was that I might be helpful in the hands of God the Holy Spirit to aid this great design, that you, dear Friends, might hear at once God's voice, that for you, at any rate, it might not be necessary that there should be a repetition of the judgment. Brothers and Sisters, you are acquainted with history, and you have reason to bless God, I am sure, in turning over its pages that we have, during the last half century, been spared many of those dreadful calamities which in former days occurred in this and other lands.

Who can read the story of the plague of London without a shudder? And who can close the book without thankfulness that such a black death is unknown among us? Who has read of famines in this land without gratitude for the abundance of bread? Who can turn to the descriptions of the sack and pillage of cities under such armies as those conducted by Tilly and other savage commanders, without thankfulness that we live in better days? Who can even read the story of the last campaign in Austria without thanking God that our country is an island, and that so we are preserved from the horrors of war?

But it is much to be feared that a constant run of prosperity, perpetual peace and freedom from disease may breed in our minds just what it has done in all human minds before, namely, security and pride, heathenism and forgetfulness of God. It is a most solemn fact that human nature can scarcely bear a long continuance of peace and health. It is almost necessary that we should be, every now and then, salted with affliction lest we putrefy with sin. God grant we may have neither famine, nor sword—but as we have pestilence in a very slight degree it becomes us to ask the Lord to bless it to the people that a tenderness of conscience may be apparent throughout the multitude—and they may recognize the hand of God.

Already I have been told by Christian Brethren laboring in the east of London that there is a greater willingness to listen to Gospel Truth, and that if there IS a religious service it is more acceptable to the people now than it was—for which I thank God as an indication that affliction is answering its purpose. There was, perhaps, no part of London more destitute of the means of Divine Grace, and of the desire to use the means, than that particular district where the plague has fallen. And if the Lord shall but make those teeming thousands anxious to hear the Gospel of Jesus, and teach them to trust in Him, then the design will be answered! And without a doubt the great Fowler will gather up His net. May it be so, O Lord, for Your Son Jesus Christ's sake.

**V.** The questions have all worked to one point. We have seen that it is no wonder if disease should come. We have learned that it does not come without a cause. We have seen that when it does come there is a design,

and that it will not be removed unless that design is answered. And now we are prepared to take the further step, raised by THE FIFTH QUESTION, namely, that an awakening should be the result. "If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid?"

In times of war in olden times there were men stationed upon watch towers, and when they saw the enemy coming the cornet was sounded, and the people rushed to arms. The sound of a trumpet was the warning of war. This cholera is like the sound of a trumpet. The voice of the Christian ministry is not heard. Those who go to listen to it do not all hear it, for they hear as though they heard not, while the great masses know nothing and care less about the preacher's message. The ministry of London is not altogether powerless to those who attend it, but it is utterly without point or force to the dense masses who lie outside the House of God.

Disease, however, is a trumpet which must be heard! Its echoes reach the miserable attics where the poor are crowded together and have never heard nor cared for the name of Christ—they hear the sound—and as one after another dies, they tremble. In the darkest cellar in the most crowded haunt of vice—yes, and in the palaces of kings, in the halls of the rich and great—the sound finds an entrance and the cry is raised, "The death plague is come! The cholera is among us!" All men are compelled to hear the trumpet! Would to God they heard it to better purpose! Would to God all of us were aroused to a searching of heart, and, above all, led to fly to Christ Jesus, the great Sacrifice for sin, and to find in Him a rescue from the greater plague—the wrath to come!

**VI.** The great end and design of God, then, it seems, is to arouse the city, and that arousing should follow from the fact declared in THE LAST QUESTION: "If there is evil in a city, will not the Lord have done it?" Here is not intended *moral* evil—that rests with *man*—but *physical* evil, the evil of pestilence or famine! Shall there be cholera in the city, and God has not done it? My soul cowered down under the majesty of that question as I read it. It seemed to stretch its black wings over my head, and had I not known them to be the wings of God, I should have been afraid!

The text talked with me in this fashion—It is not the cholera which has slain these hundreds. The cholera was but the sword. The hand which scattered death is the hand of a greater than mere disease. God Himself is traversing London! God, with silent footstep, walks the hospitals, enters the chamber, strikes the wayfarer in the street, and chills the heart of the suppliant kneeling by his bed. God, the great Judge of all, at whose belt swing the keys of Death and Hell, the mysterious One whose voice bids the pillars of Heaven's starry roof to tremble, who made the stars, and can quench them at His will—it was none other than *He* who walked down our crowded courts, and entering our lanes and alleys called one after another the souls of men to their last account! God is abroad!

There are times when God comes especially near to men. He is everywhere, and yet He is frequently described in Scripture as saying, "Let Us go down, that We may see whether it is altogether according to the report." God has come down, and is going through this city! Tread solemnly when you go to your business tomorrow morning—you walk the streets where God has walked—you who will go to the cemetery with your dead ones, I had almost said. Take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground, for God is there! The last time this dis-

ease was here I had a pervading sense of the Presence of God wherever I went. It seemed to me as if the veil between time and eternity were more transparent than usual.

If anything ought to compel our attention to God's voice, it should be the remembrance that it is attended with God's Presence, and if anything ought to make us feel His rod, it is the fact that it is not the rod that smites, but God Himself that uses the rod!

Leaving the text itself, I want to gather up my thoughts, as God shall help me, in a few earnest words. My dear Hearers, I would speak as God's mouth to you as His Holy Spirit shall enable me. Is not the Lord speaking to all of us, both saints and sinners, and warning us to be agreed with Him? O you who are His blood-bought people, Believers in Jesus—is there any sin that has parted you from communion with Christ? Have you fallen into anything which has provoked the Spirit, so that His comforts are withdrawn? If so, by deep humility and earnest prayer, standing at the foot of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, pray—

***“Return, You heavenly Dove, return  
Sweet messenger of rest!  
I hate the sins that made You mourn,  
And drove You from my breast.”***

At all times it is well for the Christian to acquaint himself with God and be at peace, but especially just now. How can you help others if you yourself have lost the sense of the love of God shed abroad in your heart? I know you are His and He will never cast you away, but if you do not enjoy His Presence you will be as weak as water. And oh, those of you who are not His people! Can you bear to be at disagreement with God? How can He walk with you? You ask His protection, but how can you expect it if you are not agreed with Him?

Now, if two men walk together, there must be a place where they meet each other. Do you know where that is? It is at the Cross! Sinner, if you trust in Jesus, God will meet you there! That is the place where true at-one-ment is made between God and sinners. If you go repenting to Jesus, saying, “Have mercy upon my iniquity. Wash me in Your blood,” you shall be agreed with God, and then you may look forward to living or dying with equal delight! For if we Live we shall walk with God on earth, and if we die we shall walk with God above!

Brethren, while the lion roars, should we not remove any evil which may have caused his anger to burn? Christian, search yourself now and purge out the old leaven! The head of the Jewish household, when the feast of unleavened bread draws near, not only puts away the loaves of bread ordinarily used in the household, but takes a candle and searches every part of the house lest there should be even a crumb of leaven anywhere. He cleans it all out, that he may keep the feast not with leavened bread.

Now, Christian, as this is God's visitation, ask for the candle of the Holy Spirit to discover any little sin. Let any little self-indulgence into which we have fallen be conscientiously given up, and for the sake of that dear Savior who denied Himself every comfort for us, let us take up our cross and follow Him, determined that if the lion shall roar, it shall not be because of any prey in us.

And oh, Sinner, against whom God has been roaring, do you not remember His own words, “Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver”? Who can remove the iniquity which

provokes the Lord to jealousy except the dying Savior, the Lord Jesus? He has put away sin by bearing it in His own body, and if you trust Him there shall be no sin in you to provoke God. But it shall be said of you as of Israel, "In those days, and in that time, said the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Moreover, the Lord our God speaks to us by His Providence, and says, "Submit yourselves, this day, to God's design." The great Fowler has spread the net—He will not take away that net till He has caught the bird. Be caught in it! Saint, fly not from your God! If He puts out even an angry hand, fly into it—there is no shelter from an angry God but in the pierced hand of His dear Son! When vengeance would strike a heavy blow, the closer you can get to it, the less will it wound you. Get close to God in Christ! Cling to Him, and He will not destroy you. Fly to Jesus! Sinner, fly! Be taken in God's net! Say to God, "What would You have me to do? Would you have me to be Yours? Here I am, Lord! Before you take me in the net of death, take me in the net of Grace. Before the snares of Hell prevent me, let the blessed snare of Your eternal love sweetly entangle me. I am, I would be, Yours."

Be awake, Christian, and be aware of God's design, for the trumpet is sounding, and when the trumpet sounds the Christian must not slumber. Let the Presence of God infuse into you a more than ordinary courage and zeal. My Brothers and Sisters, I wish I could speak to you this morning as I had hoped to have done, for then I would throw my whole soul into every word! I charge you, as you love Jesus, as you know the value of your own soul—now, if never before—be in earnest for the salvation of the sons of men!

Men are always dying! Time, like a mighty rushing stream is always bearing them away—but now they are hurried down the torrent in increasing numbers! If you and I do not exert ourselves to teach them the Gospel, upon our heads must be their blood. It is God's work, we know, to save, but then He works by instruments, and we have His own solemn word for it—"If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." Are there no houses round your dwelling where Jesus is unknown? Is there no court, no lane, no alley near to where you reside without God and without Christ?

Have you no friends unconverted? Have you no acquaintance unsaved? May there not be even sitting in the pew with you some unpardoned person? May there not be, Sunday after Sunday, sitting in the next seat someone who knows not Christ—who was never warned of his danger or pointed to the Remedy? It is a great mercy, when the bell tolls, if we can say of those who die, "I did all I could to save them from ruin." I thought when I read Whitfield's words to his congregation, I wish I could always say as much. He said, "Ah, Souls, if you are lost, it is not for lack of praying for! It is not for lack of weeping over! It is not for lack of faithful Gospel preaching."

I can say the last, but I cannot say the first as I could wish. And yet I know that there are some of you here, who, if you are lost, are not lost for lack of warning, nor for lack of teaching, nor for lack of invitation. We have set before you life and death! We have threatened you in God's name, and we have invited you by the precious blood of Jesus! Years ago there seemed to be some hope about you, but it was like the morning cloud and

the early dew, for you are still unsaved. When I heard the other day that Mrs. So-and-So was dead, and that she died of cholera, I could not lament, for she was one who had long feared God! When they told me that a worthy young man had fallen, I was sorrowful to have lost so good a student from the College, but I was thankful that one who had served his God so well in his youth had gone to his rest.

But if I heard of the death of some of you, it would cause me unmingled grief and fear! Some of you have been sitting here for years who will, I fear, go out of this Tabernacle to destruction—you know you will unless you are changed! If you die as you now are you have nothing to expect but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation! Some of you know well the result of sin and yet you choose it—your consciences prick you often—and yet you run against them! You have been alarmed and so awakened that it seems impossible that you can continue as you are! But alas, you will not turn and your end is coming.

My Hearer, I can hardly face the thought of your fate! I feel like Elijah when he looked into the face of Hazeal and trembled as he foresaw his history. It is terrible to think of your doom! He who has warned you and prayed for you will meet you in another world, and when he meets you, you shall not have to say he did not speak plainly and pointedly to you. You will be speechless because the trumpet was sounded and you did not take the warning! God was in the city and you would not hear Him! Death spoke as well as the minister, but you stopped both your ears because you were resolved to die! And your heart was set on mischief!

You scorn eternal life and choose destruction for the sake of a few paltry pleasures, or a deceitful darling lust which will treacherously stab you through your heart! You let Jesus go, and Heaven go, and all this for a moment's pleasure! Ah, my Hearer, you shall have much to answer for. I speak to you as a dying man and pray you not to venture into eternal wrath. Give these words some consideration, I pray you, and as you consider them, may God the Holy Spirit fasten them as nails in a sure place, and may you seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near, for this is His word to you—"As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?"

And Jesus adds His loving words, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

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# THE ROYAL DEATHBED

NO. 426

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 22, 1861,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord has not done it?”  
Amos 3:6.***

WE have nothing to do this morning with the question of moral evil and indeed with the awful mystery of the *origin* of moral evil we have nothing to do at any time. There may have been some few speculators upon this matter, who like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could walk in the midst of the fire unharmed. But most men who have ventured near the mouth of this fiery question have been like Nebuchadnezzar’s guards—they have fallen down, destroyed by the blasting influence of its heat.

The problem we have to solve is not how was evil born but how shall evil die—not how it came into the world—but the mischief it has worked since its coming and how it is to be driven out. Those persons who fritter away their time in useless and curious enquiries about the origin of moral evil and so forth, are generally persons who are too idle to attempt the practical casting out of the fiend and therefore would kill their time and quiet their consciences by abstruse controversies and vain jangling about subjects with which we have nothing to do.

The evil in the text is that of calamity and we might so read the verse—“Shall there be a *calamity* in the city and the Lord has not done it?”—a question exceedingly appropriate at the present time. There *has* been evil in this city. A calamity of an unusual and disastrous nature has fallen upon this nation. We have lost one who will find today a thousand tongues to eulogize him. A prince whose praise is in the mouth of all—who is in such repute among you that it is utterly needless for me to commend his memory to your hearts. We have lost a man whom it was our habit to suspect so long as he lived he could do little without arousing our mis-trusts.

We were always alarmed by phantoms of intrusion and unconstitutional influence and now that he has departed we may sincerely regret that we could not trust where confidence was so well deserved. Not of lack of homage to his rank, his talents, or his house could he complain, but from his tomb there might well come the still small voice of memory, reminding us of many careless suspicions, a few harsh judgments and one or two heartless calumnies. I was pleased by a remark made by the leading journal of the age, to the effect that the Prince Consort’s removal

might suggest deep regrets for our thrifty homage and measured respect. He has deserved nothing but good at our hands.

Standing in the most perilous position his foot has not slipped. Standing where the slightest interference might have brought down a storm of animosity upon his head he has prudently withheld himself and let public affairs as much as possible alone. Looking upon the nature of our government and the position of the Throne in our constitution, I can but say, "Verily it is a heavy calamity to lose such a husband for such a Queen." So dire is this evil that our troubled hearts are shadowed with dark forebodings of other ills of which this may be the mournful herald.

We were saying with David, "My mountain stands firm, it shall never be moved"—an earthquake has commenced, the mountain trembles, one great rock has fallen—what may come next? We *did* reckon upon war, but we had no forewarnings of a Royal funeral. We looked forward with some apprehension to strifes abroad, but not to losses at home. And now we feel that a cornerstone in the Royal house has been taken away and we look forward with sorrow and fear to what may come next and next and next.

We have great faith in our Constitution, but had we not even greater faith in God we might fear lest the removal of an eminent minister, lest the taking away of some great men who have stood prominent in our commonwealth should leave us desolate, without earthly helpers. It is not the fall of yonder stately column which alone has caused us sadness. It is the Prophetic finger pointing to other parts of the goodly pile which has made us full of forebodings of the time when many a noble pillar must lie in the dust. Nor is this all, or the deepest sorrow.

We feel this to be an evil upon the city because of the taking away of a parent from his children and such children, too—princes, princes whom no man may venture to instruct as could a father—princes into whose ears wise counsels will scarcely enter, save through a father's voice—princes and princesses who needed to have his prudent counsel to steer them through the various trials of their minority and to cheer them when they should come into the battles of life. He is taken away, who in concert with the Queen, has so well trained them and what his loss may be to their future characters time only shall reveal.

More than this—and here we touch the most tender string and come nearest to the heart of the evil—Her Majesty has lost her beloved husband, her only equal friend, her only confidant, her only counselor in her private cares. Except for her children she has lost all at a blow and she is this day more widowed than the poorest widow in the land. The bereaved wife of the peasant is too often afflicted by the grasp of chill penury, but she has some equals and friends who prevent the colder hand of regal iso-

lation from freezing the very soul. In our tenderly beloved Sovereign we see Majesty in misery and what if I say we behold the empress of sorrow?

Just as the mountain peaks—the first to catch the sunbeams of summer are the most terribly exposed to the pitiless blasts of winter—so the elevation of sovereignty with all its advantages in prosperity involves the maximum of sorrow in the hour of tribulation. What rational man among us would be willing to assume imperial cares in ordinary times, but what must they be now, when household bereavement wrings the heart and there is no more an affectionate husband to bear his portion of the burden?

Brethren, we can only sympathize, but we cannot console. Ordinary cases are often within reach of compassion but the proper reverence due to the highest authority in the land renders it impossible for the dearest friend to use that familiarity which is the very life of comfort. This is a calamity indeed! O Lord, the Comforter of all those whose hearts are bowed down, sustain and console our weeping monarch! Would that Robert Hall, or Chalmers, could arise from the grave to depict this Sorrow! As for me, my lips are so unaccustomed to courtly phrases and I understand so little of those depths of sorrow that I am not tutored and prepared to speak on such a subject as this.

I do but stammer and blunder, where there is room for golden utterance and eloquent discourse. You God of Heaven, You know that there beats nowhere a heart that feels more tenderly than ours, or an eye that can weep more sincerely for the sorrow of that Royal Lady who is thus left alone. Alas, for the Prince who has fallen upon the high places! From the council-chamber he is removed. From the abode of all the graces he is taken away. From the home of loveliness, from the throne of honor he is gone and it is an evil—such an evil as has never befallen this nation in the lifetime of any one of us—such an evil that there is but one death—and may that be far removed—which could cause greater sorrow in the land.

But now, our text lifts up its voice and demands to be heard, since it is a question from the lips of the Eternal God. “Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord has not done it?”

There are two things upon which we will speak this morning. First, *God has done it*. Secondly, *God has done it with a design*. Let us endeavor to find, if we can, what that design is.

**I.** First then, there is an evil in the city. But GOD HAS DONE IT. There was considerable curiosity to enquire into the *second* cause of this evil. From where came the fever? We could not suppose it to be bred, as the fever frequently is, in our courts and alleys in the plague-nest where filth provided it with all its food until it was hatched to pestilence. What were its earliest symptoms, what its growth and how it was that it baffled the physician’s skill? We may lay aside these enquiries, to look apart and

away from the second cause—to the first great Cause who has done all. “The Lord has done it.”

He gave the breath and He has taken it away. He molded the manly form and He has laid it prostrate in the dust. He has sent the man and He has said, “Return! to the dust from where you were taken.” I call to remembrance the notions which have spread throughout this world and which are still living in our age—the notions which seek to banish God and make Him a stranger in the midst of His own works. God must have done this thing or else we are driven to some other alternative. How came this calamity about? Shall we suppose it to be by chance? There are still some found foolish enough to believe that events happen without Divine predestination and that different calamities transpire without the overruling hand, or the direct agency of God.

Alas, for you and for me, if chance had done it. Ah, what were we, Brethren, if we were left to chance! We should be like poor mariners, put out to sea in an unsafe vessel without a chart and without a helm. We should know nothing of the port to which we might ultimately come. We should only feel that we were now the sport of the winds, the captives of the tempest and might soon be the victims of the all-devouring deep. Alas, poor orphans were we all, if we were left to chance. No father’s care to watch over us, but left to the fickleness and fallibility of mortal things!

What were all that we see about us, but a great sand storm in the midst of a desert, blinding our eyes, preventing us from ever hoping to see the end through the darkness of the beginning? We should be travelers in a pathless waste, where there were no roads to direct us—travelers who might be overturned and overwhelmed at any moment—and our bleached bones left the victims of the tempest, unknown, or forgotten of all. Thank God it is not so with us. Chance exists only in the heart of fools. We believe that everything which happens to us is ordered by the wise and tender will of Him who is our Father and our Friend. We see order in the midst of confusion, we see purposes accomplished where others discern fruitless wastes. We believe that, “He has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm and the clouds are the dust of His feet.”

Some, on the other hand, run to another extreme—still forgetting their God. They deny the thought of chance but they bend to the idea of fate. Some Predestinarians without a God are as far astray in their ideas as those who believe in chance without a God. For what is the “fate” of some men? It reminds me of one of those huge machines employed in the lead mines where two wheels are always revolving and breaking the stones quarried from the pit. The stones at first lie at a distance but they are continually moving nearer and nearer to the all-devouring mouth of the great wheels and at last they are crushed and ground.

Such is fate in the minds of some men. Or to use another figure—it is like the great car of Juggernaut, dragged along by irresistible power. On it comes, crushing, mangling, flattening beneath its wheels the bleeding bodies lying in the way. From this horrid car of fate none can get away, none even attempt to escape. They are bound hand and foot and laid down in its pathway and when the time comes the wheels will grind the poor wretches to powder.

Well, I thank God that while I believe in predestination, I know the difference between that and fate. Fate is predestination blind, demented, brainless, wandering about, achieving wondrous things without a purpose, overturning mountains, plucking up cedars by the roots, scattering firebrands, hurling deaths about—but all without an end. Such is fate—it is because it must be—events occur because they shall be. But predestination is a glorious thing. With many eyes it looks to the interests of God and His creatures, too. And although it says the thing must be, yet it must be because it is wise and right and just and kind, that it should be.

And though we may think that it comes to the same in the end, yet to our hearts the differences are as wide as the poles asunder. Believe not in fate—but believe in God. Say not it was the man's destiny—but say it is God's will. Say not a cruel and irresistible fate has snatched him away. But say a tender hand finding that the due time was come—has taken him from evil to come.

These two suppositions being disposed of, there remains another. "Is there evil in a city and the Lord has not done it?" If neither a foolish chance nor an unconscious fate has done it, perhaps the spirit of evil may have inflicted it. Perhaps Satan may bring evils upon us. Perhaps *he* may drag down men to their graves. Perhaps *he* may cut the thread of life. Perhaps *he* is the evil genius of the world and the keeper of the gates of death. Brethren, we must get rid of the thought at once from our minds. Be gone far hence, foul King of Errors! You are the prince of the air but you are not king of kings, nor are you now the king of death.

The keys swing not at the girdle, not from your black lips can come the summons, "Prepare to meet your doom." Not with your foul fingers are we plucked from our houses and from our thrones—not through your cruelty are we given up in a black day. Your despotic and tyrannical mind has no power to lord it over us. No, Jesus, You have vanquished Satan, You have delivered us from the very fear of death because You have destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil.

A thousand angels could not drag us to the grave. And *you*, black spirit, you shall not be able to confine us there, when once the trump of the archangel shall awaken us from our sleep. No, Satan has not done it. Look not on your troubles and trials, my Brethren in Christ, as coming from Hell. Satan may sometimes be the instrument of your plans, but still

they come from God. In the cup of our sorrows there is not a dreg which the Father did not put there. Bitter as the compound may be, the eternal hand of wisdom mixed the whole. The rod may fall, but Satan does not wield it. Like as a father “chastens his children,” so the Lord does chasten “them that fear Him.”

But once more—one more thought arises in our mind. Perhaps the greatest temptation of modern times is to impute everything which happens to the laws of *nature*. Now this may satisfy philosophy, but theology goes a little further and while it admits all the laws of matter, yet it asserts that a law is in itself utterly powerless apart from a power to carry it out. It may be a law that such-and-such things shall be done, but they never will be done unless there is some Power to make the law effective. The notion of some in modern times seems to be that this world is like a great clock wound up many years ago. In fact, there are some who believe in perpetual motion—and appear to teach that it wound *itself* up!

In order to get rid of God and send Him as far away as possible they go back to primeval times and conceive that then all the wheels were set in motion and a sufficient quantity of momentum put into the whole affair so that it is now going on of itself. As to Divine interpositions, these they will not believe. Miracles, of course, are absurd and everything is left to the ordinary laws of nature—there being sufficient vitality—according to some, in the world itself to carry on its own acts, according to certain laws and rules. Blessed be God, we *know* that this is not true.

We believe it is our duty to use every sanitary means to remove the seeds of disease. We believe that they err who would proclaim a fast over a plague when it were better to sweep the street. We think that they are wrong who only go to the prayer meeting when they had better go and put down a row of dilapidated cottages and build better ones. We think that they are impractical and do not understand the Scriptures well who would be on their knees when they ought to be on their feet and doing earnest work for man.

But at the same time, still we have it that the Lord has done everything and that these calamities come not except God puts forth His hand—that it is *His will* to remove men by death and only by His will could they die. Why, that idea of leaving us all to machinery is an unhappy one to a man who can say, “*My Father, my Father in Heaven.*” It is as if a child should be left without nurse or parent, but then there is a cradle which works by machinery and rocks the child so many hours a day. When it is time for the child to wake he is aroused by machinery. There is an engine ready to feed him—there is a contrivance prepared to take off his garments at night and an invention to put them on in the morning.

He grows up and whatever is to be done, has to be done by a machine—no love, no father, no tender nurse, no kind and affectionate mother—he

is the child of machines and wheels. And so, from year to year, he is passed on from one to another. When he comes up into life he is still fed by a machine. He sleeps, he goes on his journeys—in everything that he does he sees no living face—he feels no soft hand, he hears no loving tender voice. It is one clever piece of soulless, lifeless mechanism that accomplishes all.

Now, I bless God that is not the case with us. I cannot see my Father's hand. I thank Him I am fed, but I know *He* feeds me. I know the laws of nature contribute to preserve life but I see the effects of His presence in my life. I should feel like a sad and miserable orphan with nothing that could find my heart's craving after a something to love if I believed this world to be deserted of its God—and to have been going on with no Father near it to keep it in order and to make it produce the results which he designed. Blessed be God, we have no doubt about our answer to the question. Even if there is evil in a city the Lord has done it!

Let us pause a moment here and think. If, then, the Lord has done it, with what awe is every calamity invested? Standing by the royal deathbed I thought I was in the presence of a prince, but lo, I see a man. It is *Your* work, O you Most High. You have sealed those eyes in darkness. You have bid that heart cease its beatings—You, even You, have stretched the manly form in death. How near we are to God! Tread softly, as you go by that little room where your infant's dead body lies yet unburied. For God is there plucking the flower-bud and appropriating it to Himself.

You have had some trial yesterday. "Put off your shoes from off your feet." For God is in that burning bush. Men see nothing but the calamity. The eyes of faith see God. We sometimes count it a matter of interest if we hear that such-and-such a departed worthy slept in such-and-such a room, or wrote in such-and-such a place. What shall we say when we remember that *God* is there—that God is *here*—that while we wear these garments of sorrow when we bowed our heads just now and shed tears of sympathy, God was here Himself—the All-worker, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Speak with bated breath. Hush and be silent—you are in the presence of majesty. Let us think of national calamities or of private ills with that reverence which should be inspired by a consciousness of the presence of Deity.

And then, again, if God has done it, forever be put away all questions about its being right. It *must* be right. If any would reply, we would answer them in the curt phrase of Paul, "No, but O man, who are you that replies against God?" But to take *him* away and to remove him just in the hour of the nation's perils—can this be right? Brethren, it *must* be. He has died at the best hour. The affliction has come at the most fitting season. It would have been wrong that it should have been otherwise—it would neither

have been wise nor kind that he should have been spared. And this I gather from the fact that *God* has taken him away.

And therefore it must be most wise, best, most kind. Only say the same over *all* your losses. Though your dearest friend be removed—be hushed, be dumb with silence and answer not—because *You* did it, even *You*, O *God*, therefore we say, “Your will be done.” And this, too, shall be our best comfort. *God* has done it. What? Shall we weep for what *God* has done? Shall we sorrow when the Master has taken away what was His own? “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

The gardener had a choice flower in his beds. One morning he missed it. He had tended it so carefully that he looked upon it with the affection of a father to a child and he hastily ran through the garden and sought out one of the servants. He thought surely an enemy had plucked it and he said to him, “Who plucked that rose?” And the servant said, “I saw the master walking through the garden early this morning, when the sun was rising and I saw him bear it away in his hand.” Then he that tended the rose said, “It is well. Let him be blessed—it was his own. For him I held it. For him I nursed it and if he has taken it, it is well.”

So be it with your hearts. Feel that it is for the best that you have lost your friend, or that your best relation has departed. *God* has done it. Be filled with comfort. For what *God* has done can never be a proper argument for tears. Do you weep, you heavens, because *God* has veiled the stars? Do you weep, O earth, because *God* has hidden the sun? What *God* has done is ever ground for sonnet and for hallelujah. And even here, over the dead as yet unburied, our faith begins to sing its song—“It is well, ‘tis well; ‘tis for the best and let the Lord’s name be praised now as ever.”

**II.** I now only want your attention for a few minutes while I pass on to the second head. IF GOD HAS DONE IT, HE HAS DONE IT WITH SOME DESIGN.

It is not always proper for us to ask reasons for Divine acts, for if He gives no account of His matters we ought not to *ask* any account. That frivolous affectation of piety which leads even professedly Christian men to call every affliction a judgment—and to consider that every patron who is suddenly taken away, dies as a judgment either upon him or others, I detest from my very soul. The infidel press usually lays hold upon this as being our weakest point. It is *not* our weakest point. We have nothing to do with it. Those who talk thus know nothing of their Bibles.

They upon whom the tower of Siloam fell—do you think that they were worse sinners than others? I am utterly sick of the cant of a portion of the religious world when they raised a kind of miniature howl at me when I said and still repeat it, that an accident on a railway on Sunday is not a judgment, but happens in the common course of Providence and that we are not to look for an immediate reason close at hand for any of these



events. God's judgments are a vast deep—they are not that little shadow pool—to the bottom of which every fool's plummet may reach.

God has some greater mystery in what He does than these, which every babe might discover. But we draw a line between *private* calamities and *national* calamities. Nations have no future, hence the Judge of Unctions must chastise them *here*. For individuals, the punishment of sin is not in this world, but in the world to come. But nations will not rise as nations—they will rise as individuals, hence, when a death becomes a *national calamity*, it is fitting and proper to question, if we do not pry too deeply as to why God has done it. Personally, the judgment is in the next world and to each man the end of his career is to come there. But with nations I think there *are judgments here* and that we would be wrong if we passed by the dealings of God without hearing “the rod and Him that has appointed it.”

Now, why has God been pleased to take away the Consort of our Queen? I think, in the first place, we may see a motive for it in His thus giving a most solemn warning to all the kings and princes of the earth. Thus says Jehovah, King of kings and Lord of lords—“Emperors and princes! You, too, die like men. Let not your crowns seem to you eternal. There is but one King, immortal, invisible. Think not, when you stretch your specters over nations, that yours is an Almighty arm. Your arm shall drop the rod, your head shall lose its crown. Your purple shall give place to the shroud and your palace shall be the narrow limits of the tomb.”

The dead from their graves are crying—

**“Princes? This clay must be your bed  
In spite of all your towers;  
The tall, the mighty and majestic head  
Must lie as low as ours.”**

You will say, “But why not remove a common and ordinary person?” Because it would not have that effect. You, God, have spoken from the castle where the flag, half elevated, hung out the sign of sorrow and You have said to princes who *must* hear and to Czars who *must* listen, “I am God and beside Me there is none else. As for you, you kings, your breath is in your nostrils. Men of high degree are vanity. Wherein are you to be accounted of?” We, the multitude, can hear sermons every day when we see our fellows and our equals removed from us by death. But these high and lofty ones sit up in their state like the gods in high Olympus and if there were not death in their ranks they might write themselves down as demi-gods and demand worship at our hands.

O empire! Your escutcheon marred and blotted. For Death, the herald, has challenged the royalty of emperors and kings and dashed down, once and for all, his gauntlet in defiance of the princes of the earth. You shall sleep like your serfs and slaves. You shall die like your subjects. Heroes have passed away, as well as the minions they led to slaughter. And so,

you mighty ones, must you find that Death advances with equal foot to the palace of the king—as to the cottage of the poor.

More than this—who can tell how many a heart that had been careless in our court and thoughtless among our lords may be made to consider? If anything can do it, this must. They who have been dazzled with the brightness of splendor and have lost their thought amidst the noise of pomp, will hear for once a sermon by a preacher whom they dare not despise. For *God* will say to them, “Courtiers! Noblemen! Peers! I have taken away your head from you. Prepare to meet your God!” And it may be that today there are knees bowed in prayer which never bowed before. Eyes may weep for sin as well as for death today. Hearts may be breaking with a consciousness of guilt, as well as with a sense of loss.

It is hard for the rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven, thus Providence attempts to make it easy. It is not easy to get the ear of those who are thus immersed in the ordinary gaieties and cares of Court life—but this detains them. Death holds the wedding guests while with his lean and skinny hand uplifted, he tells out the tale and makes them hear and checks and keeps them till the story is done. It may be that God intends to bring out for this our age, some who shall stand towards the Church of God today as Lady Huntingdon and Ann Erskine did to the Church a hundred years ago. It may be he is tutoring some women today who, like Anne of Bohemia, the friend of the Reformers, may become promoters of the Gospel of Christ. And those who otherwise might have been strangers may come to lend their influence and their power to the promotion of real godliness and the vital interests of men.

I think these are not unreasonable things to say. We *may* see that God has His purpose here. Besides, methinks today God has spoken to us as a people. He has shown to us our entire dependence upon Him. He can take away every Prince and every Noble, every Cabinet Minister and every Privy Councilor. He can leave this nation like a ship dismasted. He can, if He so wills, take the hand from the helm and let her be drifted out to sea and there she may be encompassed with the clouds of war and the lightning of judgment—and all our State may suffer wreck like Nineveh and Babylon of old.

Britain! God has blessed you, but remember, it is your God. England, God has honored you. But forget not the God who keeps you. O nation, too, apt to become proud of your own strength—now that you are today wrapped about with sackcloth and the ashes are on your head—bow and say, “God is God alone. The shields of the mighty belong unto Him and unto Him and unto Him alone, be glory and honor, forever and ever.”

Then, He has spoken to each of us as individuals. I hear a voice which says to me, “Preacher! Be instant in season and out of season, be up and doing earnest and fervent, for your day is short and your time shall soon

be over.” I hear a voice which says to you, officers of the Church, “Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit—serving the Lord. For soon shall the pallor of death overtake you and he shall lay his chill hand upon your hoary heads and stretch you in the cold grave.” I hear a voice which speaks to the people of my charge—the members of this Christian Church—“Work while it is called today, for the night comes wherein no man can work.”

And I hear a solemn note, ringing as a funeral bell to you who are unconverted and I translate its message thus—“Prepare to meet your God, you careless ones, who are at ease, make ready, for He comes. You thoughtless ones, who give yourselves no trouble about eternity, make ready, for He comes. Drunkard, you who are a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, make ready for He comes. Swearer, blasphemer, if there is such a one here, make ready, for *He* comes. He comes whom you have blasphemed. And each one of you, if you are out of Christ, if your sins still lie upon you, if you have never sought and found absolution from the lips of God your Father, seek it, seek it, for He comes.”

When at the battle of Balaclava the troop of soldiers rode into the valley of death, it must have been a frightful thing to see your comrades reel in the saddle and fall back, to hear bullet after bullet whistling about one’s ears. And shots finding their mark in one’s companion. To see the road strewn with bodies and the ranks so continually riddled and thinned. And what has been the life of many of us but such a charge as that? Companions of our boyhood! Where are you? Friends of our youth! How many of you have fallen? And the gray-haired sire as he looks back, can say, “How few survive of all I once new! How many have gone! What multitudes have fallen in the valley of decision!”

And *we* stand—miracles of long-suffering. We stand monuments of mercy! Must not our turn soon come? Must not our turn soon come, I say? Have we a lease of our lives? Can we postpone the dread moment? Can we hope to live long when the whole of the longest life is short? Let us prepare, for tomorrow may see our coffin measured, tomorrow may behold us ready for our ceremonies. No, *tonight* the setting sun may set upon our dead bodies. I do beseech you, remember, that you are mortal. Remember by this solemn drapery of woe and by the garment of your sorrow, that soon *you* must be wept over—soon mourners shall go about the streets for *you* and *you* shall go to your long homes.

I am addressing some of you this morning who awake my most tender anxieties. You have been to hear this voice before, some of you and you have trembled. But your strong passions are too much for you. You have said, “Go your way. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” And that convenient season has not come yet. You *would* be saved, but you *must* be damned. You have longings after life at times, but the

cravings of that old lust, that old habit of drunkenness, that old vice, those old corruptions, come and you go back like dogs to your vomit and like sows that were washed to your wallowing in the mire.

I speak to some this morning, who have trembled in this house when they heard the Word preached and they have gone home and they have felt for a little while solemnly impressed. But they have put the anger of mercy from them. They have despised their own salvation. Well, you shall do it but a few times more. You shall despise your own souls but a few more days and then you shall know, on your deathbeds, that we have not lied to you, but have spoken to you God's Truth. May God convince you of that, before you discover it too late, when the judgment shall sit and your body, together reunited, shall stand before the judgment seat.

Feeble as my words may be, they will be a sad part of the account that you *were* warned to think on your latter end and to turn to God. Oh, by death and all its terrors, if unaccompanied by faith. By resurrection and the horrors it shall increase, if you shall perish unforgiven! By the judgment and its tremendous pomp—by the sentence and its eternal certainty—by the punishment and its everlasting agony—by time and eternity—by death and the grave—by Heaven and by Hell—by God and by the wounds of the Savior—awake, you sleeping ones! Awake, before you sleep the sleep of death!

The way of salvation is again proclaimed. "Whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." On yonder Tree He pours out His blood a sacrifice. Trust your soul with Him and He will save you. Put it in His hands and He will keep it and at the last He will be answerable for your soul and He will present it "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," before the Throne of God, even the Father.

May the Lord follow with His blessing what has been said and to Him shall be glory.

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## **END OF VOLUME 7**

# PREPARED TO MEET GOD

## NO. 2965

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1875.

*“Therefore thus will I do unto you, O Israel: and because I will do this unto you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”*  
*Amos 4:12.*

THERE is a peculiar solemnity about the language of our text because, albeit that the whole of Scripture is the Word of God, yet very much of it is given to us by the Prophets, Apostles and other Inspired writers. But here, it is *God* Himself who is speaking and out of Heaven He addresses His erring people and says to them, “Because I will do this unto you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” If ever every mortal ear should be earnestly attentive, it is when God’s voice is heard. Shall not the creature listen to its Creator? Shall not man give heed to the voice of the God of the whole earth? O Lord, give to us hearing ears and let not your words merely reach our ears, but may the inward meaning of them penetrate our souls through the effectual working of Your almighty Spirit!

I. I am going to use the closing words of the text—“Prepare to meet your God, O Israel,” as AN ADDRESS TO ALL WHO ARE NOW PRESENT.

You have come here, but for what purpose have you come? If you have come rightly, you have come to meet your God. The Israelites often came together to bow down before their engraved images, or professing to worship God with rites of their own inventing. They forgot that all true worship must be *spiritual* and though they did not and could not meet with God in such a way as that, yet they went back to their homes perfectly satisfied with what they had done. They had performed the external rites of their religion. They had gone through all its ceremonies correctly and they were content. But now God calls upon them to prepare to meet HIM—no longer to be satisfied with the visible and the external, but to get to the Invisible and the Eternal—and that is the call of God to everyone who is now here present.

“What did you go out to see?” What did you come here to hear? Too many attend even the House of God with the notion of merely going to listen to the preacher. He is a thoughtful man, profound, philosophic. Or he is an eloquent man, oratorical and fluent. Is it for this reason that you go to your churches and your chapels, simply to be charmed by the voice of man? If so, let me remind you that God abhors this mockery of worship! As for myself, I have long ago despised the tricks of oratory and the gaudy displays of eloquence. I would sooner be dumb than merely speak so as to exhibit my own powers. If you have come here aright, you

have come that God may meet with you and that you may meet with God—that your consciences may be awakened and that the Truth of God may enter your hearts.

O my Hearers, have you come with any such design? Are there not some of you who have almost come out to meet God as Michal went out to meet David—that she might scoff at him? Have not some of you come almost as Goliath went to defy Israel—that you may fight against God and contend against the Truth? Or, possibly, to despise it in your hearts and to mock at it? God speaks to all such persons and says to them, “Cease you from your evil ways and prepare your heart to meet ME.” Oh, if we always went up to the assemblies of God’s people with prepared hearts, we would not go there in vain! If sinners came up to hear the Gospel with their hearts breaking all the way, and crying from their very souls, “Oh, that we might find Christ!”—if they came up with earnest, believing prayer—if they gathered together with a sacred expectation of blessing—what meetings there would be between God and them! There would be for them no more wasted Sabbaths, no more sham profession, no more formal religion without any effect upon the conscience and the life! Then would our solemn services be streams of blessing—water would again leap out of the rock and the thirsty congregation would indeed be refreshed! O God, will You not touch men’s hearts so that when they gather together in Your House, they will come prepared to meet You there and to worship You in spirit and in truth?

**II.** A second application of the text which I shall make, without insisting upon its being the one designed, is this—it may be looked upon as AN ADDRESS TO GOD’S OWN PEOPLE.

Sometimes the Lord’s people get out of the way of communion and fellowship with Him. It was so with Israel in the day of Amos, yet here the Lord avows Himself to still be their God, for He says, “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” As for you who are His people, He is still your God and though you may have fallen into a cold condition of heart, and are now walking in darkness and seeing no light, yet He calls you to meet Him, for He desires to have your company! He has been chastening you, again and again, because you would not walk near to Him, and He is prepared to chasten you yet more. But He will stay His hand if you will now come near to Him. Remember what Eliphaz said to Job and obey the injunction, “Acquaint yourself now with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto you.” Child of God, permit me to point to you with my finger and say to you, “Prepare to meet your God!” Were not those blessed times when the sound of His feet made music in your ears? Have you forgotten the Hermonites and the Hill Mizar where the Lord appeared to you and said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you”? Oh, blessed were those days when we retired to a private corner and communed with God! Hallowed was that study, that kitchen, that bedroom, that hay-loft, or that ditch under the hedge where we were accustomed to meet with the Beloved of our souls and to talk with Him as one talks with his friends. We have had many blessed occasion when Heaven’s gate has seemed to be set wide

open—and if we did not pass right through, yet we did sit down as upon the doorstep of Glory and Jesus showed Himself to us—and we poured out our heart before Him! There have been times when we have received those kisses of His lips of which we love to speak even now, when the company is select, and there have been love-tokens between our soul and our Savior which have made us feel that, whether in the body or out of the body, we could hardly tell—only God knew! Then, by all your sweet recollections of the past, come, you children of the living God, and prepare to meet Him again!

