

MAROTH—OR, THE DISAPPOINTED

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“For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.”
Micah 1:12.

The village of the bitter spring, for that is probably the meaning of this name, Maroth, experienced a bitter disappointment. At the time when the Assyrians invaded the land, the inhabitants expected that deliverance would come to them from some quarter or other. From the context, I judge that they placed some sort of reliance upon the Philistines. They possibly had some hope that the king of Egypt would come up to attack Sennacherib. Evidently they looked for help everywhere except to God and, consequently, as no good came to them from the men upon whom they had relied, trial and overwhelming distress came to them from the hand of God. He was angry at their trust in men and their lack of trust in Himself and, therefore, He punished their unbelief by their total overthrow! The Assyrian swept over them and stopped not till he reached the gate of Jerusalem, where Hezekiah's faith in God made the enemy pause and retreat.

The fact recorded in the text suggests to us, first, *sad disappointments*—“the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came.” And secondly, *strange appointments*—evil came down from the Lord.” When we have considered these two things, we will change the subject, altogether, and speak about *expectations which will not end in disappointment*.

I. First, then, we are to think of SAD DISAPPOINTMENTS. “The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came.”

Disappointments are often extremely painful at the time. Even in little things, we do not like to be disappointed. If our expectations are not realized, we feel as if a sharp thorn has pierced our flesh. But in great matters, disappointment is much more serious. In the case of the inhabitants of Maroth, it was fatal—they expected to be delivered from the Assyrians, but they were either slain on the spot, or carried away captive to Nineveh. It would be the most terrible disappointment of all if our expectations concerning our souls should not be realized! It would be painful to the last degree to discover upon our dying bed that the good we had looked for had not come—to find that we had built our house upon the sand and that when we most needed its shelter, it was swept away! O Lord, disappoint not Your servant's hope! All my expectation is from You

and You have said, “They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.” Any other expectation beside this, concerning our eternal interests, will only bring us pain and misery forever.

Disappointments in this life, however, although they are at times very painful, are sometimes of such a character that *could we know all the truth, we would not lament them*. There are many who have looked forward to a change in their condition in life, or their position in society—and they have been disappointed. For a time they have been ready to wring their hands in anguish, yet if they knew what the consequences would have been if their expectations had been realized, they would fall down upon their knees and devoutly praise the Lord for the disappointment which had been so great a blessing in disguise to them! You, my Brother, had expected to be rich by this time, but God knew that had you been rich, you would have been proud and worldly and would have ceased to enjoy fellowship with him—so He kept you poor that you might still be rich in faith! You, my Friend, had expected to be in robust health at this time, but had you been so, you might not have been walking so humbly before the Lord as you are now doing. You, my oft-bereaved Brother, had hoped to see your family spared to grow up, so that you might have had sons and daughters upon whom you could have leaned in your declining days—yet they might have proved a plague and a sorrow to you instead of a comfort and a blessing. Complain not that they were taken from you in their childhood by that kind hand which made them blest forever and only deprived you for a while of their companionship, which might not have been an unmixed blessing to you. Rest assured, O child of God, that whatever happens to you is as it should be! Believe that if you could have infinite wisdom, and the helm of your life’s vessel could be entrusted to your hands, you would steer it precisely as God steers it! You would not always guide the ship through smooth water any more than He does. If you could be unerring in judgment and could be your own guide, you would choose for yourself the track which God has chosen for you. It is Divine Love and Infallible Wisdom that have ordered all things for you up to this very moment, so whatever your disappointments may have been, comfort yourself with the assurance that they have been among your greatest blessings!

There are some expectations which are certain to be disappointed. When a man expects to prosper through wrong-doing, his expectations will certainly not be realized—at least not in the long run, however much he may seem to prosper for a while. When a man thinks that happiness can be found in the ways of sin, he will be bitterly disappointed sooner or later. When a man expects that by self-reliance he will be able to gain all that he needs without trusting to a stronger arm than his own, his expectations will not be realized. When a man is relying upon his fellow creature—when he thinks that the all-important matter for him is to have some rich patron or powerful friend—and he is under the delusion that he can do without any help from Heaven—he is sure to be disappointed! And he who is depending upon his own good works and trusting to his own unaided resolutions to hold on in the way of holiness will be

terribly disappointed unless he repents before it is too late! There are some things which only fools will expect—things which are contrary to the laws of Nature, and things which are contrary to the rules of Divine Grace! The man who never sows good corn, but yet expects to reap at harvest time, is a fool and his disappointment will come in the form of thorns and thistles all over his fields! The sluggard who lies in bed and lazily says, “A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep,” may expect in that way to become wealthy, but Solomon long ago said to him, “Your poverty shall come as one that travels and your need as an armed man.” This is true in spiritual things as well as in temporal. God gives blessing to effort and diligence—not to idleness and lethargy!

Besides this, *in many cases disappointments are highly probable*. Some of our familiar proverbs relate to such cases as these. One says, “Those who wait for dead men’s shoes are pretty sure to go barefoot.” Another is, “If they never drink milk till they get their uncle’s cow, they will be long thirsty for the lack of it.” Yet there are persons who waste a great part of their lifetime in vain expectations of what they call, “windfalls.” We know that the “windfalls” in the orchard generally fall because they are rotten and are not worth picking up! And other “windfalls” are often no more valuable. There are men who might have prospered if they had not foolishly sat down in the expectation that somehow or other, a great fortune would hunt them out and make them independent—such expectations are usually doomed to disappointment. If any of you have fallen into the pernicious habit of reading works of fiction and so have formed romantic ideas of what is likely to occur to you, the great probability is that your daydreams will be only dreams—and your castles in the air will never be inhabited by you! I pray you not to fritter away your time and opportunities in vain expectations which most probably will never be fulfilled. Expect to receive not quite all you earn, nor all you lend, and probably your expectations will not be disappointed, but, as another of our proverbs puts it, if you count your chickens before they are hatched, it is highly probable that your expectations will not be realized.

There are also *other expectations that will possibly end in disappointment*. Even the most legitimate hopes are not always realized. “There’s many a slip between the cup and the lips.” When we feel almost sure that a certain plan will succeed, suddenly it turns out to be all a mistake. We think that as prudent men, we have arranged matters so wisely that they have to succeed, yet in the issue we are grievously disappointed. Be not hasty in condemning those who do not succeed in business, for at least in *some* cases, failure has come through no fault of theirs. Do not judge harshly all who are in need—no doubt there are all too many instances in which poverty is the result of idleness or drunkenness—but there are other cases in which poverty is blameless and even honorable. Men may toil hard, do the very best they can and seek God’s blessing upon their efforts—and yet they may not be permitted to secure a competence. If you, my Friend, reckon upon seeing all your schemes succeed, you are very likely to be disappointed. If you, my Christian Brother, imagine that

between here and Heaven, the way will be laid with smooth turf, well-rolled, you will certainly be disappointed! If you think that the sea will always be calm as a lake and that no storm will ever ruffle it, you will be disappointed. There will be some things that will fulfill your expectations, but there will be others that will not—and in those you will be like that inhabitants of Maroth who “waited carefully for good, but evil came.”

In every case *disappointments should be borne with the greatest possible patience and equanimity*. I am sorry to say that we do not all bear them so, not even all of us who profess to be Christians. Remember that God has never promised that all our expectations shall be fulfilled—it would have been a doubtful blessing if such a thing had been guaranteed to us—and we might easily have expected ourselves into utter misery! Who are you that everything should happen just as you wish? Should the weather be fine simply because you want it to be so when a thousand fields are gasping for rain? Should you have the channels of trade turned in your direction when if that were the case, scores of others would be bankrupts? Is everything in this world to be so arranged that you shall be the darling and pet of Providence? It cannot be right for such a state of things to prevail! Therefore, when we are disappointed, whether it is in little matters or great ones, let us bear the disappointment bravely and lay the whole case before the Lord in prayer. Let us ask Him why He contends with us. And if there is any reason for it which we can discover in ourselves, let us endeavor to remove it. Or if we can find no cause, let us believe that God acts in wisdom and in love—and let us cheerfully submit to whatever He appoints for us.

We would bear our disappointments with all the greater equanimity if we would always remember that *disappointments are often exceedingly instructive*. What do they teach us? Well, first they teach us that our judgment is very fallible. We learn from them that we are not such prophets as we thought we were! We fancied that if we said that such-and-such a thing was going to happen, it would surely be so. But when the result proved to be just the opposite, we found that our judgment was not as reliable as we thought it was and, therefore, our forecast was quite inaccurate. So our disappointments teach us our need of greater wisdom than our own—and also teach us the folly of trusting to our own understanding.

They also teach us the uncertainty of everything that is earthly. What is there, here, that can be depended upon for a single hour? The life of the most robust may suddenly end! The current of affairs may change more rapidly than the tide. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away. The greatest wisdom becomes the greatest folly. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. If our disappointments teach us this lesson, we shall be well repaid for having suffered them!