If you ask, “What shall we do in order to get ready to meet Him?” I answer—Cast out the idols from your hearts! Let them all go! Love no one else and nothing else as you love Him, but give Him your whole body, soul and spirit! Humble yourself before Him at the very thought that you should ever have wandered away from Him and played the wanton towards your Best-Beloved! Come, also, with a firm reliance upon His unchanging mercy, believing that though you have often forsaken Him, He has never forsaken you. Believe in that gracious declaration of His which says, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” Look again to the precious blood of Jesus—which is the only way of access to the Father—and come sprinkled with it even now. Why should you not come to Him at once? God has most delightful ways of blessing His people on a sudden. “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Personally, I know what it is to rise from the deeps of despair, right away from the place where I was distracted with a thousand cares, sorrows and sins and to soar straight away into the serene ether of perfect reconciliation with God and conscious fellowship with Him!

“Behold,” says the risen and glorified Jesus, “I stand at the door and knock.” It is at the door of Laodicea, the door of that Church which was lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, and it is at your door, O lukewarm Christian, that Christ is now knocking! What is the cure for your lukewarmness? It is Christ’s standing at the door and knocking, and saying to you, “If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me.” This will lift you up out of your lukewarmness and, instead of Christ spewing you out of His mouth, as it looks as if He must do, He will come and feast with you—and you shall feast with Him! Open your hearts to Him, now, Brothers and Sisters among us who profess to love Him! How can we keep our hearts closed against Him? “Come in, you blessed of the Lord,” we cry to our Beloved and, as we gaze upon Him and see that His head is wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, our hearts yearn towards Him and with heartfelt love we pray to Him, “Abide with us, O blessed Savior, and go no more out forever, but let our fellowship with You be perpetual!”

**III.** I should have liked, if I had had time—but I have not—to have applied this text to any professors here who have gone beyond the

negative loss of communion with God—who have backslidden into sin. This is THE LORD’S ADDRESS TO BACKSLIDERS— “Prepare to meet your God.” Prepare to come back into His loving arms and to be reconciled to Him again! There are some of you, perhaps, who were not only members of this Church, but who were also members of the class so long presided over by that godly woman for whom we have hung up these memorials of our grief. [Mrs. Bartlett. She had been “called Home” during the week preceding the delivery of this sermon. (See Sermon #1249, Volume 21—*Saints in Heaven and Earth One Family*)—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeons.org>.] She wept over you when you turned aside. And, among the many things which have made it hard work for you to sin is this one—that you knew you were grieving her gracious and gentle spirit. Hear her voice calling to you from the grave! No, more than that, listen as she speaks to you out of the excellent Glory, saying, “My Beloved Sister, come back to your Lord!”

You have had to suffer already for your backsliding. God has sent you, as the Lord says He sent to idolatrous Israel, “blasting and mildew.” He has also withheld from you the rain in a spiritual sense, so that you are near unto famishing. And there is something even worse coming upon you. God does not tell you what it is, even as He did not tell the guilty Israelites all that He would do to them—it is something so terrible that He seems to hesitate to describe it! But He says, “Because I will do this unto you.” I know not what it is, nor can you guess, but it is something that will destroy all your joys and lay you prostrate in the dust of sorrow. Because He threatens to do this to you, return to Him, return to Him now! “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” I wish I could come round to each one of you backsliders and beseech you to remember that we have not ceased to love you, nor to pray for you, nor to hope that you may yet be led to prepare to meet your God!

**IV.** Now, coming to my principal objective on this occasion, I want to take the text and use it as A MESSAGE TO THE UNCONVERTED. O Spirit of God, apply it to them with Your almighty power!

I think the text may be applied to the unsaved in three ways. First, *as a challenge*—“Prepare to meet your God.” Secondly, *as an invitation*—“Prepare to meet your God.” And, thirdly, *as a summons*—and it will, one day, come in that form to everyone of us—“Prepare to meet your God.”

First, this sentence comes to the ungodly *as a challenge*. At the time referred to in the text, God had been punishing the idolatrous Israelites again and again, and again, and again, with the view of bringing them to repentance. But none of His chastisements had, so far, moved them to yield to Him. The more God smote them, the harder they became, so He seemed to say to them, “Well, then, since you will not submit to Me. Since nothing appears to make you bow down at My feet, I will now put on my armor of wrath and come out against you with sword and buckler! And I throw down this challenge to you—prepare to meet Me.” Now, my dear Hearers, you who have long heard the Gospel but who, until now, have rejected it, I ask you—Do you hope to be able to withstand God



when He comes forth against you in the majesty of His righteous wrath? Already, when He has but touched you, He has made every bone and nerve in your body to tremble. You know how near to the gate of death He has brought you—do you imagine that when He comes out against you in His might, you will be a match for Him?

There are three things you may try to do and I will ask you whether you are prepared to meet God in reference to them. The first will be to justify yourself for remaining His enemy. Are you prepared to do that? When the Lord God says to you, “I created you, I have kept you in being, I have fed you and cared for you until now—why have you not obeyed Me?” When the Lord Jesus Christ says to you, “I loved sinners so much that I died for them—why will you not believe in Me?” And when the Spirit of God says, “I strove with men. Why did you resist Me?” What answer will you give? Will you be able to make it clear that you were perfectly justified in choosing the pleasures of this world rather than yield obedience to God? Will you be able, with all your logic, to make it seem right for you to have lived a wrong life, right to have despised the Law of God and right to have rejected the Gospel of Christ? Come, Man, Woman—set your wits to work and see whether you can expect, in the Great Assize which will soon be held, to be able to justify yourself before the bar of God! Prepare, in that way, to meet your God.

Or, secondly, do you expect to be able to resist Him? Come, you brave men, gird on your armor and come out to battle against the Lord God Almighty! Better let the thorns contend against the fire which licks them up with its flaming tongue! Better let the wax contend against the furnace heat which makes it run like water than let the sinner try to contend against the Omnipotent God! His faintest breath would suffice to scatter the ungodly and drive them like chaff before the wind. Can you stand up against the Most High, O you that despise and forget Him? Did Pharaoh triumph over Jehovah at the Red Sea? Did Sennacherib overthrow the God of Israel on that dreadful night when his vast host was cast into a deep sleep from which there was no awakening? No—and you cannot successfully stand up against God! But if you mean to fight with Him, count the cost, understand what it means and so prepare to meet your God.

There is a third course open to you and that is, are you able to endure what He can lay upon you? I have read of a prisoner insulting the judge by whom he had been sentenced by telling him that the punishment he had awarded was a mere trifle! Can you say this to God? O unconverted men, will you be able to endure the terror of His ire in that day when He comes forth against you! Oh, no! The very joints of your body shall be loosed in that day. Your hair shall stand erect with horror! That bold spirit of yours shall despair and all you bravado with which you said, “There is no God,” shall have departed from you and you will crouch, tremble, weep and wail in His Presence! You say today, “There is no Hell,” but you will not say that when you get there! You defy God today, but you will not defy Him in the day when He reveals Himself to you, for

then you will cry to the mountains to fall upon you to hide you from His angry face! O Sirs, the challenge of the living God is this—if you will not yield to Him, be prepared to fight the quarrel out with Him! If you will not submit to His mercy, if you cannot justify yourselves for your wrongdoing, then take up your arms and contend with Him, or harden yourselves like adamant and prepare to endure the fierceness of His wrath! But neither of these things can you do, so let that terrible challenge bring you to your knees and cause you to—

***“Seek His Grace  
Whose wrath you cannot bear.”***

So, in the second place, I will use the text *as an invitation*. And the note at once changes from the thunders of Sinai to the still small voice of Calvary—“Prepare to meet your God.” Have you heard these tidings, ungodly men? God is coming out against you, armed with His dreadful two-edged sword—that very sword of Infinite Justice with which He smote His only-begotten Son in that day when He stood as the Substitute for sinners! What can you do? Will you run away from Him? To whom or where can you run? The utmost ends of the earth are in His hands! Should you fly to the far-distant seas, He will arrest you there. Should you plunge into the thickest shades of darkness, His eyes will still behold you—

***“Lord, where shall guilty souls retire,  
Forgotten and unknown?  
In Hell they meet Your dreadful fire,  
In Heaven Your glorious Throne.  
If winged with beams of morning light  
I fly beyond the West,  
Your hand, which must support my flight,  
Would soon betray my rest.  
If o’er my sins I think to draw  
The curtains of the night,  
Those flaming eyes that guard Your Law  
Would turn the shades to light.  
The beams of noon, the midnight hour,  
Are both alike to Thee—  
Oh, may I never provoke that power  
From which I cannot flee!”***

God is coming forth to meet you and there is no way for you to escape from Him! Will you stay where you are? Then He will soon overtake you and when He does, then shall come your terrible end. Your wisdom is to give heed to the advice of the text and go meet Him! You cannot escape if you remain where you are, so go meet Him! “How?” you say. Well, go to meet Him thus—with humble confessions and petitions on your lips and with ropes on your necks, adjudging yourselves worthy of death and yielding yourselves up entirely into the Lord’s hands. Confess that you deserve any punishment that He pleases to put upon you. It is thus that a rebellious subject should meet his King—confessing guilt, praying for mercy, pleading for forgiveness, asking for Grace. Thus David met his God. Read the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm, note how he prayed and go and do likewise. You must also go with repentance in your hearts. The sins you have loved in the past must be hated and forsaken. You must go to God

abhorring yourselves and making a full surrender of your souls to Him. Yield yourselves thus to Him and do it at once, seeing that since you have rebelled against Him, His Justice can seize you at any moment—and execute upon you His hot displeasure!

But let me tell you that you have a stern task before you if you are to prepare yourselves in this fashion to meet your God—a task which you will find impossible to perform in your own strength! Our rebellious heart will not readily yield. Our stubborn spirit will not easily bow. Our pride will not let us confess our sin. The dumb devil within us will not permit us to pray. I will tell you what to do. Go to God, just as you are, in the Mediator's name, or go first to Jesus and say, "Lord Jesus, give me repentance. Give me faith, give me hatred of sin, give me a yielding spirit, give me a heart of flesh, give me a pliant mind." And when you have thus yielded yourself up to Jesus, you are prepared to meet God, for the place where God meets sinners is at the Cross of Christ and it is the only place where it is safe for a sinner to attempt to meet his God! If, then, you would be prepared to meet your God, go to that Jesus who met His Father on your behalf and who, as the result of that terrible meeting, died for your sins, if you are truly trusting Him. Go to Christ and He will wash you in His precious blood and clothe you in His spotless robe of righteousness! Go to Christ and He will breathe the perfume of His merits over you and then, when you meet God, He will not merely see in you a sinner, but a saved sinner! He will smell the fragrant odor of the garments of His Son which will have such a sweet savor to Him that you will be acceptable to Him for Christ's sake! There is no other way to God than this. How I wish that every unconverted person here would heed this message and obey it—"Prepare to meet your God." Go and meet Him in the way I have pointed out to you—go and meet Him this very hour.

"Where shall I go to meet God?" asks one. Well, meet Him just where you are. Trust Jesus and yield yourself to God and the great transaction is done. Or get away into some quiet corner and pour out your grief before the Lord and ask Him, for Jesus' sake, to meet with you that you may be reconciled to Him through the death of His Son.

It is scarcely a week ago since our good Sister, Mrs. Bartlett, fell asleep, and I do not know of anything that would so well keep her in our memories—especially in the memories of those of you who have often heard her loving invitations, but have not yielded to them, as for me to speak on her behalf, as well as on my Lord's behalf, and say to you, "Come and meet the Lord! Come and meet Him now, prepared to meet Him through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ your Lord." Happy day, happy day, would it be if many were led by the gracious Spirit to meet with God now! I remember well the time when I first met Him thus. I thought that I was a lost soul. I judged myself to be upon the brink of Hell. I had no merit and no native goodness to bring me to God—I was a mass of corruption and sin, but—

***"I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary, and worn, and sad"—***

and in Jesus I met my God and, meeting God, my soul was set at liberty! And tonight my soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior! The door that was open to me is open to you, my Friend, so enter it, and enter it now! May the Holy Spirit graciously enable you to come!

And, lastly, if the invitation of this text is not accepted, it will soon be heard *as a summons*. I am not the officer to bring the summons to you. I have no authority to do that. I am sent to invite you to meet your God and I have done that. But there will come a day, my Friends, when the authorized officer will deliver this message to you, "Prepare to meet your God." You will be sitting at the work-table, young woman, and you will feel a strange pain in your side and you will ask yourself, "What is this?" It will be a message saying to you, "Get you home to your bed, for, thus says the Lord, 'from that bed you shall come down no more till you are carried down in your coffin.' 'Prepare to meet your God.'" That message will come to you, also, my aged Friend, before very long. You have almost completed the full period of your life and, very soon, you must retire to your room and sit still and wait, for you also must prepare to meet your God. This summons may come to me as I stand here, or to you as you sit there—it may come to the strongest young man or young woman among us. Even while we are at this service, the dart of death may reach any one of us!

What a flurry some people are in when that summons comes to them, "Prepare to meet your God!" As a rule, they have not the hardihood to put it aside. A few do, but many say, "Send for the minister, call in some praying friends and let us prepare to meet our God." They go about that solemn business in quite the wrong fashion! Their harvest is past, their summer is ended and they are not saved and, even now, they do not go the right way to be saved—they are relying upon men! They are relying upon prayers, for they have not yet learned to look alone to Jesus! I do not know any more dreary work than to be called, sometimes at dead of night, to see a dying man or woman who has lived a careless, godless life. I often feel as if it would be better to refuse to go, for, when one gets there, frequently the person is insensible and what their friends imagine we, who are ministers, can do with insensible people, is more than I can tell. Why, we cannot do much with you while you have your senses! Even while you are sitting here, much that we say glides off you like rain off the roof of your house. What can you hope that we can say to you when you are either unconscious, or distracted with pain—with your head aching and your mind confused—and your soul amazed by the near prospect of the world to come?

God's Grace can work miracles, I know, but I fear that this miracle is seldom worked—that the man who has neglected all his life to prepare to meet his God should be able to light his lamp all of a sudden—and go forth to meet the King just when the trumpet voice is sounding through the streets, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go you out to meet Him." For the most part, there is a piteous appeal, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," but that we cannot do. And, while they go to buy for

themselves, the Bridegroom comes—and when they clamor for admittance at the closed door, the answer is, “Too late! Too late! You cannot enter now.” The old Rabbis used to say that every man should prepare to die one day before his death-day and, since he did not know whether he might not die tomorrow, the wisest plan was for him to prepare today. And so it is. Through this assembly, then, let this Truth of God run—that there will come a summons to death and that summons will run thus, “Prepare to meet your God.”

But when you die, in an instant your soul will be before the bar of God. There will be held what I may call the petty sessions before the Last Grand Assize, but at that session your soul will stand alone and God will bid you go to the house of detention where you must wait till your body shall rise to be united with your soul! When the day of Resurrection arises, louder than ten thousand thunders will ring out the blast of the archangel’s trumpet, startling Heaven and earth, and echoing over land and sea, “Awake you dead, and come to judgment!” Then shall the cemeteries heave and toss like seas when lashed into fury by the tempest! Then shall the battlefields of earth grow rich with living men as the harvest field is rich when the reaper goes forth with his sickle! Then shall earth, from her teeming womb, yield the unnumbered myriads that have slept within her bosom—and they shall stand, covering earth and sea, a countless multitude like the leaves of the forest or the sands of the seashore! Then again shall the trumpet sound o’er all the gathered throng, “Prepare to meet your God!” And HE shall come, the Man, Christ Jesus, whom they would not have to be their God and King and, sitting on the Great White Throne, with all nations before Him, “He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” And “the books” shall be opened and whoever, of all our fellow creatures and of ourselves, also, shall not be found written in the Book of Life shall be cast into the Lake of Fire!

O Sirs, O Sirs, in the name of the living God, I ask you—Are you prepared for that great day? Some of us can say, with humble boldness, “Yes, we are prepared for it.” I hope that many here can truthfully say, with Count Zinzendorf—

***“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress!  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.  
Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who anything to my charge shall lay?  
While through Your blood absolved I am  
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”***

But if you have not been absolved by the blood of Jesus, how can you stand there? The very light of His Countenance would scare you into abject terror! And, if His face alarms you, what will His voice do when He says, “Depart, you cursed”? And what will His hand do when He grasps His rod of iron and breaks you in pieces like a potter’s wheel? Beware, you that forget God, lest you loiter and linger and procrastinate until that last trumpet summons sounds, “Prepare to meet your God.” May He

graciously grant that you may be prepared now, instead of standing unprepared in that dread day!—

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

Crouch at His feet! Bow down before those dear feet that were nailed to the Cross! Look up to the hands that still bear the nail prints! Gaze upon the face that once was stained with spittle, but now shines beyond the light of the sun! Look upward to that brow which once was crowned with thorns! Hide yourself in that cleft in His side where the spear made an open way to the heart of Jesus! In a sentence, rest in His atoning Sacrifice, for there is nothing else in which you can rest! May the Lord enable you to do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
AMOS 5:4-27.**

**Verse 4.** *For thus says the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek you Me, and you shall live.* And that is just the message of God to professing Christians now—“Seek you Me.” Get away from your mere ceremonies, from trusting in your outward performances—and get to God Himself. Get beyond your fellow worshippers and your ministers, beyond your sanctuaries and your supposed holy places—and get in spirit and in truth to God Himself! “Seek you Me, and you shall live.”

**5.** *But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal and pass not to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nothing.* These were the places where the calves and other idols were set up for the worship of God by means of visible symbols. That was the Romanism of that day. Pure spiritual worship was ordained by God, but that was not enough for the idolatrous Israelites. They must set up the image of an ox, the emblem of power—not that they would worship the ox, they said, but that they might worship the God of Power through that symbol. And that is the plea of Papists today—“We do not worship that *cross*. We do not worship that *image*. These things help us! They are emblems.” But they are absolutely forbidden by God—“You shall not make unto you any engraved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them.” The First Commandment forbids us to have any other God than Jehovah. The Second forbids us to worship Him through any emblem or symbol whatever.

**6, 7.** *Seek the LORD, and you shall live, lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el. You who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth.* Here you have another great Truth of God—that in order to seek God aright, we must turn away from sin. All the Ritualism in the world will not save us, or be acceptable to God! There must be purity of life and

holiness of character. Justice must be done between man and man, and we must seek to be right before the righteous and holy God.

**8.** *Seek Him that makes the seven stars and Orion.* The Creator of the spring-bringing Pleiades and of the winter-bringing Orion.

**8, 9.** *And turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night: that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is His name that strengthens the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.* The God of the weak, the Defender of the oppressed! You that oppress the poor and tread down the people, seek you Him and wash your hands from the stains of your past injustice!

**10.** *They hate him that rebukes in the gate, and they abhor him that speaks uprightly.* There is still a generation that cannot bear to be told of its faults—and it shows its venom against everything that is right.

**11.** *Forasmuch, therefore, as your treading is upon the poor, and you take from him burdens of wheat: you have built houses of hewn stone but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine of them.* God has often shown how He can overthrow those who oppress the poor!

**12-17.** *For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their rights. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that you may live: and so the LORD, the God of Hosts, shall be with you, as you have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of Hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. Therefore the LORD, the God of Hosts, the Lord says thus, Wailing shall be in all streets, and they shall say in all the highways, Alas, alas, and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skillful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through you, says the LORD.* National sins bring down national judgments and when God grows angry against the people, He makes the places of their feasting, the vineyards where their choicest vines grow, to become the places of their sorrow, so that wailing and distress are heard on all sides. Oh, that nations knew the day of their visitation and would do justly! Then would such judgments be averted.

**18.** *Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! To what end is it for you? The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.* “The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light,” for such as you impenitent, unjust, graceless sinners. “The day of the Lord” will not bring blessings to you! It will be—

**19.** *As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.* From bad to worse do they go who think to escape from present misery by plunging into the Presence of God. The suicide is, of all fools, the greatest, for he goes before God with his own indictments. No, with his own sentence in his hand. He needs no trial—he has condemned himself!

**20-22.** *Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it. I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your solemn assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept these: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.* See how God speaks about public worship and formal sacrifices when the heart is not right with Him? When the moral conduct of the offerer is wrong, the Lord will not accept his offering.

**23, 24.** *Take you away from Me the noise of your songs; for I will not hear the melody of your viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.* This is what God asks for—righteousness, not sweet music! Have they not, at this very day, turned what were once houses of prayer into music halls, set up their idols in our parish churches and adorned their priests with every kind of Babylonian garment which they could find at Rome, the mystical Babylon? Are they not turning this nation back again to that accursed Popery, the yoke of which our fathers could not bear? Therefore, the Lord is angry with this land! There are storm clouds gathering over it because it is not sufficiently stirred with indignation against those idolatrous men who are again seeking to come to the front among us!

**25.** *Have you offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?* “Did you worship Me? Did you offer sacrifices to Me?” “No,” said God, “you did not.”

**26, 27.** *But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which you made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is The God of Hosts.* Oh, for pure worship! Oh, for pure living! Oh, for hearts that spiritually worship the Lord, for Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him.” “But unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?”

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—364, 529  
AND FROM “SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS”—39.**

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# **PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD**

## **NO. 923**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 27, 1870,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”  
Amos 4:12.***

GOD had, in the days of Amos, by different ways rebuked the sin of His people Israel. He had wasted them with famine and sword. He had withheld the rain. He had sent forth the pestilence after the manner of Egypt. He had smitten their fields and gardens with blast and mildew, and He had overthrown some of them, as Sodom and Gomorrah. But they still persevered in their rebellion, and therefore He declares that He will send them no more of His messengers, and shoot no more of His far-reaching arrows, but will come Himself, in His own Person, to deal with them.

God's way of dealing with rebellious humanity, is, at first to upbraid and persuade with words—soft, gentle, tender words. These He repeats many times, accompanying them with tokens of tenderness and Grace. By-and-by He exchanges these words of tenderness for words of mingled threat—He begins to expostulate with them—why will they drive Him to this? Why will they die? Why will they bring ruin upon themselves? Then, if words are of no effect upon them, He turns to blows—but His strokes fall softly at first. Yet if these avail not, His strokes gather strength, till at last He smites them with the blows of a cruel one, and wounds them sorely.

If after this the sinners remain obstinate, the Lord's longsuffering turns to wrath, and He says, “Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more. Already your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint. What shall I do unto you? What shall I do unto you?” Things have come to a dreadful pass when at last the Lord puts aside the rod, when He puts aside afflictions which He has sent as chastisements, and comes forth Himself to end the strife, crying, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies.”

Such was the position of Israel in the text. They had scorned all the milder dealings of God, and now He says to them, “Prepare to meet Me, even God Himself, in all the terror of justice.” The Prophet may be understood as in irony challenging the proud rebels to meet in arms the God whom they have despised. Let them prepare to fight it out with Him whom they have made to be their enemy, and against whose Laws they have so continually revolted. “Prepare,” says the Prophet, “O you potsherds, to strive with your Maker! You worms, to battle with Omnipotence.” As it stands, the text is an awful challenge of Almighty wrath when at last long-

suffering vacates the throne, and Justice bares its two-edged sword. Woe, woe, woe to boastful scoffers in that great and terrible day!

We shall not, however, dwell upon the particular position of the text, nor confine ourselves to the meaning of the words as the Prophet used them. We shall, however, hope as fully as possible to illustrate the natural sense of the text, in the hope that such earnest and solemn words may awaken in some hearts tenderness towards God, and the desire to be prepared to meet Him. "Prepare to meet your God." We have before us a most important call, and we shall consider first the many tones in which it may be uttered. Secondly, the heavy tidings conveyed by it to the ungodly. And thirdly, the weighty admonition given there.

I. First, then, let us think of these words in THEIR DIFFERENT TONES. They vary from grave to gay, from dread to delight—"Prepare to meet your God." Why, methinks there are no more joyous words under Heaven than these under some aspects, certainly none more solemn out of Hell under others. "Prepare to meet your God." These words may have sounded through the green alleys of Paradise, and have caused no discord there. Blending with the sweet song of new-created birds, these notes would have but given emphasis to the harmony.

Often from the mossy couch whereon he reclined in the happy life of his innocence and bliss, the great sire of men would be aroused by this holy summons. When the sun first scattered the shades of darkness, and began to gild the tops of the snow-clad hills with morning light, Adam was awakened by the birds amid the groves of Eden, whose earliest song his heart interpreted, as meaning, "Awake, O wondrous man, and prepare to meet your God." Then climbing some verdant hill from where he looked down upon the landscape, all aglow with glory and with God, Adam would, in holy rapture, meet his God.

And in lowly reverence would speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend. Then, too, at eventide, the dewdrops, as they fell, each one would say to that blessed man, "Prepare to meet your God." The lengthened shadows would silently give forth the same message, and perhaps it is no imagination, angels would alight upon lawns adorned with lilies, and pause where Adam stood pruning the growth of some too luxuriant vine, and would with courteous speech remind him that the day's work was over, for the sun was descending to the western sea, and it was time for the favored creature to have audience with his God.

The faintest intimation would suffice for our first parent, for the crown of Paradise to him was the Presence of the Lord God. And Eden's rivers, though they flowed over sands of gold, had no river in them equal to the stream whereby the spirit of Adam was gladdened when he had communion with the Most High. For then he drank from that river of the water of life which flows from underneath the throne of the Great Supreme. Unfallen man had no greater joy than walking with God. It was Heaven on earth to meet in converse tender and sublime with the great Father of

Spirits. No marriage bells ever rang out a sweeter or more joyous melody than these glad words as they were heard amid the myrtle bowers and palm groves of Eden by our first parents in the heyday of their innocence, "Prepare to meet your God."

Then, when Jehovah walked in the garden in the cool of the day, He had no need to say aloud, "Adam, where are you?" For His happy creature whom He has made to have dominion over all the works of His hands was waiting for Him as a child waits for his father when the day's work is done—watching to hear his father's footsteps, and to see his father's face. Oh, yes! Those were words in fullest harmony with Eden's joys, "Prepare to meet your God."

But, Brethren, weep not over those withered glories as those who are without hope, for the words have something of a heavenly sound to those who have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We, though fallen and sinful, and therefore naturally averse to God, have, many of us, been renewed in the spirit of our minds, and now oftentimes to us the welcome message comes, "Prepare to meet your God," in a sense most delightful and most entrancing. It is our summons to devotion. It is morning, and as we put on our garments before we go forth to the battle of life, the angel of the Lord whispers to us, "Prepare to meet your God."

And on our knees we seek our Father's face, and pray that we may be under His guardian care throughout the day. Think not that the holy Voice is silent until nightfall. Oh, no, oftentimes as business gives us pauses, and as our avocations may allow us leisure, we hear the inner life, or what if I say the indwelling Holy Spirit, softly saying to our heart, "Prepare to meet your God." And we, in spirit, put off our shoes from our feet, and feel that the place whereon we stand is holy ground! We may be in a poor workshop, but our spirit makes it a cathedral as it has communion with the Most High. Our study may be littered over with our books, and papers, and letters. But it becomes a sacred oratory on a sudden, and all things fall into order as the Voice is heard and obeyed.

Perhaps we may be in the cornfield, or on the barley mow, but if the Voice says, "Prepare to meet your God," the true heart stands as a priest before the altar, and worships in spirit and in Truth. Even the streets of busy London may become a silent temple when the heart is solemnly absorbed in worship. For preparation to meet our God means no change of vestments, nor even the washing of the hands. There is a cleansing of the heart, and a putting on of the white linen, which in the righteousness of saints is performed in a moment, and the soul stands before her God in happy fellowship.

Then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, there are set times with us when we prepare to meet our God, as for instance, on the eve of the Lord's-day. It always seems to me to be so pleasant at the family altar to make mention of the coming Sunday and to ask the Lord that we may lay aside our

cares. Ask Him that we may be quit of every earthly impediment, and may sit in the heavenly places on the Day of Rest with our Father and our God. I know how late some of you have to keep your shops open on Saturday nights, and how it almost runs into the Sunday before you can be done with your business—but still I hope you do before you come here make a point of preparing for this meeting place with God by meeting Him first at home.

I would not have you come here unprepared, as though the mere coming into the assembly would be enough. I anxiously desire to see you come with prepared hearts, with longing appetites, with holy aspirations. Bring your harps with you already tuned. Make ready for the holy convocation. Lay by in store your offering, prepare your song, uplift your heart. Yes, and besides the Sundays, there are certain other times with us when we are especially called to meet our God. We keep no holy days by the almanac, but we have holy days apportioned us by Providence and by the Holy Spirit. I mean that there are seasons hallowed by holy memories, or by present circumstances when sorrow and joy, earth and Heaven, all without and within, bear to us a call both loud and sweet, “Prepare to meet your God.”

Then we set apart a special time. The hour is consecrated to secret communion. God has claimed His portion of the day, and we sacredly guard it by entering into our closet and shutting the door. Inward motions of the Holy Spirit frequently calls us away to loneliness—let us not be slow to follow the blessed bidding. The voice of the Beloved invites us to His banquet of wine. He allures us to the secret chambers where Divine Love is revealed. He bids us stand in the cleft of the rock, while the glory of Godhead passes by. On such happy seasons, and I hope they are not infrequent with us, the silver trumpets of Jubilee ring through our souls the notes, “Prepare to meet your God,” and then our motto is, “Up, and away, to the beds of spices, to the garden of pomegranates, where the Beloved will reveal Himself and give us an audience with the King.”

Once again, these words, “Prepare to meet your God,” have no gloomy significance to some of my dear Brothers and Sisters here present, even though we attach to them the sense of the Believer’s meeting God in a disembodied state. Christians, especially when they grow aged, must often hear the angel whisper, “Prepare to meet your God.” From the inevitable process of decay which takes place in the body—from the failure of eyesight, the tottering of the limbs, and the gray hairs—there must come subdued and tender voices, all saying, “Prepare to meet your God.”

The tent is being taken down, the cord is loosed, the tent pin no longer holds to the earth. Soon must the canvas be rolled up and put away. But you have a House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! Look up, then, and prepare to dwell there. Prepare your spirit not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon with your House which is from Heaven. My aged Brothers and Sisters, I can imagine how it is with you. The dear friends

who have been the companions of your childhood and your manhood depart before you, and as they wing their happy flight to the land of the living, they look back and say, "Prepare to follow us."

Nor are you at all grieved at such an invitation! Rather do you sometimes feel impatient for the gladsome time when you may join that cloud of doves which flock to those everlasting windows and find their resting places with the Well-Beloved. Friends gathering in the upper sanctuary beckon to you whose years are threescore and ten, and you feel the attractions of their blessed society on happy Sundays when the atmosphere of your souls is clear, and the Sun of Righteousness shines forth with power! You dwell in the land, Beulah, and behold so vividly the New Jerusalem and its royal Lord, that, as though an angel spoke, you hear the sound, "Prepare to meet your God."

Often when the hymn is swelling up to Heaven, you feel as if you could mount upon it and pass through the gate of pearl. At the holy Supper Table, how loud is the call to come up higher into the excellent glory! Young as I am, and earthbound—to me, even to me—the Communion Table has made me unloose my cable, spread my sails, and long for that last voyage which shall make this world a foreign shore, and the glory land the harbor of our spirits. Surely, my aged Brethren, it must be far more so with you who have so many friends across the water, so many of your best beloved on the other side of Jordan! Your strength of experience and your weakness of body must both tend to give frequency to the message, "Prepare to meet your God." To you the tidings are happy. You are exiles and you long for Home, you are children at school and you pine for your Father's House.

But now I must pass on to notice that those words have not always that sweet ring of the silver bells about them. They are words of caution to the vast majority of men. "Prepare to meet your God." Alas, How many of you to whom I now speak are unprepared! It pains me to think of it. As I sat last night about eight o'clock, revolving in my mind a subject for this hour's discourse, there came a knock at my door, and I was earnestly entreated by a father to hasten to the deathbed of his dear girl. I wanted much my time for preparation, but as the dear one was in such a case, and had long been a constant hearer of the Word in this Tabernacle, I felt it my duty to go whether I could prepare a sermon or not.

Glad I was to hear that sick one's testimony. She told me with what, I fear was her dying breath, that she was not fully assured of her interest in Christ, but she left me no room to doubt when, between paroxysms and convulsions, she said, "I know I do love Jesus, and that is all I know." Yes, and I thought it is all I want to know. If any one of us always knows that he loves the Savior, what more does he require of testimony as to his state? But my mind was sore oppressed then, as it is now, with the thought that so many of you are not prepared to die at all. I see my sermons in sick rooms, often, and I come to think of preaching sermons in a

different light from what many do. I will try to preach sermons which will suit your most solemn hours and most serious circumstances.

I would gladly deliver sermons which shall haunt your sickbeds, and accuse you unless you yield to their persuasions, and believe in Jesus. When you lie on the borders of the spirit world, you will count all religious trifling to be cruel mockery. So let me say it affectionately, but very earnestly, to you, "Prepare to meet your God," for I am afraid many of you are quite unprepared. You have seen others die. They preach to you from their graves, and they say, "So to the dust must you also come, my Friend. Be you ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man will call for you."

You have had sicknesses in your own body. You are not now the strong man you once were. You have already passed through many perils. What are all these but voices from the God of Mercy saying, "Consider your ways"? You are not such a simpleton as to think that you shall never die—you know you will. Neither are you so insane as to think that when you die, your death will be that of a horse or a dog. You know there is a hereafter and a state of being in which men shall be judged according to the deeds that they have done in the body, whether they are good or whether they are evil. May I therefore press upon your earnest recollection, and your intense consideration at this present moment, the exhortation of the text, "Prepare to meet your God!"

Once more, let me say that this sound, as I have now put it, has little melody in it. It will by-and-by be heard in ungodly ears as a peremptory summons—and then there shall be no music in it, but a horrid clang that shall drive away all hope—"Prepare to meet your God." That summons will come to each one of you unconverted people, and when it comes it will admit of no postponement. Call in the wisest surgeon, or the most accomplished physician, and he cannot put off for an hour the execution of God's death-warrant. "Prepare to meet your God," will mean that at such a time, and such an hour, and at such a moment, the spirit must return to God who gave it.

There will be no evasion of that summons. There will be no possibility, then, of a Substitute dying in your place. "Prepare to meet your God" will come to you, my Hearer, beyond all doubt. Oh, how I wish that you were prepared for it! You must assuredly meet your God whom you have forgotten all these years—your Creator, whose rights you have ignored. Your Preserver, to Whom you have rendered no kind of recompense. Your King, whose name it may be you have blasphemed. You have denied His existence, but you will meet Him. You have lived in open revolt against His righteous Laws, but you will certainly meet Him. No exemption will be possible. Before His judgment seat you must stand.

Prepared or unprepared at the sound of the resurrection trumpet, you must appear at His bar. No words of mine, however terrible they may be, can by any possibility equal the horror which the judgment to come and

the wrath to be measured out will cause to the unregenerate heart. We are sometimes accused, my Brethren, of using language too harsh, too ghastly, too alarming, with regard to the world to come. But we shall not soon change our note, for we solemnly believe that if we could speak thunderbolts, and our every look were a lightning flash—and if our eyes dropped blood instead of tears—no tones, words, gestures, or likenesses of dread could exaggerate the awful condition of a soul which has refused the Gospel and is delivered over to Justice.

“He that despised Moses’ Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? For we know Him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Remember His own words, “Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver” (Psa. 50:22).

Certain prophets of smooth things rise up among us, deluding the people with thoughts that the judgment to come will not be terrible, but will end in eternal sleep. Into their secret my soul comes not. I must speak the Master’s Truth and the Master’s Words. O you ungodly, your punishment will not end, for He has said it, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Your miseries shall have no cessation, for He who cannot lie, declares, “The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever.” From the lips of Jesus at the Day of Judgment you shall receive the sentence of everlasting blessedness or everlasting punishment, and no other.

May God grant that you may not dare to sin under the notion that your sin is a mere trifle, for both you and it will soon cease to be. Nature itself teaches you that your soul will exist forever. O make it not forever a ruin! Bring not upon yourself everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power! Thus have you rung the changes on the tones of these words, and I leave them with you.

**II.** Secondly, and very briefly. There are HEAVY TIDINGS in these words. Heavy tidings for the ungodly, for thus they run—“Prepare to meet your God.” I wish I could take hold of every unbeliever here, of every man and woman whose heart is not right with God, and personally speak to them, just as of old the Prophet spoke to Jeroboam’s wife, and said, “I have heavy tidings from the Lord for you.” So would I speak to them, “I have heavy tidings, unconverted Friends, from the Lord for you.” And the tidings are these, “You will before long have to meet your God. Listen to the words, “meet your God.”

You have by some means passed through this world without meeting Him. He is everywhere, but you have managed not to see Him. He has fed you, and in Him you have lived and moved, and had your being. But you

have contrived so to stultify yourself that you have never yet perceived Him. You will perceive Him soon. When the flesh shall fall off from your spirit, your disembodied soul will see without these eyes far more clearly than it now does—for you will begin to see the *spiritual* world which is now hidden from you—and chief and foremost you will meet your God.

Now you say in your heart “no God,” because the thought of God is objectionable to you. You could not sin as you do if you remembered that the all-seeing eye is in the chamber, no, is in your heart itself. Remember you will not be able soon to shake off the thought of God, for you will meet Him face to face. Not the thought of God only, but the actual Being of God will confront you in your dying hour. You will be compelled to meet Him. It will be a close meeting, not as though He looked upon you from afar, or you surveyed Him from a distance. But you will so meet Him that all the Glory of His majesty will operate upon you like the fire which devours the stubble—for our God is a consuming fire.

His holiness will become wrath against your sin, not wrath treasured up and removed far away, but wrath that shall come near to you to consume you. It will be an inevitable meeting, from which you will not be able to escape. From your fellow creature, whom you do not wish to see, you readily withdraw yourself, but you cannot escape from God. The rays of the morning’s sun could not carry you so fast as the Lord’s right hand can move. The uttermost parts of the sea cannot conceal you. The night shall be light about you. Neither the heights of Heaven, nor the depths of Hell can conceal you from Him.

You must meet face to face with your God. And it must be a personal meeting. God and you will meet as if alone. God alone and you alone. What if there are angels? What if there are ten thousand times ten thousands of your kindred sinners? To you, virtually, it shall be solitude itself. You must meet your God! You, YOU! O my dear Hearer, it is a sad thing that this should be heavy tidings to you, for if you were what you should be, it would be joy to you to think that you shall be near your God, and dwell in His embrace. But, unconverted as you are, no tidings can have more of horror in them than these—that you, do as you will, and steel your heart as you may—must by-and-by confront your God.

Think awhile upon Who it is that you have to meet! You must meet your God—your God! That is, offended Justice you must meet whose laws you have broken, whose penalties you have ridiculed. Justice righteously indignant with its sword drawn you must confront. You must meet your God. That is, you must be examined by Omniscience. He who has seen your heart, and read your thoughts, and jotted down your affections, and remembered your idle words—you must meet Him. And infinite discernment you must meet—those eyes that never yet were duped. The God who will see through the veils of hypocrisy and all the concealments of formality.



There will be no making yourself out to be better than you are before Him. You must meet Him who will read you as a man reads a book open before his eyes. You must meet with unsullied holiness. You have not always found yourself happy on earth when you have been with holy men—you could not act out your natural impulses in their presence, they were a check upon you. But the infinitely holy God, what must it be to meet Him? It will be such an interview for a sinner to meet with the thrice holy God as for dross to meet with the refiner's fire or stubble with the flame.

You will have, moreover, to meet with insulted Mercy, and perhaps this will be the most dreadful meeting of the whole—when your conscience will remind you that you were *invited* to repent, that you were *urged* to lay hold of Christ, that you were honestly bid to be saved—but you hardened your neck and would not be persuaded. O Sinner, by so much as God is patient with you now, by so much will He be angry with you then. They who slight the warnings of His Divine Grace shall feel the terrors of His wrath. To none shall it be so hard to meet God in justice as to those who would not meet Him in Grace—vengeance takes the place of slighted mercy. God grant you may never know what it is to meet insulted love, rejected mercy, and tenderness turned to wrath!

O Sinner, if you have to meet your God as you now are, you will find Him everlasting Truth, fulfilling every threatening Word of His Law and Gospel. Every black Word that is in this Book shall be fulfilled over your head, and every dreadful syllable be verified in your loins and in your heart. Remember too, that you will meet with Him who has Omnipotent power—against whom you can no more contend than the smoke against the wind, or the fuel against the furnace. You shall then know how God can punish, and you will find Him not a weak and trembling God, but an Omnipotent God, putting forth His power to destroy His adversaries who have dared to assail against His majesty.

Thus have I put a few thoughts together, in very feeble language, I confess, but they ought, of themselves, apart from mere words, to have power with you. I pray God the Holy Spirit that you, dear Hearer, may prepare to meet your God. You see who it is you have to meet, and what it will be to meet Him. May God make you to be prepared for what must occur.

**III.** The last point is this. Here is A WEIGHTY PRECEPT—prepare to meet God. How can a man be prepared to meet God? In the text there is an allusion to preparing for battle, but none of you would wish to contend with God in the

hereafter. Who is he that thinks that with a thousand he can meet one that comes against him with a countless host of ten thousand times ten thousand? O Rebel, the warfare is hopeless, ground your arms. It were worse than madness to dream of contending with God. Submit, for resistance is vain.

Better far is it to prepare to meet God as sinners. We are today like prisoners who are waiting for our court date, and the news has come that

the judge is ready, and we, the prisoners, are to prepare to meet him. Sooner or later it must be the lot of us all to come before the Judge. Now, Brethren, what is the right way to prepare to meet a judge? If any of you can plead, "Not guilty," your preparation is made. But there is not one man among us who dares think of that. We have sinned, great God, and we confess the sin. What preparation, then, can we make? Suppose we sit down and investigate our case. Can we plead extenuations? Can we urge excuses or mitigations, or hope to escape by promises of future improvement?

Let us give up the attempt, my Brethren. We have gone astray willfully and wickedly—and we shall do it again—it is of no use for us to set up any kind of defense that is grounded upon ourselves. How, then, can we be prepared to meet our God? Hearken. There is an Advocate, and it is written, "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Let us send for Him. We poor prisoners, lying waiting in the cells, send for Jesus, the Son of God, to be our Intercessor and Advocate. Will He undertake our cause? O that He would plead the cause of our souls, and be our Daysman to speak with God on our behalf!

Yes! He will accept the office, and be our Advocate, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Then let us apply to Him, and say, "Jesus, undertake our case." Will you not do this? Oh, I pray God you may! Sitting in these pews, you may engage the services of the great Advocate. Cry in your hearts, "Son of David, undertake for me, undertake my case." Well, now, supposing we have put it all into His hands, and He who is called Wonderful is received as our Counselor to plead for us. What is next to be done?

First He bids us prepare to meet our God by at once taking up our true position as sinners. Let us plead guilty. Let us make a full and penitent confession. We cannot be saved by Christ unless we will do as He bids us. Faith is only *real* as it is *obedient*. One of the first Gospel exhortations which Jesus gives us is this, that we confess our sins. O that we may honestly plead guilty, for our iniquity stares us in the face, and we ought heartily to make acknowledgment of it—for it is an evil and a bitter thing—and has worked us woeful damage. O great Counselor, if You bid us plead guilty, we do so with many tears and with broken hearts. We do confess that all our hope must lie in Divine mercy, for we have no merit. Lost and undone, we cry, "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!"

But what next? Why then, the great Counselor will enter a plea for us, which will bar all further action against us. Though we have confessed that we are guilty, He knows how at the great Judgment Seat to plead a legal argument for the removal of all punishment. And what does He plead? Here is His argument, "My Father," says He, "I stood of old in the place of these who have committed their case to My hands, and who plead guilty at Your Judgment Seat. I suffered for their sins. I bore, that they

might never bear, Your righteous ire. I satisfied Your Law on their behalf. I claim, My Father, that they go free.”

The infinite Majesty admits the plea. O Brothers and Sisters, if your case is in the hands of Christ, and you confess your guilt, do you not see how He sets you free so that you may be prepared to meet your God? Because you can plead the blood of Jesus, the Atonement of the great Substitute for sinners, and covered with that Substitution, you can stand accepted in the Beloved! “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

But you have not heard the Counselor through yet, for as He goes on to speak before the infinite Majesty, He pleads, “My Father, I obeyed the Law on their behalf. I kept it in its very jots and tittles. I made it honorable, and now the righteousness which I achieved, I have made over unto them, for all that I am is theirs. My righteousness is their righteousness, and they shall stand accepted in the Beloved.” The great Judge of all admits the fact, and He receives into His bosom and into His Glory poor souls who had sinned and pleaded guilty, but who now have imputed to them the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and are justified by faith which is in Him. All their iniquities are blotted out.

O don’t you see, dear Friends, what it is to be prepared to meet God! For now we have a good case, now we are not afraid of the last court session. Our case is in the hands of a blessed Advocate whose pleading must prevail. All that you and I have now to do is to prove by our actions that we really have believed in Christ. Let us go on to justify our faith if, indeed, our faith has justified us. Let us prove the sincerity of our confidence in Christ by the holiness of our lives, by the devotedness of those lives to His honor and glory. Let us wake up all our powers and passions that we may become His servants to the highest extent and manhood’s energy—living, laboring, working for Christ—because He has undertaken our case, and will save us at the last.

Thus have I set before you what it is to be prepared to meet God, in the hope that many here will make ready to meet Him. And now let me remind you that the subject on which I have spoken this morning may have a much nearer interest to some of you than you imagine. It has a very near interest to every one of us. It is but a matter of time, and all of us must appear at the Divine tribunal—but there are some to whom it may have a peculiarly close bearing. As I just told you, I did not select this subject, I had no idea of preaching from it—the subject selected me. I was dragged into this present line of thought. I am a pressed man in this service.

That sick young woman’s necessities forced me to this subject. Why this special arrangement? I believe the reason is because there are some here this morning who are now receiving the last warning they will ever have. I am solemnly persuaded that I have among my hearers and readers

some to whom this feeble word of mine is no other than an arrow from the bow of the Almighty God. To others it is a final message of mercy, and if this does not strike them, wound them, and drive them to Christ, nothing ever will.

From this day forth they shall feel no more stirrings of conscience, or strivings of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps before another Sunday's bell shall ring, some of you now listening to my voice will be in the land of spirits and have passed the solemn test—weighed in the balances and found wanting. If it is so, and it were hard for any man here to prophesy that it shall not be so, for where several thousands are met together, the very chances of mortality, as men call them, go to make us fear it. The fact of this subject being thrust upon me makes me feel as though a Prophetic impulse were in it. Then, if it is so, you and I, whoever you may be, fated for death this week, stand in a peculiar relationship to each other.

I may be gazing straight into those eyes which shall never look upon me again till we meet at the Judgment Bar, and if I am not faithful to your soul, you may rise up amidst that throng and say, "I strayed into that Tabernacle, and I listened to you, but you played with your theme, you were not earnest, and so I was lost." So then I will be earnest! I evoke you by the living God, escape from the wrath to come! As the Lord lives, there is but a step between you and death! Flee for your life! Look not behind you! Turn your whole soul to Jesus! A crucified Savior waits for a lost sinner, willing to receive him, willing to receive him now!

Now you can not look me in the face in the next world and say I did not speak to you earnestly. O that the glance which we exchange at this moment may be succeeded in that tremendous day by a glance of recognition in which there shall be the soft emotions of gratitude and affection, as you and I shall say to each other there, "Blessed be God that we met on that hallowed Sunday, for now we shall meet forever before the throne of Him that lives and was dead, and is alive forever more, and has the keys of Hell and of death." God bless you, every one of you, richly, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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# REASONS FOR SEEKING GOD

## NO. 3034

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 1907.

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

***“Seek Him that makes the seven stars and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night: that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is His name.”  
Amos 5:8.***

IDOLATRY has been, in every age, the besetting sin of mankind. In some form or another, the unregenerate are all given to it and even in God's people there remains in their old nature, a tendency towards it.

In its grosser manifestation, idolatry is the desire of man to see God with his eyes, to have outward representation of Him who cannot be represented, who is too great, too spiritual to ever be described by human language, much less to be set forth by images of wood and stone, however elaborately carved and cunningly overlaid with gold! There is a great God who fills all space and yet is greater than space—whose existence is without beginning and without end, who is everywhere present and universally self-existent! But man is so unspiritual that he will not worship this Invisible One in spirit and in truth, but craves after outward similitudes, symbols and signs. If Aaron makes a calf, Israel forgets the Divine Jehovah's Glory and says of the image of an ox that eats grass, *“These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”*

We are apt to imagine that it is a very strange freak of human depravity when men are led to worship visible objects and signs, but it is not at all unusual or singular! It is the general sin of all mankind. I suppose no man has been entirely free from it and every Believer has to contend against it in its subtler forms, for idolatry takes insinuating shapes, less gross in appearance than the worship of Dagon or Ashtaroth, but quite as sinful.

Take, for instance, the common religious idolatry of our own country which consists, in part, of reverence to holy places, as if under the Christian dispensation, which is not one of *type*, but of *fact*, holiness could dwell in stone, lime, wood, slate, iron and brass when architecturally arranged! English idolatry further reveals itself in reverence to an order of men, not because of their superior character, but because of certain mystic rites performed upon them, by virtue of which they are supposed to become the representatives of Heaven and the reservoirs of Divine Grace. How trustful are our English idolaters in these men when they behold them appareled in vestments which the

tailor has cut into fashions remarkably helpful to devotion! Without these priests and their sumptuous adorning and grotesque disfigurements, our modern idolaters cannot publicly worship—but in these they have as much as the Ephesians had in their great goddess Diana!

They can only worship their god by objects which appeal to the senses. An outward altar, an outward priest, an outward ritual, outward rites—all these are nothing but another form of the old idolatry of Babel and of Bethel! Man still turns from the unseen God. The unseen Priest who has passed within the veil, man still ignores. The *spiritual* feast upon the body and blood of Jesus Christ which is the joy of the saints, they know not! But the outward emblems are adored by some and held in great reverence by others. Bread and wine, which are but created and common things, even when placed on the table to assist us in Communion, are made into deities by the blind idolaters of this age! Could Egypt or Assyria do worse? Bread used at the ordinance is but bread and nothing other than ordinary bread. Its emblematic use imparts to it no measure or degree of sanctity, much less of Divinity! It is idolatry—flat, groveling idolatry—and nothing less, which on all sides is spreading its mantle of darkness over this land under the pretense of profoundly reverent piety!

Where Ritualism does not reign, how easy it is for men to be idolaters of themselves! What is self-reliance, understood as too many understand it, but idolatry of self? It is the opposite of dependence upon the living God, the great Source of power and wisdom. Reliance upon my own wisdom, upon my own resolution, upon my own strength of mind—these are idolatries in a subtle and attractive shape. What is much of our overweening affection to our children and to our relatives? What is our unsubmissive repining but idolatry? How is it that we rebel against God if our friends are suddenly taken from us? O man, why is it that your God has so little of your love and the creature so much? There is a lawful affection—up to that point you should go. There is an unlawful affection when, by any means, the creature comes before the Creator—to this you may not descend! Unlawful love, love which idolizes its object, is to be avoided with all our might!

Then, again, perhaps a less excusable form of idolatry, though no excuse is to be offered for any, is that in which men idolize their estates and their confidence in their accumulations—living only to acquire wealth and position—struggling in the race—not to win the crown which is immortal—but that poor wreath with which men crown the wealthy merchant, the diligent student, the eloquent barrister, the valiant men of arms! This is idolatry, again, for it is setting up an earthly object in the place of the Creator. To God is due all my love, my trust, my fear. He made me and, therefore, I am bound to serve Him—and whenever I lay down at the feet of any person or object, dominion over my powers, apart from God, I am at once guilty of idolatry!

I cannot stay to tell you all the various form which this idolatry assumes, but may God give us Grace to strive against them. And you who are still held captive by these idolatries, may He deliver! May He save you from leaning upon an arm of flesh, from trusting in what may

be seen and handled, and bring you to rely upon the Invisible God to whom alone belongs power and strength, and who has a right to our confidence and our service!

The text is addressed to those who have been guilty, either in word, or thought, or deed, of idolatry against God. It gives arguments to persuade them to turn away from everything else and to seek the true God. We shall read the text, first, *in its natural sense* and then, diving into its meaning a little more deeply, *we shall find spiritual reasons in it for seeking Jehovah, and Jehovah alone.*

I. First, then, IN THE NATURAL SENSE OF THE TEXT, we find a Truth of God which is plain enough, but which we need to constantly be reminded of, namely, that *Jehovah is really God*. If Jehovah were not really the Creator of the world, if He did not in very deed make “the seven stars and Orion,” if He did not actually work in the operations of Providence, changing the night into day, and day again into night, we might be excused for not rendering Him service since homage might be safely withheld from an imaginary deity.

But, *as God is real* and exists as truly as we do, as our existence is dependent upon His Sovereign will and He is All-in-All, it is due to Him that we should “*seek His face.*” And simple as that utterance is, I have need to push it home to you. I am afraid, dear Friends, that many of you think of religion in its bearing towards God as being a very proper, but at the same time, imaginative, matter. You do not practically grasp the thought that God Is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. You do not lay hold upon the fact that as surely as there are fellow creatures round about you, there is a God close to you in whom you live, and move, and have your being. The worldly man puts his foot down on the earth and he says, “This is the main chance. I believe in this.” He takes up certain fragments of that earth, yellow and glittering, and he says, “Ah, I believe in this. Here is something solid and I feel it.” Just so, the created earth is real to him and God, who created all things, is to him but a shadowy being! He may not rudely deny His existence, but practically, he reduces his thought of God to a mere fancy and says in his heart, “No God.” My attentive Hearer, I trust that you are not so unwise! You know that God Is, that He *Is* even if we *are not*, that He fills all things and that He dwells *everywhere*—and since He is the Creator, the First and Chief of all things, I trust you are anxious to seek Him and to yield your obedience to Him!

Note from the text that God is not only the true God, but He is *the glorious God*. I cannot understand how the heathen, supposing their gods had been gods, could worship such little, mean, base and contemptible beings! Think of Jove, for instance, the great god of Rome and Greece—what a disgusting animal he was! What a monster of sensuality, selfishness and folly! I should feel it hard, as a creature, to worship such a god as that, if he could be a god. But when I think of Him who made “the seven stars and Orion,” who stretched out the heavens like a curtain and made the sky as a molten mirror—who is magnificent in the acts of

Creation, marvelous in the wonders of Grace and unsearchable in all the attributes of His Nature, my soul feels it to be her honor and delight to adore Him! It is an elevation to the soul to stoop to the dust before such a God! The more we reverence Him and the less we become in our own sight, the more sublime are our emotions. Well did even a heathen say, "To serve God is to reign." To serve such a God as ours is to be made kings and priests! Oh, were not our hearts perverted and depraved, it would be our greatest happiness, our highest rapture to sound forth the praises of a God so glorious! And our hearts would be always enquiring of Him, "Lord, what will You have me do? Your will is wiser and better than my own will. I ask no greater liberty than to be bound with Your bands of love! I ask no greater ease than to bear Your blessed yoke."

Since, then, the Lord is real and, moreover, so glorious as to be infinitely worthy of worship, we should seek Him and live.

Again, *Jehovah the true God, is most powerful* for He "makes the seven stars and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night: that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: Jehovah is His name." Think reverently of Him, for He is not like the gods of the heathen, of whom the Psalmist said in satire, "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat." Contempt and ridicule are poured upon these wooden gods by the Prophet Isaiah when he tells of the workman who takes one end of a log and makes a god of it—and with the other part kindles a fire and warms his hands and cooks his food. Such a god as this it is indeed a degradation for the human mind to worship! But the true God, who has displayed His power in the glittering firmament and in the foaming sea, who is revealed with wonder to the eyes of the astronomer in the innumerable worlds revolving in boundless space—such a God we must reverence. In the hour of storm and tempest, when the Lord is abroad, riding in His chariot of thunder-cloud upon wings of the wind, casting forth His hailstones and coals of fire, making the earth shake at the sound of His voice and breaking the cedars of Lebanon with the flash of His spear, we feel we must adore Him! And as we bow before Him, reason endorses the worship which Grace suggests. Is not His power a cogent argument for seeking Him? Will not you who have hitherto lived without Him, now adore Him? A real God, so glorious and so powerful, should surely command your reverent adoration!

Further, *He is a God who works great marvels*, achieving wonders every moment which would astonish us if we were not so used to beholding them! They tell the story—'tis but a legend of the days of Solomon the Wise, that the king astonished all beholders by taking a seed and producing from it in a few moments, a full-grown plant. They cried, "How wonderful! How astonishing!" But the wise man said, "This is only what the Lord does every day. This is what He is performing



everywhere in His own time, and you see it, and yet you never say, ‘How wonderful!’” When we have watched those who practice sleight-of-hand perform their feats, we have marveled greatly, but what are a few poor elicited tricks when compared with the ordinary, but yet matchless processes of Nature? Our fields and hedgerows teem with marvels never equaled by all the wisdom and skill of man! Walk into the grass field and you tread on miracles. Listen to the birds as they sing in the trees and you hear marvelous speech. If one little mechanical bird, with a few clockwork movements, were warbling out something like music in an exhibition, everybody would gather round it and some would even pay to hear it sing—and yet thousands of birds sing infinitely more sweetly than anything man can make—and men had rather kill them than admire them! Men fail to see the miracle which God is working in each living thing.

Turn your eyes above you to the starry firmament and watch the Pleiades and Arcturus with his sons, for though we know but little of them, they have won from many an observer an awestruck acknowledgment of the greatness of God, insomuch that it has been said that—

**“An undevout astronomer is mad.”**

The order, the regularity, the manifest calculation and design which appear in every one of the constellations, in every single planet, in every fixed star and in every part of the great multitude of worlds which God has created are such decisive evidences that if men do not see something of God in them, they must be weak in their minds or wicked in their hearts! Surely, what is seen of God in this way has tended to make us worship Him. Many of you may know but little of astronomy, but still, you see every day that God is working everywhere around us and that Heaven and earth, and land and sea are teeming with the products of His marvelous skill. The revolutions of day and night and the formation and fall of rain are indisputable proofs of the Presence of eternal power and Godhead! Let us, therefore, seek the Lord.

How is it that a man can go up and down in God’s world and yet forget the God who made the whole? I do not suppose that a man could have walked through the Exhibition at Paris without thinking of the emperor whose influence gathered all those treasures together and who attracted the kings and princes of the earth to visit it. And yet men will go through this world, compared with which the Paris “Exposition” was a box of children’s toys, and will not recognize God therein! Oh, strange blindness! Mad infatuation that with God everywhere present and such a God—the God whom to know is life eternal, whom to delight in is present happiness and future bliss—man is willingly ignorant, blind to His own best interests, senseless to the sweetest and the most ennobling emotions and an enemy to his best Friend!

The surface of the text supplies us with motives for seeking GOD. Oh, that the Holy Spirit might supply us with Grace that we might *feel the motives* and be obedient to them!

**II.** We will now regard the text with a more spiritual eye.

We speak to those who are sensible of their departure from the living God and are anxious to be reconciled to Him by the forgiveness of their sins for Jesus' sake. But our text also has a word for the stubborn and unawakened. In many parts of Scripture the Lord has been pleased to invite the penitent to come to Him, but in this passage, in order that the invitation may miss none, it is made exceedingly wide in its character. Our text will appear to be very wonderful if we notice the context in which it stands—"You who turn judgment to worm wood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, seek Him." There is no mention of those who thirst for Him, who are humbled and confess their faults! This exhortation is given to those who have no good points about them, but many of the most pernicious traits of character! Those who turn judgment into wormwood and leave off righteousness in the earth—even *they* are bid to seek God! Marvelous mercy! Who after this shall dare despair? If my hearer has, up to this day, lived a stranger to God, the text does not exclude him from seeking God, but, as with an angel's voice, it whispers, "Seek Him." If sin has perverted your judgments, yet seek the great Creator and Preserver! Seek Him, for you shall find Him! You are not bid to seek His face in vain—the command to seek Him implies the certainty of His being found of you!

The reasons given for seeking the Lord are, spiritually, these. The Lord "makes the seven stars." That is to say, the Pleiades. And He also "makes Orion." Now, the Pleiades were regarded as being the constellation of the spring, harbinger of the coming summer. We read of "the sweet influences of Pleiades." They are most conspicuous at the vernal period of the year. On the other hand, the Oriental herdsman, such as Amos was, when he saw Orion flaming aloft, knew the wintry sign right well. Both the Pleiades and Orion are ordained of the Lord—*He makes our joys and our troubles*. See, then, the reason why we should seek God, because if Orion should just now be in the ascendant and we should be visited with a winter of despondency, chilled by howling winds of fear and sharp frosts of dismay—if we seek God, He can withdraw Orion and place us under the gentle sway of the Pleiades of promise, so that a springtime of hope and comfort shall cheer our souls, to be succeeded by a summer of rare delights and fruitful joys! Do you hear this, poor troubled one? [See Sermon No. 818, Volume 14—THE PLEIADES AND ORION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Whatever your sorrow may be, the God who made Heaven and earth can suddenly change it into the brighter joy! By the dispensations of His Providence, He can do it! Your circumstances, which are now so desperate, can be changed by a touch of His hand within an hour. To whom can you better apply for succor? And if your heart is sick and sad with a sense of sin, and you are pining with remorse, His Grace can find a balm and cordial for your wounded conscience which shall give you peace at once! Before the clock ticks again, God can grant you perfect salvation, blot out your sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud your iniquities. Seek you the pardoning God! Seek Him, I say, for to whom else could you go? Where else could you look for

strength but to the Strong? Where else for mercy but to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

*The Lord, moreover, turns grief into joy.* In the text it is added, “He turns the shadow of death into the morning.” The long dark night of sorrow, blacker than darkness, itself, because it presages everlasting wrath. The night created by the grim shadow of death—cold, chill, terrible—may have fallen upon your soul, but the living God can at once turn this darkness into the brightness of the morning! When the sun arises with healing beneath his wings, the whole earth is made to smile, and even thus can the Lord at once make your whole nature glad with the light of His Countenance. Though you are ready to lie down in despair. Though you suppose that Hell yawns for you and will soon receive your guilty soul—He can turn this shadow of death into the morning of peace and joy! To whom, then, should you go but to this God? He has already given His dear Son to be the way of life for us sinners. Have you ever heard of another who gave His son to die for His enemies? Gad not about after other helpers, but come at once to your Heavenly Father’s arms, and say with the prodigal, “I will arise and go to my Father.” If you are willing to come to God, the way is open, for Jesus died. You must not come arrayed in the supposed fitness of your own good works or good feelings, but you must come resting on the finished work of the appointed Savior. If you look to Him, you shall be lightened. If you come with His name upon your lips, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. Should not this be a reason for coming—that He can turn your night into day, your winter into summer?

But the text bears another aspect, namely, *that God can also turn your present joy into grief* and, therefore, you should seek Him. He makes the seven stars give way to Orion. “He makes day dark with night.” At this moment it may be that you are at ease—but how long will you be so? Though you have no God, you are content with what you possess in this world, satisfied with your daily earnings, or charmed with your yearly income. You are with your wife, your children, your estate. But remember how soon your joys may be taken from you! Have you not heard how often God’s Providence has stripped the house, stripped the family, stripped the man’s very soul of every comfort? Remember you not the story of Job who, in one day descended from riches to poverty? Know you not that although the wicked spread themselves abroad like a green bay tree, they shall suddenly wither? And though they are exceedingly proud and strong, they shall come to their appointed end like the ox fattened for the slaughter?

All our joys on earth are dependent on the Sovereign will of Heaven. Some of you know this by bitter experience, for you have seen the delight of your eyes taken away in a stroke and the comfort of your heart carried to the grave. Now, to whom should you fly for succor, but to Him upon whom all your present comfort depends and who can so soon take it all away? How prudent to be at peace with Him! How wise, above all wisdom, to be reconciled to the mighty God! But, alas for those who have

often been warned but who will not heed the warning! They have hardened their necks and will be suddenly destroyed. Their day will blacken into everlasting night! The proud sinner will die as others do—his eyes will pale and his brow grow cold, for he must face inexorable Death. And then, when he comes into the land to which the wicked are banished, he will enter into the outer darkness, darkness which shall be felt, in the land of confusion, where there is no beginning of hope, or end of misery—who would then desire to stand in his soul's place? Escape, then, before the darkness gathers! Seek Him, O man, who makes the day dark with night!—

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

The last clause of the text suggests a fourth reason for seeking the Lord, namely, *God may make that which is a blessing to some a curse to others*. Did you observe it? Seek Him “that calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the face of the earth.” This may allude to the deluge, when the waters of the ocean covered the very tops of the mountains. But it may be equally well explained by reference to the clouds which yield refreshing rain. The sun draws up the waters of the sea, leaving the salt behind and when these exaltations have floated their appointed time in the air, they descend upon the thirsty earth to make glad the soil. Now, since the clause bears two readings, it were well to note how the actions of God oftentimes bear two renderings. There is, for instance, the gift of His dear Son, an unexampled act of love—and yet to some of you it will prove “a savor of death unto death.” To the unbeliever, it will prove a terrible thing that Jesus ever came into the world! He is a precious Cornerstone to those who build upon Him, but those who stumble upon Him shall be broken—and if this Stone shall fall upon any man, it shall grind him to powder! That which is Heaven's greatest joy is Hell's greatest horror. When Christ shall come, the sight of Him shall draw forth the acclamations of His people, but it will also cause the utmost anguish to His enemies. They shall weep and wail because of Him. They shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of Him who sits upon the Throne of God and from the wrath of the Lamb! Since you who so constantly hear the Gospel must have it made to you either a savor of death unto death or of life unto life, I pray that the Eternal Spirit may show you the wisdom of seeking God by Jesus Christ—and of seeking Him now!

It will be a dreadful thing, at the Last Great Day, to find the gentle Lamb become a Lion to you, to tear you in pieces when there shall be none to deliver! Why should that which is the meat of humble souls, become your poison? Why should the blood of that Savior in Whom so many have washed their robes, and made them white, be your condemnation? Remember that the blood of Jesus will be either upon you to cleanse you or upon you to condemn you! That dreadful cry of the Jews in the streets of Jerusalem, “His blood be on us, and on our children”—what a curse it brought upon their race in the massacres

within the city walls and in the bitter exile and suffering which they have so long endured! Take care that the same curse does not bring upon you an eternal exile from God! Seek His face, I beseech you! You may not long have the opportunity to seek it. The day of His mercy may close as closes this day with the setting sun. You may not survive to enjoy another day of Gospel invitation! May God the blessed Spirit, who alone can do it, make you seekers—and then make you finders—and His shall be the praise!

Thus much to the unconverted. The people of God can think over the text in relation to themselves. It is rich in priceless instruction to them, but time forbids me to direct their meditations. Farewell.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
*Psalm 139.***

In this Psalm David praises God by specially dwelling upon the one attribute of Omniscience. If we really wish to praise God, we must think of Him as He is—and it is the best praise that we can render to God to describe Him as He is. And any one of His many attributes is so full of His Glory that if we give due honor to it, we shall have much to say upon it.

**Verse 1.** *O LORD, You have searched me, and known me.* It is true that God knows everything, but that is not what David says here. He makes a *personal* application of the universal Truth of God—“O Lord, You have searched *me*, and known *me*.” He does not talk about God’s knowledge of other men, but he speaks to God concerning himself—“O Lord, You have searched me, and known me.” “You have searched me as if You were looking for contraband goods. You have ransacked me, You have gone down into my very heart and have spread out every secret part of my being—‘You have searched me, and known me.’”—

***“Lord, You have searched and seen me through.  
Your eyes command with piercing view  
My rising and my resting hours,  
My heart and flesh, with all their powers.”***

**2.** *You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thoughts afar off.* “What I do, and what I do not do—my sitting down for rest, and my rising up for action—You know me altogether, my most trivial deeds and my most important movements. My thoughts are so well known to You that even before I think them, You know what they will be. You need not come near to me in order to know me, so strong are Your eyes that if You only look at me from a vast distance, as a man looks at a star in the midnight air, ‘You understand my thoughts afar off.’ What I think and why I think it, whether it is sorrowful or hopeful, You understand my thoughts. Sometimes I cannot understand it myself, but You always understand it.”

**3.** *You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.* “You have put a ring around me both in my staying and my going. I go to sleep, but You do not sleep. I cannot think of You

while I slumber, but You think of me and You ‘are acquainted with all my ways.’”—

**“Great God, Your penetrating eyes  
Pervade my inmost powers.  
With awe profound my wondering soul  
Falls prostrate and adores.  
To be encompassed around with God,  
The Holy and the Just.  
Armed with Omnipotence to save,  
Or crush me into dust!  
Oh, how tremendous is the thought!  
Deep may it be impressed!  
And may the Spirit firmly engrave,  
This Truth within my breast!”**

**4.** *For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, You know it altogether.* “You not only know what it is, but You know all about it—even the word which I have not yet spoken, the word that is on my tongue, as well as the word that is *not* on my tongue—those seeds of speech that have as yet not grown into words, You know them altogether.”

**5.** *You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.* “Like men lying in ambush, ‘You have beset me behind and before.’ All that I have ever done and all that I shall ever *do*, You know it all. I am like one under arrest, upon whom the officer lays his hand so that he may have no opportunity of escaping. I am in Your grip. You have taken such a firm hold upon me that I cannot get away from You. In another sense, I am like a child enfolded in His mother’s arms, for You have ‘laid Your hand upon me.’”

**6.** *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain unto it.* “I cannot climb up to Your glorious Throne—the very lowest step of it is far higher than my feet can reach! ‘I cannot attain unto it.’”

**7.** *Where shall I go from Your spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence?* “I do not want to do so, but it would be quite impossible for me to flee from Your Presence even if I wished to do so. Neither by steady marching, nor by rapid flight can I get away from You.”

**8.** *If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there.* The Hebrew is, “You there,” as if there was nothing else there but God.

**8.** *If I make my bed in Hell, behold You are there.* This seemed even more amazing to the Psalmist than that God was in Heaven, so He put in a, “behold”—“Behold, You.”

**9.** *If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.* “If I fly on the wings of light, which travels with inconceivable rapidity.”

**10.** *Even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.* “I cannot go there except by Your leading and I shall not be there except by Your uplifting. There is no way by which I can keep away from God even if I try to do so. If, instead of living in the light, I seek to hide myself in the darkness, what then?”

**11.** *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.* “The very night shall change its nature and turn from darkness into light!”

**12.** *Yes, the darkness hides not from You, but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You.* See, my dear Brothers and Sisters, how we dwell continually under the inspection of God? You have seen bees in a glass hive and watched all their movements, or you have put an insect under a powerful microscope and examined every part of it. Even so does the Omniscient God watch and examine you! Nothing is done by you that He does not observe. The poet speaks of the fierce light that beats about the throne of man, but you dwell in that far fiercer light which beats about the Throne of God!

**13.** *For You have possessed my reins.* “Those secret organs of my body which I cannot see, and whose working I can only imperfectly comprehend.”

**13.** *You have covered me in my mother’s womb.* “Even before I came on the stage of action, You were exercising wondrous care over me.”

**14.** *I will praise You.* That is a good resolution for each one of us, as well as the Psalmist, to make! As God sees me, let me praise Him—it will be pleasing to Him to hear me praising Him. “I will praise You.”

**14.** *For I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Nobody can rightly study the anatomy of the human body and see the beautiful arrangement of the various veins, nerves, sinews, muscles and bones without saying with the Psalmist, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

**14.** *Marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well.* To study God’s marvelous works, you need not go abroad, for they can be plainly seen in your own body. This earthly house of your tabernacle, in which you dwell so long as you are in this world, is a masterpiece of Divine wisdom and skill!

**15.** *My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth.* God made us in His secret workshop by a marvelous method of Divine Power.

**16.** *Your eyes did see my substance, yet being not perfect; and in Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* God’s wonderful foreknowledge enabled Him to know us even before we knew ourselves, or anyone else knew us! And in the very making of us, the creation of our body and mind and spirit, God was beforehand with us.

**17.** *How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!* “I love to remember that You, my God, are thinking of me. I am not distressed or alarmed by that recollection. I do not say, ‘How terrible are Your thoughts unto me, O God!’ But, ‘How precious’—how consoling, how full of promises of blessing to me—‘are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!’”

**18.** *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You.* “You lull me to sleep and You awake me in the morning. And when I open my eyes, You are still there.” Happy

Believer, who is always with God! Why should not You and I, dear Friends, always be consciously in the Presence of God? We are never right unless we are in that condition—and if we ever begin to forget God, we are in a wrong state of heart. If we can live from day to day without realizing that God is near us, we are falling into a sad and dangerous condition!

**19.** *Surely You will slay the wicked, O God.* It cannot be that God has seen all their wicked acts and read their evil thoughts, and yet will spare them! When men offend in the very presence of the judge, it is easy work for him to try them.

**19.** *Depart from me, therefore, you bloody men.* “You men of blood. You men stained with the blood of your fellows. Get away from me, for I do not want to be harboring criminals. God sees my company as well as myself, so depart from me!”

**20.** *For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain.* David could not bear even the thought that men should insult such a God—a lack of reverence to the All-Seeing One was altogether unbearable to him, so he bade those who were guilty of such wickedness to take themselves away from him.

**21, 22.** *Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate You? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies.* We are to love our own enemies, but we are not to love God’s enemies, nor willingly to mix with them! How can Christians associate with the lewd and irreverent without becoming partakers of their evil deeds? Let us take note of what David says and realize that we cannot be the friends of God if we are the friends of God’s enemies. Now the Psalmist comes back to his key-note. He began the Psalm with the declaration, “O Lord, You have searched me.” Now he prays.

**23.** *Search me, O God, and know my heart.* “You have searched me, O God, but I pray You to do it again, and to keep on doing it—never take Your great searchlight away from me.”

**23.** *Try me, and know my thoughts.* “I cannot hide them from You, and would not if I could.”

**24.** *And see if there is any wicked way in me.* “Lord, look for the dross, to consume it! Look for the spots, to wash them away.”

**24.** *And lead me in the way everlasting.* “Amen.” Our hearts say, “Amen—so let it be.”

—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.**



# SCOURGE FOR SLUMBERING SOULS

## NO. 417

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 3, 1861,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.”*  
*Amos 6:1.*

IN itself considered it is no ill thing to be at ease. No, it is a great blessing to be at ease in Zion in the healthy sense and meaning of that word. Is it not one of the invitations of Christ—“Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest?” Is not this one of the promises made to the believer—“His soul shall dwell at ease and his seed shall inherit the earth”? (Psa. 25:13). Is not this the privilege which is accorded to the Church of God, in the words of Isaiah—“Your eyes shall see Jerusalem a *quiet* habitation”? (Isa. 33:20). And still more in the prophecy of Jeremiah 46:27—“Jacob shall return and be in rest and at ease and none shall make him afraid!”

To have perfect quietness in Christ is indeed a privilege which only belongs to those who have entered into that which is within the veil! Oh to enter into our rest! For “they that have believed do enter into rest.” They have found in the finished work of Christ enough for their soul’s repose. They see in the faithfulness and power of God enough support for the future whatever troubles it may bring. They see in the precious blood of Christ sufficient atonement for the past whatever its sins may have been. And in communion and fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, abundant joy for the present whatever may be its trials, its difficulties its straits, or its fears.

It is a blessed thing then, understanding the word “ease” in its *good sense*, to be at ease in Zion. So good a thing that it is denied to the wicked, for “the wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” And of the wicked it may be said, “And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of your foot have rest. But the Lord shall give you there a trembling heart and failing of eyes and sorrow of mind” (Deut. 28:65). Oh beloved Brothers and Sisters, it is a thing worth praying for and worth striving after, that our spirit may have perfect rest.

The kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Jesus is King of Salem and Prince of Peace, “and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever” (Isa. 32:17). Peace, peace to you, you troubled one. In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Christ you shall have peace.

But it seems there is also another sense in which the word “ease” may be used, for the text says, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.” This is a *carnal* ease, a fleshly security. It is not the confidence of a man who is pardoned but the ease of a hardened wretch who has learned to despise the gallows. It is not the assurance of one who is on the rock, but the ease

of a senseless drunkard whose house is tottering from its sandy foundations and yet he riots at full speed. It is not the calm of a soul at peace with God but the ease of a madman, who, because he has hidden his sin from his own eyes, thinks he has concealed it from God.

It is the ease and peace of one who has grown callous, hardened, brutalized, stupid, sullen and careless. One who has begun a sleep which God grant may soon be broken or else it will surely bring him where he shall make his bed in Hell.

As I know there are many in this congregation who are at ease in Zion—I shall not draw the bow at a venture this morning, but in the name of God shall aim straight at the heart. I shall first of all—laboring all the morning long as God’s servant to wake up those that are at ease in Zion—try to wake them *by calling out their names*—for *that* is said to be an admirable method of waking sleeping men.

Secondly, *by shedding a light upon their eyes*, for there are many who can sleep in the night who will not sleep so comfortably in the day. And then, thirdly, *by sounding the trumpet in their ears*. Yes and such a trumpet that if God the Holy Spirit is here, it shall sound like the blast of the archangel and make them quiver with fright even if they turn not unto God. But all these things will fail unless the Holy Spirit who quickens those that are dead in trespasses and sins, shall be present to wake and to save these sleepers.

**1.** First, in order to the arousing of the many that are at ease in Zion, we will CALL OUT THEIR NAMES—which are to be found in the chapter before us.

The name of the first sleeper in Zion is *Presumptuous*. His character is described in the first verse—“They trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came.” Alas, proud Heart, you come to this house and you go from it quite content and easy because you say to yourself, “I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing.” “Let the drunkard tremble,” you say, “I have always been moral. Let the dishonest bow their heads, I have always walked in integrity before men.”

And so you wrap yourselves in your good works and hope thus to stand complete before God. So you trust in your mountain of Samaria and say, “*My* mountain stands firm. I shall never be moved.” I can hardly understand your being at ease in self-righteousness—if you occupy these seats often—for there are none against whom we hurl such thunderbolts as those workmongers, those merit-trusters who boast of themselves that they are righteous and deceive both themselves and others. Against no man do we utter sterner anathemas than against him who, going about to establish his own righteousness, has not submitted himself to the righteousness of Christ.

Why, Man, your purest works are only dross and dung in the sight of God. Your best performances are defiled with the marks of your sin-black hands. They cannot even bear the twilight of an awakened conscience. How, then, will they bear the sevenfold sunlight of God’s great Judgment Day—when He shall bring all things before Him and everything shall be naked and open? He that trusts in his own works leans upon a broken

reed. As well attempt to cross the storm-tossed ocean upon a child's paper boat, or mount to the Heaven of God in the philosopher's balloon. As well attempt to put out the fire of a blazing prairie by carrying in your hand a little water scooped from the neighboring stream, as hope by any means to get rid of your own iniquities by doing better, or of your past sins by future holiness.

I tell you, Man, your prayers, your alms-giving, your fasting, your repenting, your church-going, your chapel-going are all as nothing in the eye of Him who demands perfect obedience and will never accept anything short of perfect righteousness from man. Away, away, away with these gaudy rags! They will be unraveled before long. You may toil at the loom night and day but your work shall be rent in pieces and not a shred shall be left—you are spinning nothing but a spider's web which Justice shall tear in pieces and like Adam, whose fig leaves could never cover him, you shall cry before God, "I knew that I was naked and I hid myself." Woe, then, to those that are at ease in Zion, whose name is Presumptuous.

But the great mass of you escape while I speak thus. "No," you say, "We do not belong to *that* class, we know the Gospel better than that. We are orthodox Protestants and stand fast with good Martin Luther and believe that a man is justified by faith and not by the works of the Law." Remember, you may believe that and yet not be justified yourself. You may hold the doctrine plainly enough—but it is one thing to *believe* in the justification of the ungodly—and quite another thing for an ungodly man to be justified.

**2.** A second name is put before us in the roll and that is *Not-now*, or *Procrastination*. Surely there are hundreds of you who will recognize your own surname. See how you are described in the third verse—"You that put far away the evil day." Yes, you are only young apprentices at present and when your time is out you think it will be early enough to attend to matters of soul-interest. Or you are only journeymen at present and when you have earned sufficient money to set you up in business, then will be the time to think of God. Or you are little masters and have just begun business—you have a growing family and are struggling hard and this is your pretense for procrastination.

You promise that when you have a nest egg and can quietly retire to a snug little villa in the country and your children have grown up—*then* you will repent of the past and seek God's grace for the future. All these are such delusions of the grossest kind. For you will do no such thing. What you are today you will probably be tomorrow and what you are tomorrow you will probably be the next day. And unless a miracle shall happen, that is to say, unless the supernatural grace of God shall make a new man of you, you will be at your last day what you now are—without God, without hope—and a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel.

Procrastination is the greatest of Satan's nets. In this he catches more unwary souls than in any other. "Not now. Not now. Not now. Time enough. Time enough. Time enough," says Satan. "Taste the world's pleasure first. Come, take your swing, go to the end of your tether and then pull up of a sudden and repent." Well knows he that then he will have the same cry for them—"Not now. Not now, until they come into the

jaws of death and then he will turn round and hiss into their ears the awful words—"Too late! Too late! Too late!" Though he will be as much a liar *then* as he is *now*, for it is never too late if the Lord make bare His arm.

Now might I not look around these galleries and down upon these pews below and remember many of you who for these seven or eight years have been hearers of the Gospel from my lips? There have been many times when you have trembled and been alarmed. You felt like Felix, but like he you cried—"Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you." Ah, that convenient season has not come yet and I fear it never will. Bless the Lord, there have been many hundreds of you whose own season never came—but the Lord made you come at *His* convenient season and not at yours.

May it be so with others of you! But alas, alas, how large a proportion of those who come into this house of prayer still say, "Not now, not now," and put off the day and will not come. They think they are to live forever, imagining that the Judgment Day will never approach, that they shall never have to give an account before God. And so they go on in their sins till the chapter shall end and the *finis* shall be written in black letters—for, "Depart you cursed!" shall be their sentence.

**3.** The third name is *Evil-doer* or *Sin-lover*. "They cause the seat of violence to come near." Into the house of God there are many who still persevere in their sins, though not so comfortably as they would have done if they had neglected the means of grace. Many I know have come here, who at last said, "Well, this will not do. I cannot hear the Gospel and have the shop open on Sunday. I cannot act as I have done in my business and yet be a seat-holder there—one of the two must be given up."

And God has given them grace to serve Jehovah and renounce Baal. But ah, there is a large proportion who are undecided. Where were you last night? Here you sit and who would know but that you are the greatest saints out of Heaven? But, perhaps, some time or other last week you sat where none would know that you were the basest sinners out of Hell. Many attend the synagogue of Satan as well as the synagogue of God. Some can give the right hand to religion, while the left hand clasps their iniquity. Oh, those sweet sins, those darling sins that men hug and press to them. They might as well put a viper in their bosom and hug it there, while all the while it infused its venom into their veins.

How many must indulge their sins! They would have Christ, but they must have their cups, too. They would follow the Savior, but they must have their chambering and wantonness. They would be Christians, but oh, it is a hard road and a narrow one and they cannot give up their sweet lusts. O Soul, am I not calling out your name now? Do I not now describe your character to the very life? Lover of sin the day shall come when you will hate your sin because of the punishment it shall bring you—for he that woos sin, woos punishment. He that loves iniquity drinks a cup which is sweet at the brim—but the dregs! The dregs! The dregs!—which must be drained! How direful shall be that burning draught! Oh, the draining of those dregs will last throughout eternity, an eternity of Hell.

**4.** The next name is *Love-self*. "They lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches and eat the lambs out of the flocks and

the calves out of the midst of the stall.” This was not wrong, if they had a bed of ivory there was no more objection to their lying upon that than to their lying upon a common couch. There can be no reason why persons blest with rank in life where they can use these things should not use them, for every creature of God is good and nothing to be despised, but to be received with thankfulness.

Their fault was this—they lived only for self-indulgence. They come under the category of those described by the Apostle—“Whose God is their belly.” They lived only to eat and to drink, to be merry and to make merry with their friends. You know I am no ascetic, my humor is far too warm and genial for me to claim association with John the Baptist, whose meat was locusts and wild honey. My sympathies run with the Master, of whom it is said, “The Son of Man came eating and drinking.” But still I must, even as He did, protest against those who live only for the flesh, who are simply strainers for meat and drink, whose life-work is to provide food and raiment, who are satisfied so long as they have the richest dainties and the choicest wines.