Let them also teach us to speak correctly, as Christians should. You know how the Apostle James writes, “Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow...For that you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do

this or that.” Let our past disappointments warn us to speak with bated breath about tomorrow and the more distant future, and not to say without any qualification what we will do as if all time were at our disposal and we were the disposers of all events. Even if we do not always use the words, “If the Lord wills,” “If God pleases,” “If we are spared,” or similar expressions, let the spirit of them always be in our mind so that we do not think and speak unconditionally concerning the unknown future!

Let our disappointments also teach us to submit—absolutely and unquestioningly—to the Lord’s will. We wish to have things in a certain fashion, but God plainly indicated that they are not to be so. Therefore let us cheerfully surrender our wish to His will. Surely, O child of God, you would not think of wanting to have your way when once you learn that it is contrary to your heavenly Father’s way! If you are right-minded, you will at once give up your wish and will say, “Not my will, O my Father, but Your will be done!” You will probably do that all the more decidedly if some disappointment has burnt into your soul the Truth that God is wiser than you are—and that His will must always prevail above yours. Stand to the surrender at all times and say to the Lord, “Show me Your way, and let me hear the voice behind me saying, ‘This is the way; walk you in it.’”

Let me also add that *disappointments may be greatly sanctified*. They are not always so, for sometimes they irritate and so cause sin—or they create a murmuring spirit against God and so make us worse than we were before. But sanctified disappointments are part of that rod of the Covenant which is so beneficial in the hands of a chastening God. Sometimes a grievous disappointment has changed the whole current of a person’s life. A man was looking forward to what he hoped would be a happy marriage, but his intended bride suddenly died—and then he surrendered his heart to Jesus, who became the Bridegroom of his soul! A son had expected to inherit a large estate, but by some means the wealth came not into his possession—and when he found himself poor, he sought true riches in Christ! A strong man had hoped to build up a prosperous business, but he was unexpectedly struck with serious illness, his former prosperity departed from him—and then he fixed his hopes upon the ever-blessed Son of God and so he attained to bliss which no earthly success could ever have brought him! I remember meeting a man who told me that he could never see spiritually until he had lost his natural eyesight! And there have, doubtless, been many who were never rich until they became poor, and others who were never happy until their earthly happiness was blighted and blasted, and then they sought and found true happiness in Jesus. What a blessed disappointment it is that leads us to a Savior’s love!

Disappointments are also sanctified to Believers when they help to wean them from the world. There is a sort of glue about this world that makes it adhere to us and makes us adhere to it. David found it so when he wrote, “My soul cleaves unto the dust.” Earth naturally clings to earth, but I will guarantee you that David cared little enough for earth when his handsome son, Absalom, became a rebel and when his house,

which had been such a comfort to him, became a terror and when his subjects, who had almost worshipped him, joined in rebelling against him! Then did he plaintively sigh, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." Yes, disappointments wean us from the world and makes us plume our wings, ready to be up and away to that fair country where hope shall reach its full fruition and disappointment shall be unknown forever!

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, when we meet with disappointments in this life, we prize all the more, the faithfulness of our God! When you have had an unkind word from one whom you have loved, how much more closely you have nestled down in the embrace of your ever-loving Savior! When you have been betrayed by a friend in whom you trusted, what sweet communion you have had with the Friend that sticks closer than a brother! When your gourd above you has withered and you have lost its welcome shade, however more you have prized the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land! It is a good thing for us to have all earthly props knocked away, for then we value more than ever the faithfulness of the God who never fails those who put their trust in Him. Those who always remain on dry land will never learn by practical experience what the sailors know—"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep." And it is when, like the storm-tossed mariners, our soul is melted because of trouble, that our dear Lord and Master, coming to us upon the crest of the wave, becomes tenfold more precious to us than He had ever been before! If our disappointments would only make us hold with a loose hand all we have—house, lands, children, health, reputation and everything else, so that if God should take them all away, we would still continue to bless His name because we never reckoned that they were ours to keep, but were only lent to us during our Lord's good will and pleasure—if our disappointments only brought us to such a condition as that, they would be, indeed, most soul-enriching things!

II. Now I must leave this part of the subject and turn to the second portion which is STRANGE APPOINTMENTS—"The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the Lord."

This expression must not be misunderstood. "Evil came down from the Lord." The word, "evil," here means *trial, affliction, chastisement*, and to a Christian this kind of, "evil," is often for his highest good! It does seem singular to a child of God that even that which he thinks to be evil should come down from the Lord. How can it be that God is loving and kind when He deprives one of His children of her husband, or takes away her babe from her bosom? How can it be that God is Infinitely Wise, yet He sometimes casts His poor weak children into difficulties where they are at their wits' end and know not what to do? How is it that He loves the righteous and is gracious to them, yet He puts some of the best of them into the hottest part of the furnace and makes it burn most furiously like that of Nebuchadnezzar of old? If our aches and pains came from Satan. If our losses were the result of chance, or if our sufferings arose only from the malevolence of the wicked—they would be compre-

hensible—but it is oftentimes a marvel and a mystery to a Christian why the Lord sends the trials which lays upon him! Be patient, Brothers and Sisters! What you know not, now, you shall know hereafter—so be content to wait until God reveals the mystery to you if He pleases to do so—and then it will make you marvel that your Lord should have taken such pains in training you for the service He has for you yet to render Him!

Perhaps I am addressing some child of God who is sorely puzzled as to why certain things have happened to him. But, Father, does your child always understand all that you do to him and for him? It was not long ago that your boy was sent away to school—perhaps he thought you unkind in treating him so—yet it was real love to him that prompted you to send him away from you to be all the better trained for whatever may lie before him in his later life. He does not understand all that is in your mind and you can never comprehend all that is in the Infinite Mind of your Father who is in Heaven. Be satisfied that whatever God does must be right.

Yet, remember that in a certain sense, *all trials do come from God*. There may be secondary agents coming in between, but let us not quibble at them, or quarrel with them. When Shimei cursed David, Abishai said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray you, and take off his head.” But David said, “Let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, ‘Curse David.’” He felt that he deserved to be cursed so he looked upon Shimei’s insults as being a form of chastisement from God. If you strike a dog with a stick, he will bite the stick—but if he had more sense, he would try to bite *you*. And when we are chastened, it is foolish for us to be angry with the rod that God employs—and we dare not be angry with God! There may be sin in the person who causes us to suffer, as there was in the case of Shimei, but we must look beyond him even as David did—and learn what God’s intention is in thus chastening us—and submissively accept whatever God appoints.

There are some trials which come very distinctly from God. Perhaps you have lost one who was very dear to you. Let it comfort your heart that it was the Lord who took away your loved one. There is an empty chair in your house and every time you look at it your eyes fill with tears—yet never forget that it was the Lord who called to Himself the one who used to occupy that chair. Or possibly your trouble is that you are gradually fading away by consumption or some other deadly disease. Well, if it is so, that is God’s appointment for you in the order of His Providence, so do not rebel against what is clearly His will. Or it may be that your trial is that you have struggled hard to gain an honest livelihood for yourself and your family, but instead of attaining that end, you are constantly getting further and further away from it. If it is so, look upon your trouble as coming from God and bear patiently what you are unable to alter!

This leads me to say to every Christian whose trial is distinctly from the Lord—my Brother or Sister, *this makes it all the easier for you to submit without murmuring at God’s will*. When such a trial comes, there

is nothing for a Believer to say but this, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." There may be cases in which submission will best be indicated by silence before the Lord. When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire before the Lord and there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, it must have been a terrible trial to their father, yet we read, "Aaron held his peace." As if he thought, "Since God has done it, what can I say?" You know the oft-repeated story of the gardener who had a favorite rose, and when it was plucked, he was very angry. But when he was told that the master had taken it, he said no more about the matter. May not the owner of the garden take any flowers in it that he pleases? And may not the Lord take away His beloved ones from us whenever He chooses to do so? We ought not to be vexed with Him when He does so, but we ought to say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." No, my Lord, I must not and I will not quibble at anything that You have done. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but let not man strive with his Maker. In our case, it would not only be striving with our Maker—it would be striving with our best Friend, our Father, our All-in-All—and that we must never do. So, if the trial has come distinctly from God, it should be easy to submit to it.

And, further, if it comes distinctly from God, *it gives us all the more powerful plea in prayer*. One may plead thus, "O Lord, this trouble is not of my own making. You have sent it to me for Your own wise purposes—will You not bring me through it?" Another may say, "O Lord, I am very poor, yet this is not because I have been imprudent or extravagant, but because You have permitted it—so will You not help me in my time of need?" A Sister pleads, "O Lord, I am in deep distress. My dear husband has been taken away and I am left with many children and with very scanty means. But as You have put me into this furnace, will You not be with me in it and keep me from being consumed?" When a soldier is sent on a campaign, he is not expected to bear his own charges. And if the great Captain of Salvation has sent you out to fight for Him, He will meet your expenses. He will also cover your head in the day of battle and make you more than conqueror through His might. Did the Lord ever lay a heavier burden on any man than that man was able to bear unless He also gave him extra strength to enable him to bear it? Rest confident concerning the trial which God sends you, that He will also send you deliverance from it, or Divine Grace to glorify Him in it! If His left hand smites you, His right hand will support you. If He frowns upon you, to-day, He will smile upon you tomorrow. If He leads you into deep waters, He will bring you up again to the hills where He will gladden you with the light of His Countenance! The deeper your sorrows, the higher shall be your joys! As your tribulations abound, so also shall your consolations abound by Jesus Christ! The groans of earth shall be surpassed by the songs of Heaven and the woes of time shall be swallowed up in the hallelujahs of eternity! Therefore if in any of these senses evil comes down upon you from the Lord, I pray that He may give you the Grace to accept it and even to rejoice in it!

III. Now we are to close by thinking of EXPECTATIONS WHICH WILL NOT END IN DISAPPOINTMENT.

For instance, I expect, and so do you if you are the Lord's children, that God will keep His promises. It is not always so with men, for they make many promises which they never fulfill. There are men who are so rich and so reliable that their signature to a check is as good as gold to the full value of the check—and God's promise is His check which can be cashed at the Bank of Faith in every time of need! We are all too apt to rely upon our fellow men, even though they have failed us again and again. But we sometimes find it difficult to depend upon our God, although He has never failed anyone who has trusted Him. O Beloved, what wickedness lurks in that fact! If you believe every promise that God has given, you will be able to endorse the testimony that Joshua gave to the children of Israel just before he died, "You know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you; all are come to pass unto you and not one thing has failed thereof."

Then next, *expect much from the merits and work of the Lord Jesus Christ*. If you have really believed in Him, expect to be justified by Him. Expect that He will answer every accusation that can be brought against you either now or at the last great Judgment Day. Expect also to be preserved and kept by Him. Expect that He will go before you as your Shepherd, making you to lie down in green pastures and leading you beside the still waters. Expect that He will plead for you in Heaven and that He will soon come to take you up to dwell at His right hand forever! You cannot expect too much of Christ—and large as your expectations may be—none of them shall be disappointed.

And, Beloved, *expect much from the work of the Holy Spirit*. If the Spirit of God has quickened you from your death in sin, what is there that He cannot and will not do? Are you in trouble? He can comfort you. Are you depressed? He can cheer you. Are you in the dark? He can enlighten you. Are you at this moment fighting against sin? He can enable you to gain the victory! I am sure that many of God's children do not expect half as much as they ought from the Holy Spirit. They seem to imagine that there are some sins that cannot be driven out of them! They do not, in the power of the Spirit, put the sword to the throat of all their sins. Yet this should be the constant aim of every Christian—to drive out the Canaanites and kill the last Amalekite with the edge of the sword! The Spirit of God is able to subdue the fiercest temper. He is able to impart activity to the most slothful nature. He is able to repress the wildest and most evil desires. He is able to excite us to those virtues which seem to be directly opposite to our natural temperaments and characters. "All things are possible to him who believes." If he will but wholly trust to the Holy Spirit, he shall be able to do great exploits in the war that has to be waged within his own heart and also in the fight against evil which is raging all around him!

If time would permit, I might go on urging you to cherish expectations which are not likely to be disappointed, but I can only summarize them

very briefly. Expect tonight that God will bless you as you offer up your evening prayer. Expect that the Lord will be with you tomorrow sustaining you amid all the cares and toils of the day. Expect for all the days of your active life that as your days, so shall your strength be. And when your declining years come, expect that consolation will be given to you to meet every emergency. In sickness, expect to receive sustaining Grace. In death, itself, expect the Lord's very special Presence. Expect a glorious Resurrection! Expect the triumph that you shall share with Christ in His millennial Glory. Expect an eternity of bliss with Him as He has promised, and rest assured that none of these expectations shall be disappointed!

I fear that there are some here who have no right to cherish any of these expectations. You have probably had disappointments about many things. I cannot pity you very much concerning the trivial disappointments of this life—but if you do not seek the Savior where He is found, there is a disappointment in store for you that might well fill all Christian hearts with tender pity and compassion. There is a man who has lived a life of selfish pleasure. He has been clothed in scarlet and fine linen and has fared sumptuously every day. But all of a sudden the voice of God declares that he must die. What will be his horror when he sees all his treasures melting away and himself doomed to depart out of this world as naked as when he entered it? Imagine the case of the man who has been what he calls religious, who has attended to all the ceremonies of his church, or who has been orthodox after the fashion of the sect to which he belongs—but who has had no new birth and, consequently, none of the life of God in his soul—no indwelling Spirit, no vital connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior! Yet he has expected to be ferried across the bridgeless river by one called Vain-Hope—and when the hour of death has come, God has opened his eyes to let him see his real position and the dread future that is awaiting him! Oh, the terror of that man when his vain and unfounded hopes are disappointed! We have read of some who have offered a great portion of their wealth if they might only be allowed to live another hour, but it was all in vain, for die they must! God save all of you, my dear Hearers, from such a doom as that! In order that it may be so, put not your trust in things below—be not like the inhabitants of Maroth who looked to the Philistines and the Egyptians to help them—and so waited in vain for the good that never came. But turn your eyes unto Him who says, “Look unto Me, and be you saved,” and then your expectations shall not be disappointed. So may it be, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 4.**

(This Exposition belongs to sermon No. 3182, Volume 56—“Boldness at the Throne,” but there was no space available for it there.—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.)

Verse 1. *Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* Not only dread coming short, but dread the very *appearance* of it! Oh, that we might now enter into that rest and so clearly enjoy it that there should not even be a seeming to come short of it!

2. *For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* [See Sermon #2089, Volume 35—PROFITABLE MIXTURE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] They were not united to it by faith. Consequently, as they did not receive the Word, it was taken away from them.

3. *For we who have believed do enter into rest.* [See Sermons #866, Volume 15—REST—and #2090, Volume 35—A DELICIOUS EXPERIENCE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Faith brings us into this rest, even as unbelief shut them out.

3. *As He said, As I have sworn in My wrath they shall not enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.* That is God's rest, the rest of a finished work—and into that rest many never enter. The work by which they might live forever, the finished work by which they might be saved, they refuse, and so they never enter into God's rest.

4, 5. *For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, they shall not enter into My rest.* There are many professing Christians who do not understand what it is to rest because the work of salvation is done. They do not even seem to know that the work is done! They understand not that dying word of the Lord Jesus, "It is finished." They think there is something still to be added to His work to make it effectual. But it is not so.

6-8. *Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, again He designates a certain day saying in David, Today after so long a time; as it is said, Today if you will hear the voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day.* We read of this in the 95th Psalm, where David was urging those to whom he was writing to hear God's voice, and not be like the unbelievers in the wilderness, so that the rest still remained to be entered upon by somebody. Joshua had not given them rest, or else David would not have spoken of entering into rest.

9, 10. *There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God has from His.* He says, "It is finished. I am no longer going to do my own works, I have done with them—I now trust the finished work of Christ—and that gives me rest. But as to all that wearied me, before, and made life a continual task and toil, it is now ended." God is not a cruel taskmaster to His people. He gives rest to those who trust in Him—and some of us have entered into that rest.

11. *Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.* Let us not repeat the story of unbelieving Israel in our own lives. Let us not live and die in the wilderness, but let us go in and take possession of the promised land, the promised rest, in the power of the Holy Spirit!

12. *For the Word of God is quick, and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* This verse may be interpreted with reference to the Incarnate Word or to the Inspired Word—they are so closely united and related to one another that we need not attempt to separate them, but see Christ in the Word, and the Word in Christ—and learn that both Christ and the Word do for us all that the Apostle here declares!

13. *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.* However great a revealer the Word of God may be, however clear a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, the God who gave the Word is even more so!

14. *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.* Shall we desert Him, now that He has gone into Heaven to represent us? Now that He has fought the fight and won the victory on our behalf, and gone up to Heaven as our Representative? God forbid!

15, 16. *For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* [See Sermon #2143, Volume 36—THE TENDERNESS OF JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find Grace to help in time of need.

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

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

THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE NEED OF THE AGE NO. 1952

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 13, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“O you that are named the House of Jacob, is the Spirit
of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings?
Do not My words do good to him that walks uprightly?”
Micah 2:7.*

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, what a stern rebuke to the people of Israel is contained in the title with which the Prophet addressed them—“O you that are named the House of Jacob”! It is as much as to say to them—“You wear the name, but you do not bear the character of Jacob.” It is the Old Testament version of the New Testament saying, “You have a name to live and are dead.” They gloried that they were the seed of Israel! They vaunted the peculiar privileges which came to them as the descendants of God’s honored and chosen servant Jacob! But they did not act in the same way as Jacob would have acted—they were devoid of Jacob’s faith in Jehovah, they knew nothing of Jacob’s power of prayer—and nothing of his reliance upon the Covenant.