I must protest against those who even come up to the house of God because they love to have their ears regaled with sweet sound and even God’s Prophet is to them as one that plays a goodly turn upon a pleasant instrument. Self-indulgence! Oh, this is the God of many! They live not for Christ—what do they do for Him? They live not for His Church—What care they for that? They live for self and for self only. And mark—there are such among the poor as well as among the rich—all classes have this evil leaven. Self-honor, self-seeking, these be your gods, O Israel and multitudes dance and sing in honor of the beloved deities.

Fullness of bread often brings on emptiness of heart and there are many who are like the Israelites in the wilderness. While their meat is yet in their mouth the wrath of God comes upon them—because their meat is the offering which they offer at the shrine of their god—and that god is their belly. Do I not speak to some such here this morning? Probably those to whom this most applies will say, “Well I do not think that is for me.” Probably it is for you, then, for this is a charge to which no man would like to plead guilty.

Among all the sins that are confessed nobody ever confessed covetousness. No, he only exercises a proper discretion in taking care of himself. He thinks that the excellent of the earth ought to be provided for. He puts himself down among them and therefore takes care that he should have not only his bread and his water given him, but whatever else he may desire besides. O self-lover, remember there are no pampered tables and of-fice confectioneries in Hell. Awake, then, from your dreams!

**5.** It seems that among those who were at ease in Zion, was one called *Careless*, an individual who belongs to a very large family—we may give him another name, *giddy*, *light-hearted*. He is described in the fifth and sixth verses, “That chant to the sound of the viol and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David. That drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the chief ointments.” You know how many we have, even among those who frequent our sanctuaries, who say, “Be gone, dull care.” They never sit down for half an hour and turn over the Word of God to see

whether these things are so. “No,” they say, “let well enough alone.” They are happy. They are comfortable for the present.

And like butterflies, while it is a bright summer’s day, they think the winter is far off. Their whole life is spent in levity. We may call them the froth of society. There is nothing solid in them. They are not solid enough even to be desperately wicked. Even their religion is carelessness. They sing a hymn as though it were a song. When prayer is offered—and they will sometimes go to prayer meetings—they are criticizing the terms which are used before the mighty God. Sometimes they venture to make a profession of religion. But you might hope to build a palace with pillars of smoke or adorn a queen’s brow with dewdrops sooner than find any Truth in their godliness.

Their convictions are always superficial—a sort of scratching of the soil as with the old plows, but there is no sub-soil plowing—no turning up and breaking the clods—no tearing up of the vitals of their consciences, no revelation of themselves to themselves. Like stony-ground hearers, they receive the Word with gladness but they have no depth of earth and after a little while, when the seed springs up, it withers away. Not here and there do we find such, but there are very many careless souls who never will give themselves the healthy exercise of thought. Woe unto you, woe unto you, if thus you are at ease in Zion!

6. And now to call out the last name in the list, there is one called *Crossless*. He is described in the sixth verse, “And they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” It is an awful thing to live in this world without a cross! I have heard of one who, being told of another that he had never any trials, said he should not like to live in the same town, for he was sure something terrible would happen to him. I was once preaching in a country village where there was an estimable pastor who seemed to have a very quiet and nourishing little Church. I said to him, “Now, yours is the course of life I should prefer, to be quiet and secluded and not to have an excess of labor. You,” I said, “seem to have no trials.”

Ah, it was not long after, he had the most crushing of trials that could happen to man and his brain reeled beneath it. And so, no doubt, if a child of God should be a little while without a trial, it is only because there is another one coming and he is having a little respite because a very heavy blow is about to fall upon him. As John Bunyan says in his doggerel rhyme—

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

It is written of the ungodly—“Moab has been at ease from his youth, he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel.” There are such in this congregation. You never had a great trouble in your lives. Some little things that you have elevated into trials by sentimentalism have fallen upon you. But you have never had any great racking of mind, no great temptations, or trials, or losses, or crosses. And you are comfortably saying—“I am favored because I have none of these.” Methinks I may add that you are highly abhorred—for only they escape the rod whom God disowns!

Just as a man dare not chasten another man’s child, but is sure to chastise his own, if he loves him, you have escaped crossless till now. Take care, your being at ease in Zion on this account is very dangerous.

Oh, may God arouse you as I thus describe your ease and call out your name!

**II.** And now, having thus passed through their names we come to SHED SOME LIGHT UPON THESE SLEEPERS' EYES.

Ah, Brethren, this time we have a hopeless errand! It is of no use shedding any light upon these people's eyes. That will not wake them, for, to tell the truth, they are sleeping with the sun of Heaven shining upon their eyelids, for the text says they are "at ease *in Zion*." They were not at ease in Ethiopia where they have never heard the Gospel. They were not at ease in Sheba, or the ends of the earth where no warning Prophets had been sent.

They were at ease *in Zion* where Wisdom cried aloud in the streets, where her oracles were in every house and where her servitors stand at every door. What is the use of bringing light to these people? We shall not waken them so but perhaps we may do it by reminding them of this light. And oh, while I do this, my dear Hearer, if there is any value in your soul and if it is worth while to be saved, I pray you hear for yourself. "He that has ears to ear, let him hear," while I do in God's name, perform the sorrowful task of endeavoring to wake you out of your sleep.

In the first place you are asleep, *but you know not your danger*. Ah, how many of you foster the sins which *you know* will destroy your souls. You put your hands into the fire knowing it will burn you, yes, and you have the festering blisters still upon you where you were burnt before. You leap into the furnace knowing that you must be consumed, while you can hear the cries of those who, as your companions, have already felt the heat. Oh, I beseech you to remember that to sin in the light is to sin with vengeance. To sin against knowledge is to sin seven times over. He that sins in Sidon or in Tyre is but a petty offender compared with sinners in Chorazin or Bethsaida.

According to the degree of privilege is the degree of sin. He that leaps over hedge and bar and post to destroy himself, is a self-destroyer indeed. He that starves with bread in his hand deserves to starve. He that cries of sickness when the physician lives next door and he refuses to call him in, deserves to die. He that perishes when Christ's Cross is lifted up, when the brazen serpent is held up before his eyes and he is bidden to look to it deserves that the fiery serpent should bite him and that the poison should rankle in his veins. Oh, sin not, I pray you. For you cannot sin so cheaply as others. Strange paradox—to die in the light is to die in the thickest darkness.

But again—*you frequently have arousings*. Oh, I pray God I may never be found among the list of those sleepy preachers who will let their congregations continue peacefully in their sins. I appeal to you—what man's smile have I ever courted—or what man's frown among you have I feared? Have I always been harping upon some sweet doctrine, saying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace"? Have I not told you what sin will bring upon you? Have not these eyes wept over you, while I have cried, "Oh, that you knew your end, that you would consider these things"? Has not this throat been hoarse when I have called out after you in God's name as you were going along the downward path?

I have heard of a preacher, who in order to be spiritual, gave up his ministry because he said it was written, "In the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread." Little was he fit for a minister, for he would soon have known that ministry is the hardest of toil. He who does not know how to combine the two things, to minister and yet to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow, is not a minister of God. If I have preached in such a way that I have found my ministry a light labor. If the preaching of a sermon has been to me but a trifle to be played with—then God be merciful to me for this great evil!

But be assured it is not so. I have come forth some Sunday mornings with the burden of the Lord upon my heart till I have been bowed down with the weight. And there is not a Sunday night and has not been for many a day, when I do not come on this platform in such a state both of body and soul that I pity a dog who has to suffer what I have, under the terror and the weight of the awful responsibility of having to preach to such a crowd as this. If you perish, any one of you, it is not because I have not warned you. It is not because I have not shunned to use plain language, or have selected courtly phrases to make you think me eloquent.

I have come down upon your consciences as with a sledge hammer. I have sought to dash at your hearts that you might turn unto the Lord my God. Woe, then, to those that are at ease under a faithful, laborious and earnest ministry! God have mercy on such! They need it. O Lord, we pray You lay not this to their charge!

But more than this. Have you ever thought of it—you that are unsaved in this congregation and yet are so continually here—that *everything in this place cries out against you?* As often as the pool beneath me is opened and the ordinance of baptism is administered—every candidate descending into the pool bears witness against you. As they say—"I am on the Lord's side," they leave you behind and you have this reflection—oh that you would let it work in you—that you dare not confess Christ. And tonight, when that table shall be spread with the blessed emblems of His body and of His blood, they will cry out against you.

The bread will say to you—"You have never eaten the flesh of Christ." The blood will cry to you—"You have never been able to drink of His blood." The whole communion as it sets forth the dying of the Lord will say to you—"You have no interest in Calvary—you have no part or lot in this matter. You are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." And as each shall partake of that ordinance, you will see the hoary-headed receive it and he will speak to you hoary-headed sinners, old in sin but not yet babes in grace, groveling, like sere-wood, only the more ready for the fire.

And as the young come and take it, they will say to you—"I am young and I know the Savior. You are twice my age and yet you are strangers to Him." You go quickly onwards, but not staying to think of Him who shed His blood for men. But perhaps you say that there are hypocrites among them. Then the very hypocrites warn you and silently testify, watch yourself that you be not a hypocrite. Why, look at this morning's service. If you are still at ease in Zion every part of it has been accusing you. We sung



this morning—"Welcome sweet day of rest." Is it the day of rest for you? That is to say, in a spiritual sense can you rest yourself in Christ?

Do you feel any comfort in the rising of the Lord from the tomb? Could you join in the last verse—

***"Sit and sing myself away,  
To everlasting bliss?"***

Why, was it not a lie upon your lips, unless you are a believer in Christ? And then came the reading of the Word. Was not every verse a thunder-clap against those that are at ease in Zion? And then came the prayer and while we prayed for God's people and your heart wandered, was not the prayer an accusation before Almighty Heaven against you? And now comes the sermon and oh, if that, too, should be slighted and despised, do you think God shall despise it and slight it? No, "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish—to the one we are the savor of death unto death and to the other the savor of life onto life." And do you not see, my dear Hearers, that this very house of prayer, if you are at ease in Zion, accuses you?

When last Sabbath evening I saw the crowds outside—the many hundreds—I might say the thousands who stood waiting there and never gained an entrance though they were willing to tug and strive and have their garments rent from their backs in the struggle—if they might but enter and hear the Word—I thought of some of you who come so comfortably into your seats and yet grow none the better by it. Oh, it were better for you that you had never been born, if you thus sit and hear the Word and hear it ringing in your very soul and yet go away and despise it!

Many of those outside will rise up in judgment against you. "That man," say they, "had a seat I might have had. That man kept me out. And I hearing the Word—who can tell!—I might have received it, but I could not hear and he heard it and despised it." He that has the child's bread and treads it under foot deserves to starve. He that has the river of the water of life and will not drink it, but muddies it with his foot, deserves to die of thirst. And what shall we say of many here present? Do they despise their privileges? Look at the very seat you are sitting in. Why, *it* cries out against you. How many times have you sat upon it and how many times have you gone away unblest?

On the week-night when you were absent, there has been a sinner sat there and was saved. You have occupied that place—well, not so very many times, for we have not been in this house long—but add up the times when you occupied your seat in Park Street and at the Surrey Music Hall, or Exeter Hall. How many sermons have been wasted on you? How many invitations to dead ears, warnings to stony hearts? How many cries of God to ears that would not hear, the weeping of an earnest ministry over that were as flints and the earnest exhortation and admonition of a tender heart to hearts as that were as adamant and would not feel?

Ah, to be at ease in Zion is to be damnably at ease. To be at ease under a faithful ministry is to be at ease in the jaws of Hell. To be at ease when the House and the Gospel and the Sabbath are all crying out against us is to be at ease while God is making ready His sword against us. But I cannot stay longer, nor do I wish to do so! Oh that my heart had language

and could speak without my lips! Oh that I might fling myself at your feet and say to you—"Why will you die, O house of Israel, why will you die?"

I call you to witness that in putting the things of God far from you, you are guilty of willful and aggravated wickedness—for you have been warned not once nor twice, nor twenty times, but so many times as there are Sabbaths in the year! But this is not enough for me merely to say that I am clear from your blood. Oh that you may be clear of it yourselves! Oh, sovereign grace, renew the heart! Oh, Jesus, Conqueror, lead them captive at the chariot-wheels of Your love and make them bow! No human power can do it, but You can do it, Lord, do it for Your glory's sake!

**III.** And now I come to my last point. God give me strength to urge it and may the Holy Spirit send it home. The last point is this—TO SOUND THE TRUMPET IN THE EARS OF THE SLEEPERS.

My trumpet has no great variety of sound. It has but one note. Not one which I give to it, but one which is ordained of God in the text. It sounds—"Woe! Woe! Woe!" There is not a man living among us that knows the full meaning of that word—"Woe." No, there is not a damned spirit in Hell who has got to the bottom of that word—for *there* is an eternity of damnation.—to as we are in an infinity of misery. "Woe, woe to them that are at ease in Zion." I shall bring out but the gentler parts of the note and first I say—woe to you, woe to you, *for how is it at all likely that you ever will be saved?*

When a man has not attended the house of God and is suddenly brought in, we say, "Well, I am glad to see that man come in, who can tell?—the ministry may be blessed." I have noticed that in the innumerable cases of conversion which we have had in this place, the majority have been persons who had not heard the Word long. There have been some few persons who have for five, or six, or ten years, been regular attendants, but these are not many. The majority of cases are those out of the streets and the world who had lived in the habitual neglect of the Word of God. They came in and the Word was with power to their souls. I am not to account for that! I have only noticed it and I state it as the result of a pretty wide observation.

Now how are you to expect to be blessed? I know God can do all things. We are not to limit the Holy One of Israel—but what are the means to be used with you? "Sickness," you say, "perhaps will bless me." But you have been sick, you have had a fever, perhaps the cholera and you thought you repented, but you did not. Why should you be smitten any more? You will revolt more and more. Perhaps you say—"If I had another ministry it might be blessed to me." Oh, I pray you to go and find another. I pray you for your souls' sake find another if you think so.

But if it is that you have heard a faithful and earnest ministry already, then remember God's great means has been used, His greatest means—the preaching of the Word. How then can you hope to be saved at all? And then another thought comes in. You say you have been twenty years a hearer and you are not saved—now is there any probability that you ever will be? God is Sovereign, He can save you. We are only speaking now of probabilities. Does it not seem very probable that if when the Gospel was

very new to you and you took a lovely interest in it and still it was not blessed to you, that now when your ears have got accustomed to our voice till you can go to sleep under it—does it not seem probable that you will never have a blessing under it at all?

Does it not seem probable that the next twenty years, if you live so long, will be as profitless as the twenty that are passed and so you will go unsaved to your graves? I think it was Christmas Evans who used the simile of the blacksmith's dog, which when his master first set up in trade was very much frightened with the sparks. But at last he got to be so used to them that he went to sleep under the anvil. "And so," said the good preacher, "there are many that go to sleep under the Gospel, with the sparks of damnation flying about their nostrils." And certainly there are such here.

I am told that when they are making the great boilers at Bankside, when a man has to go inside for the first time and hold the hammer the noise is so frightful that his head aches and his ears seem to have lost all power of hearing for a long time afterwards. But I am also told that after a week or two a person can go to sleep in the midst of these boilers while the workmen are hammering outside and he would sleep none the less for the noise. So I know there is such a thing as going to sleep under the most thundering ministry.

I know that men get used to these things—used to being invited, used to being warned, used to being thundered at. They have been pleaded with until they sleep under it. Yes, I doubt not they would sleep even if the world were blazing, if the sun were turned into darkness and the moon into blood. And I think that even the trumpet of the archangel would not suffice to wake them from their lethargy, if they heard it long enough to be accustomed to it. Oh, then, shall we give you up as hopeless? I think we almost may. If you have heard so long and been unblest there is no great likelihood that you ever will be blessed. But you will go on as you have been going, till at last you perish.

But, remember—for I must sound this trumpet one moment longer—that being at ease in Zion you are at ease where God will come *first*. Judgment must begin at the house of God. His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor. He begins with His own floor. He shall purify the sons of Levi. He will begin with them that are in His house so that judgment will have to begin with you. What a place to be asleep in! Not asleep in the far ends of that country where the invasion can only come after due and proper notice—but asleep on the coast—when Justice is on board its vessel and is ready to land on the shore. This is to sleep, indeed.

Remember, too, you are asleep where God is most severe. Certain it is, according to Scripture, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgment than for Capernaum, where Christ was preached. Why, you are asleep where Justice deals its heaviest blow—asleep where its sword is keenest, where its battle is hottest and its doom is the most dreadful. Well, if you are sleeping here, methinks you will sleep anywhere and if the thundering of God's great woe cannot suffice to wake you up what can? O God Almighty! What can? You can do it Your-

self. O that You would do it! But it shall be a miracle indeed and a wonder of grace if these sleepers shall be made to wake.

And now I send you not home with the word “woe” in your ears alone. Do you feel the force of what has been said? O my Hearers! Do you feel that it is a solemn thing to have been at ease so long? Do you tremble? Are you saying, “O that I might be saved! O that God would have mercy upon me!” He will do it. HE WILL! The Gospel is free to you still as it always has been and lo, we preach it to you. All He asks of you is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. He has not asked an impossible thing—a hard thing—that which takes weeks to do. It is done in an instant and when His Spirit is present, it is done at once and completely.

“But what is to believe in Christ?” you say. It is to *trust* Him—trust Him with your soul—trust Him with your soul just as it is. Trust Him with it now. I do not say to you, “Go home and pray,” though I hope you will—that is not my errand. I have to say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” That is the way to salvation and you have no need to go home to do that. If the Spirit of God has shown you your need of Christ, that can be done where you are—in the pew. O may the Spirit enable you in your soul thus to cry to God—“I am guilty of all that has been said. I am guilty. I acknowledge it with sorrow. I feel I cannot save myself and that the means of grace cannot save me, for they have been tried and they have failed.

“Lord, I have such a stony heart that nothing can break it but Yourself. I am such a careless, good-for-nothing sinner that the most earnest ministry is lost upon me. I have been pleaded with long, but I have not turned. I confess that all this has aggravated my guilt. I acknowledge it. And now, if You destroy me, Lord, You would be just. But, O save me! Save me!—not for any good thing I have, for, ‘All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but sin.’ But Father, Jesus died. I believe that He is able and that He is willing to save to the uttermost them that come unto You by Him. Just as I am, I put my case into His hands, I am guilty. Lord, I feel it. Oh that I could feel it more, but Lord, I trust in Him.”

Are you touching the hem of His garment and putting your trust in what He did and what He is? Then your sins which are many are all forgiven you. Go in peace. “There is therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” You are saved the moment you believe in Christ. You are saved. His finished work is yours. It needs not a stitch to be added to it. His complete atonement is yours. It needs no blood of bullocks, no tears of man to complete it. It is done. You are saved by His grace. Clap your hands and go in peace.

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# A QUESTION FOR HARD-HEARTED HEARERS NO. 1470

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

***“Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?”  
Amos 6:12.***

THESE expressions are proverbs, probably taken from the familiar adages of the country, but, anyhow, right worthy to be used as proverbs. The wiser men become, the more sententious are their utterances, the more terse and full of meaning are their sayings and, therefore, the wisdom of the wise condenses into proverbs and the language of Prophets is sure to abound in them. But a proverb is generally a sword with two edges, or, if such a metaphor might be tolerated, it has many edges, or is *all* edge and hence it may be turned this way and that way and its back stroke will be as sharp as its direct cut, for every part of it will have force and point. A proverb has often many bearings and you cannot always tell what was the precise meaning of him who uttered it, except by the connection.

Now, I believe that the connection would abundantly tolerate two senses in this place. An ancient commentator asserts that there are *seven* meanings of it and that any one of them would be consistent with the context. I cannot deny the assertion, for if it is correct, it is only one among many instances of the manifold wisdom of the Word of God. Like those curious carved Chinese balls in which there is one ball within another, so in many a holy text there is sense within sense, teaching within teaching and each one worthy of the Spirit of God.

The first sense of the text I would say just a word or two upon is this—the Prophet is expostulating with ungodly men upon their pursuit of happiness where it can never be found. They were endeavoring to grow rich and great and strong by oppression. The Prophet says, “you have turned judgment into gall and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock.” They had transformed the judgment seat into a place where justice was bought and sold and the Book of the Law was made to be the instrument of chicanery and high-handed fraud. “Yet,” says the Prophet, “there is no gain to be gotten this way—no real profit, no true happiness. As well may horses run upon the rock and oxen plow the sand—it is a foolish attempt, it is labor in vain.”

And truly, dear Hearers, if there are any of you, and probably there are, who try to content yourselves with this world and hope to find a Heaven in the midst of your business and your family without looking *upward* for it, you labor in vain! If any of you endeavor to find pleasure in sin and think that it will go well with you if you despise the Law of God and seek your own pleasure by breaking the natural laws which concern your body, you

will find that you have made a great mistake! You might as well seek for roses in the grottoes of the sea, or look for pearls on the bare pavements of the city! You will find what your soul requires nowhere but in God. To seek after happiness in evil deeds is to plow a rock of granite. To labor after true prosperity by dishonest means is as useless as to till the sandy shore.

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not?” Young man, you are killing yourself with ambition and if your objective were worthy, we might not be so grieved, but your ambition is selfish—you seek only your own honor and emolument—and this is a poor, poor objective for an immortal soul. And you, too, Sir, are wearing out your life with anxiety—your mind and body both fail you in endeavoring to amass riches, as if a man’s life consisted in the abundance of the things which he possesses! You are plowing a rock! Your avarice will not bring you joy of heart or content of spirit, but will end in failure.

And you, too, who labor to weave a righteousness by your works apart from Christ and fancy that with the diligent use of outward ceremonies you may be able to do the work of the Holy Spirit upon your own heart—you, too, are plowing thankless sand! No harvest will ever repay your self-elected toils. Merit can no more spring from human hands than fruit from an iron rod! The strength of fallen nature exerted at its utmost can never rescue a soul from the storm of wrath which awaits the guilty. You may row hard to bring that galley of yours to shore, but it shall be broken by the fierce storm. Why, then, attempt the impossible when faith would, in a moment, calm the sea and bring the ship to shore? Woe unto those who kindle a fire, surround themselves with sparks and delight themselves in the blaze of their own kindling, for they shall have this of the Lord—they shall go down in sorrow!

So far, I believe, I have not misread the text, but have mentioned a very probable meaning of the words as they stand in the context. But, still, another strikes me which I think equally suitable and upon it I shall dwell, by God’s help. It is just this. God will not always send His Prophets to warn people, or employ His ministers to call them to repentance. When it turns out that men’s hearts remain obdurate and they do not and will not repent, then God will not always deal with them in mercy. “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” There is a time of plowing, but when it comes to be quite evident that the heart is willfully hardened, then Wisdom, itself, suggests to Mercy that she should give over her efforts. “Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?”

No, there is a limit to the efforts of kindness and in fullness of time the labor ceases—the rock remains a sterile rock, forever unplowed.

**I.** Taking that sense, we shall speak upon it and remark, first, that **MINISTERS LABOR TO BREAK UP MEN’S HEARTS.** This is the first effort of the wise preacher. The servant of Christ who teaches the Gospel, whatever he may be called, is a sower of seed—and though it may appear useless to sow seed upon rocks, we are bound, while acting as evangelists, to

sow our Seed everywhere. Broadcast is our Master's rule—"Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Hence in our Lord's parable a handful fell upon the highway where the birds devoured it and another handful fell upon the rocky soil where it sprung up, but tomorrow perished because it had not depth of earth.

It was no business of the sower to select the soil. He was to sow as he went along, for so his Master told him. But I think he would not be blamed, but commended if he threw *double* handfuls over there where the soil was evidently rich and well prepared! As a sower he was to sow broadcast and leave the Seed to fall where it might under the guardian care of Him who sent Him to sow. But when he became a farmer, he would have further duties and among the rest, that of breaking up the fallow ground that he might no longer sow among thorns.

We have so often sown on the rock and have been so frequently disappointed because of the hardness of the unrenewed heart, that much time must be spent by the pastor, as a lover of men's souls, in trying, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to break up the hard earth—to make it so that it will be receptive of the Seed and ready to nurture the Living Grain after it has fallen there. There are many Truths of God which are used in this plowing and driven in like sharp plowshares to break up the heart. Men must be made to feel that they have sinned and they must be led to repent of sin. They must receive Christ, not with the head, only, but with the *heart*—for with the heart man believes unto righteousness.

There must be emotion—we must cut into the heart with the plowshare of the Law. A farmer who is too tenderhearted to tear up and harrow the land will never see a harvest! Here is the failing of certain Divines—they are afraid of hurting anyone's feelings and so they keep clear of all the Truths which are likely to excite fear or grief. They have not a sharp plowshare on their premises and are never likely to have a stack in their barn. They angle without hooks for fear of hurting the fish and fire without bullets out of respect to the feelings of the birds! This kind of love is real cruelty to men's souls. It is much the same as if a surgeon should permit a patient to die because he would not pain him with the knife, or by the necessary removal of a limb. It is a terrible tenderness which leaves men to sink into Hell rather than distress their minds! It is a diabolical love which denies the eternal danger which assuredly exists and argues the soul into presumption because it thinks it a pity to excite terror and so much more pleasant to prophesy smooth things.

Is this the spirit of Christ? Did He conceal the sinner's peril? Did He cast doubts upon the unquenchable fire and the undying worm? Did He lull souls into slumber by notes of flattery? No, but with honest love and anxious concern He warned men of the wrath to come and bade them repent or perish! Let the servant of the Lord Jesus in this thing follow his Master and plow deep with a sharp plowshare which will not be balked by the hardest clods! This we must school ourselves to do. It may be contrary to our impulses and painful to our feelings, but it must not be left undone to gratify our love of ease and our desire to please our hearers.

If we really love the souls of men, let us prove it by honest speech which costs us pain; by earnest warning which it is more grievous to us to utter than to others to hear! This part of our work is essential to man's welfare and can by no means be omitted. The hard heart must be broken, or it will refuse the Savior whose Glory lies very much in His being sent to bind up the broken-hearted. There are some things which men may or may not have and yet may be saved—but those things which go with the plowing of the heart are indispensable and, therefore, men must have them or hopelessly perish! The heart must be broken up—there must be a holy fear and a humble trembling before God! There must be an acknowledgment of offenses committed and a penitent petition for mercy. There must, in a word, be a thorough plowing of the soul before we can expect that the Seed should bring forth fruit!

**II.** But the text indicates to us that AT TIMES MINISTERS LABOR IN VAIN. "Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?" There are some hearts—there are some in this house tonight, there are some who are always here—who are very hard soil. When the plowman plows, he soon discovers what he is at work upon. I do not suppose that anybody but a minister with considerable experience will understand what I say when I declare that there is a sympathy between the preacher of the Gospel and his hearers of a very intimate kind, even as there is a mutual action between the soil and the plowman.

Though our hearers are silent, they probably speak more to the preacher than he does to them. In a short time a plowman feels whether the plow will go or not and so does the minister. He may use the very same words in one place which he has used in another, or they may seem to him to be so, but he feels in the one place great joy and hopefulness in preaching, while with another audience he has heavy work and little hope mingles with it. The plow in the last case seems to jump out of the furrow—and a bit of the blade is broken off every now and then. He says to himself, "I do not know how it is, but I know I can't get on at this," and he becomes conscious that his Master has sent him to work upon a particularly heavy soil. The people were so far attentive that nobody was asleep—they seemed to drink in every word and yet they were as unmoved as so many statues!

They did not *feel* and did not appear as if they could feel anything. The preacher was ready to stop and burst into tears to see how utterly unfeeling his audience had become, but that did not alter them. He hoped it was no vain regard for his own reputation which distressed him, but that a sincere desire for their good and for the honor of the Truth of God moved him to holy jealousy. But he felt a kind of heart-breaking coming over him because he could make no headway. He was doing his best. The very same that he had done in other places with abounding success and with a sense of joyous ease, he was now doing in heaviness of spirit, conscious that he was wasting effort and that his pleadings were lost upon the people.



All laborers for Christ know that this is occasionally the case. You must have found it so in a Sunday school class. You must have known it to be so in a cottage meeting or in any other gathering where you have tried to teach and preach Jesus. You have said to yourself every now and then, "Now I am plowing a rock. Before, I turned up rich soil which a yoke of oxen might plow with ease and a horse might even run at the work. But now the horse may tug and the oxen may wearily toil till they gall their shoulders—but they cannot cut a furrow—the rock is stubborn to the last degree." There are such hearers in all congregations. They are as iron and yet they are side by side with a fine plot of ground!

Their sister, their brother, their son, their daughter—all these have readily felt the power of the Gospel, but *they* do not feel it. They hear it, respectfully hear it and they allow it free course so far that they permit it to go in one ear and out the other, but they will have nothing more to do with it. They would not like to be Sabbath-breakers and stay away from worship. They, therefore, do the Gospel the questionable compliment of coming where it is preached and then refusing to regard it! They are hard, hard, hard bits of rock—the plow does not furrow them.

Many, on the other hand, are equally hard, but it is in another way. The plow seems to touch them when they hear the Word of God preached, but it is in *seeming* only—the impression is not deep or permanent. They receive it with joy, but retain it not. They listen, apparently with deep attention and they are ready enough to go to a place of worship, as often as ever you like, but it never comes to *practice* with them. They will hear about repentance, but they never repent. They hear about faith, but they never believe. If we were to preach anything other than the Truth of God they would be indignant, for they are very good judges of what the Gospel is—but they have never accepted the Gospel! They will not eat, but still they insist that good bread shall be put on the table. They will not wash, but they will have the hose continually open before them.

They are great sticklers for the very things which they personally reject. They are moved to feeling—they shed tears occasionally. A sentimental tale would make them weep fast enough and, sometimes, the pathos of the preacher stirs them in the same manner, for a time, but their hearts are not really broken up by the Word. They go their way and forget what manner of men they are. Their transient feeling is rather an illustration of their hardness than an instance of true emotion. They are hard, hard, hard, rocky-hearted through and through! They are stony-souled enough to mock the Word of God by feeling and yet not feeling—by the imitation of a sensibility which never amounts to spiritual sensation. We have such in this congregation—the Lord have mercy upon them! While I am speaking, I hope the description will come home to them and that each one of them may listen for himself and feel the plowshare tearing its rough but useful way.

Now, all this is worse because certain of these people, these rocky-hearted people, have been plowed for years and they become harder instead of softer! Once or twice plowing, a broken share or two and a disap-

pointed plowman or two, we might not mind if they would finally yield—but these have, since their *childhood*, known the Gospel and never given way before its power! It is a good while since their childhood, now, with some of them! Their hair is turning gray and they are getting feeble with years. I am addressing those who have heard the Word of God preached in sincerity and earnestness, now, scores and hundreds of times! You have heard wagonloads of sermons! You have been entreated and persuaded times beyond number! You have had invitations and exhortations multiplied ad infinitum!

Yes, and you have been prayed over and wept over, but your hearts are still rocky—labor has been lost upon you. In fact, you used to feel the Word, in a certain fashion, far more, years ago, than you do now! The sun, which softens wax, hardens clay—and the same Gospel which has brought others to tenderness and repentance has exercised a contrary effect upon you and made you more thoughtless, more hardened, more worldly and more contemptuous of Divine things than you were in your youth! We knew it would be so—we told you so years ago—for though we are always unto God a sweet savor, we are among men a savor of death unto death as well as of life unto life! I fear that this sad result is being illustrated in your case.

Why are certain men so extremely rocky? Some are so from a peculiar dullness of nature. There are many people in the world whom you cannot very well move. You would have to put a piece of dynamite under them before you could alarm them, they are so very quiet and cool about everything! They are the same in business—there is nothing sanguine about them, no excitability, no possibility of stir or emotion. They have a great deal of granite in their constitution and are more nearly related to Mr. Obstinate than to Mr. Pliable. Now, I do not think very badly of these people because one knows what it is to preach to an excitable people and to get them all stirred up and to know that at the end they are none the better, but relapse into inaction, whereas some of the more dull and immovable people, when they are moved, are moved, indeed! When they feel, they feel intensely, and they retain any impression that is made.

A little chip made in granite by very hard blows will abide there, while the lashing of water, which is easy enough, will leave no trace even for a moment! It is a grand thing to get hold of a fine piece of rock and to exercise faith about it! The Lord's own hammer has mighty power to break and, in the breaking, great Glory comes to the Most High. Worse, still, certain men are hard because of their infidelity—not heart-infidelity all of it—but an infidelity which springs out of a desire *not* to believe which has assisted itself by manufacturing doubts and discovering difficulties. These difficulties exist and were meant to exist, for there were no room for *faith* if everything were as plain as the nose on one's face! These people have gradually come to doubt, or to *think* that they doubt essential Truths of God and this renders them impervious to the Gospel of Christ—another sad means of hardening the heart till it rivals granite.

A much more numerous body are very orthodox people, but very hard-hearted people for all that. Worldliness hardens a man in every way. It often dries up all his charity to the poor because he must make money and he thinks that the poor *societies* are quite sufficient excuses for neglecting the offices of charity. He thinks how comfortable poor people are when they are attended to by relieving officers! He pretends to believe that our union houses are perfectly palatial establishments and that it would be wicked to give away a penny because he might be helping an imposter and encouraging idleness! At any rate, it is better for him to take care of his worthy self and give the penny to Number One!

Worldliness hardens him in that way and so it does with regard to other things. He has no time to think of the next world—he must spend all his thoughts upon the present one. Money is tight and, therefore, he must hold it tight and when money brings in so little interest, he finds another reason for being the more niggardly. He has no opportunity for prayer—he must get down to the counting house. He has no time for reading his Bible—his ledger needs him. It is of no use to speak to him about eternal things, for he is thoroughly engrossed with the affairs of time. You may knock at his door, but his heart is not at home—it is never at home—it is always in the counting house where he lives and moves and has his being. His god is his gold; his bliss is his business; his all in all is himself! What is the use of preaching to him? As well may horses run upon a rock, or oxen drag the plow across a field sheeted with iron a mile thick!

With some, too, there is a hardness produced by what I might almost call the opposite of stern worldliness, namely, a general levity. Some are naturally butterflies—they never think or want to think! Half a thought exhausts them and they must be diverted or their feeble minds will utterly weary! They live in a round of pleasure and amusement. Their chief delight is giggling—it does not amount to laughter, for it is downright earnest men that laugh—these are too silly, too frivolous for anything but mere childish giggling! They go through the world as if it were a stage and all the men and women only players. It is very little use preaching to them—there is no depth of earth in their superficial nature. Beneath a sprinkling of shifting, worthless sand, lies an impenetrable rock of utter stupidity and senselessness!

I might thus multiply reasons why some are harder than others, but it is a well-assured fact that they are so and there I leave it to notice a third point.

**III.** I shall now ask everybody to judge whether this running of horses upon a rock and this plowing there with oxen shall always be continued? I assert that IT IS UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT GOD'S SERVANTS SHOULD ALWAYS CONTINUE TO LABOR IN VAIN. These people have been preached to, taught, instructed, admonished, expostulated with and advised—shall this unrecompensed work be always performed? We have given them a fair trial—what do Reason and Prudence say? Shall we be bound to continue till we are worn out by this unsuccessful work? We will ask it of men of business! We will ask it of men who plow their own

farms—do they recommend perseverance when failure is certain? Shall horses run upon the rock? Shall one plow there with oxen? Surely not forever!

I think we shall all agree that labor in vain cannot be continued forever if we, first of all, think of *the plowman*. He is not much and he does not need to be much considered, but still, his Master will think of him. See how weary he grows when the work discourages him. He goes to his Master with, “Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Why have You sent me,” he asks, “to a people that have ears but hear not? They sit as Your people sit and they hear as Your people hear—and then they go their way and they forget every Word that is spoken—and they obey not the voice of the Lord by His servant.”

See how disappointed the preacher becomes! It is always hard work when you appear to see no progress although you do your utmost. Nobody likes doing work which will not pay and from which nothing comes! I once looked over a military prison and I saw the soldiers carrying shot from one end of a yard to the other. And it was remarked to me by the warden that some time ago they made the men pile the shot at one end in a pyramid and then take it back to the other end of the yard and pile it there. But as that gave them some kind of amusement, the work was not thought sufficiently irksome and so they made the culprits carry a shot to one end of the yard and bring it back, and thus no pile was formed at either end!

The growing of the little pyramid, though they knew they would have to move it again, afforded a measure of interest to the prisoners and as the work was to be a matter of *punishment* and not of interest, even that was denied them. How frequently we have felt like those poor soldiers in prison, for we have carried the Gospel and brought it back again, seeing no result to our endeavors! With many of you, our work has been all wasted, all useless! Now, will God keep His servants in such work? If they were His prisoners in a military prison, it would be natural He should! But they are not—they are His *sons* and He loves them! Will He keep them to such weary work as this?

Must they always do that which discourages and disappoints them? No man, whoever he may be, likes to be given work which appears to be altogether a waste of time and effort. To his own mind it seems to have a touch of the ridiculous about it and he fears that he will be despised of his fellows for aiming at the impossible. Shall it, then, always be our lot to treat with hard-hearted men and women? Will the great Farmer bid His plowmen spill their lives for nothing? Must His preachers continue to cast pearls before swine? Shall they continue to speak to deaf ears? Must they always expostulate with stones and prophesy to those who are less sensible than the beasts of the field?

If the consecrated workers are so bid of their Lord, they will persevere in their painful task—but their Master is considerate of them and I ask you, also, to consider whether it is reasonable to expect a zealous heart to be forever occupied with the salvation of those who never respond to its anxiety? Shall the horses always plow upon the rock? Shall the oxen al-

ways labor there? Then think again—there is *the Master* to be considered. The Lord—is He always to be resisted and provoked and yet continue to have patience? Many of you have had eternal life set before you as to be received by simply believing in Jesus Christ—and you have refused to believe.

Now, my Lord might have said to me, “Go home. You have done your duty with them. Never set Christ before them again—I am not going to have My Son insulted.” If you offer a beggar in the street a shilling and he refuses and will not have it, you cheerfully put it into your purse and go your way—you do not stand there begging him to have his needs relieved. But, behold, our God in mercy has been begging sinners to come to Him, imploring them to accept His Son! In His condescension He has even come down to be like a salesman in the market, crying, “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters and he that has no money, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” In another place He says of Himself, “All day long have I stretched out My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying generation.”

Well, if the Lord of Mercy has been refused and the Lord of Love has been despised so long in the sight of you who reverence Him, does not some indignation mingle with your pity—and while you love sinners and would have them saved—do you not feel in your heart that there must be an end to such insulting behavior and such matchless patience? You cannot always be pleading with those who will not be persuaded, for he that refuses you refuses Him that sent you! I ask those whose hearts are hard to think of the matter in this light and if they do not respect the plowman, yet let them have regard to his Master.

And then, again, there are so many *other people* who are needing the Gospel and who would receive it if they had it, that it seems as if it would be wise to leave off wearying oneself about these people who will not have it. What did our Lord say? He said that if the mighty things which had been done in Bethsaida and Chorazin had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented! What is more amazing, still, He says that if He had worked the same miracles in Sodom and Gomorrah which He worked in Capernaum, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes! Well, then, does it not occur to us at once to give the Word of God to those who will have it and leave the despisers to perish in their own willfulness? Does not Reason say, Let us send off this medicine for the sick where there are sick people who will value it, for these people refuse it”?

There are thousands of people willing to hear the Gospel! See how they crowd wherever the preacher goes—how they tread upon one another in their anxiety to listen to him! And if these people who hear him every day will not receive the message of God, “in God’s name,” he says, “let me go somewhere else where there is a probability of finding soil that can be plowed.” “Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?” Must I work always where nothing comes of it? Does not reason say, let the Word of God go to China, to India, or to the utmost parts of the earth where they will receive it, for those who have it preached in the corners of

their streets despise it and think it a common thing, if not an utter nuisance?

I shall not lengthen out this argument, but shall just put the question again. Would any one of you continue to pursue an object when it proved to be hopeless? Have you ever attempted to make a child who has been in a fit and fretful, happy and good-tempered? You have said many kind and gentle things and you have used a few sharp words, too, but as my little lord would not come round, you have said to yourself, "Then let him sulk until he has had it out." And if the Lord has sent His servants to speak kind, gracious, tender things and men will not hear, do you wonder if He should say, "Let them alone. They are joined unto their idols. Let them alone."

There is a limit to the patience of men and we soon arrive at it. And assuredly there is a limit, though it is long before we outrun it, to the patience of God! "At length," He says, "it is enough, My Spirit shall no longer strive with them. Now will I henceforth let them alone." If the Lord does this, can any of us blame Him? Is not this the way of Wisdom? Does not Prudence, itself, dictate it? If we put it to any man of thoughtful mind here, he will say, "Yes, yes, it cannot always be that the rock should be plowed by the oxen."

**IV.** Fourthly, THERE MUST BE AN ALTERATION, then, and that speedily. Can this be altered? Can the oxen be taken off the rock? Yes, it can be *easily* done and very likely it will happen before long to some hard hearts now before me. It can be done three ways. First, the person can be taken away so that the unprofitable hearer shall no more hear the Gospel from the lips of his best-approved minister. There is a preacher who evidently touches the man a little and has some sort of power over him, but, as he rejects his testimony and remains impenitent, the preacher shall be removed to another town. The hearer shall now hear monotonous discourses which will not touch his conscience nor disturb his lethargy. He shall go into a lone village, or a foreign land where he shall be no longer persuaded and entreated—and there he will sleep himself into Hell! That may be readily enough done—perhaps some of you are making arrangements, even now, for your own removal from the house of hope.

Another way is to take away the plowman. He has done his work as best he could, now call him off from his hopeless task. Let him go Home. He is weary—let him go Home to his Master! The soil would not break up, but he could not help that, let him have his wages. He has broken his plow at the work—let him go Home and hear his Lord say, "Well done." He was willing to keep on at the disheartening labor as long as his Master bade him, but it is evidently useless, Therefore let him go Home, for his work is done. He has been sick, let him die and enter into his rest. This is by no means improbable.

Or, there may happen something else. The Lord may say, "Now, that piece of rock shall never trouble the plowman any more. I will take it away." And he may take it away in this fashion—the man who has heard the Gospel but rejected it will die. I pray my Master that He will not suffer

this to happen in the case of any one of you, that you should die in your sins—die impenitent—for then we cannot reach you any more or indulge the faint hope for you! No prayers of ours can follow you into eternity! The most ardent lover of your souls cannot hope that there shall be an escape for you after death! There is one name by which you may be saved and that name is sounded in your ears—the name of Jesus! But if you reject Him now, even that name will not save you, for He shall be your terror!