The words of Micah imply that the descendants of Jacob in his day were proud of the name, “House of Jacob,” but that they were not worthy of it. Nothing is more mischievous than to cling to a name when the thing for which it stands has disappeared. May we never come to such a stage of declension that even the Spirit of God will be compelled, in speaking to us, to say, “O you that are called the Church of God!” To be named Christians, but not to be Christians, is to be deceivers or deceived! The name brings with it great responsibility and if it is a name, only, it brings with it terrible condemnation! It is a crime against the Truth of God if we *dare* to take the name of His people when we are not His people. It is a robbery of honor from those to whom it is due. It is a practical lie against the Holy Spirit! It is a defamation of the character of the bride of Christ to take the name of Christian when the Spirit of Christ is not among us! This is to honor Christ with our lips and disgrace Him by our lives!

What is this but to repeat the crime of Judas and betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Brothers and Sisters, I say again, may we never come to this! Truths, not names, facts, not professions, are to be the first consideration! Better to be true to God and bear the names of reproach which the adversary is so apt to coin, than to be false to our Lord and yet to be decorated with the names of saints and regarded as the most orthodox of Believers. Whether named, “the House of Jacob,” or not, let us be wres-

tlers like Jacob and like he, may we come off as prevailing princes—the true Israel of God!

When the Lord found His chosen people to be in such a state that they had rather the name than the character of His people, He spoke to them by the Spirit of the Lord. Was not this because their restoration must come from that direction? Was not their evil spirit to be removed by the Lord's good Spirit? "O you that are named the House of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that whenever the Church of God declines, one of the most effectual ways of reviving her is to preach much Truth concerning the Holy Spirit. After all, He is the very breath of the Church. Where the Spirit of God is, there is power! If the Spirit is withdrawn, then the vitality of godliness begins to decline and the energy thereof is near to dying out. If we, ourselves, feel that we are backsliding, let us turn to the Spirit of God, crying, "Quicken me in Your way."

If we sorrowfully perceive that any *Church* is growing lukewarm, be it our prayer that the Holy Spirit may work graciously for its revival. Let us direct the attention of our fellow Christians under declension to the Spirit of God. They are not straitened in Him, but in themselves! Let them turn to Him for enlargement. It is He alone who can quicken us and strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. I admire the wisdom of God here, that when speaking by the Prophet, He rebukes the backsliding of the people and He immediately directs their minds to the Holy Spirit who can bring them back from their wanderings and cause them to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called. Let us learn from this Divine Wisdom and, in lowly reverence and earnest faith, let us look to the Spirit of the Lord.

In speaking to Israel upon the Spirit of God, the Prophet Micah uses the remarkable language in our text, upon which I would now speak to you. "O you that are named the House of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings? Do not My words do good to him that walks uprightly?" May the Holy Spirit help me to speak and you to hear!

I. And, first, I think we may consider these words to have been spoken TO DENOUNCE THOSE WHO WOULD CONTROL THE SPIRIT OF GOD. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Can you hold Him a captive and make Him speak at your dictation?

On turning to the connection you will find that there were certain Prophets sent of God to Israel who were unpopular. The message which they brought was not acceptable—the people could not endure it and so we read in the sixth verse—"Prophecy you not, say they to them that prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame." The words of these Prophets came so home to their consciences and made them so ashamed of themselves, that they said, "Do not prophesy! We wish not to hear you." To these Micah replies, "Is the Spirit of the Lord to be straitened by you?"

There were some in those days who would altogether have silenced the Spirit. They would banish all spiritual teaching from the earth, that the voice of human wisdom might be not contradicted. But can they silence

the Spirit of God? Has He not continually spoken according to His own will and will He not continue to do so? Is He not the free Spirit who, like the wind, blows where He wishes? If the adversaries could have slain with the sword all the messengers of God, would He not have found others? And if these, also, had been killed, could He not, out of *stones*, have raised up heralds of His Truth? While the Scriptures remain, the Holy Spirit will never be without a voice to the sons of men! And while He remains, those Scriptures will not be left without honest hearts and tongues to expound and enforce them! Is it possible for men anywhere to silence the Spirit of God? They may be guilty of the crime because they *desire* to commit it and *attempt* to do so, but yet, its accomplishment is beyond their reach. They may “quench the Spirit” in this and that man, but not in those in whom He effectually works. The Almighty Spirit may be resisted, but He will not be defeated! As well might men attempt to stop the shining of the sun, or seal up the winds, or still the pulsing of the tides, as effectually to straiten the Spirit of the Lord—

**“When God makes bare His arm,
Who can His work withstand?”**

Jehovah speaks and it is done—who shall resist His Word? When His Spirit attends that Word, shall it fall to the ground? “My Word,” says He, “shall not return unto Me void”—and all the sinners on earth and all the devils in Hell cannot alter that grand decree! Every now and then there seems to be a lull in the history of holy work, a silence from God, as if He were wearying of men and would speak no longer to them. But before long, in some unexpected quarter, the voice of the Lord is heard once more—some earnest soul breaks the awful silence of spiritual death and again the adversary is defeated! Outbursts of the great Spirit of Life, and Light, and Truth comes at the Divine will—when men least look for it or desire it! When Jesus has been crucified, even then the Holy Spirit descends, and the victories of the Cross begin. No, my Brethren, the Spirit of the Lord is not silenced—the voice of the Lord is heard above the tumults of the people!

The apostate Israelites also tried to straiten the Spirit of God *by only allowing certain persons to speak in His name*. They would have a choice of their Prophets—and a bad choice, too. See in the 11th verse—“If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, I will prophesy unto you of wine and of strong drink, even he shall be the prophet of this people.” They had a liking for preachers who would indulge their lusts, pander to their passions and swell their pride with windy flatteries! This age also inclines greatly to those who have cast off the restraints of God’s Revelation and utter the flattering inventions of their own boasted “thought.” Your liberal spirits, your large-hearted men, your despisers of the old and hunters after the new—these are the idols of many! As for those who would urge upon men separation from the world and holiness to the Lord, they are Puritans and out of date! In Micah’s days, Israel would only hear false prophets—the rest they would not listen to. “What?” asks Micah, “is the Spirit of the Lord then to be shut up to speak to you

by such men as you would choose? Is He not to speak by whomever He pleases?”

It is the tendency of churches in all ages to fetter the free Spirit. Now they are afraid that we shall have too many preachers and they would restrain their number by a sort of trades-union! In certain churches none must speak in God’s name unless they have gone through a certain humanly-prescribed preparation and have been ordained after a regulation manner—the Spirit of God may speak by the ordained, but He must not speak by others! In my inmost soul I treasure the liberty of prophesying. Not the right of every man to speak in the name of the Spirit, but the right of the Spirit to speak by whomever He pleases! He will rest on some rather than on others and God forbid that we should straiten His Sovereignty! Lord, send by whomever You will send! Choose whom You will to the sacred office of ministers of God! Among the poor and illiterate the Spirit of God has had voices as clear and bold as among the educated and refined—and He will have them still, for He is not straitened—and it is the way of Him to use instruments which pour contempt upon all the vain-glory of men! He anoints His own to bear witness for His Truth by life and lips—these the professing church may criticize and even reject, saying, “The Lord has not spoken by these,” but the Word of the Lord will stand, notwithstanding the judgment of men! God’s true ministers shall be acknowledged of Him—wisdom is justified of her children. The Lord’s Spirit will not be straitened or shut up by all the rules, modes and methods which even good men may devise. The wind blows where it wishes and the power of the Spirit waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men!

Further, this people tried to straiten the Spirit of God *by changing His testimony*. They did not wish the Prophets to speak upon subjects which caused shame to them. They bade them prophesy smooth things. Tell us that we may sin with safety! Tell us that the punishment of sin is not so overwhelming as we have feared! Stand up and be advocates for the devil by flattering us with “a larger hope!” Hint to us that, after all, man is a poor, inoffensive creature who does wrong because he cannot help it and that God will wink at his sins! And if He does punish us for a while, He will soon set it all right! That was the style of teaching which Israel desired and, no doubt, they found prophets to speak in that manner, for the demand soon creates the supply! But Micah boldly asks, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” Do you think that He will have His utterances toned down and His Revelation shaped to suit your tastes?

Brothers and Sisters, let me ask you, do you imagine that the Gospel is a nose of wax which can be shaped to suit the face of each succeeding age? Is the Revelation, once given by the Spirit of God, to be interpreted according to the fashion of the period? Is “advanced thought” to be the cord with which the Spirit of the Lord is to be straitened? Is the old Truth of God that saved men hundreds of years ago to be banished because something fresh has been hatched in the nests of the wise? Do you think that the witness of the Holy Spirit can be shaped and molded at our will? Is the Divine Spirit to be the *pupil* rather than the Teacher of the ages? “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” My very soul boils within me when I

think of the impudent arrogance of certain willful spirits from whom all reverence for Revelation has departed! They would teach Jehovah wisdom! They criticize His Word and amend His Truth. Certain Scriptural doctrines are, indeed, discarded as dogmas of the medieval period! Others are denounced as gloomy because they cannot be called untrue. Paul is questioned and quibbled out of court and the Lord Jesus is first praised and then explained away. We are told that the teaching of God's ministers must be conformed to the spirit of the age. We shall have nothing to do with such treason to the Truth of God! "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Shall His ministers speak as if He were? Verily, that same treasure of Truth which the Lord has committed unto us we will keep inviolate so long as we live, God helping us. We are not so unmindful of the words of the Apostle, "Hold fast the form of sound words," as to change a syllable of what we believe to be the Word of the Lord!

Certain of these backsliding Israelites went so far as *to oppose the testimony of God*. Note in the eighth verse—"Even of late My people have risen up as an enemy." It is sad when God's own people become the enemies of God's own Spirit, yet those who professed to be of the House of Jacob, instead of listening to the voice of the living God, began to sit in judgment upon His Word and even to contradict the same! The worst foes of the Truth of God are not infidels, but false professors! These men called themselves God's people and yet fought against His Spirit. "What then," asks Micah, "is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Will the Spirit of God fail? Will His operations on the hearts of men come to nothing? Will the Truth of God be put to shame and have no influence over human minds? Shall the Gospel be driven out of the world? Will there be none to believe it? None to proclaim it? None to live for it? None to die for it? We ask, with scorn, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Brothers and Sisters, my confidence in the success of the old faith is not lessened because so many forsake it! "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which, by the Gospel, is preached to you." If all the confessors of the faith could be martyred—even from their ashes, like a heavenly phoenix—the Truth of God would rise again! The Spirit of the Lord lives and, therefore, the Truth of God must also live. Is not all Truth of God immortal? How much more that which is the shrine of God! The Spirit's witness concerning the sin of man, the Grace of God, the mission of Jesus, the power of His blood, the glory of His Resurrection, reign and advent—this witness, I say, cannot cease or fail! It is to be greatly lamented that so many have turned aside unto vanities and are now the enemies of the Cross, but fear not, for the victory is in sure hands! O you that would control the Spirit of God, remember who He is and bite your lips in despair! What can you do against Him? Go bit the tempest and bridle the north wind—and then *dream* that the Spirit of the Lord is to be straitened by you! He will speak *when* He pleases, by *whom* He pleases and *as* He pleases—and His Word shall be with power! None can stay His hand, nor

say unto Him, “What are You doing?” Thus much upon the first use of our text.

II. The second use of it is this, TO SILENCE THOSE WHO WOULD CENSURE THE SPIRIT. Some even dare to bring accusations against the Holy Spirit of God! Read the text again—“O you that are named the House of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? *Are these His doings?*” If anything is amiss, is He to be blamed for it?

The low estate of the Church—is that to be laid at God’s door? It is true that the Church is not so full of life and energy and power and spirituality and holiness as she was in her first days and, therefore, some insinuate that the Gospel is an antique and an effete thing—in other words, that the Spirit of God is not so mighty as in past ages. To which the answer is, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? *Are these His doings?*” If we are lukewarm, is that the fault of the Spirit of Fire? If we are feeble in our testimony, is that the fault of the Spirit of Power? If we are weak in prayer, is that the fault of the Spirit who helps our infirmities? *Are these His doings?* Instead of blaming the Holy Spirit, would it not be better for us to smite upon our breasts and chasten our hearts? What if the Church is not “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners,” as once she was? Is not this because the Gospel has not been fully and faithfully preached and because those who believe it have not lived up to it with the earnestness and holiness which they ought to have exhibited? Is not that the reason? In any case, *are these His doings?* Can you lay the blame of defection and backsliding, of lack of strength, of lack of faith—at the door of the Holy Spirit? God forbid! We cannot blame the Holy One of Israel!

Then it is said, “Look at *the condition of the world*. After the Gospel has been in it nearly 2,000 years, see how small a part of it is enlightened, how many cling to their idols, how much of vice, error, poverty and misery are to be found in the world!” We know all these sad facts, but *are these His doings?* Tell me, when has the Holy Spirit created darkness or sin? Where has He been the Author of vice or oppression? From where come wars and strife? Come they from Him? Come they not from our own lusts? What if the world is still an Augean stable, greatly needing cleansing—has the Spirit of God in any degree or sense rendered it so? Where the Gospel has been fully preached, have not the Words of the Lord done good to them that walk uprightly? Have not cannibals, even during the last few years, been reclaimed and civilized? Has not the slave trade and other evils been ended by the power of Christian influence? How, then, can the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of the Gospel, be blamed?

Will you attribute the darkness to the sun? Will you charge the filthiness of swine to the account of the crystal stream? Will you blame the pest upon the fresh breeze from the sea? It were quite as just and quite as sensible. No, we admit the darkness and the sin and the misery of men. Oh, that our head were waters and our eyes a fountain of tears that we might weep day and night concerning these things! But these are not the work of the Spirit of God! These come of the spirit from beneath. He that is from above would heal them. He is not straitened. These are not His do-

ings. Where His Gospel has been preached and men have believed it and lived according to it, they have been enlightened, sanctified and blessed. Life and love, light and liberty and all other good things come of the Spirit of the Lord—

***“Blessings abound wherever He reigns;
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of need are blessed.”***

But some have said, “Yes, but then see *how few the conversions are nowadays!* We have many places of worship badly attended. We have others where there are scarcely any conversions from the beginning of the year to the end of it.” This is all granted and granted with great regret, but, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings?” Cannot we find some other reason far more near the truth? O Sirs, if there are no conversions, we cannot fall back upon the Spirit of God and blame Him! Has Christ been preached? Has faith been exercised? The preacher must take his share of blame; the Church with which he is connected must also inquire whether there has been that measure of prayer for a blessing on the Word that there ought to have been. Christians must begin to look into their own hearts to find the reason for defeat. If the work of God is hindered in our midst, may there not be some secret sin with us which hinders the operation of the Spirit of God? May He not be compelled, by the very holiness of His Character, to refuse to work with an unholy or an unbelieving people? Have you never read, “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief”? May not unbelief be turning a fruitful land into barrenness? The Spirit Himself is not straitened in His power—but our sin has made Him hide Himself from us! The lack of conversions is not His doing—we have not gone forth in His strength. We shake off with detestation the least trace of a thought that should lay any blame to the Spirit of the Most High. Unto us be shame and confusion of face as at this day!

But it is also said that there is *a lack of power largely manifested by individual saints*. Where are now the men who can go up to the top of Carmel and cover the heavens with clouds? Where are the apostolic men who convert nations? Where are the heroes and martyr spirits of the better days? Have we not fallen upon an age of little men who little dare and little do? It may be so, but this is no fault of the great Spirit! Our degeneracy is not His doing. We have destroyed ourselves and only in Him is our help found! Instead of crying today, “Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord,” we ought to listen to the cry from Heaven which says, “Awake, awake, O Zion! Shake yourself from the dust, and put on your beautiful garments.” Many of us might have done great exploits if we had but given our hearts to it. The weakest of us might have rivaled David and the strongest among us might have been as angels of God! We are straitened in *ourselves*—we have not reached out to the possibilities of strength which lie within our grasp. Let us not wickedly insinuate a charge against the good Spirit of our God, but let us in truthful humility blame ourselves.

If we have not lived in the Light of God, can we marvel that we are in great part, dark? If we have not fed upon the Bread of Heaven, can we

wonder that we are faint? Let us return unto the Lord! Let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Spirit and into fire—and we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord! He sets before us an open door, but if we enter not, we are, ourselves, to blame. He gives liberally and upbraids not, but if we are still impoverished, we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss! Thus much, then, have I spoken, using the text to silence those who would censure the Spirit of God.

III. In the third place, our subject enters a more pleasing phase while I use it TO ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD. My Brothers and Sisters, let us this morning with joy remember that the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened!

Let this meet our trouble about *our own straitness*. What narrow and shallow vessels we are! How soon we are empty! We wake up on Sunday morning and wonder where we shall find strength for the day. Do you not sigh, “Alas, I cannot take my Sunday school class today with any hope of teaching with power! I am so dreadfully dull and heavy. I feel stupid and devoid of thought and feeling”? In such a case, say to yourself, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” He will help you. You purpose to speak to someone about his soul and you fear that the right words will not come? You forget that He has promised to give you what you shall speak. “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” Cannot He prepare your heart and tongue?

As a minister of Christ I have constantly to feel my own straitness. Perhaps more than any other man I am faced by my own inefficiency and inability to address such an audience so often and to print all that is spoken. Who is sufficient for these things? I do not feel half as capable of addressing you now as I did 20 years ago. I sink as to conscious personal power, though I have a firmer faith than ever in the all-sufficiency of God. No, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! That promise is still our delight—“My Grace is sufficient for you.” It is a joy to become weak that we may say with the Apostle, “When I am weak then am I strong.” Behold, the strength of the Lord is gloriously revealed—revealed to perfection in our weakness! Come, you feeble workers, you fainting laborers, come and rejoice in the unstraitened Spirit! Come, you that seem to plow the rock and till the sand, come and lay hold of this fact that the Spirit of the Lord is Omnipotent! No rock will remain unbroken when He wields the hammer! No metal will be unmelted when He is the fire! Still will our Lord put His Spirit within us and gird us with His power, according to His promise, “As your days, so shall your strength be.”