From His face you shall flee away and your great cry shall be, “Rocks, hide me! Mountains, fall upon me! Hide me from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne and from the face of the Lamb.” You will dread Him and well you may dread Him, though at this hour He waits to be gracious to you. I pray you do not destroy your own souls by continuing to be obstinate against Almighty Love. Oh that the *Lord* might do for you what *we* cannot! May He make you willing in the day of His power, for otherwise, as surely as you live and God lives, if it comes to close quarters with you and your offended God—with no Christ between to be the Mediator—it will go hard with you! “Beware,” He says, “you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you.”

Do not mind anything that I say on my own, but look at the Word of God for yourselves and you shall find that the Inspired Scripture has in it terrible threats against impenitent sinners! And there is no imagery, (though borrowed from the mediaeval times, against which our adversaries make so much noise), there is no imagery that at all exaggerates the terror which must actually fall upon every soul that commits suicide by rejecting the Savior and spits into the face of God’s own Christ by saying, “I would sooner be lost than have Him to save me,” for that is, virtually, what every unbelieving soul is saying! O God, grant that some better thing may happen!

I close by asking, is there any alternative to all this? Can nothing else be done? This soil is rock—can we not, somehow sow it without breaking it? No, it must be broken. “You must be born again.” “Except a man receive the kingdom of Heaven as a little child he can in no wise enter therein.” There must be repentance, for without repentance there is no remission of sin. But is there not a way of saving men, somehow, *without* the Gospel and *without* the Grace of God? The Lord Jesus did not say so—He told us to preach as follows—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.” He does not hint at a middle course or hold out a “larger hope,” but He says, “he that believes not shall be damned,” *and so he must be*.

God grant that no soul here may dream that there may, perhaps, be some back door to Heaven, for the Lord has provided none. What then? Shall the preacher be permitted to continue his fruitless toil of plowing? Yes, he is willing. He is willing if there is only half a hope left him—willing to go on and say—“Hear, you deaf and see, you blind, and look you dead!” He will even speak so this day, for his Master bids him preach the Gospel to every creature! But it will be hard work to repeat the word of exhortation for years to those who will not hear it! Happily, there is one other

turn which affairs may take! There is a God in Heaven! Let us pray to Him to put forth His power! Jesus is at His side—let us invoke His interposition! The Holy Spirit is almighty—let us call for His aid!

Brothers who plow and my Brothers and Sisters who help us as we plow and long for our success, cry to the Master for help! The horse and the ox evidently fail, but there remains One above who made both ox and horse and who is able to work great marvels! Did He not once speak to the rock and turn the flint into a stream of water? Let us pray to Him to do the same now! And, oh, if there is one who feels and mourns that his heart is like a piece of rock, I am so glad he has come so far as feeling it, because he who feels that His heart is a rock gives some evidence that the flint is beginning to be transformed. O Rock, instead of smiting you tonight, as Moses smote the rock in the wilderness and erred therein, I would speak to you!

O Rock, would you become like wax? O Rock, would you dissolve into rivers of repentance? O Rock, fall down with that wish! Echo to the voice of exhortation! O Rock, break with that good desire! O Rock, dissolve with that longing for God because He is working upon you now! Who knows, but at this very moment you shall begin to crumble? Do you feel the power of the Word? Did the sharp plowshare touch you, just now, and did you begin to break up? Break and break again, till by contrition you are broken in pieces all asunder, for then will the good Seed of the Gospel come to you and you shall receive it into your bosom—and we shall all behold the fruit thereof!

And so I will fling one more handful of good Seed and have done. If you desire eternal life, trust Jesus Christ and you are saved at once. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth,” says Christ, “for I am God, and beside Me there is none.” He that believes in Him has everlasting life! “Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” O Lord, break up the rock and let the Seed drop in among its broken substance—and get a harvest from the dissolved granite, at this time, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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# PLOWING ROCK NO. 2977

A SERMON  
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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***“Shall horses run upon the rocks? Will one plow there with oxen?”  
Amos 6:12.***

THESE two questions are evidently Oriental proverbial expressions. Proverbs have always been used by the wisest of men. Solomon not only spoke and wrote a great many, but he also made a considerable collection of those uttered by others. We find in the writings of such notable thinkers as Socrates, Pliny and Aristotle, an abundance of short, pithy sentences, many of which can be used as proverbs. Proverbs have great force in them, because they are condensed wisdom. They are generally most convincing—it is hardly ever possible to answer or controvert them. They carry truth home as an arrow has often been known to carry death to the person aimed at, for they strike, they stick, they penetrate, they wound. Our Lord Jesus very frequently made use of proverbs, nor was He singular in doing so. The Prophets of old constantly employed them and here, in our text, we see Amos—who, from his occupation as a herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit, was probably more familiar with their use than some others of the Prophets were—puts together two proverbs which were commonly used to signify that men do not, as a rule, continue to labor in vain and spend their strength for nothing. Wise men do not send their horses to run upon the rocks and they do not send their oxen to plow where all their toil would be wasted—“Shall horses run upon the rocks?” “Will one plow rocks with oxen?” The answer implied is, “Certainly not,” and it means that if a thing cannot be done, or is not worth doing if it can, it will be well for us not to attempt to do it. Our text may have two bearings—first, *upon men* and, secondly, *upon God*.

**I.** First, WITH REGARD TO MEN. They are not usually so foolish as to try to plow a rock, yet many are as foolish as that in moral and spiritual matters!

I want to give you three or four illustrations of this fact. The first is that *many persons have tried to find the way of safety and pleasure in the way of sin*. Many a man has sought to get rich by injustice. Possibly he has succeeded to a certain extent, but, as a general rule, it is notorious that ill-gotten riches are generally ill-spent and bring a curse upon their possessors. Some have thought that if they indulged their passions, they would have great enjoyment. Although their fathers warned them that such a sin would be like self-destruction and would make their whole life

sad, they have not believed it would be so and they have tried to plow this hard rock of sin and to find lasting pleasure therein. There are hundreds and thousands of men who are pursuing the way which is not good—and they know it is not good—yet they foolishly continue in it because they conceive it to be the path of pleasure, nor can you beat that false notion out of their heart, do what you may! On the contrary, they turn upon you and call you a “Puritan” because you object to their style of living. Possibly they revile you as a hypocrite because you point out the evils of the way in which they are walking. Yet if they would but think at all seriously, they must perceive that the way of sin cannot lead to happiness. It is absolutely inconceivable that God, who made the whole universe, should have arranged that the terminus of sin should be Heaven, or should have made the path of evil lead to joy and peace! The Judge of all the earth cannot have put a premium upon wickedness! In the long run, it will be proved that sin brings forth sorrow and that the path of right is the path of peace. Yet many will not see that it must be so and they continue, even to the bitter end of life, to plow that rock, breaking the plowshare, wearing out the ox, and themselves dying a death of miserable disappointment, which, if they had not been arrant fools, they would never have had to endure, for they would never have attempted so hopeless a task as that of trying to find any real pleasure in the ways of sin! As well might you sow the sea with salt and expect to reap from it a harvest of golden sheaves! As well might you scatter firebrands and expect to gather from them the cooling streams that flow from the mountain spring, as live in sin and expect to receive happiness as the result of doing so! Cease, O sons of men—such an act of madness as the plowing of this rock must always be!

Others are attempting another equally absurd task. They are *hoping to find real joy in pursuits which are laudable in themselves, but which are entirely of this world.* Did you ever read the book called *The Mirage of Life*? It is a book which is well worth everyone’s reading. The author gives, in sets of pictures, the life of the man of pleasure, the life of the courtier, the life of the philosopher, the life of the statesman, the life of the warrior and so on with a very fair selection of facts from the lives of such men, with the objective of showing that, although each one of them was eminent in his own line of things—and apparently successful in that line—yet they all failed to find the precious jewel of solid satisfaction. Most of them lived in a sort of perpetual weariness and when, at last, they died, and their eyes were opened, they found that their pretty dreams had all vanished and that the reality, when they beheld it, was dreary indeed. There have been men—perhaps some of you have known them—who have had more wealth than you and I would care to count, yet they have thought themselves poor—and so they really were, for they were incapable of enjoying the riches which they had amassed! There have been men who have been crowned with laurel who have had all sorts of honors heaped upon them, yet, when a friend has wished them a happy new year, they have said, “Then it had need be a very different year from any that we have ever yet experienced.” The high places of the

world, like the mountaintops, are glassy with icy dangers and they are cold with discontent. Many try to clamber up to them—and a few reach the summit, but others perish in the crevasses. Yet those who reach the summit often envy those who are in the valley below, and those in the valley envy those on the heights, for, beneath yon moon, there is no contentment to be found in earthly things either in the peasant's hut or the monarch's palace! The man whose arm is not long enough to grasp that which lies in the land beyond the stars will have to live and die without attaining to perfect satisfaction. Man, it is not here below that God has placed that which you need! The bread for your souls must come from Heaven! That which can satisfy your immortal spirit must be Divine, like the Creator who made you! God alone can satisfy the cravings of your soul. Cease, then, to toil, and tug, and fret, and fume, and waste your time and strength in seeking happiness in these bubbles of earth. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"—insofar as you need them—but as for seeking them *first*, plow that rock no longer, for it will yield you no return for all your toil!

Men of another sort are satisfied that the things of this world are not sufficient to render a man perfectly happy, so *they have religious thoughts of a certain form*. They believe that they are very good, excellent and they mean to make themselves still better and so to get perfect peace by feeling that they are what they ought to be, and have done what they ought to have done! I remember when I plowed that hard rock and entertained the hope of getting a very fine crop off it—but I woke, one morning, to discover that the rock would not yield even the moss or lichen of comfort to me—there was nothing on its surface that could bring me any contentment. Self-righteousness is a great cheat. The man who gets most comfort out of it simply gets that comfort because he is ignorant! If he knew himself and knew God's Law, and knew the demands of inflexible Justice, he would fling upon the nearest dunghill that self-righteousness of his which looks like fair white linen, but which really is, in God's sight, nothing but filthy rags! O Sinner, you cannot find your way to Heaven by your own works, for the only way to Heaven by works is to keep *perfectly* the Law of God—and you have already broken that Law! You must present this matchless vase, flawless and entire, at the gates of Glory if you would be saved by works—but you have already shattered it in a thousand pieces—how can you hope to mend it? That is impossible! The hope of salvation by a perfect life is over and you must, each one, feel that your life has already been imperfect.

*Some hope that they will get perfect peace by the way of ceremonies.* Many people tell us that we are living in a very enlightened age, but I am inclined to think that Carlyle was uncommonly near the mark when he said that "the United Kingdom contains about thirty millions of people, mostly fools," for it does seem as if people, nowadays, are fools to a very large extent. For instance, a man says that if we will come and confess our sins to him, he can forgive us in the name of God—and that he can,

by sprinkling a few drops of water upon a child, and uttering certain words, transform an heir of wrath into an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven! He also says that if we come to what he calls an altar, he will give us the very body and blood of Christ to eat and drink! Well, when I was young, I thought that anybody who talked like that ought to be served like the gypsies who were put in prison for taking sixpences from silly servants and pretending to tell their fortunes! And, in later years, I have been sometimes surprised that the law has not been put in motion against these gentlemen, for certainly the imposture which they seek to foist upon us is a far more terrible one than that of the fortune-telling gypsies! The so-called “priest” has no power to forgive sins, or to change the nature of the child he sprinkles, or to offer the sacrifice of the “mass.” There is nothing more in him than there is in anybody else—and let him talk as loudly as he may, his pretensions are utterly vain and worthless! If you trust to him, the result to you will be the same as it has been to tens of thousands before you, for you will find that all the ceremonies which men have invented, yes, and all the rites that God Himself has given, cannot bring healing to a diseased soul, or hush the tumult of an awakened conscience, or bring the soul into a state of conscious reconciliation with the Most High! O Sirs, you may be sprinkled, and confirmed, and immersed, and go to the Communion Table, and do I know not what besides—yes, you may travel along seven thousand leagues of ceremonialism, but you will be just as uneasy at the end as you were at the beginning! That is not the way of peace, neither will God make it to be so! It is plowing a rock—and no harvest can possibly come of it.

Some are trying the equally impossible task of *being saved by Jesus Christ when they shall have prepared themselves for Him*. In other words, they talk about being saved by Christ, but, in their heart of hearts, they do not think that Christ can save them till they have reached a certain standard of excellence. Now we know, from the Scriptures, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save His people from their sins and He will do it from first to last, or not at all. He will be the Alpha and the Omega—the A and the Z of salvation’s alphabet, or else He will have nothing to do with it! Yet thousands of hearers of the Gospel are constantly saying, “We will believe in Jesus when we feel our sins more—when we feel more repentance—when we have done this and told that, and experienced the other.” Ah, Sirs, this plan of bringing Christ in at the end of the work—after you have accomplished the first part of it yourselves—is a most foolish mistake, and a fatal one, too! It is like setting oxen to plow a rock. Let me ask you—Are you any better than you used to be? You have been trying, for a long while, to make yourselves ready for Christ—are you any more ready than you were at the first? Has it never struck you that Hart’s lines are true?—

***“If you tarry till you’re better,  
You will never come at all!”***

Thus I have shown you how the text can be applied with regard to men.

**II.** Now, secondly, I want to show you how these Proverbs can be applied WITH REGARD TO GOD. “Shall horses run upon the rocks? Will one plow there with oxen?”

God does not always continue to do that which, after a certain period, turns out to be unprofitable. Dear Friends, there are some of you—I pray God to grant that there may not be any of you of whom this will remain true—but it is at present true that *there are some of you to whom the Gospel has come in vain*. Up till now, so far as you are concerned, the Gospel plow has only gone across a rock—the Truth of God preached in your hearing has not gained an entrance into your heart. Oh, how many come and hear us preach merely that they may compare us with other preachers! They pass certain criticisms upon our mode, manner and matter. We do not know, and we do not care what they say, but the point that really concerns us is that we cannot get the Gospel plow into them—we cannot make them feel, and repent, and believe! A great master of the art of preaching once said, when his congregation complimented him on having delivered a fine discourse, “There is another sermon lost.” He did not want his hearers to praise his discourse—he wanted them to feel the power of the Truth of God which he had preached to them! And so do we. But there are some hearers into whom we do not know how to get the Truth of God. We may put it, first in one way, and then in another way—sometimes pathetically and, at other times, we may make use of a little humor. We may denounce or allure, but we are equally foiled in whatever way we attempt to reach them. We cannot get the plow in where we want it to go and if ever the share does seem to make a little impression, it only produces a slight surface scratch. Some of you have had a good many of those scratches. You have thought, “When I get out of this place, I will go home and pray,” but you have not done so. Or, if you have prayed, your seriousness has soon vanished and the impression made upon you in the service has expended itself in that prayer!

What is worst of all, in some of you, *God’s dealing with you, in the preaching of the Gospel, has developed the hardness of your hearts*. It has made others realize how hard they are and, truth to tell, it has really hardened them. Plowing does not harden rocks—but preaching does harden sinners if the Gospel does not reach their hearts and, of all hardhearted men, the hardest are those who have been hardened in the fire of the Gospel! If you want to find a heart that is as hard as steel, you must look for one that has passed through the furnace of Divine Love and has been made aware of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, but has rejected the Truths of God that has been made known to it.

This hardening of heart is *not* the fault of the plowshares which have been used and, *with some of you, God has used a great many*. There is a man here who used to be plowed by God when he was a child, and the plowshares employed then were his mother’s tears. He cannot forget them! Even now, as I bring them to his memory, he feels as if he must weep as he did when he was a child. Ah, my Friend, that mother of yours is in Heaven, now, but if she could look down upon her son, and tears

could be shed in Heaven, what cause she would have to weep over you! She prayed for you when you were nestling in her bosom and she took you to the House of God from your very early days. You can remember her very look when she used to speak to you about Jesus when you were quite a little child! And perhaps you remember her dying request that you would follow her to Heaven. But that plowshare—one of God's best—has never yet cut into your rocky heart and you still remain as hard as you ever were!

Since that time God has tried you with the plowshare of personal sickness. You have not always been such a strong man as you are today. Time was when you lay very near the gates of death and you trembled at the prospect before you! Do you remember when the fever seized you, or when you thought the cholera had claimed you as its victim? You trembled then and you made many vows which all proved to be lies! And you even made a profession of repentance, but it was mere profession—and though you appeared, just for a little while, to be touched—and those who were around you, who had prayed for you, hoped that at last the plowshare had entered into you—they found that you rose up from that bed of sickness worse than you were before!

Since then, God has used another sharp plowshare upon you—the conversion of some of those who are very near and dear to you. You were not at all pleased when your wife came home a converted woman, but you could not help feeling it. And when your sister wrote and told you that she was rejoicing in Christ as her Savior, you could not pour ridicule upon the letter and, as you read it, it brought tears to your eyes. You quickly wiped them away and said that you were not such a fool as to trouble about so absurd a matter, yet it was not easy for you to forget the emotion which the news had caused. Possibly your own dear child, whom you love very much, has made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet you do not know anything, experimentally, about such faith as that. This is a very sharp plowshare and none can think lightly of it but those who are unaware of its operation. To have your relatives and friends converted and to be yourself left out of the happy circle of blessing ought to make you think seriously about this matter!

Another plowshare has gone across your rocky heart from the fact that some of your old companions are dead. One was buried this week, was he not? You used to drink and smoke with him, but there will be no more pipes and beer on a Sunday night for you two! You know right well that he died without the fear of God in his heart and you also know that you are living in the same sad and perilous condition. It gave you quite a shock when someone said to you, "Old Tom is dead." You have also seen several of your business friends die. There was that clerk who was in the office with you a little while ago—he is gone and you have been called to occupy his place. Death has come awfully near you again and again. You have been like a soldier on the field of battle who saw the ranks on every side of him mown down, yet he still lived on. God's plow has been at work with you—He has been trying, by these striking Providential dealings, to touch your hard heart—but it has not yet yielded. Do you

think that God means to keep on plowing you to no effect? If you do, you are wonderfully mistaken, for the oxen will not always plow upon this rock—and when it comes to this—that neither can love melt you, nor terrors subdue you—God will say, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” And when God says that, your doom will be sealed! May God grant that He may never have to say that concerning any whom I am now addressing!

I have thus shown you that you have been like a piece of granite rock, untouched by all the different plowshares which have been tried upon you. There is another thought that you must not forget and that is, *you have wearied the workers*. I pity the poor oxen that have to plow a rock—they plod on and on and all their toil is wasted. The hardest form of labor is that which produces no result. I remember being in a military prison where they punish the men by making them carry cannon balls from one end of the yard to another, and bring them back again—a very senseless practice. The sergeant who accompanied me said, “When we let the men carry the balls from this end of the yard, to make them into a pyramid at the other end, there was some kind of amusement in the task, so the rule was made that the man must carry the ball from this end of the yard and bring it back again, and his toil seems to be so altogether fruitless that it becomes a double punishment to him.” It is certainly a very great trial for a man to have to work for nothing and to feel that all he is doing will result in nothing. There are some of us who have had to do so with you unconverted folk. And sometimes some of us have been very harshly used—we oxen that have to plow such hard rock’s as you are!

The first part of my text asks, “Shall horses run upon the rock?” I remember going over a smooth, rocky place in the Alps which is called Hell-Place because it is so very slippery. Well, horses could not be expected to run over rocks like those, and it is not surprising that they sometimes trip! And if the preacher occasionally trips, it is little wonder when he has such rocks as those to go over. George Herbert says that the sins of hearers sometimes make the preacher trip, and so it is. There is often, in the hearer, that which makes the preacher speak amiss. I remember pleading one night here with all my soul, and I said, “If some of you who are listening to me, never mean to accept Christ as your Savior, do not continue to sit in this place and hear the Gospel, but go away and let somebody who will accept Him, occupy your seat.” I did not think that one of my hearers would take me at my word, but there was one, over whom I have never ceased to lament, and for whom I still pray, who says that he will never come here again because he is one of those who will never receive Christ and, though he would still like to hear me preach, he will never occupy another person’s place. It was a mistake on my part to say what I did, but I do not think I would have tripped like that if the rock had not been so hard and smooth!

It is hard for a horse to have to run upon such a rock as that and it is hard for the oxen to keep on plowing there. I have had over 20 years of this kind of plowing upon some of you—and I have made nothing of you

yet. Thank God, there are not many of your sort, but there is still a remnant left of the old Park-Streeters who were “almost persuaded” then, and they are still “almost persuaded.” And I am “almost persuaded” that I shall never be able to do them any good. It seems to me that there is nothing which I can say that will ever reach their hearts, or else, surely, it would have reached them before now! I am always glad when I hear that some other preacher attracts them and that they are listening to him with interest, for, as long as they get saved, I do not mind how it is done. Still, it is hard lines for us to have to preach for 20 years to some of you and to have all that labor for nothing. If anybody could teach me how to preach better, I would gladly go to school, again, and learn how to get at some of your hearts. If they would teach me how to speak in such a vulgar style that I would lose my reputation, but be blessed to the saving of your souls, I would willingly fling my reputation to the winds! Or if I could learn the art of oratory, I would go and sit at the feet of Cicero or Demosthenes, if I could but get at your superfine hearts that need such fine words before they will be touched! But I fear that it is the oxen’s fate to go on plowing, and plowing, and plowing—and to get weary with the labor, and yet to see no result of it all.

One other thing that I want you to remember—you who remain unconverted after all this effort—and that is *if the same labor which has been lost upon you, has been used elsewhere, it might have been profitable*. Christ said, concerning Bethsaida and Chorazin, a very amazing thing which I do not fully understand, but which I absolutely believe—“If the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” It is a very extraordinary thing that God would send the Gospel to men who do not get any good out of it, and not send it to people who would have got good out of it! There are people, possibly, even in London, certainly, in other parts of the earth, who would have been converted if they had heard the Gospel as much as you have—yet you have heard it and have not been converted! That same digging about and fertilizing that would have made other trees bring forth much fruit, has been used in vain upon you, for you have brought forth no fruit. And you have stood there and occupied a plot of ground which a better tree might have occupied. You have cumbered the ground—do you think that God will always allow you to do that? Have you—who live in the country and have a large orchard—have you a tree that has borne no fruit for many years? I am sure that, if so, you mean to have it cut down before long—and God means to have some of you cut down—and that, it may be, before long! I tremble even as I speak to you thus, for I may be a Prophet foretelling the destruction of your soul! May God, in His infinite mercy, grant that you may repent before His axe of Judgment falls upon you!

Any man in his senses, when he finds that the rock will not break, gives up plowing it. The ancient proverb says, “Will one plow there with oxen?” and God, though infinitely merciful, is equally wise. And if, after the use of means which are blessed elsewhere, any heart still remains hard, He may fairly say, “I have done with it. I give it up to its natural



rockiness and so let it continue forever.” That is the end of the matter and a terrible end it is! And I do not know anything more that I can say about it. I have preached the Gospel thousands of times and I have nothing to preach but the Gospel—but these people will not have it, so what more can I say to them? A man came to me the other day and asked me to pray for him. He was one to whom I had many times explained the Gospel and after I had again done so, he said to me, “Will you pray for me, Sir?” I said, “No, I will not.” He asked, “Why not?” and I replied, “Do you want me to ask God to save you apart from the Gospel? I have told you the Gospel again and again—will you accept it? If you will not, I shall not ask God to save you. How can I do so? I cannot expect Him to save you if you will not have the Gospel. If you will have it, that will save you. If you will not have it, you will be lost and it is no use for me to pray for you.”

There I had to leave the matter so far as that man was concerned, but let me say this much to God’s people—You see that we cannot do anything with this rock. The oxen are quite tired out with their useless labor, so let us pray to God to turn that rock into good soil. It needs a miracle to be worked and only God can work it. Let us unite our prayers and cry to God, “O Lord, You did change our rocky hearts into good soil, where the Good Seed could enter, germinate and grow. Change these rocks, we beseech You!” Here is the reason for our Prayer Meetings and for our private intercession. We can do nothing with these rocky hearts, so let us turn to God who can do everything! Then I may add that if you will pray God to change these rocky hearts, I will go on preaching to them! The weary ox will go on plowing again, hard as it has found the work for these 20 years and more. If you will pray, I will preach! If you pray God to make the rock brittle and break it up, I will plow it again, and I should not wonder if the plowshare gets into some of them at last, so that there may yet be a golden harvest to God’s honor and Glory!

Let me put the plow in one minute more. The greatest rock-breaking plow that I know of is the one that broke me up. If that will not do it, I do not know of any other that will. When Christ died upon the Cross, among other wonderful things that happened, we read that “the rocks rent, and the graves were opened.” Ah, it was a dying Christ that rent the rocks! Sinner, listen once more to—

***“The old, old story  
Of Jesus and His love.”***

You have offended and grieved your God and my God is just—and must punish you for your wrongdoing. But, in order that He may not punish you, He has taken upon Himself your nature and come into this world to suffer in the sinner’s place and borne what was due to human sin in His own body on the Cross! Out of pure love to those who were His enemies, out of love to those hearts that are so hard that they will not love Him, out of love to those who have, perhaps, for 50 years rejected and despised Him—for love, for the sake of love, alone, He died upon the Cross, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” And now,

if you will trust Him, you shall at once have the pardon of all your sins! If you will trust Him, you shall be—

***“To the great Father’s bosom pressed,  
Once for all a child confessed!”***

You shall be cleansed in a moment and accepted and saved forever if you do trust the Incarnate, dying, risen, glorified Redeemer! God grant that this plowshare of the Cross may touch you! Law and terrors, I know full well, do not affect some men, but Almighty Love—will that not affect them? God grant that it may, and unto Him shall be glory forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
AMOS 6:1-8; 7:1-6.**

Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. His words are rugged, but sometimes he rises to sublimity. His expressions are somewhat dark and not readily understood, but when we learn the meaning of them, we perceive that they are full of deep, earnest, solemn warning and instruction.

**Amos 6:1.** *Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!* It was a time of great sin and also of great judgment, yet there were some in Zion who were quite at ease under all that was happening. No sense of sin grieved them, no thought of coming judgment alarmed them. What did they care if the nation went to rack and ruin? What did it mean to them that God was angry with His people? They were atheists or, at least, they acted as if they were! Whatever might happen, they would run the risk of it. “Woe,” says God, to all such people as these—and when the Lord says, “Woe,” to anyone, it is indeed woe, for He never speaks thus without cause.

**2.** *Pass you unto Calneh, and see; and from there go you to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? Or their border greater than your border?* The Lord points to other cities which had been destroyed—to Calneh, and Hamath, and Gath which He had smitten because of the sin of the people who had lived there, and He says, “You that dwell at Jerusalem, and you that live at Samaria, do not imagine that you will escape the consequences of your sin. I was able to reach the inhabitants of these proud cities, despite their strong fortifications and their powerful armies—and I can also reach you.” So, when we look back upon the judgments of God upon guilty men, we may conclude that no sinner has any right to think that he shall escape. The proudest and mightiest have been brought down by God and so will men who dare to resist the Most High continue to be humbled, even to the world’s end.

**3.** *You that put far away the evil day.* You who say, “There is time enough yet. Let us see a little more of life; why need we be in a hurry to seek salvation?” “You that put far away the evil day”—

**3.** *And cause the seat of violence to come near.* For, when men try to postpone thoughts about “the judgment” which is to follow “after death,” they are generally the more eager to indulge in sin. They say, “There is time enough yet,” because they want a longer period for yet greater indulgence in sinful ways. The Lord cries, “Woe,” to all such people as these.

**4.** *That lie upon beds of ivory.* They were men of wealth who spent their money upon all manner of luxuries while the poor of the land were perishing through need.

**4.** *And stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall.* It was, as I have said, a time of danger when war was at the gates, but the people were so careless that they lived as if peace were established forever and the enemy could never touch them! Their expenditure was at a high rate for self-indulgence and only for that.

**5.** *That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instrument of music, like David.* But not for the same purpose as David played and sang—his instruments of music were used for spiritual solace and the worship of God—but these people set their wits to work to find out how their music might inflame their lusts and be a vehicle for the expression of their lascivious desires.

**6.** *That drink wine in bowls.* For seldom can a careless man crown the edifice of his sin without indulging in drunkenness! He must have the sensual delight that he finds in “the flowing bowl.”

**6.** *And anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.* It is not wrong for a person, to whom God has given much of the good things of this life, to enjoy them fitly and reasonably. The sin of these people consisted in the fact that when others were afflicted, they took that opportunity to indulge themselves in all the delights of the flesh. And when God’s rod was being used for chastisement, they went on with their sinful mirth to show how little they cared about it. Probably I am addressing some who have, at this very moment, a sore sickness in the house. Or it may be that a beloved wife is scarcely cold in her grave, or a dear child has only just sobbed itself into its death-sleep—yet the survivors are running after amusements, pleasures and follies more wildly than ever, as if to hush the voice of conscience and to forget the strokes of God’s rod! Oh, that this very solemn chapter might convey a warning message to them!

**7.** *Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.* Whenever God does come forth to execute judgment upon the ungodly, He will first pick out those who have defied Him the most. Those who have the proudest spirit and the hardest heart shall be the first to feel the strokes of His rod.

**8.** *The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, says the LORD, the God of Hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.*

The next chapter shows that even when God was very angry with the wicked, there was still wonderful power in prayer.

**Amos 7:1-3.** *Thus has the lord God showed unto me; and, behold, He formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowing. And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech You: by whom shall Jacob arise? For he is small. The Lord repented for this: it shall not be, says the LORD.* In a vision, the Prophet saw the locusts or grasshoppers come to devour all the green things of the land—a very terrible visitation! If you have never seen it, you cannot realize how utterly bare everything is made after the visit of the locusts. The Prophet put up a vehement and earnest prayer. He cried, “O Lord God, forgive!” And no sooner was the intercession offered than the Lord said, “It shall not be.” Thus the impending judgment was turned away.

**4-6.** *Thus has the Lord God showed unto me: and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech You: by whom shall Jacob arise? For he is small. The Lord repented for this. This also shall not be, says the Lord God.* This time the Prophet saw the fire devouring the land—perhaps the fire of war which casts its blazing brand upon peaceful dwellings. This fire, however, was something worse than that, for the very deep itself seemed to be licked up by tongues of flame and the Prophet, in hearty sympathy with the afflicted people, cried again as he had done before, and the answer came, “This also shall not be, says the Lord God.” This ought to encourage you who are the King's remembrancers to make use of the position in which His Grace has placed you, and to cry earnestly to Him to turn away His wrathful hand and have pity upon sinners! God grant that many of us may have such an intercessory spirit as that of Amos the herdsman-Prophet!

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—551, 527.  
AND FROM “SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS”—20.**

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

# THE KING'S MOWINGS

## NO. 3129

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
EARLY IN THE YEAR 1872.

*"The king's mowings."*  
*Amos 7:1.*

CERTAIN lands belonged to the king so far that he always took the first cut of grass for himself and left any aftermath to those who worked upon the land. Now, our great King has His mowings, too. His Church is the field which He has enclosed and blessed. At set seasons the King takes His mowings. Lately, beyond any other time in my life that I remember, the King has been taking His mowings in and around the Church of which He has made me overseer. One has spent many hours at the bedsides of the dying and in trying to console the bereaved. Our loss, if I may venture to call it a loss, as a Church, at the opening of this year was extremely heavy. The King has been taking His mowings among us and has cut down here, one, and there, another. When churches commence with a great many young members, there would naturally not be so many deaths at first, but as we all grow old together, there must be a large proportion of removals from this world into the land above. I purpose to speak a little upon that subject and I shall do so in a threefold way—first, by way of *consolation*. Then, by way of *admonition*. And then by way of *anticipation*.

I. First, by way of CONSOLATION. It is a sorrowful matter that our Beloved Brothers and Sisters should be taken from us. We were not more but less than men if we did not sorrow. Jesus wept and by that act He sanctified our tears. It is not wrong, it is not unmanly—much less is it sinful for us to drop the tear of sorrow over the departed—yet let us help to wipe those tears away with a handkerchief of sacred consolations.

First, seeing that "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass," do you lament that the King has been mowing? Then let this thought chide you. *The King Himself has done it!* There is no such abstract thing as death—an unloosed monster devouring the saints at will—"Drinking the blood of men and grinding their bones between his iron teeth." This is a poet's raving! No destroying angel is sent forth to slay the Israel of God! There is a destroying angel, it is true, but He comes not near those who bear the blood mark. It is not in the power of disease or accident to kill the children of God except as instruments in the Divine hand. No saint dies otherwise than by the act of God! It is always according to the King's own will—it is the King's own doing. Every ripe ear in His field is gathered by His own hand, cut down by His own

golden sickle and by none other. Every full-blown flower of Grace is taken away by Him, not smitten with blight, or cut down by the tempest, or devoured by some evil beast—

***“When mortal man resigns his breath,  
’Tis God directs the stroke of death.  
Casual however the stroke appear,  
He sends the fatal messenger.  
The keys are in that hand Divine—  
That hand must first the warrant sign  
And arm the death, and wing the dart  
Which does His message to our heart.”***

The Lord has done it, in every case, and knowing this, we must not even think of complaining! What the King does, His servants delight in, for He is such a King that, let Him do what seems good to Him and we will still bless Him—we are of the mind of him who said, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.”

Again, *those who have been mown down and taken away are with the King.* They are the King’s mowings! They are gathered into His stores. They are not in “purgatory” (a Romanist lie). They are not in the *limbus patran*, much less are they in Hell. They are not wandering in dreary pathways amidst the stars to find a lodging place. Jesus prayed, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” And this prayer has fixed the saints’ abode! We shall enter into no question, now, about whether Heaven is a place, or where it is, or whether it is merely a state—it is enough for us that where Jesus is, there His people are—not some of them in lower seats, or in lower rooms, or sitting outside, but they are all where *He* is! That will certainly content me. And if there are any degrees in Glory, you who want the high ones may have them. The lowest degree that I can perceive in Scripture is, “that they may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory”—and that lowest degree is as high as my most vivid imagination can carry me! Here is enough to fill our souls even to the brim.

And now do you sorrow for those who are with Christ where He is? Do you not almost blame your tears when you learn that your beloved ones are promoted to such blissful scenes? Why, Mother, did you ever wish for your child a higher place than that it should be where Jesus is? Husband, by the love you bore your wife, you cannot grudge her the Glory into which she has entered! Wife, by the deep devotion of your heart to him who has been taken from you, you could not wish to have detained him a moment from the joy in which his soul now triumphs with his Lord! If he were gone to some unknown land, if you could stand on life’s brink and hear the roaring billows of a dread mysterious ocean and say, “My dear one has gone, I know not where, to be tossed like a waif or stray upon yonder tempestuous sea,” oh, *then* you might mix your own tears with the brine of that ocean! But you know where they are, you know with Whom they are and you can form some idea, by the joy of Christ’s Presence here on earth, what must be their bliss above!—

***“Sounds of sweet melody fall on my ears.  
Harps of the blessed, your music I hear!  
Rings with the harmony Heaven’s high dome,  
Joyfully, joyfully bring the saints Home.”***

It is a sweet reflection, too, that although our dear friends have been cut down like flowers by the scythe, yet *their lot is better than ours*, though we are standing and blooming today. Life seems better than death and the living dog is better than the dead lion—but take into account the *everlasting state*—and who will dare to say that the state of the blessed is worse than ours? Will not all assert that it is infinitely superior? We are still suffering, but they shall smart no more. We are weak and tottering, but they have regained the dew of their youth! We know what need means and wipe the sweat of toil from off our face, but they rest in abundance forever! The worst of all is that we still sin and have to wrestle hard with doubts and fears. Satan still besets us, the world is around us and corruptions fester within us. But they are where not a wave of trouble can ever break the serenity of their spirit! They are beyond the barking of the Hell dogs and beyond the arrows of Hell’s quiver, though there are archers who would shoot their darts into Heaven itself if they could! The ingathered ones are supremely blest! They are far beyond what we are in joy, knowledge and holiness! Therefore, if we love them, how can we mourn that they have gone from the worse to the better—and from the lower to the higher room?

And, moreover, Brothers and Sisters, although some of you sorrow very bitterly because God has taken away the desire of your eyes with a stroke, let me remind you that *you might have had a worse sorrow than this concerning them*. Ah, the mother who has to mourn over an adult son who has become a profligate, has a thousand times more bitter pang than she has who seen her infant carried to the grave! The father who knows that his sons or daughters have become a dishonor to his name may well wish that he had long ago seen them laid in the silent tomb. And I have known men in the Church whom I would sooner have buried a thousand times over than have lived to see what I have afterwards seen in them! For years they stood as honorable professors—but they lived to dishonor the Church, to blaspheme their Lord, to go back into perdition and prove that the root of the matter was never in them! Oh, you need not weep for those in Heaven! Weep not for the dead, neither bewail them—but weep for the *spiritually* dead—weep for the apostate and backslider! Weep for the false professor and the hypocrite—“the wandering stars,” “to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” If you have tears, go and shed them there—but for those who have fought the fight and won the victory, for those who have stemmed the stream and safely landed on the other side—let us have no tears! No, put away the sackbut and bring forth the clarion! Let the trumpet ring out jubilantly the note of victory! It is to them the day of jubilee—why should it be for us the hour of sorrow? They put on the crown and bear the palm branch in their hands—why should we don the funeral weeds? There is infinitely more to rejoice in than there is to sorrow for! Therefore let our hearts be

glad. The Lord has said to them, "Well done," and rewarded them according to His Grace—and this is infinitely better than that they should have lived to slip and slide!

"But this is poor comfort," you will say, and therefore let me come back to the text and say that *the King has taken His mowings*. Sorrowful as we may be, it is not the worst sorrow that we could have, but whether or not, we must not grudge the King any whom He takes from us. All the friends we have are lent us. The old proverb says, "A loan should go laughing home," that is we should never be unwilling to return a loan, but cheerfully give it back to the lender. Our dear ones were lent to us and what a blessing they have been to us! The lamps of our house, have they not been the joy of our day? The Master says, "I need them back again," and do we clutch at them and say, "No, Master, You shall not have them"? Oh, it must not be so! Our dear ones were never half as much ours as they were Christ's! We did not make them, but *He* did! We never bought them with our blood, but *He* did! We never sweat a bloody sweat for them, nor had our hands and feet pierced for them, but *He* did! They were lent to us, but they belonged to Him! Your prayer was, "Father, let them be with me where I am," but Christ's prayer was, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." Your prayer pulled one way and Christ's pulled another. Be not envious that Christ won the suit! If I ever enter into the Lord's Court of Chancery, if I find that Christ is on the other side, my Lord, I will not plead. You shall have Your will, for I and You and You and I are one—and if it is Your plea that all I love may be with You, so be it, for I shall be with You, too, before long, and I would not quarrel with Your wish. The King has let out this Church like a pasture to us and He says, "I must sometimes take My mowings." Well, He has so watered us and given us the smell of a field that the Lord God has blessed, that when He comes and takes His rent, we may not stand at the gate and forbid Him, but say, "Good Master, come and take which You will! Take your quit-rent, for the field is all Your own. You have dearly purchased it and You have tilled it with much diligence—take what You will, for it is Yours."

And, let me add, to increase our comfort *the King took His mowings at the right time*. Out of those whom He has taken away from us, I think we must all confess that the Lord took them when they should be taken. In one case, a venerable Sister, who if she had lasted longer, would have been the prey of weakness and of pain—'twas well she fell asleep. In another case, a dear young friend was pining under that fell disease, consumption—her throat was scarcely able to receive nourishment—I think those who loved her best must have felt relieved when at last she fell asleep. Two Brothers rise before my mind's eye—the one struggled through life and wondered often that he did not sink before, for he was like a ship unfit for sea which every wave threatens to engulf! It is a wonder that he survived as long as he did. He served his Lord up to the last and when all was over, it was well. Another, whom I saw with an afflicting disease about him that had brought him very low, had led so gracious a life that he did not need to utter any dying testimony. Beloved



Brothers, also, who were once with us in the College have fallen asleep, having finished their course and kept the faith.

I may add that not only did the King take His mowings at the right time, but in every case I have now before my mind, *He took them in the easiest way*. He took them gently. Some have a hard fight for it at the last, but in these cases, though there were pains and dying strife, yet at the last their souls were kissed away by the dear lips of Him who named them by their names and said they were His! They fell asleep, some of them so sweetly that those who looked on scarcely knew whether it was the sleep of life or the deeper sleep of eternity. They were gone—they were gone at once to their Lord and their God! Putting all these things together—reflecting that the King has done it, that those He has taken away He has taken to be with Himself, that their present lot is an infinitely better one than anything beneath the moon and considering, too, that we must never grudge the King the heritage which He has so dearly bought, and that He took His mowings at the right time and took them in the happiest manner—we will no longer repine, but we will bless the Lord!

**II.** And now, Brothers and Sisters, allow me for a few minutes to use the subject by way of ADMONITION.

I hardly know whether, under this head, I have grouped together thoughts that are quite admonitory. The first one is to be very joyous. It is this—that *as we belong to the King, our hope is that we shall be mown too!* We are sitting on the banks of Jordan, especially some of us who are of riper years, waiting for a summons to the court of the Eternal King! It becomes a wonder, sometimes, with aged Christians, why they stay here so long. John Newton, I think, used to marvel at his own age! And Rowland Hill used to say that he half imagined they had forgotten him—and hoped they would soon remember him and send for him. Well, we have not quite gone that length—we who are young—but still we entertain the hope that some fair evening, calm and bright, the angel reaper will come with the scythe. Then shall we, having fulfilled, like the hireling, our day, lay down our tools of labor and take our rest. Then shall we put down our sword, take off our breastplate and unloose the shoes of iron and brass, for we shall fight no more, but take the palm and claim the victory before the House of God! Never let us look forward to this with dread. It is amazing that we should do so—and we would not if our faith were stronger. When faith vividly realizes the rest that remains for the people of God, we are tempted to long to be up and away! Then why should we wish to linger here? What is there in this old musty worn-out world—worm-eaten and full of holes, with its very gold and silver cankered—that can satisfy an immortal spirit? Let us away to the hills of spices and to the mountains of frankincense, where the King in His beauty stands with “helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim” and all the hosts that serve Him day and night, to behold His face, and evermore adore Him! Let us anticipate cheerfully the time when the King’s mowings shall also include us!