This also meets another matter, namely, *the lack of honored leaders*. We cry at this time, “Where are the eminent teachers of years gone by?” The Lord has made a man more precious than the gold of Ophir. Good and great men were the pillars of the Church in former times, but where are they now? Renowned ministers have died and where are their successors? It is not an infrequent thing with the older Brothers and Sisters, for them to say, one to the other, “Do you see the young men springing up who will equal those whom we have lost?” I am not among those who despair for the good old cause, but certainly I would be glad to see the Elishas who are to succeed the Elijahs who have gone up! Oh, for another Calvin or

Luther! Oh, for a Knox or a Latimer, a Whitefield or a Wesley! Our fathers told us of Romaine and Newton, Toplady and Rowland Hill—where are the like of these? When we have said, “where?” echo has answered, “where?” But herein is our hope—the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! He can raise up standard-bearers for His hosts! He can give to His Church stars in her firmament as bright as any that ever gladdened our fathers’ eyes! He that walks among the golden candlesticks can so trim the lamps that those which are dim shall burn with sevenfold splendor! He who found a Moses to face Pharaoh and Elijah to face Jezebel, can find a man to confront the adversaries today! To equip an army of apostolic men would be a small matter to the Creator of Heaven and earth! Let us have no fear about this. He that ascended on high, leading captivity captive, gave such large gifts unto men that unto the end of the dispensation they will not be exhausted! Still does He give evangelists, pastors and teachers according as the need of the Church may be. Let us cast away all fear as to a break in the succession of witnesses, for the Word of the Lord endures forever and it shall never lack a man to declare it!

Brethren, the great Truth of God now before us may prevent our being dismayed by *the peculiar character of the age in which we live*. It is full of a terrible unrest. The earthquake in the Riviera is only typical of a far greater disturbance which is going on everywhere. The foundations of society are quivering. The cornerstones are starting. No man can foretell what the close of this century may see. The age is growing more and more irreverent, unbelieving, indifferent. The men of this generation are even more greedy of gain, more in haste after their ambitions than those that preceded them. They are fickle, exacting, hungering after excitement and sensation. Here comes in the Truth of God—“The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened.” Was not the Gospel intended for every age and for every condition of human society? Will it not meet the case of London and Ireland as well as the case of the old Roman empire in the midst of which it first began its course? It is even so, O Lord! Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted in You and You did deliver them! And we with joyful confidence fall back upon the same delivering power, saying in our hearts, “The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, He will bear us through!”

But, then, sometimes we are troubled because of *the hardness of men’s hearts*. You that work for the Lord know most about this. If anybody thinks that he can change a heart by his own power, let him try with anyone he pleases and he will soon be at a nonplus. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon—our trembling arm cannot roll away the stone of natural depravity! Well, what then? The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! Did I hear you cry, “Alas, I have tried to reclaim a drunk and he has gone back to his degradation”? Yes, he has beaten *you*, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do you cry, “But he signed the pledge and yet he broke it”? Very likely *your* bonds are broken, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He renew the heart and cast out the love of sin? When the Spirit of God works with your persuasions, your convert will keep his pledge.

“Alas!” cries another, “I hoped I had rescued a fallen woman, but she has returned to her iniquity.” No unusual thing is this with those who exercise themselves in that form of service. But is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He save the woman that was a sinner? Cannot He create a surpassing love to Jesus in her forgiven spirit? We are baffled, but the Spirit is not! “But it is my own boy,” cries a mother. “Alas, I brought him up tenderly from his youth, but he has gone astray. I cannot persuade him to hear the Word of God—I cannot do anything with him!” Dear mother, register that confession of inability and then, by faith, write at the bottom of it, “But the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened.” Have faith in God and never let your discovery of your own weakness shake your firm conviction that with God all things are possible! It seems to me to be a fountain of comfort, a storehouse of strength. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel, nor conceive of the Holy Spirit as bound and checked by the difficulties which crop up in fallen human nature! No case which you bring to Him with affectionate tears and with an earnest faith in Jesus shall ever be dismissed as incurable. Despair of no man since the Lord of Hosts is with us!

“Ah well,” says one, “but I am oppressed with *the great problem which lies before the Church*. London is to be rescued, the world is to be enlightened. Think of India, China and the vast multitudes of Africa. Is the Gospel to be preached to all these? Are the kingdoms of this world to become the Kingdoms of our Lord? How can these things be! Why, Sirs, when I think of London, alone, a world of poverty and misery, I see the sheer impossibility of delivering this world from the power of darkness.” Do you prefer a theory which holds out no hope of a converted world? I do not wonder! Judge after the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears and the thing is quite beyond all hope. But is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Surely the good Lord means to convince the Church of her own powerlessness, that she may cast herself upon the Divine might! Looking around she can see no help for her in her great enterprise—let her look *up* and watch for His coming who will bring her deliverance! Amid apparent helplessness the Church is rich in secret succors. If the Spirit of God shall anoint our eyes, we shall see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the servants of the Lord. Behold, the stars in their courses fight against our adversaries! The earth shall yet help the woman and the abundance of the seas shall yield their strength unto God. When the time comes for the Lord to make bare His arm, we shall see greater things than these—and then we shall wrap our faces in a veil of blushing confusion to think that we ever doubted the Most High! Behold, the Son of Man comes! Shall He find faith among us? Shall He find it anywhere on the earth? The Lord help us to feel in our darkest hour that His arm is not shortened!

IV. I must close by remarking that this text may be used TO DIRECT THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING AFTER BETTER THINGS. I hope that in this audience there are many who are desiring to be at peace with God through Jesus Christ. You are already convinced of sin, but you are, by that conviction, driven to despondency and almost to despair. Now notice

this—whatever Grace you need in order to salvation, the Holy Spirit can work it in you. You need a more tender sense of sin. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Can He not give it to you? You need to be able to perceive the way of salvation—can He not instruct you? You need to be able to take the first step to Christ—you need, in fact, to trust Him wholly and alone and so find peace in Him. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Can He not give you faith? Do you cry, “I would believe, but I cannot tell how”? The Spirit will help you to believe! He can shed such light into your mind that faith in Christ shall become an easy and a simple thing with you. The Spirit of God is not straitened! He can bring you out of darkness into His marvelous light! If you are quite driven from all reliance on your own natural power, then cry unto Him, “Lord, help me!” The Holy Spirit has come on purpose to work all our works in us. It is His office to take of the things of Christ and to show them to us. Yield yourself to His gracious direction! Be willing and obedient—and He will lead you into all Truth!

Notice again—although you are under deep depression of spirit and you feel shut up so that you cannot come forth—yet the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. He is not weighed down nor discouraged. His name is The Comforter and He can comfort to purpose. Though you are, today, ready to lay violent hands upon yourself by reason of the trouble of your restless thoughts, yet is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Look to the strong for strength, even to your God. Does not the Lord cry to you, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else”? Your strength as well as your salvation lies in Him! When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. Trust, implicitly trust, for the Spirit of God is not straitened! Your dependency and unbelief are not His doings, they are your own. He has not driven you into this misery. He invites you to come forth from it and trust the Son of God—and rest in the finished righteousness of Christ—and you shall come at once into light and peace!

May I invite you to remember how many persons have already found joy, peace and salvation by believing the teaching of the Spirit of God? In the text the question is asked, “Do not My Words do good to him that walks uprightly?” Many of us can bear testimony today that the Word of the Lord is not word only, but power! It has done good to us. The Gospel has not only been much to us, it has been *everything* to us. Personally, I do not believe and preach the Gospel because I have made a choice and have preferred it to any other theory of religion out of many others which might have been accepted. No. There is no other Truth to me! I believe it because I am a saved man by the power of it! The Truths of God revealed by the Spirit has new-created me! I am born again by this living and incorruptible Seed. My only hope of holiness in this life and of happiness in the life to come is found in the life and death, the Person and merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

Give up the Gospel? I may when it gives me up, but not while it grasps my very soul! I am not perplexed with doubt, because the Truth of God which I believe has worked a miracle in me. By its means I have received

and still retain a new life to which I was once a stranger. I am like the good man and his wife who had kept a lighthouse for years. A visitor who came to see the lighthouse, looking out from the window over the waste of waters, asked the good woman, "Are you not afraid of a night when the storm is out and the big waves dash right over the lantern? Do you not fear that the lighthouse and all that is in it will be carried away?" The woman remarked that the idea never occurred to her. She had lived there so long that she felt as safe on the lone rock as ever she did when she lived on the mainland. As for her husband, when asked if he did not feel anxious when the wind blew a hurricane, he answered, "Yes, I feel anxious to keep the lamps well trimmed and the light burning, lest any vessel should be wrecked." As to anxiety about the safety of the lighthouse, or his own personal security in it, he had outlived all that.