Brothers and Sisters, the admonition that arises out of all this is, *let us be ready*. Should not every Christian live every day as if he were going to die that day? Should we not always live as if we knew our last hour to be at the door? If a man in his right state were informed all a sudden, "You will die tonight!" He ought not to have to alter his mode of life one atom! He should be so living that he had nothing more to do but to continue his course. It is remarked of Bengel, the great critic, that "he did not wish to die in spiritual parade, but in the ordinary way—like a person called out to the street door from the midst of business—so much so that he was occupied with the collection of his proof-sheets at his dying season, as at other times." To me, it seems to be the very highest kind of death to die in harness—concluding life without suspending service. Alas, many are unready and would be sadly put about if the midnight cry were suddenly heard. Oh, let us see that everything is in order! Both for this world and the next, *nothing* should be left to be hurried over in the last few hours. Christian, is your will made? Are your business affairs all straight? They ought to be—everything ought to be as nearly as you can keep it in perfect order, so that you are ready to go at any minute. Mr. George Whitefield used to so live in anticipation of death that he said, "I never go to sleep at night with even a pair of gloves out of place." Oh, that we would be habitually ready and in order—especially in higher matters—walking before the Lord, as preparing to meet Him!

Then, dear Friends, this departure of many of our fellow workers, while it admonishes us to be ready to go, at the same time *teaches us to do twice as much while we are here, seeing that our numbers are being so constantly thinned*. A brave soldier, in the day of battle, if he hears that a regiment has been exterminated by the enemies shot and shell, says, "Then those of us that survive must fight all the more bravely! There is no room for us to play at fighting. If they have slain so many, we must be more desperately valiant." And so, today, if one here or there is gone, a useful worker from the Sunday schools, or from the street preaching, then it is time our broken ranks were repaired! O you young men, I pray you, fill up the gap! And you young women who love the Savior, if a Sunday school teacher is gone and you are teaching, teach better! Or if you are not teaching, come and fill the place! My dear Brothers and Sisters, I pray for recruits. I stand like a commander in the midst of my little army and see some of the best smitten down—here one and there one—and what can I do, but as my Master bids me, lead you on and say, "Brothers and Sisters, step into their places! Fill the gaps in the ranks!" Do not let death gain upon us, but even as one goes into the Golden City, let another cry, "Here I am! Call me, also, to my reward!" As for us who are at work, we must labor more zealously than ever, we must pray more fervently than ever! When a certain great man suddenly died in the ministry, I remember, in my young days, an old preacher saying, "I must preach better than ever I did, now that Mr. So-and-So is gone." And you, Christian, whenever a saint is removed, say, "I must live the better to make up to the Church the loss which it has sustained."

One other thought, by way of admonition. *If the King has been taking His mowings, then the King's eyes are upon His Church.* He has not forgotten this field, for He has been mowing it! We have been praying lately that He would visit us. He has come, He has come! Not quite as we expected Him, but He has come, He has come! Oh yes, and as He has walked these aisles and looked on this congregation, He has taken first one, and then another. He has not taken me, for I am not ready. And He has not taken you, for you are not quite ripe—but He has taken away some that were ripe and ready—and they have gone to be with Him where He is. Well, then, He has not forgotten us, and this ought to stimulate us in prayer! He will hear us! His eyes are upon us! This ought to stimulate us to self-examination. Let us purge out everything that will grieve Him! He is evidently watching us. Let us seek to live as in His Presence—that nothing may vex His Spirit and cause Him to withdraw from us!

Beloved, these are the words of admonition.

**III.** And, now, a few more words by way of ANTICIPATION. I hardly know under what head to place them. What anticipations are there that come out of the mowing?

Why these. *There is to be an after-growth.* After the King's mowings, there came another springing up of fresh grass which belonged to the King's tenants. So we expect, now that the King has been mowing, that we shall have a fresh crop of grass! Is there not a promise, "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses?" Fresh converts will come and who will they be? Well, I look around, but I will not say, with Samuel, as I look at some young man in the gallery, "Surely the Lord has chosen him." Neither will I look down to someone in that area and say, "Surely the Lord has chosen *him*," but I will bless God that I know He has chosen some and that He means to make this fresh grass spring up to fill up the vacuum caused by the King's mowings!

Do you know who I should like to come if I might have my preference? Well, where the daughter has died, how glad I should be if the father came, or the brother came. And where the father has died, how I would rejoice if the son should come! And where a good woman has been taken away, how glad would I be if her husband filled up her place! It seems to me as if it were natural to wish that those who loved them best should occupy their position and discharge their work for them. But if that cannot be, I stand here tonight as a recruiting sergeant. My King in His wars has lost some of His men and the regiment needs replenishing! Who will come? I put the colors in my hat, tonight, but I will not stand here and tempt you with lies about the ease of the service, for it is hard service! Yet I assure you that we have a blessed Leader, a glorious conflict and a grand reward! Who will come? Who will come to fill up the gaps in the ranks? Who will be baptized for the dead, to stand in their place of Christian service and take up the torch which they have dropped? I will pass the question round and I hope that many a heart will say, "Oh, that the Lord would have me! Oh, that He would blot out my sins and receive

me!" He delights in contrite hearts! He saves such as are of a contrite spirit. He will save whom He will have, but the way to be enlisted is plain! "Oh," you say, "what must I give to be Christ's soldier?" To be the queen's soldier, you do not give anything—you receive a shilling. You *take* in order to be a soldier of the queen, and so, to be Christ's soldier, you must take Christ to be your All-in-All, holding out your empty hand and receiving of His blood and righteousness to be your hope and your salvation! Oh, that His good Spirit would sweetly incline your wills that one after another might be made willing in the day of His power! May He thus do—and our hearts will greatly rejoice!

As I read the passage in Amos from which I have taken my text, I noticed something about caterpillars. (The marginal reading calls them "green worms"). It is said that after the King's mowings, there came the caterpillars to eat up the after growth. Oh, those caterpillars! When the poor Eastern farmer sees the caterpillars, his heart is ready to break, for he knows that they will eat up every green thing! And I can see the caterpillars here tonight. There is the great green caterpillar that eats up all before him—I wish I could crush him. He is called the caterpillar of procrastination! There are many, many other worms and locusts which eat up much, but this worm of procrastination is the worst, for just as the green blade is beginning to spring up, this caterpillar begins to eat. I can hear him gnawing, "Wait, wait, wait! Tomorrow, tomorrow! A little more sleep, a little more sleep, a little more sleep!" And so this caterpillar devours our hopes. Lord, destroy the caterpillar and grant that instead of the fathers, may be the children! Instead of the King's mowings, may there come up the after-growth who shall be a rich reward to the farmer and bring glory to the Owner of the soil!

We have reason to pray that the Lord would send the dew and the rain to bring forth the after-growth. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass." Now this congregation is like mown grass. God has mown it—a rich mowing has the King taken from us. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, we have the promise—let us plead it before the Throne of God. All the preaching in the world cannot save a soul, nor all the efforts of men. But God's Spirit can do everything! Oh that He would come down like rain upon the mown grass right now! Then shall we see the handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains multiply till its fruit shall shake like Lebanon and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. The Lord send it, the Lord send it now!

If any would be saved, here is the way of salvation—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." To believe is to *trust*. What you have to trust in is this—that Jesus is God, that He became Man, that He suffered in the sinner's place and that whoever believes in Him shall be forgiven because God has punished Christ instead of Believers. Christ bore God's wrath instead of every sinner that ever did or ever shall believe in Him! And if you believe in Him, you were redeemed from among men. His substitution was for you and it will save you! But if you believe not, you have no part or lot in this matter. Oh, that you were brought to

put your trust in Jesus! This would be the pledge of your sure salvation tonight and forevermore! God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
REVELATION 21.**

**Verse 1.** *And I saw a new Heaven and a new earth: for the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.* Astronomers tell us that within living memory several starry worlds have burnt out and vanished out of sight. The Apostle Peter has told us that this world will be destroyed by fire, but it will afterwards be renewed, and a new sky and a new earth will appear after the first firmament and the first earth shall have become extinct. God means that this planet should continue to exist after it has had a new creation and renewed its youth. The regeneration of His people, their new birth, is a foretaste of what is yet to happen to this whole world of ours. We have the first fruits of the Spirit and we groan within ourselves while we wait for the fullness of that new creation!

“The first Heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea,” because the sea is the emblem of separation, destruction and unrest. The sea has her dead who shall be given up. The sea cannot now rest nor be quiet, but all shall be calm and tranquil in the new Heaven and the new earth!

**2.** *And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* John saw, in vision, the glorified Church of God coming to dwell on the new earth, descending for a while from Heaven to be the very glory of the newly-created world!

**3, 4.** *And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.* When there shall be a new Heaven and a new earth, and the Church shall be in her new and glorified condition, then there will be no need for all those purifying forces which have been so active here below. There shall be no death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, nor trial of any kind—all shall be happiness for all shall be holiness! And then, as God dwelt of old among His people in the wilderness, and as Jesus Christ, the Word, was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His Glory, so in that new world shall God reveal Himself to His people by a special indwelling and a peculiar nearness.

**5.** *And He that sat upon the Throne said, Behold, I make all things new.* [See Sermon #1816, Volume 31—SERMON FOR A NEW YEAR'S DAY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.* Once, the Lord might have said, “Behold, I make all things,” but now He says, “Behold, I make all things

*new.*” Glory be unto the great Creator! Did not the morning stars sing together for joy when He made the world? But equal if not greater Glory must be ascribed to the great Regenerator, the New Creator! Shall we not all sing together to His praise? Yes, that we shall if we are numbered among the “all things” that He makes new!

**6.** *And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely.* [See Sermon #1459, Volume 26—GOOD NEWS FOR THIRSTY SOULS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Probably John did not expect to hear that sweet Gospel message just then. The Lord Jesus Christ was speaking of lofty themes, of worlds newly made—and yet in the very middle of it all He puts this gracious promise! Let this be a pattern to all of you who are preachers or teachers—no matter what your subject may be, a Gospel promise or invitation is always in place and in season. You may put it among the most golden sentences like a precious stone in a setting of pure gold and it will never be out of order, come when it may. Men hate God without the slightest reason for doing so and God loves men without the slightest reason—there is every reason why men should love God, and not hate Him—yet they have hated Him without a cause. And there is every reason why God should hate man and not love him—yet He loves us so much that He gave His only-begotten Son to die, that whoever believes in Him may live forever!

**7.** *He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.* What a wonderful word is that! “He shall be My son”—not My servant, but, “My son.” God give us the faith to rise to this more than royal dignity! “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.”

**8.** *But the fearful.* No, that is not the right word, it is the *cowardly*, for there are many who are full of fear who are nevertheless most sincere and right in God’s sight. “But the cowardly.”

**8.** *And unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers.* And the Apostle John tells us that “whoever hates his brother is a murderer.”

**8.** *And whoremongers.* Unchaste and unclean men and women.

**8.** *And sorcerers.* Persons who profess to have communications with the dead. Necromancers, spiritualists and all people of that sort.

**8.** *And idolaters.* That is, all who love anyone or anything more than God.

**8.** *And all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.* That is the death that never dies—the death which is far more to be dreaded than the death of the body!

**9.** *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.* John had already caught a glimpse of “the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven.” And now this angelic messenger bids him come nearer and look more closely into this mysterious and glorious city “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

**10-13.** *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.* God's Church glorified lies open to all quarters of the infinitude of space! It is no prison of souls that dare not go beyond its borders, but a many-gated city, so that the blessed spirits there can fly wherever they will!

**14.** *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.* Not Peter only, but the whole of the twelve Apostles shall have their names in the foundations of that holy city!

**15, 16.** *And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.* It seems at first to be astounding that the height of a city should be equal to the length and the breadth of it, but if you have traveled in Italy, you must have seen many a city, perched upon a hill, which seemed to be even higher than it was broad or long, if you included the wall of the city and the houses, one above another, right up to the loftiest minaret or tower. Yes, like a priceless square casket made all of costly jewels is this wondrous city, equally glorious whichever way you look at it! "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."

**17, 18.** *And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.* Such gold as never was, nor is, nor ever shall be on this earth until that time when God shall have purified it. Our gold is dull, opaque—light is blocked out by it. How many might see if it were not for the gold which blinds them and hides the Truth of God from them!

**19, 20.** *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.* You know that the stones of which this holy city is built are living stones. You and I, if we are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be there—living stones prepared by living Grace to have a name and a place in this living city! But what changes will have to be worked in us before we are fit to be put among these precious jewels! We are like poor blocks of common stone, but we do not know what we shall be like when we have been cut and polished on the great Lapidary's

wheel. You may take a precious stone to a jeweler and ask him what its value is, but he will say, "I cannot tell what it is worth until it has been cut and polished." That is how the Lord will prove the value of His living stones. If He will but work upon us by His Grace, we cannot tell what He will make of us before He places us in the position He has appointed for us in the glorious city that rests upon these twelve precious foundations!

**21.** *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each individual gate was of pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.* John had already said that "the city was pure gold like unto clear glass" and now he says that "the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." We do not always get such a combination as this here below, gold, precious and pure, yet unstained with blood and undimmed with the oppression of the poor—delicate gold, "as it were transparent glass."

**22, 23.** *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof.* [See Sermon #583, Volume 10—THE LAMB—THE LIGHT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Yes, and the glorified Church, herself, because of this Light, sheds such a bright light on all within her that all the saints rejoice in her light!

**24, 25.** *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.* Shut gates signify war—open gates mean peace. There shall be no more fear of war, no Gog and Magog to gather together to battle, no Armageddon to be dreaded by the glorified Church of Christ who shall be in perfect peace forever.

**26, 27.** *And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.* [See Sermon #1590, Volume 27—THE BARRIER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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



# THE PLUMB LINE

## NO. 2904

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
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***“Thus He showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what do you see? And I said, A plumb line. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel: I will not again pass by them anymore.  
Amos 7:7, 8.***

GOD usually speaks by men according to their natural capacity. Amos was a herdsman. He was not a man of noble and priestly rank, like Ezekiel, nor a man of gigantic intellect and mighty eloquence, like Isaiah. He was a simple herdsman and, therefore, God did not cause him to see the visions of Isaiah, or dazzle his mind with the wondrous revelations that were given to Ezekiel. God's rule is, “Every man in his own order” and if we depart from that, we get out of place and we are apt to try to make others do that which they are not fit to do and then blame them when they fail to accomplish what they should never have attempted! God always uses His servants in the best possible way and as they ought to be used. And so, when the herdsman Amos had a vision, he simply saw a piece of string with a plumb of lead at the bottom of it—a plumb line—a thing which he could easily understand.

There was a mystery about the vision, but the vision itself was not mysterious. It was a very simple emblem, indeed, exactly suited to the mind of Amos, just as the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah were adapted to the more poetic minds of men of another class. You and I, dear Brothers and Sisters, may be very thankful if God should use us as he did Amos and, if He does, we must not be envying the Isaiahs and Ezekiels. If we see a plumb line, let us preach about a plumb line! And if God should ever enable us to understand the visions of Zechariah or Ezekiel, then let us preach about them. Let every preacher or teacher testify according to the measure of the Light of God and Grace that God has given him—then we shall do well. Amos can see a plumb line and he sees it well—and when he has seen it, he tells what he has seen—and leaves God to set His seal upon his testimony.

Now, on this occasion we have nothing before us but this plumb line, but there is a great deal to be learned from it. The first thing is this—the *plumb line is used in construction*. Secondly, *the plumb line is used for*

*testing what is built.* And, thirdly, it appears from the text that *the plumb line is used in the work of destruction*, for the casting down of that which is found not to be straight.

**I.** First, THE PLUMB LINE IS USED IN CONSTRUCTION. We are told in the text that “the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb line,” that is to say, a wall which had been constructed with the help of a plumb line and, therefore, He tested it with that which was supposed to have been used in its construction—which was a fair and proper thing to do. If the wall only professed to be run up without a plumb line, then it might be hard to try it with the plumb line. But as it was a wall which professed to have been constructed according to the rules of the builder’s art, it was fair and reasonable that it should be tested by the plumb line.

First, then, dear Friends, a plumb line is used in building when it is done as it ought to be. And I remind you that *God always uses it in His building*. Everything that God builds is built plumb, straight, square and fair. You see that rule at work in Nature—there is nothing out of proportion there. Those who understand these things and look deeply into them will tell you that the very form and size of the earth have a connection with the blooming of a flower, or the hanging of a dew-drop upon a blade of grass and that if the sun were larger or smaller than it is, or if the material of which the earth is formed were more dense, or different in any degree from what it is, then everything—the most magnificent and the most minute—would be thrown out of gear! Someone of old used to say that God is the great Arithmetician—the great Master of geometry—and so He is. He never makes any mistakes in His calculations. There is not anything in the world that He has made in a careless manner. The mixing of the component parts of the air we breathe is managed with consummate skill and if you could resolve a drop of water into its original elements, you would be struck by the wisdom with which God has adapted the proportions of each particle so as to make a liquid which man can drink! Everything is done by order and rule, as in the changes of the various seasons, the movements of the heavenly bodies and the arrangements of Divine Providence. God always has the plumb line in His hand. He never begins to build, as a careless workman would, that which might turn out to be right, or might turn out to be wrong—He makes sure work of all that He does.

In spiritual matters it is very manifest that whenever God is dealing with souls, He always uses the plumb line. In beginning with us, He finds that the very foundation of our nature is out of the perpendicular and, therefore, He does not attempt to build upon it, but commences His operations by digging it out. The first work of Divine Grace in the soul is to pull down all that Nature has built up. God says, “I cannot use these stones in My building. This man has been behaving himself admirably in some respects and he thinks that he is building up a temple to My honor and glory with his own natural virtues, his own good works and other things of a like character. But all this must be dug out.” The man has taken a great deal of pains in putting it together but it must all come out

and there must be a great hole left—the man must feel himself emptied, abased and humbled in the sight of God, for if God is to be everything to the man, then He must be *nothing*! And if Christ is to be his Savior, He must be a complete Savior from beginning to end. So the foundation of human merit must be cleared right out and flung away, for God could not build squarely upon it. With such a foundation as that, the plumb line would never mark a perpendicular wall.

After all human merit has been flung out, the Lord begins His gracious work by laying the foundation stone of a simple faith in Jesus Christ—and that faith, though simple, is very real. When a man professes to convert his fellow man, he only gives him a fictitious faith which is of no value to him. But when God saves a sinner, He gives him real faith. There may be little knowledge of the Truth of God, but the little that the man knows is truth—and faith, though it is but as a grain of mustard seed, if it is of the right sort, it is better than that faith which is as big as a mountain, yet all of the wrong sort, which will not stand in the time of testing! But the faith which the Holy Spirit gives is the faith of God's elect—the real faith which will endure even the tests which God applies to it.

Side by side with that faith, God puts true repentance. When a man attempts to convert his fellow man, he gives him a sham repentance, or perhaps he tells him that there is no need of any repentance at all. Certain preachers have been telling us, lately, that it is a very easy matter to obtain salvation and that there is no need of repentance—or if repentance is needed it is merely a change of mind. That is not the Doctrine that our fathers used to preach, nor the Doctrine that we have believed! That faith which is not accompanied by repentance will have to be repented of! So, whenever God builds, He builds repentance fair and square with faith. These two things go together—the man just as much regrets and grieves over the past as he sees that past obliterated by the precious blood of Jesus. He just as much hates all his sin as he believes that his sin has been all put away.

The Lord never builds anything falsely in any man, or teaches him to reckon that to be true which is not true. He builds with facts, with substantial verities, with true Grace and with a real and lasting work in the soul. When the Lord builds in a man, He builds with the plumb line in the sense of always building up that which is towards holiness. Have any of you fallen into sin? Rest assured that God did not build you in that way. Have sinful desires and lusts after evil been excited within you by any doctrine to which you have listened? Then you may be sure that it was not of God! "By their fruits shall you know them," is an Infallible test of doctrines as well as of disciples! And if any of you have embraced any form of doctrine which hinders you from being watchful, prayerful, careful and anxious to avoid sin, you have embraced error and not the Truth of God, for all God's building tends towards holiness, towards carefulness, towards a gracious walk to the praise and glory of God!

When the Lord builds a man up, He makes him conscientious, makes him jealous of Himself, makes him detect the very shadow of sin so that before the sin, itself, comes upon him, he holds up his all-covering shield of faith that he may be preserved from its deadly assaults. You may always know God's building because it is pure building, clean building—but if anybody builds you up in such a style that you can talk of sin as a trifle and think that you may indulge in it even in the least measure with impunity—that is certainly not God's building!

And, blessed be His name, when our souls are really given up into the Lord's hands, He will continue to build in us until He has built us up to perfection! There will come a day when sin which now makes its nest in this mortal body of ours shall find this body dissolving and crumbling back to the earth of which it was made—and then our emancipated spirits, delivered from the last taint and trace of sin—free from even the *tendency* to evil—shall soar away to be with Christ which is far better—and to wait for the trumpet of the Resurrection, when the body, itself, shall also be delivered from corruption, for the grave is a refining pot and, at the coming of Christ, our body shall be pure and white like the garments of a bride arrayed to meet her bridegroom! And the soul, reunited with the body, shall have triumphed over every sin! This is the way that God builds. He does not build us up so that we can go to Heaven with our sin still working in us. He does not build us up to be temples for Him to dwell in and let the devil also dwell in us. Antinomian building is not according to the fashion of God's building—God builds up surely, solidly, truthfully, sincerely and until we have reached that state of perfection which makes us fit for Heaven!

Now, Beloved, as God thus uses the plumb line in His building, I gather that *we also should use the plumb line in our building*. First, with regard to the lifting up of our own soul, I would urge upon myself, first, and then upon you, next, the constant use of the plumb line. It is very easy to seek after speed and to neglect to ensure certainty. There is such a thing as being in a dreadful hurry to do what had better never be done, or else be done in a very different style. We see some people who become Christians in about two minutes—and I am devoutly thankful when that is really the case. We see some others become full-grown Christians in about two days and instructors of others in the course of a week—and, very speedily, they attain to such vast dimensions that there is no ordinary church that is big enough to hold them! That is very quick work—that is the way that mushrooms grow, but it is not the way that oaks grow! I urge you all to remember that often the proverb, “the more haste, the less speed,” is true in spiritual things as well as in temporal. My dear Brothers and Sisters, if you only grow an inch in the course of ten laborious years, yet that growth is real—it is better than appearing to grow six feet in an hour when that would only be disease puffing you up and blowing you out. Often and often the soul needs to use the plumb line to see whether that which is built so very quickly is really built perpendicularly, or whether it does not lean this way or that. As the work goes on,

we should frequently stop and say to ourselves, “Now, is this right? Is this real? Is this true?” Many a time, if we did that, we would have to fall on our knees and cry, “O Lord, deliver me from exalting myself above measure and counting myself to be rich and increased with goods when, all the while, I am wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.”

I would like you young men who are here to use the plumb line when you begin your spiritual life-building. I mean this—your father and mother are members of a certain church, but do not you, therefore, go and join that church without a thorough investigation of the principles on which it is founded. Use the plumb line to see whether it is all straight and square. Try all the doctrines that are taught and do not embrace that which is popular, but that which is Biblical! Then try with the plumb line the ordinances of the church—do not submit to them simply because other people do so, but use the plumb line of Scripture to test them all. You know that as a body we are not afraid that you will ever read your Bible too much. We, as Baptists, have no objection to your bringing everything that is taught to the test of the Bible, for we know that we would be the gainers if you were to do that. But instead of using the plumb line of the Bible, many people have a newly-invented test—the Book of Common Prayer, or Minutes of the Conference, or something else equally valueless! Now, whatever respect I have for books of that sort, I prize my Bible infinitely above them all and above all the volumes of decrees of popes, councils and conferences put together! I would not like to feel that I had been building, and building, and building, and building and yet that there had been a radical error in the whole structure, for I had commenced with a mistake and I had been building myself up not in the most holy faith of the Apostles, but in the most mischievous error of my own notions! I pray you, apply the Bible plumb line continually to all your beliefs, views and practices!

But, even before you do that, use the Gospel plumb line to see whether you really were ever born-again, for our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Test yourselves as to whether you have really believed in Jesus Christ for, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” And if you have believed in Him, take care that while you think you are getting more faith, more love, more patience, more of every Grace—keep the plumb line going—otherwise you may get a great deal into the structure that you will have to take out, again, and you will get the building out of the perpendicular and the whole of it may come down with a crash!

And this plumb line is also to be used upon all work that is done on behalf of other people. There is much teaching which has been given with a pure motive, but which, nevertheless, cannot endure this test. There are some little sects still existing upon the face of the earth that were formed with much labor by their originators, but they are evidently not gold, or silver, or precious stones, for they are passing away with the lapse of time. I would like, as a minister of the Gospel, to do for God that which will endure the supreme test of the Day of Judgment. I should not

like to build up a great Church and then, when I was dead and gone, for it to be scattered to the four winds—and to learn in Heaven that I had been mistaken except as to the matter of my own salvation and that, consequently, while some good was done, there was evil done as well! No, we must constantly use the plumb line so that what we build may be perpendicular and may stand the test of the ages and the test of God's great Judgment Seat! Look to it, Sirs, you who are diligent, that you are diligent in spreading the Truth of God and not error! See to it, you who count up your many converts, that they are real converts and not the mere fruit of excitement! See to it, you who plod on from day to day so industriously seeking to save souls that they are really saved and truly brought to Christ, for, if not, your work will be in vain! Churches that are built in a hurry will come down in a hurry—wood, hay and stubble that look all right in the building will look terrible in the burning when the Day of the Trial by Fire comes!

So that is our first point—that the plumb line is to be used in the construction of the building.

## II. Secondly, THE PLUMB LINE IS TO BE USED FOR TESTING THE BUILDING WHEN IT IS BUILT.

Do not let us judge either ourselves or one another simply by the eyes. I have frequently thought that a building was out of the perpendicular when it was not and I have sometimes thought it perpendicular when it really was not so. The human eye is readily deceived, but the plumb line is not—it drops straight down and at once shows whether the wall is upright or not. *We must continually use upon ourselves the plumb line of God's Word.* Here is a wall that needs to be tested—the wall of self-righteousness. This man thinks he is all right. He never did anything very wrong. Moreover, he is religious in his way. He says that he has kept the Law of God from his youth up. That is a fine piece of wall, is it not?—with some very handsome stones inlaid with fair colors. You are very proud of it, my dear Friend, but if I put the Bible plumb line to your life, you will be astonished to find how much out of the perpendicular it is. The plumb line is according to this standard, “If any man will be saved by his own works, he must keep the Law of the Lord perfectly, for he who is guilty of the breach of any one of God's commandments, has broken the whole Law. Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” That condemns your wall, does it not?—because you have not at all times kept the whole Law of God in the fullness of the meaning which Christ gave to it. If you are to be saved by works, there must not be a single flaw in the whole wall of your life! If there is, it is not in the perpendicular.

Here is another wall, built by a man who says that he is doing his best and trusting to Christ to make up for his deficiencies. Well, my dear Friend, your wall is sadly out of the perpendicular because there is a text which says, “Christ is all”—and I know that the Lord Jesus Christ will never be willing to be put side by side with such a poor creature as you are—to be jointly used with yourself to your soul's salvation! Remember

that in the Gospel plan it is not Christ and Co.—it must be all Christ, or no Christ at all! So, if you are depending partly upon self and partly upon Him, my plumb line shows that your wall is out of the perpendicular and that it will have to come down.

Another man is depending upon rites and ceremonies. Now there are some very strong texts in Scripture concerning that matter. Here is one. “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Will you come before God bringing the blood of beasts or costly offerings? Has He not told you that to come before Him with a broken and a contrite heart and, especially to come to Him through the merit of the one great Sacrifice offered by His Son is the only acceptable way of approaching Him? The most gorgeous ceremonies in the whole world cannot save a single soul! That wall is out of the perpendicular and must come down!

Here is another man who says, “I am, as often as I can be, a hearer of the Word.” I am glad that you are, but if you are only a hearer and not a *doer* of the Word, your wall is out of the perpendicular, for, if it is good to hear what is right, it is still better to *do* it. And your condemnation will be all the more terrible if you have known what you ought to do and yet have not done it. There are many of you who come here and who have been coming for a long time who, I hope, will be led to do much more than simply come to hear, for I trust that you will be led by the Holy Spirit to lay hold on eternal life! If not, your wall will not endure the test of the Bible plumb line which plainly shows that you are quite out of the perpendicular!

There are many other bowing walls, beside those I have mentioned, but I cannot stop to try them now. I would, however, most earnestly urge you all to remember that if you *do not test yourself* by the plumb line of God’s Word—if you are God’s servant, you will be tried and tested. Have you ever known what it is to be laid aside, on a bed of sickness, and to have everything about you tried? In times of acute pain I have had every morsel of what I thought to be gold and silver put into the fire, piece by piece, by the Master, Himself, until He has put it all in. Thank God some of it has been proven to be gold and has come out all the brighter for the testing. But oh, how much of it has proved to be alloy, or even worthless dross! You can have a great deal of patience when you have not any pain. And you can have a great deal of joy in the Lord when you have got joy in your worldly prosperity—and you can have any quantity of it when you have no troubles to test its reality! But the real faith is that which will endure the trial by fire. The real patience is that which will bear intense agony without a murmur of complaint. The Lord will test and try you, my Brothers and Sisters, sooner or later, if you are His. He will be sure to use the plumb line so you had better use it yourself. It may save you much anxiety in the future if you stop now to question yourself and to enquire whether these things are real and true to you or not.

And remember, once more, that *God will use the plumb line at the Last Great Day to test everything*. How many of us could hear, without a tremor, the intimation that God had summoned us to appear before His

bar? O my Brothers and Sisters, if the great scales of Divine Justice were swinging from this ceiling right now and the Judge of All said to you, "Step in and let me see what is your weight," is there one of us who could solemnly and sincerely rise and say, "Lord, I am ready for the weighing"? Yes, I trust that many could say, each one for himself or herself, "There is not anything good in me, but my hope is fixed on Christ alone. And though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I want to be, nor what I shall be, yet 'by the Grace of God I am what I am.' My profession of being a Christian is not a lie. It is not a pretense, it is not a piece of religious masquerade—it is true, great God—it is true."

My Brother, my Sister, if you can say that, you may step into the scales without any fear, for the contrite and believing heart can endure being weighed! But into the scales you will have to go whether you are ready or not. Your building will all have to be tested and tried. Some of you have built fine mansions, towers and palaces—but the plumb line will be applied to them all and it is God, Himself, who will use the plumb line in every case! No counterfeit will be allowed to pass the pearly gates, nor anything that defiles, or works abomination, or makes a lie. At the Last Great Day none shall pass from beneath the eye of the Judge of all without due examination. He will not suffer even one of the guilty to escape, nor condemn any of those who have been absolved for Christ's sake. It will be a right and just judgment that will be given in that day—but there will be judgment!

**III.** My last point is this—THE PLUMB LINE IS USED IN THE WORK OF DESTRUCTION.

When a city wall was to be battered down, the general would sometimes say, "This wall is to be taken down to this point." And then the plumb line was hung down to mark how far they were to go with the work of destruction. They thus marked out that part which might be spared and that which must be destroyed. Now, in the work of destruction, God always uses the plumb line and *He goes about that work very slowly*. He shows that He does not like it. When the Lord is going to save a sinner, He has wings on His feet—but when He is going to destroy a sinner, He goes with lead footsteps, waiting, warning many times and while He waits and warns, He sighs and cries, "How shall I give you up?" He even goes so far as to use an oath, saying, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." God never brings men to judgment, as the infamous Judge Jeffreys did, in a great haste—he would hurry them off to the gallows with indecent speed. But, at the Last Great Day there will be a solemn and stately pomp about the whole dread assize—the sounding of the trumpet, the bursting of the graves, the setting up of the Great White Throne, the opening of the books and the majestic appearance of Him from whose face Heaven and earth will flee away! And when the Judgment begins, it will not be without due order, nor will it be without keen perception of all differences. There will hang the Infallible plumb line! That which is perpendicular will be declared to be perpendicular



and that which bows will be shown tottering to its fall, for, before the Judge's eyes and before the eyes of the assembled universe shall hang a plumb line, with these words above it, "He who is filthy, let him be filthy still...and he who is holy, let him be holy still."

The whole judgment shall be according to the plumb line. *Not a soul, in that great day, will be sent to Hell who does not deserve to go there!* If there is any man who can plead that it would be unjust to condemn him—if he can truthfully prove that he has been obedient up to the measure of his light—if he can prove that justice is on his side—God will not do an unjust turn to him or to any other man. Those awful gates that grind upon their iron hinges never yet opened to receive a soul damned unjustly! It would be impossible, in the very nature of things, for such a thing to happen. If any man could truly say, "This is unjust," he would have taken away the sting of Hell, for this is the essence and the soul of Hell—"I am wrong and can never get right. I am wrong and do not want to get right. I am so wrong that I love the wrong and make evil to be my good, and good to be my evil! I hate God, for it is impossible, while I am in such a state as this, that I can be otherwise than unhappy—and this is the greatest Hell that can happen to a man—not to love God and not to love right." That is the flame of Hell, the worm that gnaws forever—that being out of gear with God—that being out of harmony with the Most High forever! I think that there needs to be no fiercer Hell than that.

So the final judgment will be according to the plumb line so that no one will be condemned unjustly. You talk to me about the fate of the heathen who have never heard the Gospel and I reply, "I know very little about them, but I know that God is just, so I leave them in His hands knowing that the Judge of all the earth will do right." There will not be one pang, to a soul in Hell, more than that soul deserves—not a single spasm of despair, or a sinking in hopelessness that is imposed by the arbitrary will of God. It will be a terrible reaping for them, when they reap sheaves of fire, but they will only reap what they have sown. There will be an awful pouring out of Divine Vengeance upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, but no one will be able to say that the judgment is unjust. The lost will feel that they only have to eat as they baked and to drink as they brewed. It will all be just to them and this is what will make the teeth of the serpent of Hell and the flame of its fire—that it is all just—that if I were, myself, judge, I must condemn myself to what I have to suffer. Think of that and escape from the wrath to come!

And as that plumb line hangs there, in that Great Day of Account, *there will be differences made between some lost men and other lost men.* All Hell is not the same Hell any more than all flesh is the same flesh. That man knew His Lord's will and did it not—lay on the lashes to the fullest that the law allows! That other man did not obey His Lord's will, but then, he did not know it, so he shall be beaten with few stripes. Few will be too many for anyone to bear, so do not run the risk of them! But, oh, the many stripes—what will they be? There are the lost that perished in Sodom and Gomorrah—those filthy beings whose sins we dare not

think upon. There they are and there is the Hell they suffer. There hangs the plumb line and, by His unerring justice, God awards their doom!

But what will He award to you, and you, and you who have heard the Gospel simply and plainly preached, and yet have rejected Christ? You will have to go lower down in Hell than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, for God's plumb line tells us that sin against the Light of God is the worst of sin and that the willful rejection of the atoning blood flowing from the loving Savior's wounds is the climax of all iniquity! That is how the plumb line will work. And when you come up, you rich man who has spent your money in sin—and when you come up, you poor man who works so hard—there shall be a difference between the one of you and the other—between the seducer whom the world allows to enter into her drawing room and the poor girl whom he led astray, for, though both are guilty—God will make a difference, not as men make it here, but quite the other way! The man of talent, of rank and of position who frittered away his whole existence in the life of a butterfly—there will be a difference between his sentence and that of the obscure, uneducated individual who did sin, but not as he did who had the greater gifts! To put one talent in a napkin brings its due punishment—but to bury or misuse 10 talents shall bring a tenfold doom—for there will hang that plumb line and by the rules of Infinite Justice everything shall be determined.

“This is dreadful talk,” some of you may be saying. It is. It is. And it is a dreadful business altogether for the lost—that being driven from God's Presence when you die—hearing Him say, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” You do not like to hear about this and I do not like to preach about it. Only I must do so lest you come unto that place of torment because I failed to warn you. Then might you say in your despair, “O cursed preacher! O unfaithful minister! You tried to tickle our ears with pleasant things but you left out all allusions to the wrath to come! You toned down the Truth of God, you softened it—and now we are ruined forever through your wicked desire to please our foolish ears!

O Sirs, you will never be able to truthfully say that, for I do pray you to escape from that awful future! Run no risk of it. I think every one of you would like to have his house insured against fire and to know that as far as proper title-deeds go, whatever you have is held on a good tenure. Then I implore you, make sure work for eternity by laying hold on Christ Jesus! Yield yourself up to Him that He may make you right where you are wrong, put you in gear with God and set you running parallel with the will of the Most High! That He, indeed, may build you up on the perpendicular, on the solid foundation of His eternal merits by faith through the power of the ever-blessed Spirit—that you may be so built that when God, Himself, holds the plumb line, it may hang straight down and He will be able to say, “It is all right.” Happy will you be if you hear His verdict, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”

May God grant this mercy to each one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
1 CORINTHIANS 3.**

**Verse 1.** *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.* Their spiritual part had not grown strong. Their old carnal nature still had the preponderance as Paul was obliged to address that which was the bigger half of them.

**2.** *I have fed you with milk.* That is a blessing.

**2.** *And not with meat.* That is not a blessing. It is a great privilege to be fed even with the simple Doctrines of Grace, with the milk of the Gospel. But it is a higher blessing to have such a spiritual constitution as to be able to eat the strong meat of the Word!

**2, 3.** *For hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men?* As ordinary, unregenerate men.

**4.** *For while one says, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal?* Is not this just how common, ordinary men would do? Where is your spiritual-mindedness if you so act?

**5.** *Who then is Paul?* Mark, it is Paul, himself, who asks this question! He puts his own name here in order to show that he does not despise Apollos any more than he despises himself.

**5-9.** *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase. Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry. You are God's tilled ground. Then the Apostle works out the same thought under another image turning from agriculture to architecture.*

**9, 10.** *You are God's building. According to the Grace of God which is given unto me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon.* Paul began the churches. He was the first preacher of the Gospel in Corinth and also in other places—and other preachers followed in his footsteps. When a man lays a good foundation, he always feels anxious that those who come after him should build in the same substantial manner as he has begun. It is a great grief to a man if he sees that after he has laid a foundation of the Truth of God, somebody else follows and builds up an error on the top of it. Alas, men still do that sometimes!

**10-15.** *But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones,*

*wood, hay, rubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work endures which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.* If he is a good man, he builds for God, though he may build mistakenly and say much that he ought not to have said. He shall escape, as a man flies out of a burning house, but all his work is gone. What a dreadful thing that would be, at the end of life, to get into Heaven, but to have seen that all your life's work had been a failure—to have been building a great deal, but to see it all burned—or to know, as you die, that because it was not God's Truth, it would all be burned!

**16, 17.** *Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God—For so it should run—*

**17.** *Him shall God destroy.* If any man should pull down that which Paul built for God—if any man shall pull down that which any faithful minister of Christ has built before him—“him shall God destroy;”

**17, 18.** *For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.* For that kind of folly is the doorstep of true wisdom.

**19.** *For the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.* All that which calls itself philosophy and talks about its culture and so on, is foolishness with God—just as much today as it was among the Greeks.

**19.** *For it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness.* They call themselves wise, but they shall all be taken in their own craftiness.

**20, 21.** *And again, The lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men.* Men are poor things to glory in.

**21, 23.** *For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.* Glory be to His holy name!

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—103, 614, 641.**

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

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

# A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT

## NO. 343

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 28, 1860,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Thus has the Lord God showed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what do you see? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon My people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.”***  
**Amos 8:1, 2.**

IN reading through the prophetical books, you must have been struck at their singular variety. On looking a little more closely, you have at once perceived that every Prophet has a manner and style peculiarly his own. Although God speaks through them all, yet they lose not their individuality or originality of character. The breath which causes the music is the same, but no two of the instruments give forth precisely the same sound. It is true they all utter the Words of God. But each voice has its own special cry, so that though God is pre-eminently seen, yet the man is not lost.

You do not find in searching through the Prophets that Jeremiah copies the language of Isaiah. The herdsman Amos writes not like the wise counselor Daniel. Nor does Jonah borrow the notes of Malachi. Every man speaks after his own order. Whatever he was when God called him to be a Prophet, that he remains. God consecrates what is already there and does not re-cast the man into a new mold. I believe this is an excellent lesson to all ministers of Christ in these times. How much more useful might many men be if they would speak according to their own character, after their own style.

But instead, the young minister attaches himself to some eminent model and copies, not only the expressions, but the very tones, the action—no the whims and absurdities of the master whom he venerates. But if each man, instead of seeking to be another, would be himself—if he would consecrate his powers and talents to God as they are, and bring them out in their native simplicity—whether they are polished or rough—the world would be conscious that a man had arisen who was in earnest and not a mere player, an imitator of another.

God himself, I doubt not, will speak more clearly through a man who speaks out of the fullness of his heart, than He will through another who cannot let the stream of Divine influence come through him naturally, but needs seek to turn it into the artificial current of some other man's form of eloquence. I am led to make these observations, because this is specially the case with regard to Amos. Amos was a herdsman, a keeper of cattle, and all through his book you find him continually alluding to his peasant life. He seems to have been an honest, homely countryman and he talks to us about sheep which have been rent in pieces by the lions of the kine

of Bashan—of the cart full of sheaves, of sifted corn—and plowmen and vine-dressers.

He does not mount to the sublimity of Isaiah. He has no golden mouth like that Chrysostom among the Prophets. He never soars to the height of Daniel, he lacks Ezekiel's eagle wings and the weeping eyes of Jeremiah. But he dashes out before you in his first chapter like some untamed irresistible being and begins—"The Lord will roar from Zion and utter His voice from Jerusalem and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn and the top of Carmel shall wither." And then through the first two chapters he flings firebrands about him with both his hands. He has a flame for Syria and another for Gaza. He flashes lightning upon Tyrus in a few sentences and pours a vial of wrath upon Edom.

He darts his sacred ire on Ammon and devours the palaces of Moab. He stabs his foes in short abrupt sentences, not aiming at eloquence, but speaking always like a herdsman. As Shamgar slew the Philistines not with the sword of Goliath, but with his own ox-goad, so does Amos come out against the sins of his times with no polished shaft taken out of the quiver of the noble, but with his own ox-goad and right gloriously does he lay sin dead at his feet.