Even so it is with me! "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." From henceforth let no man trouble me with doubts and questionings! I bear in my soul the proofs of the Spirit's truth and power and I will have none of your artful reasoning. The Gospel to me is TRUTH—I am content to perish if it is not true. I risk my soul's eternal fate upon the truth of the Gospel and I know no risk in it. My one concern is to keep the lamps burning, that I may thereby enlighten others. Only let the Lord give me oil enough to feed my lamp so that I may cast a ray across the dark and treacherous sea of life, and I am well content. Now, troubled Seeker, if it is so, that your minister and many others in whom you confide have found perfect peace and rest in the Gospel, why should not you? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do not His Words do good to them that walk uprightly? Will not *you* also try their saving virtue?

In conclusion, just a hint to you. The Words of God do good to those who walk uprightly. If they do no good to you, may it not be that you are walking crookedly? Have you given up all secret sin? How can you hope to get peace with God if you live according to your own lusts? Give up the hopeless hope! You must come right out from the *love* of sin if you would be delivered from the *guilt* of sin. You cannot have your sin and go to Heaven—you must either give up sin or give up hope. "Repent" is a constant exhortation of the Word of God. Quit the sin which you confess. Flee the evil which crucified your Lord! Sin forsaken is, through the blood of Jesus, turned into sin forgiven! If you cannot find freedom in the Lord, the straitness is not with the Spirit of God, but your sin lies at the door blocking up the gangway of Grace. Is the Spirit of God straitened? No, His Words "do good to them that walk uprightly." And if you, in sincerity of heart, will quit your sin and believe in Christ, you, also, shall find peace, hope and rest. Try it and see if it is not so. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Ephesians 3:8-21; 4:1-16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—464, 958, 954.

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“IS THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD STRAITENED?”

NO. 2218

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, AUGUST 23, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 26, 1891.**

***“O you that are named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?”
Micah 2:7.***

THERE may be some who think they can convert the world by philosophy; that they can renew the heart by eloquence; or that, by some witchcraft of ceremonies, they can regenerate the soul. But we depend wholly and simply and *only* on the Spirit of God! He, alone, works all our works in us and, in going forth to our holy service, we take with us no strength and we rely upon no power except that of the Spirit of the Most High. When Asher’s foot was dipped in oil, no wonder he left a footprint wherever he went! But if his foot had not first been anointed, there would have been small trace of him and, unless we have the unction of the Holy One, and are endued with power from on high, in vain shall we seek to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, or to proclaim the opening of the prison to them that are bound!

We need the Holy Spirit to prepare us for our work. He first gives the desire to go forth to the field of service and only He can equip us for the fight. “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.” Let us seek, then, to be charged with the Holy Spirit—to receive to the fullest the Divine influence—and go to our labor thus amply prepared. There is no preparation for the work of God like being with God! Go up into the solitude with Christ and then, when He calls you, you will be fit to go forth for Him and tell what you have seen with Him in the Holy Mount.

When we get at the work, our need remains. We long to see the people saved, but in order to that, they must be born again and this we cannot, ourselves, accomplish. Change a stone into flesh? Try that at home with a piece of stone on your table before you attempt it with the hard hearts of men! Create a soul between the ribs of death? Try that in a morgue before you pretend to create within a sinner, dead in sin, the spiritual life! Of regeneration we may say, “This is the finger of God.” If our religion is not supernatural, it is a delusion! If the Holy Spirit is not with you, you are like Jannes and Jambres, attempting to work a miracle without Jehovah’s aid—and you will be baffled and detected for an impostor. You will fail, like the seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who tried to cast out devils. The devils do not know you—they know Jesus and they know the Holy Spirit—

but at your idle efforts they mockingly laugh! Only those people who never do any spiritual work talk about what they can accomplish. When you get into the sacred service, you find how great your weakness is! You feel out of your depth when you come to deal with souls and you must have the Holy Spirit or fail!

We must not conclude that because so many good people give their time to God's work, that necessarily the work is done. No, there is nothing done unless the Holy Spirit does it. We never personally go a step towards Heaven and we never lead another one inch in the way apart from the Holy Spirit! We must have the Holy Spirit and if we have Him not, all our machinery will stand still, or if it goes on, it will produce no effect whatever. I heard of a Christian man whose mill wheel was noticed to be in motion on a certain Sunday. The people going to worship greatly wondered about it, but one who went by set their minds at rest by pointing out that the wheel was only turning idly round because the water, by accident, was allowed to flow over it. And the man said, "It is very much like our minister and his sermons. There is no work being done, but the wheel goes round—clickety click, clickety click—though it is not grinding anything." It also greatly resembles many an organization for spiritual service—the water is passing over it, glittering as it flows—but the outside motion does not join on to any human need, nor produce any practical result—and nothing comes of the click and hum—

***"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers,"***

or else all our service for the Lord is in vain.

I. The text asks this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" As we try and dwell upon it a little while, we remark, first, that THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS NOT STRAITENED BY THE COMMANDS OF MEN, for in a previous verse we find that the people said to their Prophets, "Prophesy you not." When men spoke in the name of God, these people had grown so besotted, through their evil doings, that they bade them hold their tongues! They did not want to hear any more about God. They had given Him up and they wished to have no more to do with Him! What was said by the Prophets was unpleasant. It provoked unhappy memories. It made them think of things that they would rather forget. So they said to the Prophets, "Prophesy you not."

And here comes the question of the text. These men speak under the impulse of the Spirit of God. What do you think? Is the Spirit of the Lord to be straitened, shut up, put down, silenced by the commands of men? *They* thought so! They thought that they had only to say to these men of God, "Be quiet. If you speak again, we will put you in prison, or we will banish you, or we will cut off your heads." By those means they thought to stifle the voice of the Spirit of God and make Him dumb in their midst! The question comes, "Have you done it? Can you do it? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Beloved Friends, this can never be! The Spirit of God is not straitened, for *any man in whom He dwells must speak*. They may tell Him to be quiet and He may even, for a season, consent to be so. But one of old said, "His

Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing”—and he was obliged to speak out. If a man has made a message of his own, or if he has borrowed it from another, he may or may not speak it. But if God has given it to him to speak, speak it he must, and nothing can silence him! Throughout long ages men have felt moved of God to speak and they have had to speak in peril of their lives, but they have spoken all the same. When the light of the Reformation first came to England, those who received the Gospel were mostly very feeble folk. They felt the force of the movement and thought that it must have come from God, but they were not sure of their standing ground and the major part of them recanted when they were brought in presence of the fire, or even laid in prison.

Some of the best of them, during the early days of Henry the Eighth, having but a slight hold of the Truth of God, drew back, and the enemy thought that they would all be of this kind. And so he hunted and persecuted them. But, after a very little time, the very men who had been cowards when first they learned the Truth, were pricked in their conscience and they came forward, saying that they found it to be more unbearable to live after having recanted than they could find it to die—and in the power of God they stood up boldly to declare Christ! There was little Bilney, of whom Latimer speaks so lovingly—a man grandly taught in many things, but at first a trembler. He thought that he might be mistaken and so he drew back. But afterwards he gave himself up to die. And when opportunities were given to him to escape, he would not embrace them. He felt that he must die for his Master!

And there was Frith, who, when they brought him through Croydon and he was desired by the Archbishop of Canterbury (I mean Cranmer, who was in an almost similar spiritual state, himself, but then, by force of his position compelled to be a persecutor) to escape into the woods—the north wood or Norwood and elsewhere—made the notable reply, “The moment that you let me alone, I will go up to Lambeth myself. I am to die for Christ and if you make me fly away for a time, I will be back again, for I must acknowledge my Master.” The persecutors began to be surprised at this, but the reason was that the men grew surer of the Truth of God and, as they grew surer of it, they grew bolder to confess it—and confess it they *must* when once they felt the power of it in their souls! God will not leave Himself without a witness, be you sure of this, and if there should come a time of trembling, when even the brave hearts seem staggered and begin to fail, there will again come a time of confidence when men will step out and say, “I was a coward once, but now, in the name of the Most High, I will avow His cause and stand up for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by the commands of men. He will make His servants speak!

Know, again, that if some of these servants are put to death, or silenced, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, for *He will raise up others*. He is never at a loss. They burned Huss, whose name was Goose, but he said that God would raise up a swan, a bigger bird than he! And that was Luther’s motto, his coat-of-arms—and they could never roast the swan,

though they would have liked to have done so. Luther lived on, for God wanted such a witness as he and as long as God needed him, the hate of his enemies was vain! Thus it has been in all ages. Where did God find many of His first witnesses in the Reformation? In the places where you would have thought it least likely that there should have been any to bear testimony for Him—in the monasteries! He laid His hand on priests, monks and nuns—and He said to these, “Go and preach the Gospel of Christ” and they did it, and did it faithfully, even to the death. They fell before their persecutors, the Romanists, like mowed grass in the month of June—one swathe of martyrs, and then another, and then another—but though their enemies reaped on, they never reaped that field clean, for by the time they had got to one end, it was all green grass, up to their ankles again, at the other end!