And now look at my text in the light of what I have already said. It appears that Amos was a skillful man and able to turn his hand to other useful employments. There was one occupation which was usually given to men who had delicacy of hand and skill—that was the culture of the sycamore fig tree. You will find that Amos is called in one of the chapters of his own book, "a gatherer of sycamore fruit." A more correct translation might be a *bruiser*—a trainer or preparer of sycamore fruit—the sycamore fruit being like a fig, though not quite so excellent in flavor. It was believed in the East that it would never ripen except it was a little bruised, so that some person was employed with an iron comb to scratch and wound the skin.

Unwounded, the fruit, even when ripe, was too bitter to be eaten. But after it had been wounded, it ripened rapidly and became sweet and was not an objectionable article of diet. Now the good man had desired to be employed by his neighbors, at certain seasons of the year, in bruising their figs that they might become ripe. And now, in one of the visions which God gives to him, he sees neither the seraphim of Isaiah, nor the cherubim of Ezekiel, but he sees a basket of summer fruit, a vision suited to his capacity and harmonizing with his occupation.

There is no need for any labored disquisition. There are no hard words in a herdsman's language and no great mysteries in a herdsman's vision. There is a basket of fruit which is so ripe that it has been gathered and it is a sort of fruit—summer fruit—which will not keep, which will not keep until the winter, but which must be eaten at once. Amos sees at once that God's purposes were now ripe with regard to His people Israel and that the nation itself had become ripe in its sin—so ripe that it must be destroyed.

It teaches us, in these modern times, that there is a ripeness of men as well as of summer fruit. There is a ripening in holiness till we are gathered by the hand of Jesus for Heaven and a ripening in sin till we are swept

away with the rough hand of death and are cast away into the rottenness of destruction.

**I.** I shall use my text, then, in three different ways. The first remark being that **GOD'S PURPOSES HAVE A RIPENESS.**

God always times His decrees. He is never before His time and He never is so much as a single hour behind. Many men are wise too late. God is always wise and always proves His wisdom, not only by what He does, but by the time when He does it. Let us notice two of God's greatest acts and notice the ripeness of them.

There was the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. God had promised to our forefather Adam in the garden that a mysterious Seed of the woman should be born and should bruise the serpent's head. In mysterious signs He had shown to His people that a Messiah was coming. By many of His Prophets had He spoken of Immanuel, God With Us. But for thousands of years the Lord came not, although sin was rampant and the darkness dense, nothing could excite the Lord to an unwise haste.

Nor, on the other hand, did He stay beyond the proper hour, for when the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, made under the Law. In Heaven we shall probably discover that Christ came to die for our sins precisely at the only fitting moment, that in fact, redemption's work could not have been so wisely accomplished at the gates of the garden of Eden as on Calvary. And that the reign of Herod and the Roman Caesar afforded the most fitting era for the sacrifice of the Cross.

And so shall it be with regard to the second advent of our blessed Lord and Master. We are apt to say, "Why are His chariots so long in coming? Do not the virgins sleep because the Bridegroom tarries, the wise as well as the foolish, have they not all slumbered and slept?" And many are the servants who say in their heart, "My Lord delays His coming," and are ready therefore to beat their fellow servants, to drink and to be drunk. But cheer your hearts, you who look for His appearing, He will not come too hastily, for why should the sun arise until darkness has had its hour? Nor will He delay His appearing one moment beyond the proper time, for should not the sun beam forth in the morning?

We know and are persuaded that when He shall stand a second time upon the earth, it shall be as much the fullness of times for Him to come, as it was the fullness of time when He came at first. When His feet stood on Calvary, they stood there in good time—and when they shall stand on Olivet and when He shall judge the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat, then, too, shall He come at His proper time and His proper season. Watch then, Beloved, watch and wait earnestly, be not discouraged or cast down. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years are but as one day." He shall come and you shall behold Him in His glory and shall be partakers of the splendor of His reign.

And now I shall wish for a moment to apply this great Truth of God of the ripeness of God's purposes to your own personal affairs. You believe that the advents of Christ are well-timed. Indeed, Beloved, so is *every* act of God. The time when you were called by Divine Grace was the proper time for you to be converted. That hour when Jesus looked on you with an

eye of love, when you were dead in sin, was a time of love and it was a time of wisdom, too. God did not wait too long, else you might have been driven to despair or to desperation in sin. He did not come too soon. You may have wished that He had come before, but doubtless He had some end to serve, that in permitting you to learn more fully the lesson of your own sinfulness you might be the better prepared to adore the infinite, matchless, Sovereign Grace, which has now plucked you as a brand from the burning.

Your calling, I say, was well timed. It came to you not as unripe fruit shaken from the tree, or beaten off by hailstones, but as fruit that was gathered in its season. So, mark you, shall it be with all that occurs to you in life. Your trials always come to you at the right moment. Do you doubt it? Do you say that troubles always follow troubles? That they are not equally enough distributed and that you generally receive one severe blow just when your strength and patience have been exhausted by the endurance of another?

Ah, this is the language of your reason, but the language of your faith should be, "Great God, I leave my times and seasons in Your hands, for well I know if You smite me again, and again, and again, it is that You may multiply to bless me, that my manifold trials may produce in me manifold blessings." So be of good cheer, my Hearer. I know that in looking back, you have seen that your troubles have come to you at the right time. Have they not always come just when you had strength to bear them, or else, have they not come just when they were required to wean you from this world, to deliver you from carnal security into which you had well near fallen? Or to wake you up from some deadly slumber of indifference, which might have destroyed you?

And mark you, as your trials, so your deliverances. You want deliverances now. God will not give it to you in your time, but in His. He will not send to you His mercies before their date. You shall wait until the tribulation has had its perfect work, by producing patience. Then the hour of your extremity shall be the hour of God's opportunity. He knows when your strength is spent and you are ready to perish—then shall the Sun of Righteousness arrive with healing beneath His wings. Your deliverances from trouble shall always come to you in time enough. But they shall never come too soon, lest you be proud in your heart.

Learn, Believer, to be resigned to God's will. Learn to leave all things in His hands. It is pleasant to float along the stream of Providence. There is no more blessed way of living than the life of faith upon a Covenant-keeping God—to know that we have no cares—for He cares for us. To know that we need have no fear—except to fear Him. To know that we need have no troubles, because we have cast our burdens upon the Lord and are conscious that He will sustain us. And oh, how sweet is it to look forward to the day of our death in this way—to feel that, "plagues and death around us fly, but until He pleases, we cannot die."

We may walk among a thousand graves, but no grave shall open its mouth for us. We may stand where pestilence is blazing forth and devouring the nations as the fire devours the stubble, but we must lie secure. We are immortal till our work is done. God's purpose for our death



shall not be fulfilled till that purpose is ripe and surely we would not have Him wait longer than His appointed time.

I take this first head by way of cheering my own heart and yours. For I am persuaded that the doctrine of predestination—the blessed truth of Providence—is one of the softest pillows upon which the Christian can lay his head and one of the strongest staffs upon which he may lean in his pilgrimage along this rough road. Cheer up, Christian! Things are not left to chance—no blind fate rules the world. God has purposes and those purposes are fulfilled. God has plans and those plans are wise and never can be dislocated. Oh, trust Him, and you shall have each fruit in its season, the mercy in its time, the trial in its period, and the deliverance in its needed moment.

**II.** And now I turn to the second point—NATIONS HAVE THEIR RIPENESS AND THAT WHEN THEY COME TO THEIR RIPENESS THEY MUST BE DESTROYED.

We may see in this basket of summer fruit a picture of them. In the case of these summer fruits there was a need that they should be at once eaten. And there is a need when a nation has become ripe in sin that it should be given up to destruction. There are such things as national sins and there are consequently such things as national punishments. In looking back upon the history of the world, though skeptics might entertain a doubt as to individual transgression and personal punishment, they must confess that there have been such things as national judgments sent from the hand of God.

If I could take you today to the dreary wilderness of Babylon, I would bid you listen to the hooting of the owls and shiver amid the lonely ruins. I would remind you that this was the throne of one of the greatest monarchs. You ask, “And why were these people swept from off the face of the earth? Why has the palace been consumed with fire and the beautiful city become desolate?” We can give you but one answer—that the sins of this people at last became so intolerable that from the very force of its own rottenness it crumbled to decay.

We take you again to Greece and bid you stand among the fallen pillars of its glorious temples. We show you the broken memorials of its ancient idolatry. We point to the fact that all the glories of Alexander and of Macedon have long since been eclipsed. And if you should ask the same question as you did at Babylon, “Who slew all these and gave their cities for a prey?” it would not be a sufficient answer to assure you that the tooth of time had devoured these palaces, or that passing ages and the natural shifting of the focus of civilization had made those things totter to their fall. It was the sin of the Grecian State that brought upon it its ruin.

If it had not been given up to inordinate luxury. If its hero soldiers had not degenerated into robbers. If its statesmen had retained their early integrity. If the nation had been as manly, as pain-enduring, as upright as they were in days gone by, Greece had not ceased to exist. The Roman iron could not have been a match for the Corinthian brass. The battle would have lasted long and Spartan valor would have driven back the Roman legions. Had they been free in heart they would have been free

from the iron yoke. They had enslaved themselves long before the Western empire had subdued them.

So was it with old Rome. Long did God endure with it. Emperor succeeded Emperor—or rather, let me correct myself—Fiend succeeded Fiend. It seemed as if Hell strove to outdo itself by sending forth a greater monster than the last. All of them brutish. With but few exceptions, most of them cruel, every one of them capricious. And God bore long with the sins of the old palaces of Rome—long did He endure her base idolatries and her cup that was filled with the blood of the saints. But at last He spoke and it was done. The northern swarms soon swept away the flimsy remnants of an empire, whose moth had been its own corruption.

We believe that it is the same with Rome at present—the Vatican. Iniquity had been heaped upon iniquity, worse than even Pagan Rome was guilty of. The persecutions of Pagan Rome against God's saints have been excelled by Popish Rome. If there were fiends in Rome before, I know not how to describe these men who have persecuted God's saints in days gone by and yet could claim to be vicars of God. Oppression has been heaped upon oppression, blood has followed blood, iniquity has cried unto iniquity and lo, the sword of God is at the gate of Rome. Lo, God, even now, in the thundercloud, hangs over the palace of the Vatican.

And if for awhile the judgment shall be withheld, it is because the iniquity is not yet full. Another Perugia, another slaughter of innocent men. Another attack upon the Gospel, another attempt to burn the Scriptures and Rome shall have consummated her guilt. Then shall the nations of the world eat her flesh and devour her as with fire and a great cry shall go up from earth, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, is fallen!" Then shall be heard the song in Heaven, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the smoke arises forever and ever and the Lord God Omnipotent reigns."

Let us not, however, in our self-righteousness, fancy that this fact has no relationship to us. We as a people have been very guilty. I trust it cannot be said of us that our iniquity is full, but much, very much of sin has there been. Has not drunkenness run down our streets? Has not infidelity had its favored haunts in all our towns? Has not Sabbath-breaking been a continual and a crying sin? Has not England grievously offended God in thrusting her poisonous drugs upon an Empire which sought them not? Have we not often been the aggressors and in our lust for the extension of empire in the East has not many a deed been done for which an Englishman might blush?

We have all good need when we are making intercession for the nation, to repent before God for our national sins. We are a proud people. No nation upon the earth can match us for boasting. We have larger words to speak concerning our own dignity than any other race of men. It were well for us if we had humbler words before the Throne of God. I believe we are a more highly favored nation than even Israel of old. God has done more for Britain, or certainly as much, as he did for Abraham's race and even if we have not rebelled and revolted as often as did Israel in the wilderness, yet our little rebellions, if they were so, would be great because of the greatness of God's goodness.

Oh Christians! Be in earnest that this land may be filled with Divine Grace. Be earnest in prayer that the torrent of our iniquities may be dried up, lest haply that supposition of a great historian should at last become a fact and the New Zealander should yet sit on the broken arch of London Bridge, wondering that so great a city could have passed away. We are not sure that Nineveh and Babylon were as great as this metropolis, but they certainly might have rivaled it—and yet there is nothing left thereof and the dragon and the owl dwell in what was the very center of commerce and civilization.

May it not be so with us and may not the name of Anglo-Saxon be blotted out. May we repent, may we seek God and pray that this nation may be in covenant with Him and may abide faithful to Him, even till the Lord Jesus Christ shall come and absorb all monarchies into His own great empire which shall extend from sea to sea and from the river even unto the ends of the earth.

**III.** I shall now pass to that which is the main business of this morning's work. May God help me therein and give both physical and spiritual strength. I now come to deal with each man before me. The basket of summer fruit which Amos saw before him, I would now bring before your own eyes. You see it—the basket full of fruits—quite ripe and requiring to be eaten. Here is the picture of what some of us are and what all of us must be.

In the first place, with the righteous man there is a time of ripening. In one sense the moment a man is converted he is fit for Heaven. In another sense he is not fit—otherwise God would take him at once to Himself. The Christian, when first converted, is but a bud upon the tree, a mere blossom. There is need that he grow unto perfection and that that fruit should become ripe fruit. Christians are every day ripening by the perfecting energy of the Holy Spirit, without whom they can never advance in the Divine life.

But the Holy Spirit uses *means* and upon these I shall enlarge. Believers are each day ripening by the care of God, the great Husbandman who looks for fruit from men and walks among the trees each day and bids the sunshine of His love and the dew of His kindness fall upon them, that they may bring forth much fruit. They are ripened by every Providence which passes over them. The cold wind ripens them. Even winter's frost, which might destroy our fruit, ripens that which grows in the garden of the Lord.

The sorest tribulation which ever exercises a Believer is a ripening dispensation and is making him ready to stand in the full development of His Grace before the glory of His Father's Throne. In fact, without affliction, no Christian can ever ripen. He is like the sycamore fig of Amos, there must be the scratching of the rind of the fruit. There must be a bruising with the iron comb, or else the Christian will not become ripe. We may grow in some things by prosperity. But true ripeness in Divine Grace can only be obtained in adversity. Our cares, our losses, our crosses, our depression of spirits, our temptations from without and from within—these are all ripening dispensations—they are making us ready for the

time when our Beloved Lord shall come and gather us into the basket, like apples of gold in baskets of silver.

We are being ripened each day, I trust, by what we hear under the ministry and by what we read in God's Word. The means of grace co-act with God's dealings in Providence. Our prayers ripen us. The blessed Supper of our Lord helps to ripen us. Our seasons of fellowship with Jesus—the sweet promises which are every day fulfilled ripen us. The assistances which are rendered necessary by the incidents of each day—all these things work together for good to them that love God. They are dividing us each day from the earth—loosening our roots—cutting the strings which bind us here below. They are pluming our wings for the last great flight—when, leaving earth with all its ties behind us we shall enter into the realities of the bliss which remains for the people of God.

But you ask me, in what respect the Christian is ripening? I reply he is ripening in *knowledge*—he is learning each day what he knew not before. He begins now to spell over the heavenly alphabet and there are some of the words of the celestial tongue which he can speak most plainly. He begins to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths and lengths and breadths and he knows the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. Things which were mysterious to him, once, are plain enough now and riddles are become simplicities. He is no more a child in knowledge, but has become a man in understanding. He shall ripen in knowledge until he shall know even as he is known.

So does he advance each day in *experience*. That experience of his which was but as a little unripe fruit, has now swelled out into the full orb of the ripening pomegranate. He has felt and tasted and handled of the good Word of God. Religion is not a theory to him now. It is a matter of fact. He knows whom he has believed and he is persuaded that He is able to keep that which he has committed to Him. And increasing thus in knowledge and experience, he ripens also in *spirituality*. He becomes less worldly, he shakes off more and more the cares which once were chains to him. He bears his trials more easily than he once did.

A great wave that would have drowned him now merely washes his loins with its foamy crest. He is not afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. He is not now grasping after this world's wealth—he seeks to fill a treasury into which the moth cannot enter—and where thieves cannot break through and steal. And as he ripens thus in spirituality, he ripens in savor. His conversation becomes more full of marrow. He is not now like Pharaoh's lean kine, nor like the ears of corn that were dried and shriveled in the east wind. He is an instructor of the ignorant and a teacher of babes.

You listen to him, you watch his daily walk and conversation. He is one from whom you may learn much. A person who is to be imitated—for there is a sweet smelling perfume of fellowship with Christ about him in all that he says and all that he does. He is a ripe Christian, ripening for Heaven. And you may add to this that he now becomes more kind in spirit than he was before. The asperities of his youth give way to cordial kindness in his old age. He learns to overlook faults which irritated him

when he was younger. He learns to bear with the young and with the silly—for he remembers that he was once young and foolish, too.

He has compassion for those that are out of the way and a kind and encouraging word for the distressed. He goes about with a beaming countenance, looking, indeed, like a ripe fruit with a rich bloom upon it, a pleasant sight for the great Husbandman. If, Brothers and Sisters, this is accompanied with old age, it is indeed a fair vision to see a Christian fully ripe. I think if I needed an illustration of one who as often as I saw him, always seemed to be fruit fully ripe and whose recent death thoroughly well justifies my belief, I might refer to that venerable and excellent servant of God, Dr. Fletcher. He had in his youth sharp and severe trials and troubles, but they helped to ripen him. He had to bear up continually with arduous labor, always sweetened with unusual success.

My acquaintance with him was only in the declining years of his life. He was always as I knew him, an example of a ripe Christian. He had always a kind word ready upon his tongue and never lacked a generous thought bubbling up in his heart. If an enemy spoke against you, he would say, "Never mind them, let them write until they wear the nibs from their pens, but do not answer them." If he suspected that others thought harshly of you, he would always have an excuse for the young beginner, or if he did not make an excuse in your presence, yet he would give you a word of encouragement. Ah, I dare say many of you have seen him during this last year or two. That noble countenance, that fatherly expression, that overflowing love, were all signs that he was getting ready for the hand of the blessed Master to take him to Himself.

God forbid we should have wished him to be here longer! Was he not ripe? Let him, then, be taken Home! God forbid we should have desired that he had gone earlier. He would not have been ripe, but when fully ripe the Master removed him. I cast my eyes round upon some of you, dearly Beloved. some of you whose heads are bald and others of you who wear that crown of glory, woven of gray hairs, and I do trust it will be so with you, that each day shall be making you more and more meet for your Father's Presence.

When the silver cord shall be loosed and the golden bowl shall be broken—when they that look out of the windows shall be darkened and when the pitcher shall be broken at the cistern and the wheel shall be broken at the fountain—may your spirit return in gladness to God who gave it, that you may rejoice in Him forever and forever. I do not like to see a Christian die like a boy who leaves his play because he is tired of it. I do not, on the other hand, like to see a Christian go from this world like a boy who is flogged out of his play and who is sorry to leave it. I like to see him like a fair ship which has all its cargo on board and all its passengers on deck. The flags are flying and the pennants streaming in the gale. All the canvas is fully stretched and it waits till it is just high tide—the tide begins to roll out towards the sea and it sails on the head of the tide with the wind bellying out the sails and so has the soul an abundant entrance into the joy of its Lord. May it be yours and mine, as many years as we shall live, to be each of us ripening for the, "rest which remains for the people of God."

Lastly and very solemnly, now, may God the Holy Spirit bless what I shall have to say concerning a ripeness with which the sinful and ungodly, all of you who are unconverted, are ripening. You are being ripened from within. The depravity of your own heart is developing itself every hour and though the heart can grow no worse, yet will the outward life grow worse by a ripening process from within. The fermentation of your own depravity shall prepare you for destruction. Satan, too, is daily busy with you, to try and make you grow in vice. He is an apt teacher, for well is he skilled in it and he will leave no stone unturned to make the young beginner in sin sit in the chair of Belial and become a very Doctor of Damnation.

Yes, as a creature planted in the field of Providence, you are daily ripening in sin. Are you prosperous—do you not become proud? Do things go amiss with you—do you not murmur against God? And are not your pride and murmuring each a species of ripening for the great day of God's wrath? Ah, and I speak to some today who are getting ripe in sin by being taught and instructed in evils which they never knew before. Young man, have you been lately taken into a firm where you have been taught by other young men, more advanced than yourself, some new folly, some new iniquity which you never knew in your country home?

You are being ripened for Hell. Old man, have you just come to that period in life when you are able to teach others iniquity and guide others into sin? You are not as Amos, who could ripen fruit for God, but you are become a bruiser of sycamore fruit for Satan—helping Satan to ripen the fruit in his own diabolical garden.

I speak to some here this morning who have strolled into this Hall from curiosity, who are growing very ripe in sin. You look back upon the days of your boyhood now, with wonder—wondering, as you say, that you could ever have been “so green,” so foolish as you then were. Ah, but what is your wisdom now? Has it not been an advancement in guilt? Have you not looked upon sin so long that you are being changed into its image, from iniquity unto iniquity, as by the very work of Satan himself?

Are not some of you conscious that you know things now that you did not know years ago and that you can indulge with hardness of heart in crimes that would have startled you in days gone by? Oh, look back I beseech you, upon the hours of your comparative innocence and mourn over the thought that you are growing riper and riper and riper each day and everything that happens to you is conspiring to make you rotten-ripe. Before long you will fall from life's spreading tree and utterly perish.

And do you ask me in what it is that the sinner ripens? I could not give you particulars in such a case as this, but certainly most sinners ripen in knowledge of sin. They ripen in love to sin and they ripen also in the hardness of heart which enables them to commit sin with impunity. And with some, sin has attained such a ripeness that they dare to blaspheme God! They have grown so rotten ripe, that they will even dare to say there is no God, or think that He is blind, or ignorant and will not see and punish sin in the sinner.

It is an awful sign of nearness to Hell when a man begins to think that he can doubt the existence of God. I consider that time is lost in

controverting with men upon this point. We are not to controvert but to denounce. I should not expect to teach a serpent to change its hissing for music—nor do I think that while men are unregenerate it is of much use to teach them to exchange their infidelity for formality. God Himself must convert those who have gone into infidelity with His own Word, for our reasoning are powerless. We must pray for them. Yet must they be left in His hands, for it is a deep ditch and the abhorred of the Lord do fall therein.

I may have in my presence, too, some who have become so rotten-ripe that they will not only curse God themselves and despise religion and violate every precept of it, but they will not tolerate religion near them. They cast slander upon every godly action. They persecute their relations who fear the Lord. Ah, Sirs, you do but show what spirit you are of. Your actions do but discover the inward baseness and depravity of your hearts. Take heed to yourselves—take heed.

When you see the ripe fruit upon the tree you expect it shall soon be gathered and when I hear of those ill-deeds of yours, I may well expect that your damnation shall not long tarry, but that the pains of death shall soon close themselves upon you. You are ripening, Sinners, you are ripening, and unless God changes your hearts, your gathering time shall soon come. And for what are you ripening? You are ripening for death—ripening for eternal judgment and ripening for the wrath of God. Will you take this fact home with you? If I cannot speak to you this morning as I would, at any rate I will speak to you as I can.

Oh unconverted men and women, I bid you take this with you, you are ripening for Hell! And some fruits ripen very quickly and those that ripen slowly ripen surely and the gathering time shall come. The righteous shall be gathered and be as apples of gold in baskets of silver. And you shall be gathered and be as grapes of Gomorrah and be cast into the winepress of Divine Wrath to be trod in His indignation. Does the prospect please you? Are you prepared to make your bed in Hell and to lay down in everlasting burnings? Oh, remember, if you take the road, you must take the end. If you will have your ripening time of sin, then your rotting time must be a time of damnation.

“Be not deceived, God is not mocked.” He will not change His dispensations for you. “He that goes on in his iniquity, hardening his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.” Oh, my dear Hearers, I could stand and weep over some of you! My soul weeps now at the thought of the many who have been in this hall and have gone away to despise the Word which has been preached and to be ripened in their sin by the very efforts which have been made to turn them away from their iniquity. And shall it be so with you? Shall Sabbath after Sabbath only ripen you for the flames?

Sirs, shall earnest warnings only supply fire wood for your burning? Shall the tender heart of one who would die to save you only increase the guilt which you acquire by despising that earnestness? Oh, what multitudes in this hall have been changed, renewed, converted and some of them were the rotten-ripe ones. When I look over the Church-book we have to record those who have been added to our fellowship—containing

the history of their conversion—I often clap my hands with delight, for there are those in the Church now who were not simply drunkards and swearers, but who were the worst of drunkards and vilest of blasphemers.

We have some who were not content with being damned themselves, but did their best to turn wife and children from the way of the Truth of God and hated and scorned that which was good. Many a man has come to me when he was about to be added to the Church and his first speech has been, “Will you ever forgive me, Sir?” I have said, “Forgive what?” “Why, because,” says he, “there was no word in the English language that was bad enough for you and yet I had never seen you in my life and I had no reason for speaking like that. And oh, if I have cursed God’s people and said all manner of evil of them, will you forgive me?”

My reply has been, “I have nothing to forgive! I am sure if you have spoken against me I am heartily glad that you are ready to confess the sin to God. But as far as I was concerned there was no offense given and none taken.” And oh how glad have I been when that man has said that his heart was broke and that he repented of all his sins and Christ had put away all his iniquities and that he wished to follow the Lord and make confession of his faith. May that be my happy lot this morning.

Or instead thereof, must I, the minister of this congregation, behold some of you in perdition? Must I, my Hearers, if I am saved myself, stand and look upon you cast down into perdition by the eternal God? I cannot bear the thought. I know not whether it is pleasing to you—but surely it cannot be. Do you wish forever to be cast away from God?—Forever! Forever! Forever! Are you so mad as to dash yourself against the point of Jehovah’s spear! Say, what pleasure is there in casting yourself upon the bosses of His buckler? Why will you cast yourself into an oven of devouring wrath? What need is there, Sinner, that you should rend yourself in pieces and be your own tormentor?

And yet every sin is a mixing of the poison that destroys your own soul, every act of lust is a kindling of the fire that shall consume you. Oh, I bid you, turn!

O Lord, turn the sinner! O Spirit of God, come down and work with the most obdurate and hardened of men. And let sinners who are ripened for destruction now be renewed in heart, that they may become fruits of grace and at last be ripened for eternal glory.

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# THE SIEVE

## NO. 825

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 16, 1868,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel  
among all nations, like as corn  
is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least  
grain fall upon the earth.”  
Amos 9:9.***

“I WILL command, and I will sift”—how easily the Divine purposes become facts! The Lord has but to command and His will is done. Omnipotence has servants everywhere. If those who serve Jehovah cheerfully shall not suffice to carry out His will, the very devils themselves, and the most rebellious of spirits shall be chained to the chariot of His Divine decree and made to effect His designs—

***“When God commands, who dares oppose,  
Or ask Him why, or what He does?”***

And if they, in their impudent obstinacy should oppose, their opposition is made to subserve the very purpose which it was designed to thwart! And all their raving and their raging, their rebellion and their struggles merge into a wonderful adherence to the eternal plan by which Divine Wisdom and Grace shall be displayed.

We are led to make that remark by the text opening thus—“I will command, and I will sift”—as if the mere command were enough to effect the sifting. God has but to *speak* and it is done! And at His will His children shall be chastened with innumerable trials, or delivered in abundant mercies. The rills of comfort and the streams of woe, alike, flow at His bidding, or at His word are dried up.

This prophecy is no doubt originally applicable to the long-afflicted seed of Israel. How terribly has it been fulfilled! Have not the sons of Jacob been sifted among all nations? They have been removed to and fro as a shepherd's tent. They have known no abiding dwelling place. Since the day when, in answer to their cry, “His blood be on us, and on our children,” the firebrand of the Roman soldier set their Temple on a blaze, and the plow of the Roman conqueror went over the bloodstained foundations of the beloved city—since that day they have been a nation scattered and peeled—sons of the weary foot—a nation without a land—a people without a language!

The sufferings of the Jews are almost unparalleled. From the time of the famous siege of Jerusalem down to days almost within memory they have been a proscribed and persecuted people. Their name has been a word of scorn and their race a byword and a proverb. In almost every land they have been hunted like the partridges upon the mountain—he that killed them thought he did God service. The followers of that greatest of Jews, the meek and lowly Jesus, thought they displayed their Christianity by hounding to the death His Brethren according to the flesh! Perhaps no

chapter in human history shows more how near akin man may be to a devil than the history of the Jews in Spain.

But why instance one nation—all have been barbarous and inhuman—England had her share in their murder. As a frugal and industrious people they have flourished wherever they have been allowed to trade, but their wealth has been extorted from them by greedy monarchs, or destroyed by lawless mobs. For them there were no laws except such as are made for the destruction of wolves and foxes. They could never be sure of life or limb. To mock them was the sport of children—to torture them was the amusement of kings and princes. Alas, poor Israel, what have you not suffered? What woes have been made to roll in billows over you!

Nation of God's election, yet to be restored to joy—for whom a glorious future is certainly ordained—how have you been trod as the mire in the street! The precious sons of God, comparable unto fine gold—how have they been esteemed as earthen pitchers—the work of the hands of the potter! Israel has forgotten her God and rejected her King, the Son of David, the crucified Jesus—and therefore long days of bitterness and centuries of grief have been appointed her! O God, how long? When will You return and bid Judah's Lion-standard once more wave in triumph? When shall the throne be restored unto Jerusalem and the kingdom unto Judah? When shall the long-expected Messiah set up the kingdom which shall endure forever?

I intend, this morning, not to discuss those matters, but to take the text as it applies to the *spiritual* Israel. Undoubtedly all these prophecies have a double teaching. And while it is atrocious to overlook the literal meaning, and a despite to the Spirit of God to read literal passages as though they were altogether spiritual and figurative, yet after having once stated the literal meaning we are allowed to go on, in the way of teaching, to the spiritual sense, as we shall now do, so far as the Spirit of all Grace shall assist us.

Two things there are in the text for God's people to remember—the sifting and the saving. We shall be sifted, everyone of us, yet shall not the least grain fall to the ground. Tried much, but never forsaken, often near to death, but never suffered to perish!

**I.** Let us begin with THE SIFTING. God has ordained that this side of the Jordan there shall be no rest for His people as to their outward circumstances. The Covenant of Grace has for one of its clauses, "In the world you shall have tribulation." As long as the wheat lies on the threshing floor, the flail must be kept in motion. And so long as the corn-heap of the Church is a mingled mass of chaff and wheat, the winnowing fan must not be laid aside. The Church of God, since its institution, has never been perfectly pure.

It has been the object of all true ministers, as the Lord's watchmen, to keep His Church pure—and the servants of God in every age have longed and desired that the tares might be rooted up from among the wheat—but it has never been so. The Church has shared in the imperfection of everything else that is human, and therefore, upon God's floor there has never been a heap of perfectly pure, well-winnowed wheat—some chaff has always been introduced by some means or other. No matter how stringent your regulations, how Scriptural your rules, how judicious your officers, how precise your examinations, for all that, as certainly as Judas thrust

himself in among the Twelve, so will there creep in unawares among us ungodly men who were of old ordained unto this condemnation—who shall be as chaff in the midst of the wheat.

Because of this we must expect, wherever and whenever God has a Church, to find that it is in the sieve. As long as the farmer's corn is not clean, he will keep on sifting it. And as long as God's Church is not pure, He will continue to purify it. He will, in fact, fulfill the words of the text, "Sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve." Now take this great fact in reference to the Church at large, and you will see it worked out in her history. No sooner had the Lord a Church after the time of His Ascension, and that Church had begun to multiply through the Pentecostal blessing, than Herod rose up, and, strong-handed tyrant as he was, took the sieve and sifted the Church most terribly—till the saints of God were scattered, and many of them slain!

Persecution set in as soon as the Church appeared—the Man-Child was scarcely born into the world before the dragon began to pour forth floods out of his mouth—hoping that he might utterly drown the woman's Seed. From that first day until now the page of history is crimson with the blood of the faithful. Notice the persecutions by the Pagan emperor—through what seas of blood the Church swam in those cruel days! What horrors make the flesh to creep as we turn to Papal times! Surely the blood of saints shed for the testimony of Jesus might have filled the Mediterranean to its brim! I know not whether every drop of the Atlantic ocean might not have been colored red if the warm blood of all the martyrs had been poured into its all but boundless deeps. So many were the saints of God that were offered, that arithmetic can scarcely compute their number, and time would fail us to narrate their torments and their triumphs.

The Church was sifted by these persecutions. The vain and light, the formal and the insincere went off from her, too glad to earn inglorious safety by dastardly apostasy! They could not afford to lose their lives for the Truth of God's sake. The Cross was too heavy for their galled shoulders and they turned aside. Yet not the least true grain fell to the ground! The Church was never the worst for her fiercest persecution! In fact, she seemed to derive new vigor from her baptism of blood—and her voice was never so piercing and so potent as when it was uplifted from the rack and the stake! Her soldiers never fought so well as when the martyr's ruby crown hung visibly before their eyes! Sifted, she has been, but never injured! She has been a grand gainer through the Grace of God by all her tribulations and afflictions.

Brothers and Sisters, we need not suppose that the sacramental host of God's elect has come to the end of persecution! We may have done so in this country. I cannot tell. This I know, I would not aid in maintaining an unjust law to escape from persecution. I would not deny to the Roman Catholic his natural rights though I thought he would burn me and my fellow Believers as soon as he had the power! I would do him no wrong under the pretext of preventing him from doing a wrong to me. God forbid that we should do evil that good may come!

True Protestantism does not live upon political favoritism or national supremacy. Truth can afford to let justice be done, for she knows that the right can never hurt her. We who worship Jesus in spirit can afford to do what is right and let consequences take care of themselves. My Brothers

and Sisters, let the worst come—let violence again assail us—we have overcome in days gone by, and can overcome again! Weak and feeble as we are today, when filled by the Holy Spirit we shall be strong and shall form a fresh band of martyrs to illustrate the faithfulness of God again! But we cannot, we *cannot* do violence to our consciences and the rights of other men even though it is to save our lives and preserve our liberties.

Other sieves beside persecution have been used. Not long after the days of the Apostles, yes, even in their days, God was sifting His Church in the sieve of *heresy*. There arose men who taught contrary to the Truth as it is in Jesus. They were cunning and smooth-spoken men who, by sleight of words and craftiness of argument, led aside many and perverted the faith of not a few. Ever since those times notorious heresies have, at various seasons, afflicted the Church like epidemics among sheep—deadly and hard to cure. Professors have fallen before the hurricane of false doctrine like leaves in autumn. Thick as leaves in Vallambrosa have been the apostates who have been hurried here and there by the fitful winds of novel opinions, subtle refining, and pestilent errors! Denying the Lord that bought them—denying the cardinal doctrines of the faith—they have perished in their iniquity.

Doubtless the uprising of false doctrine is intended by God to be a test to the professing Church. While men hear the Truth of God and nothing but the Truth of God, and it is the fashion to avow it, who shall judge between the pretended and the real? But when a strong party is made for error, then some son of Levi lifts up the banner of separation and cries, “Who is on the Lord’s side? Let him come unto me!” Then straightaway there is a division in the camp, and it becomes known who has the Truth of God written in his heart and who has it merely on his tongue! By the fierce blasts of false teaching, which are apparently so injurious, a difference is made between the rotten boughs which only adhere to the tree from force of habit, and the living boughs which keep their hold because they suck their vital sap from the stem.

We need not fear if even worse heresies should arise in these times than in the past, for God will defeat them! It seems to me very likely that Antichrist has yet more deceptive inventions to reveal—we have not yet fathomed all the depths of Satan. Puseyism, with its many attractions, is about as cunning a device as we could well imagine. It has outdone Rome, itself, in some respects! But yet there may be worse to come. If so, so be it, for God will overrule it for good. These devices of men and doctrines of devils are only so many sieves by which the Lord will separate the chaff from the wheat—and make it to be known who are His elect and who are not.

So, too, the uprising of new infidelities are intended to act as a test to the Church. At different times the public mind exhibits a stronger tendency towards unbelief. One wave rolls up black with superstition and the next is pale with infidelity. The mind of man oscillates like a pendulum between believing a lie and believing nothing. Frequently the Church is assailed by a crafty philosophy and then by a brutal ignorance. Every Truth which she declares is exposed to the most violent and even ferocious assaults. She has been assailed from all quarters and at all points. In modern times she has been peculiarly attacked by criticism upon her Bible which she upholds as the revealed will of God. Men have even been

found calling themselves bishops and presbyters of the Church who have sought to undermine the foundations of the Gospel by impugning the truthfulness of the Word of God!

This is no strange thing—it is but an old device. Those who have read the history of the Church from the very beginning will remember how she had to contend with Atheism, Deism, Arianism and all shapes and forms of doubts and skepticism in her earliest days. This is no new conflict, O soldiers of the Cross—neither is it one concerning which you have any ground for alarm! We have overcome Atheism in the past, and we shall vanquish it in the future. There will be *benefit* reaped by the Church from skeptical attacks, and certainly no detriment shall accrue to her. She will come out of her trial, however fiery, like gold seven times purified! She shall shine with a clearer luster because of the ordeals which she has triumphantly endured.

I will mention one more sieve in which the Church at large has been tested. It is that of providential examination by public opinion and sense of justice. You must never expect that any professing Church of God will be, for a long time, flourishing if it abides exactly in the same state. Whenever our Churches run for years in the same rut, little good is done. To many of our old established Baptist Churches, it would be the greatest possible blessing if the Chapel were burnt down, or if some disorderly zealot would break all their proprieties to shivers—anything to break the deadly stagnation under which they wither!

As it is in small Churches, so it is in the Church at large—change and stir are necessary. We must expect, often, to hear that the ship of Christ's Church is in a storm—there must not be smooth sailing for the vessel of the Church—it must be tossed with tempest and driven to and fro. At the present juncture all established Churches are in the sieve. I believe there is much good corn in the established Church, though intermixed with a sad amount of chaff—and now the whole is being sifted and *will be* sifted yet more and more. I do not care who holds the sieve—whether it is a politician or an ecclesiastic—I am persuaded that by God's Grace good will come of all this strife, and debate, and agitation.

The public mind, when it stirs itself about religion, is often mysteriously guided to the right path. And even if it chooses a wrong thing for a season, yet the wrong only plays itself out and the right, by-and-by, comes to the fore and wins the victory. God will not have His Church in alliance with the State! And though they settle down upon their lees, and are at quiet in an adulterous connection with the powers that be—the trying time must come and the sieve must be used.

The true friends of the Church need not wish for the sifting to be withheld, for not one grain of precious Truth will fall to the ground! All that will perish will be the *chaff*, which is a signal blessing to lose. Purification will be the result of agitation. After the Episcopal Church is sifted, other Churches will endure the same. All must take their turn—and those Churches which have any mixture of tradition or man's teaching—those Churches which depart in anything from this Book will lose much by the sifting that they now hold to be precious. And a blessed loss it will be to them! We, as a denomination, shall have our sifting, too—how shall we come forth from it? It may not come yet, but the ordeal is surely ordained

for us. Perhaps we shall rebel terribly at the trial of cherished prejudices, but our rebellion will be in vain.

So long as the Divine will shall be accomplished, what does it matter? Let us be content to abide what the Lord has appointed—

***“Let sects, and names, and parties fall,  
And Jesus Christ be All in All.”***

Let every turret of ecclesiastical citadels be cast down, however venerated they may be, if they are not of the Lord! Let every graceful pile, though hallowed with the moss of ages, be hurled down and not one stone left upon another if it is not of the Lord’s building! Lord, send through the camp Your sharp two-edged sword to kill error everywhere! Search us with candles and try us as the refiner tries his gold till You have consumed every false thing and made Your people to be a Scriptural Church, a pure Church, a living and perfect Church fair as the sun, clear as the moon and terrible as an army with banners!

Thus far we have spoken of the Church of God at large. Other matters call us onward. God’s Truths are like crystals which bear one uniform shape whether in larger masses or broken into fragments. Take, too, the great Truth of God that the whole Church shall be winnowed, and as you break it up you will see that each Church and each individual *Christian* must be sifted, too. The Lord will sift *all* His people—sift them most thoroughly and in all respects. Let us think of certain of the sieves in which you and I shall be tried. One is the preaching of the Word. Wherever the Gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully preached it acts as a discernor of spirits.

There are certain searching and testing Truths taught in God’s Word, which when spoken in plainness and distinctness, cause mere professors to be angry and voluntarily to withdraw themselves. This is the design of such Truths—that the vile may be separated from the precious. You remember when our Lord stated a certain doctrine, it is said that certain of them walked no more with Him? It was not that He had done anything evil, or laid any hard duty upon them, but He had simply stated a deep Truth of God. He had gone a little beyond His ordinary teaching, and at this deep Truth they were straightaway scandalized and walked no more with Him.

So in the preaching of the Gospel—if the minister declares the whole Truth of God, certain persons will say, “I cannot receive that”—not because it is not Scriptural, but because it does not jump with their prejudices, or suit their carnal tastes. Now, when such people go away, we have no cause to mourn except that they should be so foolish! Our cause is rather for rejoicing that God has made His Word to answer what always was its purpose—the separating of the precious from the vile. The Gospel is like a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit—it is intended to cut between the joints and the marrow, and to lay bare the very heart of man!

I would hate to come into this pulpit and utter words which should be needlessly offensive, but I do delight to preach the Gospel that the Word shall find you out and make you perceive that we are speaking of you! Every true preacher of the Gospel will be sure to become a spiritual detective. He may not know anything of his hearers, but in the course of his ministry he will speak as if he had entered into the very chambers of their

heart and read the secrets of their soul! There are some who do not like close dealings, though that seems to *me* to be the very ministry every Christian ought to prefer—a heart-searching, heart-trying ministry!

But to many, plain preaching is very distasteful—they want to be patted on the back, and praised, and extolled—they like to have human nature lifted on high, and have sweet things said unto them! They are like those of old who said unto the Prophets, “Prophecy smooth things unto us.” But the genuine Gospel, wherever it comes with *power*, acts like a sieve, for vain and foolish people are offended at that which searches and tries them, and so they fall to the ground with the chaff—while the precious wheat, under such a ministry, remains to the glory of God! I have known some young ministers dreadfully alarmed because a few of their hearers have been indignant and threatened to withdraw when they have preached the Doctrines of Grace. This is the natural result of a faithful ministry—why, then, be alarmed? No, let the chaff blow away! If God’s Gospel offends any man, let him be offended! Or, rather, let Divine Grace come and change his heart until he shall yield to it—for the Word of God cannot yield to him!

But, Brethren, we shall have severer tests than these! Every professing child of God will be tested by temptation. You think, young Disciple, that you shall never fall! You do not know what traps there are—what gins, what pitfalls—what slippery places! How soon you may be taken in them! She who lies in your bosom may lead you into sin. He who has been your instructor from your youth up may be your Ahithophel and entrap you by his subtlety. You cannot tell where you shall meet your foe—but conclude that behind every bush there is an enemy and underneath every tuft of grass a viper! It is very easy for us, at first conversion, to think that we have overcome our sins and to imagine that they are dead and buried. But how soon we find that they are yet alive to be our pest and plague, and to keep up a constant warfare in our soul.

Brothers and Sisters, tens of thousands of fair vessels have floated from the docks and have passed down the river with every color flying—receiving every man’s good word, freighted with hope, and manned with resolution—and yet they have been wrecked most hopelessly! A shifting quicksand or a hidden rock has been their destroyer, and they have been heard of no more in the regions of the good. So may it be with you, young Professor! Tempted in the one point which you have left unguarded, the enemy may attack you at the post at which you have set no watchman—and you may fall a prey, even *you* who thought yourself so sure! The daily temptations of the shop, the house, the field, the street, yes, even of the Church of God, are the discoverers of sincerity, the detectives of delusion, the exposers of hypocrisy and the beacons of wisdom.

Next to these come the trials of life. Believe me, these are severe enough for any of us—to some they are crushing! But to all, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. There are temptations in prosperity—*that* is a sieve which few men can pass. As the refining pot for silver and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise—many men can bear to be censured who cannot endure to be praised. Where one man has been ruined by adversity, 10,000 men have been destroyed by prosperity. Do we not see it? When men get into that sieve and become rich, they cannot attend the little Meeting House they once attended. They are too big for their former

Brothers and Sisters—they go off to some other religion that shall be more fashionable—and they forsake the simple faith of their fathers and the Truth of God.

The men, who in their prosperity ought to be pillars in God's Church, become the fiercest of her foes. Who are those most bitter against the Truth of God but the sons of men who held it, but, having grown rich, have despised their fathers' faith and their fathers' God, and have gone over to the adversary! Few men can endure long-continued, undisturbed prosperity! Capuan holidays ruined Hannibal's troops! And in the luxurious ease of the valleys men degenerate—but among the mountains we find a brave and hardy race—for there the dangers of the crags and the cold of winter brace nerve and muscle till each becomes vigorous and men are fit for acts of valor and deeds of heroism. It is in battle and service that veteran soldiers are bred!

There is a sieve, then, in prosperity. And adversity acts in the same sifting manner. I know it has acted so in this Church—some who were fervent among us are gone forth from us because they have not prospered in the world as they wished and have been unable to endure the pinches of need. Therefore they have drifted into wrong courses and doubtful dealings, and they are ashamed to show their faces among the people of God. Lord, deliver us from being filled with riches or stunted by poverty—from either extreme, save us! The prayer of Agur is a most wise one—"Give me neither poverty nor riches."

Whether rich or poor, we must look upon our condition as being a test by which God would make known to us and to His Church whether we are solidly in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, or only superficial professors—having a name to live, but we are dead. Farther tests, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord uses are inward conflicts. Of these I have no doubt many of you are well aware. Ah, there are times with us when everything in us is salted with fire and weighed in the balances. We speak pretty boldly sometimes, but there are seasons when we cannot speak at all for very trembling of heart.

Were it not for the infinite mercy of God, we should then give up all—sealing our own doom with the black seal of despair! The Lord sets a testing time for everything in the Christian. He does not let any part of him escape the proof-house. His *faith* is tested—he thought he did believe in God, but when wave upon wave rolls over him, till all God's billows have passed over his head, he half suspects that he never knew what faith was! And if, at such an hour, he had not living and real faith, he would utterly perish as wax melts in the fire. Our experience! Why it often happens to me that every experience I have ever enjoyed of Divine love and faithfulness is veiled in a cloud—and I fear lest it should have been all a delusion!

I look back upon it all, and tremble lest I should have deceived myself. I ask whether such Divine Grace could have been shown to such a sinner! Most men's experience, when it is put into the sieve, comes out very much less showy than when it went in. We thought—we thought that we had experienced the deep things of the Spirit. But we found when we came to search, that we had heaped up much borrowed experience, many stolen plumes, and feathers plucked from others' wings. Our good resolutions—how they shrivel when they are put into the sieve! "Lord, I will never deny



You,” said Peter, but when the cock had crowed, where was Peter’s steadfastness?

When the soul is bruised and broken under a sense of past sins—when it is crushed and beaten small under a consciousness of present departure from God by unbelief, or the neglect of private prayer, or other spiritual mischiefs—then Satan will come in and tell us that God has forsaken us, and He will be gracious no more. And he will shoot his fiery darts with such pertinacity and skill, that he will stick us all over in every part of our spiritual man with his fiery suggestions! Ah, *then* you will find out whether Grace within is real, or whether your love and faith are false and feigned! At such times, much tinsel and guilt are crumpled up by the heat, and we find that much of our spiritual beauty was but skin deep.

Beloved, the most real thing about us is our *sinnerness*, and I trust, also, our simple child-like dependence upon Jesus—

***“I, the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me.”***

Let me sing that from my heart, and there is no sham in the song. You will have to be emptied of every particle and portion of self-righteousness, and come to Jesus just as empty and vile as you did at the first—to throw yourself at His dear, bleeding feet—and find that *His fullness* and *your emptiness* are the two most real things in all the world—

***“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All in All.”***

All experience beyond this is but a flower and may wither, but this is the root that abides—all else is but as grass that springs up in its season, fair and verdant—but is soon scorched in the summer’s drought.

This is the eternal foundation which cannot be moved or shaken, world without end—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” and, “whoever believes in Him shall never perish, but shall have eternal life.” How often, when sifted do we come to this as our ultimate resource? And, indeed, it is a blessed thing to come here and to remain here, and never to go beyond it but abide ever in that precious Truth, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief! Then can we bless the sifting and admire the love which ordained it.

There will come other siftings beside these. The hour of death has often served as a touchstone by which formality has been revealed. Men have felt the mask rudely plucked off when lying at death’s gate. They have been compelled to see the leprosy in their brow which they had feared to think upon before. They have discovered, then, the foul and reeking pollution concealed within their hearts which before they had filmed over with religious duties and virtues and professions. Sepulcher light is brighter than we think—the dying bed is a great revealer of secrets.

And what a test the Day of Judgment will be! Ah, speak of this with bated breath, and speak of it with a broken heart—those scales in which we must all be placed! Shall it be said, “Mene, Mene, Tekel,” “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting”? Or shall we be accepted in the Beloved? There will be no escaping that last dread ordeal, nor will there be any deceiving the Infallible Judge! How will it go with you, Professor? Soaring Professor, if your wings are not your own, the sun will melt the wax and you will fall to your destruction! Gifted Professor, think not

your gifts can help you, for only Divine Grace, not gifts, shall stand you in that last sifting when Jesus shall divide the righteous from the wicked!

We may have preached in the pulpit, or taught in the Sunday school! We may have been deacons or elders! We may have sat at the Lord's Table and eaten and drunk with His people! We may have been baptized and received into the Church. We may have been the loudest and busiest talkers in the courts of the Lord, but we shall be cast away forever unless we have a new heart and a right spirit—unless an effectual work of the *Holy Spirit* shall have been worked in us—bringing us away from ourselves and all other dependences, to the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world!

God grant that you and I may stand this test at the last. But in order to do so, we must stand these *present* tests—we must be steadfast and unmovable—and having done all, we must still stand steadfast in the Truth of Christ. Thus have I, very feebly, brought before you the fact of the sifting.

**II.** Let us now turn to THE SAVING—a few comforting words. Sifting is very far from being a pleasant experience for the wheat. Look into the sieve for a minute—the grain lies still and begins to make acquaintance with the chaff and the wheat around it. But lo, it is tossed aloft and all its associations broken! It mounts for awhile, but falls again to the bottom, not to rest, but to be continually tossed about. In the sieve the corn has no peace. And so may Believers sing—

**“We’ve no abiding city here.”**

This is not your rest! You must not expect continuance on this revolving orb. You had, at one time, a delightful family circle round about you. It is broken up now—husband gone, friends gone—old associates gone. You who have your families around you now must look upon them as only loaned to you for a time—you are in the *sieve*, remember, and nothing is stable. Never whisper, “My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved.” No one talks like that but a mistaken one! You will be moved soon, for you are in the sieve.

Yes, and you may have had many trials and changes, and been tossed from America to Australia, and from Australia to England and back again to the Continent! You may have been tossed from house to house, from riches to poverty, from “pillar to post,” as we say—but the tossing is not over yet—there is more to come. Here is the matter that makes calamity of so long a life that we get not to the end of the sifting till we come to our graves. We are still tossed up and down, still being forever molested and disturbed in our earthly circumstances.

But here arises the comfort—we are assured that no *anger* occasions our being put into the sieve. The farmer does not sift his wheat because he dislikes it, but just the opposite—he sifts it because it is precious. And you, child of God, your trials and changes, and constant catastrophes and afflictions are no proofs of lack of affection on the part of the Most High, but the very contrary. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” It is because you are gold that you are in the crucible! And it is because you are wheat you are put into the sieve.

Another man might have been much happier and more peaceful than you as far as outward circumstances—I say not that he could have had a *real* peace like yours, which you possess within your heart, that is a dif-

ferent matter. But another man might have had eyes standing out with fatness—possessing more than heart could wish. He might have spread himself like a green bay tree, being prosperous in life and having no bands in death. Whereas, you as one of God's people are often chastened, afflicted, tried, and troubled. Well, so it must be, but you must reflect that there is great wrath in God's *apparent* mercy to the wicked—God is but fattening them like bullocks for the slaughter! But as for you, there is no Divine wrath in your tribulation. It is all sent in love. Love is in every loss, every bereavement, every bodily pain. Love, love, love—nothing but love, even when the cup is bitterest.

There is another thought, also, that may cheer you—it cannot be the purpose of the farmer to *destroy* the grain when he puts it into the sieve. I never heard of any farmer doing so. If he meant to burn it or let it rot, he would not take the trouble to sift it—it cannot be his intention to destroy it if he sifts it. And so, you poor, timid Believer, the Lord does not intend to destroy you by these trials. He has said, “I will not break the bruised reed.” He may bruise it, but not break it. “I will not quench the smoking flax.” He will chasten, but not destroy. He will bring you low, but He will yet appear for your deliverance and lift you up.

If the Lord had meant to destroy you, He would have left you in your prosperity to run deeper into sin. He would have suffered you to become rotten with pride, or polluted with base passion to your destruction. No, it is because there is a need for it that He prunes the tree that He loves so well—purging it that it may bring forth more fruit—and that He may have the glory of it. I think I see you, poor Believer, tossed about like that wheat, up and down, right and left, in the sieve, and in the air never resting. Perhaps it is suggested to you, “God is very angry with me.” No, the farmer is not angry with his wheat when he casts it up and down in the sieve—and neither is God angry with you! This you shall see, one day, when the light shall show that *love* ruled in all your griefs.

Then comes the promise, “There shall not the least grain fall to the ground.” And why is this? It is a great wonder that, when sifted so much, not *one* grain falls. I suppose he who usually handles the sieve, now and then, lets a little corn fall under foot—but God says that not even yonder small shriveled corn shall perish! He says that half-developed grain shall not fall—the very least shall be preserved and kept from falling with the chaff. And why? It may be replied that the Lord's people are preserved in some degree by their intrinsic weight—because the Holy Spirit gives them substance and solidity. The Holy Spirit has put into every Believer a life that *cannot* die, making him a living and incorruptible seed that abides forever! The wind which sweeps away another man like chaff cannot remove the Believer because he is solid wheat.

Where the Lord God, Himself, dwells, there is a power to resist temptation—even such temptations, as, apart from that power—would be our destruction. But the great defense of God's people lies in this—that He who holds the sieve watches with an observant eye and acts with unlimited power. He sees that little grain as it moves up and down in the sieve. The least corn of wheat He keeps His eye upon. He never sleeps, never for a moment forgets—and when it seems likely that a grain may fall, He knows how to catch it just at the falling moment and to preserve it still.

“He gives more Grace.” “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones—not one of them is broken.” “It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish.” “And this is the Father’s will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” “I give unto My sheep *eternal life*; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” Much sifted, but not lost! Much tempest tossed but never shipwrecked! Much put into the fire, but never consumed! Blessed be God for all that!

Now observe, the very least of God’s people is safe because the love of Christ is as much set upon the least as the greatest. Because Jesus has as much bought with blood the least as the greatest. Because Christ is as much the Surety of the little saints as of the strong saints. Because the least in the family is as dear to the heavenly Father as the elder sons. Because the absence of the feeblest saint would make a gap in Heaven quite as much as the loss of the greatest. Because if Jesus should suffer one of His people to perish, He would as much break His suretyship engagements by losing the least as the greatest. Because it would be as much dishonor to Christ to suffer the meanest as the best to fall, for Satan would say, “He kept the strong, but could not keep the weak.”

The very least of God’s people is safe because Christ’s love encompasses the lambs as much as the sheep, and eternal Grace makes as sure their salvation as that of Apostles and martyrs. God will not be thwarted and Christ will not be robbed! The Holy Spirit will not be defeated! The Covenant shall not be broken! The oath shall not fall to the ground! The blood shall not have been spilt in vain and intercession shall not go up to Heaven unheeded for any one of these little ones—they must—they shall be kept!

Though earth’s old columns bow, not one of these shall be cast away! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but no word of Christ shall perish, and His word is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” And therefore whoever believes must and shall be saved, be he little or be he great! God bless this present assembly and bring us all to trust in Jesus, and then give us this blessed salvation. Amen and Amen!

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# A REVIVAL NO. 296

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 26, 1860,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that sows seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt.”  
Amos 9:13.***

GOD’S promises are not exhausted when they are fulfilled. For when once performed, they stand just as good as they did before—and we may await a second accomplishment of them. Man’s promises even at the best are like a cistern which holds but a temporary supply. But God’s promises are as a fountain, never emptied, ever overflowing, so that you may draw from them the whole of that which they apparently contain and they shall be still as full as ever. Hence it is that you will frequently find a promise containing both a literal and spiritual meaning. In the literal meaning it has already been fulfilled to the letter, in the spiritual meaning it shall also be accomplished and not a jot or tittle of it shall fail.

This is true of the particular promise which is before us. Originally, as you are aware, the land of Canaan was very fertile. It was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Even where no tillage had been exercised upon it, the land was so fruitful that the trees who sucked the sweetness from the wild flowers produced such masses of honey that the very woods were sometimes flooded with it. It was “A land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates. A land of oil olive and honey.”

When, however, the children of Israel thrust in the plowshare and began to use the many arts of agriculture, the land became exceedingly fat and fertile. It yielded so much corn the Israelites could export through the Phoenicians both corn and wine and oil, even to the pillars of Hercules, so that Palestine became, like Egypt, the granary of the nations. It is somewhat surprising to find that now the land is barren, that its valleys are parched and that the miserable inhabitants gather miserable harvests from the arid soil. Yet the promise stands true, that one day in the very letter Palestine shall be as rich and fruitful as ever it was.

There are those who understand the matter, who assert that if once the rigor of the Turkish rule could be removed—if men were safe from robbers—if the man who sowed could reap and keep the corn which his own industry had sown and gathered, the land might yet again laugh in the midst of the nations and become the joyous mother of children. There is no reason in the *soil* for its barrenness. It is simply the neglect that has been brought on from the fact that when a man has been industrious, his savings are plundered from him and the very harvest for which he toiled is often reaped by another and his own blood spilt upon the soil.

But, my dear Friends, while this promise will doubtless be carried out and every word of it shall be verified, so that the hilltops of that country shall again bear the vine and the land shall flow with wine, yet, I take it this is more fully a *spiritual* than a temporal promise. And I think that the beginning of its fulfillment is now to be discerned and we shall see the Lord's good hand upon us, so that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, the mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt.

First, I shall this morning endeavor to explain my text as a promise of revival. Secondly, I shall take it as a lesson of doctrine. Then as a stimulus for Christian exertion. And I shall conclude with a word or two of warning to those whose hearts are not given to Christ.

**I.** First, I take the text as being A GREAT PROMISE OF SPIRITUAL REVIVAL. And here, in looking attentively at the text, we shall observe several very pleasant things.

**1.** In the first we notice a promise of surprising ingathering. According to the metaphor here used, the harvest is to be so great that before the reapers can have fully gathered it in, the plowman shall begin to plow for the next crop—while the abundance of fruit shall be so surprising that before the treader of grapes can have trodden out all the juice of the vine, the time shall come for sowing seed. One season, by reason of the abundant fertility, shall run into another.

Now you all know, Beloved, what this means in the Church. It prophecies that in the Church of Christ we shall see the most abundant ingathering of souls. Pharaoh's dream has been enacted again in the last century. About a hundred years ago, if I may look back in my dream, I might have seen seven ears of corn upon one stalk, rank and strong. At another time, the time of plenty went away and I have seen and you have seen, in your own lifetime, the seven ears of corn thin and withered in the east wind. The seven ears of withered corn have eaten up and devoured the seven ears of fat corn and there has been a sore famine in the land.

Lo, I see in Whitfield's time, seven bullocks coming up from the river, fat and well-favored and since then we have lived to see seven lean kine come up from the same river. And lo, the seven lean kine have eaten up the seven fat kine, yet have they been none the better for all that they have eaten. We read of such marvelous revivals a hundred years ago, that the music of their news has not ceased to ring in our ears. But we have seen, alas, a season of lethargy, a poverty of soul among the saints and of neglect among the ministers of God. The product of the seven years has been utterly consumed and the Church has been none the better.

Now, I take it, however, we are about to see the seven fat years again. God is about to send times of surprising fertility to His Church. When a sermon has been preached in these modern times, if one sinner has been converted by it, we have rejoiced with a suspicious joy. For we have thought it something amazing. But Brethren, where we have seen one converted, we may yet see hundreds. Where the Word of God has been powerful to scores, it shall be blessed to thousands. And where hundreds in past years have seen it, nations shall be converted to Christ. There is no reason why we should not see all the good that God has given us

multiplied a hundred-fold. There is sufficient vigor in the seed of the Lord to produce a far more plentiful crop than any we have yet gathered.

God the Holy Spirit is not stinted in His power. When the sower went forth to sow his seed, some of it fell on good soil and it brought forth fruit, some twenty fold, some thirty fold, but it is written, "Some a hundred fold." Now, we have been sowing this seed. And thanks be to God, I have seen it bring forth twenty and thirty fold. But I expect to see it bring forth a hundred fold. I do trust that our harvest shall be so heavy that while we are taking in the harvest, it shall be time to sow again. That Prayer Meetings shall be succeeded by the enquiry of souls as to what they shall do to be saved and before the enquirers' meeting shall be done, it shall be time again to preach, again to pray. And then, before that is over, there shall be again another influx of souls, the baptismal pool shall be again stirred and hundreds of converted men shall flock to Christ.

Oh, we never can be contented with going on as the Churches have been during the last twenty years! I would not be censorious, but solemnly in my own heart I do not believe that the ministers of our Churches have been free from the blood of men. I would not say a hard word if I did not feel compelled to do it. But I am constrained to remind our Brethren that let God send what revival He may, it will not exonerate them from the awful guilt that rests upon them of having been idle and dilatory during the last twenty years.

Let all be saved who live now—what about those that have been damned while we have been sleeping? Let God gather in multitudes of sinners, but who shall answer for the blood of those men who have been swept into eternity while we have been going on in our canonical fashion—content to go along the path of propriety and walk around the path of dull routine—but never weeping for sinners, never agonizing for souls? All the ministers of Christ are not awake yet. But the most of them are. There has come a glad time of arousing, the trumpet has been set to their ear and the people have heard the sound also.

**II.** The promise then, seems to me to convey the idea of surprising ingatherings. And I think there is also the idea of amazing rapidity. Notice how quickly the crops succeed each other. Between the harvest and the plowing there is a season even in our country. In the east it is a longer period. But here you find that no sooner has the reaper ceased his work, or scarce has he ceased it, before the plowman follows at his heels. This is a rapidity that is contrary to the course of nature. Still it is quite consistent with grace.

Our old Baptist Churches in the country treat young converts with what they call summering and wintering. Any young Believer who wants to join the Church in summer, must wait till the winter and he is put off from time to time, till it is sometimes five or six years before they admit him. They want to try him and see whether he is fit to unite with such pious souls as they are. Indeed among us all there is a tendency to imagine that conversion must be a slow work—that as the snail creeps slowly on its way, so must grace move very leisurely in the heart of man. We have come to believe that there is more true divinity in stagnant pools than in lighting flashes. We cannot believe for a moment in a quick

method of travailing to the kingdom of Heaven. Every man who goes there must go on crutches and limp all the way.

But as for the swift beasts, as for the chariots whose axles are hot with speed, we do not quite understand and comprehend that. Now, mark, here is a promise given of a revival and when that revival shall be fulfilled this will be one of the signs of it—the marvelous growth in grace of those who are converted. The young convert shall that very day come forward to make a profession of his faith. Perhaps before a week has passed over his head you will hear him publicly defending the cause of Christ and before many months have gone you shall see him standing up to tell others what God has done for his soul. There is no need that the pulse of the Church should forever be so slow. The Lord can quicken her heart so that her pulse shall throb as rapidly as the pulse of time itself. Her floods shall be as the rushing of the Kishon when it swept the hosts of Sisera in its fury.

As the fire from Heaven shall the Spirit rush from the skies and as the sacrifice which instantly blazed to Heaven, so shall the Church burn with holy and glorious ardor. She shall no longer drive heavily with her wheels torn away, but as the chariot of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, she shall devour the distance in her haste. That seems to me to be one of the promises of the text—the *rapidity* of the work of grace, so that the plow shall overtake the reaper.

**3.** But a third blessing is very manifest here and one, indeed, which is already given to us. Notice the activity of labor which is mentioned in the text. God does not promise that there shall be fruitful crops *without labor*, but here we find mention made of plowmen, reapers, treaders of grapes and sowers of seeds and all these persons are girt with singular energy. The plowman does not wait, because, says he, the season has not yet come for me to plow. But seeing that God is blessing the land, he has his plow ready and no sooner is one harvest shouted home than he is ready to plow again. And so with the sower. He has to prepare his basket and to collect his seed. But when he hears the shouts of the vintage, he is ready to go out to work.

Now, my Brethren, one sign of a true revival and, indeed, an essential part of it, is the increased activity of God's laborers. Why, time was when our ministers thought that preaching twice on Sunday was the hardest work to which a man could be exposed. Poor souls, they could not think of preaching on a weekday. Or if there was once a lecture, they had bronchitis—were obliged to go to Jerusalem—and lay by, for they would soon be dead if they were to work too hard. I never believed in the hard work of preaching yet. We find ourselves able to preach ten or twelve times a week. And find that we are the stronger for it—that in fact, it is the healthiest and most blessed exercise in the world.

But the cry used to be that our ministers were hardly done by. They were to be pampered and laid by, done up in velvet and only to be brought out to do a little work occasionally. And then to be pitied when that work was done. I do not hear anything of that talk nowadays. I meet with my Brethren in the ministry who are able to preach day after day, day after day and are not half so fatigued as they were. And I saw a Brother minister this week who has been having meetings in his Church every day



and the people have been so earnest that they will keep him very often from six in o'clock in the evening to two in the morning.

"Oh," said one of the members, "our minister will kill himself." "Not he," said I, "that is the kind of work that will kill no man. It is preaching to a sleepy congregation that kills good ministers, but not preaching to earnest people." So when I saw him, his eyes were sparkling and I said to him, "Brother, you do not look like a man who is being killed." "Killed, my Brother," said he, "why I am living twice as much as I did before. I was never so happy, never so hearty, never so well." Said he, "I sometimes lack my rest and want my sleep, when my people keep me up so late, but it will never hurt me—indeed," he said, "I should like to die of such a disease as that—the disease of being so greatly blessed."

There was a specimen before me of the plowman who overtook the reaper—of one who sowed seed, who was treading on the heels of the men who were gathering in the vintage. And the like activity we have lived to see in the Church of Christ. Did you ever know so much doing in the Christian world before? There are gray-headed men around me who have known the Church of Christ sixty years and I think they can bear me witness that they never knew such life, such vigor and activity, as there is at present. Everybody seems to have a mission and everybody is doing it.

There may be a great many sluggards, but they do not come across my path now. I used to be always kicking at them and always being kicked for doing so. But now there is nothing to kick at—everyone is at work—Church of England, Independents, Methodists and Baptists—there is not a single squadron that is behind. They have all their guns ready and are standing, shoulder to shoulder, ready to make a tremendous charge against the common enemy. This leads me to hope, since I see the activity of God's plowmen and vine dressers, that there is a great revival coming—that God will bless us and that right early.

**4.** We have not yet, however, exhausted our text. The latter part of it says, "The mountains shall drop sweet wine." It is not a likely place for wine upon the mountains. There may be freshets and cataracts leaping down their sides. But who ever saw fountains of red wine streaming from rocks, or gushing out from the hills? Yet here we are told that, "The mountains shall drop sweet wine," by which we are to understand that conversions shall take place in unusual quarters. Brethren, this day is this promise literally fulfilled to us. I have this week seen what I never saw before. It has been my lot these last six years to preach to crowded congregations and to see many, many souls brought to Christ.

It has been no unusual thing for us to see the greatest and noblest of the land listening to the Word of God. But this week I have seen, I repeat, what my eyes have never before beheld, used as I am to extraordinary things. I have seen the people of Dublin, without exception, from the highest to the lowest, crowd in to hear the Gospel. I have known that my congregation has been constituted in a considerable measure of Roman Catholics and I have seen them listening to the Word with as much attention as though they had been Protestants.

I have seen men who never heard the Gospel before, military men, whose tastes and habits were not likely to be those of the Puritan

minister, who have nevertheless sat to listen. No, they have come again—have made it a point to find the place where they could hear the best—have submitted to be crowded, that they might press in to hear the Word and I have never before seen such intense eagerness of the people to listen to the Gospel. I have heard, too, cheering news of work going on in the most unlikely quarters—men who could not speak without larding their conversation richly Irish oaths—have nevertheless come to hear the Word.

They have listened and have been convicted and if the impression does not die away, there has been something done for them which they will not forget even in eternity. But the most pleasing thing I have seen is this—and I must tell it to you. Hervey once said, “Each floating ship, a floating Hell.” Of all classes of men, the sailor has been supposed to be the man least likely to be reached by the Gospel. In crossing over from Holyhead to Dublin and back—two excessively rough passages—I spent the most pleasant hours that I ever spent.

The first vessel that I entered, I found my hands very heartily shaken by the sailors. I thought, “What can these sailors know of me?” And they were calling me, “Brother.” Of course, I felt that I was their Brother, too. But I did not know how they came to talk to me in that way. It was not generally the way for sailors to call ministers, Brother. There was the most officious attention given and when I made the enquiry, “What makes you so kind?” “Why,” said one, “because I love your Master, the Lord Jesus.” I enquired and found that out of the whole crew, there were but three unconverted men. That though the most of them had been before without God and without Christ, yet by a sudden visitation of the Spirit of God they had all been converted.

I talked to many of these men and more spiritual, heavenly minded men I never yet saw. They have a Prayer Meeting every morning before the boat starts and another Prayer meeting after she comes to port. And on Sundays, when they lay-to off Kingstown or Holyhead, a minister comes on board and preaches the Gospel. The cabins are crowded—service is held on deck when it can be. And said an eyewitness to me, “The minister preaches very earnestly, but I should like you to hear the men pray. I never heard such praying before,” said he, “they pray with such power, as only a sailor can pray.” My heart was lifted up with joy, to think of a ship being made a floating Church—a very Bethel for God?

When I came back by another ship I did not expect to see the like—but it was precisely the same. The same work had been going on. I walked among them and talked to them. They all knew me. One man took out of his pocket an old leather covered book in Welch—“Do you know the likeness of that man in front?” said he. “Yes,” I said, “I think I do—do you read these sermons!” “Yes, Sir” replied he, “we have had your sermons on board this ship and I read them aloud as often as I can. If we have a fine passage coming over, I get a few around me and read them a sermon.”

Another man told me a story of a gentleman who stood laughing when a hymn was being sung. And one of the men proposed that they should pray for him. They did and that man was suddenly smitten down and began on the quay to cry for mercy and plead with God for pardon. “Ah, Sir,” said the sailors, “we have the best proof that there is a God here, for

we have seen this crew marvelously brought to a knowledge of the Truth of God and here we are, joyful and happy men, serving the Lord.”

Now, what shall we say of this, but that the mountains drop sweet wine? The men who were loudest with their oaths, are now loudest with their songs. Those who were the most darling children of Satan, have become the most earnest advocates of the Truth of God. For mark you, once get sailors converted and there is no end to the good they can do. Of all men who can preach well, sailors are the best. The sailor has seen the wonders of God in the deep. The hardy British Tar has got a heart that is not made of such cold stuff as many of the hearts of landmen. And when that heart is once touched, it gives great big beats. It sends great pulses of energy right through his whole frame. And with his zeal and energy what may he not do, God helping him and blessing him?

**5.** This seems to be in the text—that a time of revival shall be followed by very extraordinary conversion. But, albeit that in the time of revival, grace is put in extraordinary places and singular individuals are converted, yet these are not a bit behind the usual converts. For if you notice the text does not say, “the mountains shall drop wine” merely, but they “shall drop sweet wine.” It does not say that the hill shall send forth little streams, but all the hills shall melt. When sinners, profligate and debauched persons, are converted to God, we say, “Well, it is wonderful thing, but I do not suppose they will be very first class Christians.”

The most wonderful thing is, that these are the best Christians alive—the wine which God brings from the hills is sweet wine. That when the hills do melt they all melt. The most extraordinary ministers of any time have been most extraordinary sinners before conversion. We might never have had a John Bunyan, if it had not have been for the profanity of Elstow Green. We might never have heard of a John Newton, if it had not have been for his wickedness on shipboard. I mean he would not have known the depths of Satan, nor the trying experience, nor even the power of Divine Grace, if he had not been suffered wildly to stray and then wondrously to be brought back.

These great sinners are not a whit behind those who have been trained under pious influences and so have been brought into the Church. “Always in revival you will find this to be the case, that the converts are not inferior to the best of the converts of ordinary seasons—that the Romanist and the men who have never heard the Gospel—when they are converted, are as true in their faith, as hearty in their love, as accurate in their knowledge and as zealous in their efforts, as the best of persons who have ever been brought to Christ. “The mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt.”

**II.** I must now go on to the other point very briefly—WHAT IS THE DOCTRINAL LESSON WHICH IS TAUGHT IN OUR TEXT. AND WHAT IS TAUGHT TO US BY A REVIVAL?

I think it is just this—that God is absolute monarch of the hearts of men. God does not say here if men are willing but He gives an absolute promise of a blessing. As much as to say, “I have the key of men’s hearts. I can induce the plowman to overtake the reaper. I am master of the soil—however hard and rocky it may be I can break it and I can make it

fruitful." When God promises to bless His Church and to save sinners, He does not add, "if the sinners is willing to be saved"! No, great God! You lead free will in sweet captivity and your free grace is all triumphant.

Man has a free will and God does not violate it. But the free will is sweetly bound with fetters of the Divine love till it becomes more free than it ever was before. The Lord, when he means to save sinners, does not stop to ask them whether they mean to be saved—but like a rushing mighty wind the Divine influence sweeps away every obstacle. The unwilling heart bends before the potent gale of grace and sinners that would not yield are made to yield by God. I know this, if the Lord willed it, there is no man so desperately wicked here this morning that he would not be made now to seek for mercy. However infidel he might be, however rooted in his prejudices against the Gospel, Jehovah has but to will it and it is done. Into your dark heart, O you who have never seen the light, would the light stream. If He did but say, "Let there be light," there would be light. You may bend your fist and lift up your mouth against Jehovah, but He is your master yet—your master to destroy you, if you go on in your wickedness! But your master to save you now, to change your heart and turn your will, as He turns the rivers of water.

If it were not for this doctrine, I wonder where the ministry would be. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. The power of our preaching is bought—it can do nothing in the conversion of men by itself. Men are hardened, obdurate, indifferent—but the power of grace is greater than the power of eloquence or the power of earnestness—and once let that power be put forth and what can stand against it? Divine Omnipotence is the doctrine of a revival. We may not see it in ordinary days, by reason of the coldness of our hearts. But we must see it when these extraordinary works of grace are wrought. Have you ever heard the Eastern fables of the dervish, who wished to teach to a young prince the fact of the existence of a God? The fable has it that the young prince could not see any proof of the existence of a First Cause—so the dervish brought a little plant and set it before him. And in his sight that little plant grew up, blossomed, brought forth fruit and became a towering tree in an hour.

The young man lifted up his hands in wonder and he said, "God must have done this." "Oh, but," said the teacher, you say, "God has done this, because it is done in an hour—has He not done it, when it is accomplished in twenty years?" It was the same work in both cases. It was only the *rapidity* that astonished his pupil. So, Brethren, when we see the Church gradually built up and converted, we lose the sense perhaps of a present God. But when the Lord causes the tree suddenly to grow from a sapling to a strong tall monarch of the forest, then we say, "This is God." We are all blind and stupid in a measure and we want to see sometimes some of these quick upgoings, these extraordinary motions of Divine influence, before we will fully understand Gods power.

Learn, then, O Church of God today, this great lesson of the nothingness of man and the Eternal All of God. Learn, disciples of Jesus, to rest on Him—look for your success to His powers and while you make your efforts, trust not in your efforts, but in the Lord Jehovah. If you have progressed slowly, give Him thanks for progress. But if now He pleases to

give you a marvelous increase, multiply your songs and sing unto Him that works all things according to the counsel of His will.

**III.** I now desire, with great earnestness, as the Holy Spirit shall help me, to make the text A STIMULUS FOR FURTHER EXERTION.

The duty of the Church is not to be measured by her success. It is as much the minister's duty to preach the Gospel in adverse times as in propitious seasons. We are not to think if God withholds the dew, we are to withhold the plow. We are not to imagine that if unfruitful seasons come, we are therefore to cease from sowing our seed. Our business is with *act*, not with result. The Church has to do her duty, even though that duty should bring her no present reward. "If they hear you not, Son of Man, if they perish they shall perish, but their blood will I not require at yours hands." If we sow the seed and the birds of the air devour it, we have done what we were commanded to do and the duty is accepted even though the birds devour the seed.

We may expect to see a blessed result, but even if it did not come we must not cease from duty. But while this is true so far, it must, nevertheless be a Divine and holy stimulant to a Gospel laborer, to know that God is making him successful. And in the present day we have a better prospect of success than we ever had and we should consequently work the harder. When a tradesman begins business with a little shop at the corner, he waits awhile to see whether he will have any customers. By-and-by his little shop is crowded. He has a name. He finds he is making money. What does he do? He enlarges his premises. The back yard is taken in and covered over. There are extra men employed. Still the business increases, but he will not invest all his capital in it till he sees to what extent it will pay. It still increases and the next house is taken and perhaps the next—he says, "This is a paying concern and therefore increase it."

My dear Friends, I am using commercial maxims, but they are common-sense rules and I like to talk so. There are, in these days, happy opportunities. There is a noble business to be done for Christ. Where you used to invest a little capital, a little effort and a little donation, invest more. There never was such heavy interest to be made as now. It shall be paid back in the results cent per cent. No, beyond all that you expected you shall see God's work prospering. If a farmer knew that a bad year was coming, he would perhaps only sow an acre or two. But If some Prophet could tell him, "Farmer, there will be such a harvest next year as there never was," he would say, "I will plow up my grass lands, I will stub up those hedges—every inch of ground I will sow."

So do you. There is a wondrous harvest coming. Plow up your headlands. Root up your hedges. Break up your fallow ground and sow, even among the thorns. You know not which shall prosper, this or that. But you may hope that they shall be alike good. Enlarged effort should always follow an increased hope of success.

And let me give you another encouragement. Remember that even when this Revival comes, an instrumentality will still be wanted. The plowman is wanted, even after the harvest and the treader of grapes is wanted, however plentiful the vintage. The greater the success the more need of

instrumentality. They began at first to think in the North of Ireland that they could do without ministers! But now that the Gospel is spread, never was there such a demand for the preachers of the Gospel as now. Proudly men said in their hearts, "God has done this without the intervention of man." I say, they said it proudly, for there is such a thing as proud humility. But God made them stoop. He made them see that, after all, He would bless the Word through His servants—that He would make the ministers of God "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds."

Brothers and Sisters, you need not think that if better times should come, the world will do without you. You will be wanted. "A man shall be precious as the gold of Ophir." They shall take hold of your garments and they shall say, "Tell us what we must do to be saved." They shall come to your house. They shall ask your prayers—they shall demand your instructions. And you shall find the meanest of the flock become precious as a wedge of gold. The plowman shall never be so much esteemed as when he follows after the reaper and the sower of seed never so much valued as when he comes at the heels of those that tread the grapes. The glory which God puts upon instrumentality should encourage you to use it.

And now I beseech and entreat you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, inhabitants of this great city of London, let not this auspicious gale pass away without singular effort. I sometimes fear lest the wind should blow on us and we should have our sails all furled and therefore the good ship should not speed. Up with the canvas now. Oh, put on every stitch of it. Let every effort be used, while God is helping us. Let us be earnest co-workers with Him. Methinks I see the clouds floating here. They have come from the far west, from the shore of America. They have crossed the sea and the wind has wafted them till the green isle received the showers in its northern extremity. Lo, the clouds are just now passing over Wales and are refreshing the shores that border on the principality. The rain is falling on Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. Divine Grace is distilling and the clouds are drawing nearer and nearer to us.

Mark, my Brethren, they tarry not, for men, neither for the sons of men. They are floating over our heads today. Shall they float away and shall we still be left as dry as ever? 'Tis yours today to bring down the rain though 'tis God's to send the clouds. God has sent this day over this great city a Divine cloud of His Grace. Now, you Elijahs, pray it down! To your knees, Believers, to your knees. You can bring it down and only you, "For this thing will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." "Prove me now herewith," says the Lord of hosts, "and see if I will not open the windows of Heaven and give you such a blessing that you shall not have room to contain it."

Will you lose the opportunity, Christians? Will you let men be lost for want of effort? Will you suffer this all-blessed time to roll away unimproved? If so, the Church of 1860 is a cowardly Church and is unworthy of its time. And he among you, Brothers and Sisters, that has not an earnest heart today, if he is a Christian, is a disgrace to his Christianity. When there are such times as these, if we do not every man of us trust in the plow, we shall indeed deserve the worst barrenness of

soul that can possibly fall upon us. I believe that the Church has often been plagued and vexed by her God, because when God has favored her she has not made a proper use of the favor. "Then," says He, "I will make you like Gilboa. On your mount there shall be no dew. I will bid the clouds that they rain no more rain upon you and you shall be barren and desolate, till once again I pour out the Spirit from on high."

Let us spend this week in special prayer. Let us meet together as often as we can and plead at the Throne. And each man of you in private be mighty with your God and in public be diligent in your efforts to bring your fellow men and women to Christ.

**IV.** I have done, when I have uttered a WORD OF WARNING to those of you who know not Christ.

I am aware that I have many here on Sabbath mornings who never were in the habit of attending a place of worship at all. There is many a gentleman here today who would be ashamed in any society, to confess himself a professor of religion. He has never perhaps, for a long time heard the Gospel preached. And now there is a strange sort of fascination that has drawn him here. He came the first time out of curiosity—perhaps to make a joke at the minister's expense. He has found himself enthralled, he does not know how it is, but he has been all this week uneasy. He has been wanting to come again and when he goes away today, he will be watching for next Sabbath.

He has not given up his sins, but somehow they are not so pleasurable as they used to be. He cannot swear as he did. If an oath comes out edgeways, it does not roll out in the round form it used to do—he knows better now. Now, it is to such persons that I speak. My dear Friends, allow me to express my hearty joy that you are here and let me also express the hope that you are here for a purpose you do not as yet understand. God has a special favor to you, I do trust, and therefore He has brought you here. I have frequently remarked that in any revival of religion, it is not often the children of pious parents that are brought in, but those who never knew anything of Christ before.

The ordinary means are usually blessed to those who constantly attend them. But the express effort, and the extraordinary influence of the Spirit reaches those who were outside the pale of nominal Christians and made no profession of religion. I am in hopes it may meet you. But if you should despise the Word which you have heard. If the impression that has been made and you know it has been made—should die away—one of the most awful regrets you will ever have when you come to your right sense and reason in another world will be the feeling that you had an opportunity, but that you neglected it. I cannot conceive a more doleful wail than that of the men who cries at last in Hell, "The harvest is past—there was a harvest. The summer is ended—there was a summer—and I am not saved."

To go to perdition in ordinary times is Hell. But to go from under the sound of an earnest ministry, where you are bid to come to Christ, where you are entreated with honest tears to come to Jesus—to go there after you have been warned is to go not to Hell merely, but to the very Hell of Hells. The worst damnation is reserved for men who hear the Truth of God

and feel it, too, but yet reject it and are lost. Oh, my dear Hearer, this is a solemn time with you. I pray God the Holy Spirit may remind you that it may be now or never with you. You may never have another warning, or if you have it, you may grow so hardened that you may laugh at it and despise it. My Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you, by God, by Christ Jesus, by your own immortal welfare, stop and think now whether it is worth while to throw away the hallowed opportunity which is now presented to you. Will you go and dance away your impressions, or laugh them out of your soul? Ah, you may laugh yourself into Hell, but you can not laugh yourself out of it.

There is a turning point in each man's life when his character becomes fixed and settled. That turning point may be today. It may be that there shall be some solemn seat in this hall, which if a man knew its history he would never sit in it—a seat in which a man shall sit and hear the Word and shall say, "I will not yield. I will resist the impression. I will despise it. I will have my sins, even if I am lost for them." Mark your seat, Friend, before you go. Make a blood-red stain across it that next time we come here we may say, "Here a soul destroyed itself."

But I pray rather that God the Holy Spirit may sweetly whisper in your heart—"Man, yield, for Jesus invites you to come to Him." Oh, may my Master smile into your face this morning and say, "I love your soul, trust Me with it. Give up your sins. Turn to Me." O Lord Jesus do it! And men shall not resist You. Oh, show them Your love and they must yield. Do it, O Crucified One, for Your mercy's sake! Send forth Your Holy Spirit now and bring the strangers home and in this hall grant, O Lord, that many hearts may be fully resigned to Your love and to Your grace! Amen.

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