God made men who could bear witness to His Word to grow faster than they could kill them! And so He will while the world stands. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. If the whole Church of God were to apostatize—and I should not be surprised if almost the entire visible Church were to do so, seeing that it has, to a great extent, done so already—it would make no difference whatever to the eternal purposes of God. Outside the professing church He would soon find His own people and soon build up for Himself a truer and better Church that would not be as the past, but would hold fast by the Gospel of the Grace of God with the energy and simplicity of faith. Therefore, fear not, but answer this question with confidence and say, “The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened.”

But if those who believe in God’s name should die and if no more were raised up, the Spirit of our Lord would not, even *then*, be straitened—*He could find other ways of reaching men’s minds*. He could still speak by the Bible. Give us an open Bible and we shall never be in the dark. And He can speak by many a holy book that in the present evil age is despised. There are many good books, like the saints of old, wandering about in sheepskins and goatskins—old Puritans, “destitute, afflicted, tormented,” that will yet bear witness for Christ! Just remember how Guthrie’s, “Saving Testimony,” long forgotten in Scotland, was found by a shepherd lad, taken to a minister and read—and how there broke out, from the reading of that old book that had well-near gone out of date and notice—a blessed revival of evangelical religion!

And if all books were gone, the Spirit of God could act directly upon the hearts of men. He is not straitened! He can still call some Saul of Tarsus without a Bible and without a minister. And if the enemies of the Lord were so to conquer that the very name of *Christian* should be forgotten—still the Spirit of God could begin again and, out of nothing, “create a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.” Despair? What have we who know the might of God to do with despair? What have we to do, even, with doubt or fear? The Lord lives and His eternal Spirit will work His Divine purposes without fail.

II. Our second remark is equally emphatic. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS NOT STRAITENED BY ANY CONCEIVABLE CAUSE—if not by the commands of men, certainly not by any other cause.

The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened *by any change in Himself*. The Holy Spirit, as very God of very God, might truly say of Himself, "I am the Lord, I change not." He is today what He was at Pentecost, what He always was from that beginning which had no beginning. He is Divine, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, All-Wise, Infinite. He does as He wills. Therefore He is not straitened. He is not straitened *by the spirit of the age*, whatever that may be. I have heard a good deal about it and I believe that "the spirit of the age" is Satan. That is short and not very sweet—but that is the only spirit of the age that I know of. Ages have followed ages, but there has never been but one "Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." He has appeared in different forms—the spirit of ignorance, the spirit of intolerance, the spirit of superstition, the spirit of envy, the spirit of infidelity, the spirit of speculation. All these work one and the same spirit, dividing unto his disciples severally as he wills. And though the spirit of evil is mighty, he must fly before the Spirit of God, who is infinitely more powerful and who is not to be hindered, hampered or straitened by the spirit of the age!

Certainly the Spirit of God is not to be straitened *by the discoveries of science*. Last night, I think, they found out something very new. They will probably be finding out something new tonight. With reference to my faith in Christ, it does not make the slightest difference what is discovered, nor should any true revelation of science unsettle any preacher of the Gospel. The more that is known of God's works, the better! The more they are understood and rightly explained, the better! Let the Father's Words be magnified. But the Gospel that God's servants were bound to preach when our forefathers were in the utmost ignorance, is the same Gospel that we are bound to preach now, amid the dazzling electric light. If we had gone into the catacombs of Rome, illuminated by a few flickering lamps, we should have had nothing to preach down there but Jesus Christ and Him crucified!

And when we come together, now, in this enlightened 19th Century, we have still no other subject but Christ crucified, "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." Modern discoveries need not make us tremble, for that the Spirit of God is not straitened by science is proved by the fact that the most scientific men have been subdued by His power. He is as able to convert the learned as the unlearned. He has often done it and we have had those who have seemed to know all about the earth and the heavens, too, who yet were little children at the feet of Christ. Where the Spirit of God comes, He is not straitened in that way.

Neither is He straitened *by the worldliness of the great masses in the midst of whom we live*. As we look round about on the people, we are almost broken-hearted about them and seem to think the world was never so hard as it is now—and that men were never so indifferent, never so wrapped up with worldly gain as they are now. Oh, yes they were! It is only another phase of the same evil. "The whole world lies in wickedness," just where it has always lain. There is the same sin, the same hardness of heart, the same blindness, the same callousness—and the Word of God is as much able to work here in London as in old pagan Rome! It is as able

to subdue our cities in England as it was to subdue Athens and Corinth and the other cities where Paul preached it. Let us have confidence that nothing about the people today—their poverty, their love of drink, their search after pleasure, their indifference, or anything else—has at all affected the power of the Holy Spirit over the minds of men!

And the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, *even, by the skill of His enemies*. Certainly they are now skillful beyond anything we have ever read of! We have those who pretend to preach the Gospel but, all the while, they are trying to stab it. They appear to give it a kiss, but they smite it under the fifth rib. Many, nowadays, claim to be evangelical, when they know that the very essence of the evangelical system is abhorrent to them. But the Holy Spirit is not straitened today, any more than when He met the sophistries of the Greek philosophers and overthrew them all! The simple Truth of God will win its way. The fog may darken and become so thick that a man cannot see his hand, but the Holy Spirit knows the road and He can see through the darkest midnight that the Church of God will ever have to endure! And He will bring out the righteousness and Truth of the Gospel as the light—and the glory thereof as a lamp that burns. He is not straitened by the skill of His enemies.

I do not know how to express all that I feel about this, but this I do know—that I cannot imagine anything that can really diminish the power of the Holy Spirit. If He is Divine, He is Omnipotent and, if Omnipotent, nothing can lay hands on Him to bind Him as the Philistines bound Samson. He would burst their bands asunder! He is the free Spirit of God and no power can hold Him—

**“When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?”**

III. But now I come to a very practical part of my subject, which is this—THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD MUST NOT BE TREATED BY US AS THOUGH HE WERE STRAITENED. How can we do this? In many ways. I mention nine.

If we act towards Him *as if His holy Word would not, now, convert and sanctify, comfort and conquer*, as it used to do, we are, in this, in a horrible position of practical unbelief! His holy Book, in days gone by, did great wonders. It was like Goliath’s sword, of which David said, “There is none like that; give it to me.” It was double-edged and even he that played with it might wound himself to spiritual death. Many have wrested the Word to their own destruction. “But surely the Word has not, now, the same power?” Try it! Give the Bible to the wicked, to the careless and the thoughtless. Read it to them. Induce them to read it and see if it does not still convert! When you are in great trouble, turn to the Book and pray the Holy Spirit to bless it, and see if it does not comfort you! In your darkest hour you shall find light in it! When you are ready to give up in despair, you shall be strengthened and return to your labor with hope, if you do but search it and believe its message. It is full of consolation.

Never think that the Spirit cannot bless the Word to you, as He used to do. He is not straitened. When you hear and do not profit, it is your hearing that is wrong, not His power that has failed. When you read the Bible

and have not that enjoyment you once had, be sure that it is your own fault. The meat is as rich—you have lost your appetite. The Spirit of God is not straitened! There is as much Inspiration in this Book as when it was first penned. It is still Inspired and he that reads it aright still feels its inspiring influence, as God comes into his heart through His own Word. The Spirit of God in the Book and through the Book, is not straitened. Let us keep to it. Let us preach it more and more. Let us take care that our sermons are made out of the Bible, not out of our own heads! Then, speaking God's Word, we shall see that the Spirit of God is not straitened.

We behave as if the Spirit of God were straitened, in the next place, *if we conceive the present state of things to be hopeless*. If you are ready to fold your arms and say that nothing can be done, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? The church to which you belong may be cold and dead and the ministry powerless, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Your own works seem to have no good results following from them and though you plod on, the service has become almost a monotony to you. But is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Perhaps I address some man, so far ungodly that he has no hope of salvation, yet still is anxious to be saved. Perhaps he says, "How can I ever become a Christian? How can I have a new heart and a right spirit?" Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He give you the tenderness you desire? Cannot He give you the desire that seems to be lacking? Cannot He give you faith in Christ at this very moment? Cannot He breathe into you, *right now*, that breath of spiritual life that shall make you a living soul, looking up to the Cross and finding life in the Crucified?

I pray, dear Friend, if you are under a horrible sense of sin—if you think yourself the worst wretch that ever poisoned the air and if you feel unfit to live as well as unfit to die—yet believe that the Holy Spirit can renew you and can turn the sinner into a saint and make you to glorify God even now, this instant! If not, you limit the power of the Holy Spirit and I come to you with this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" The case is desperate if it were not for the Divine hand. It is beyond all hope if there were no God. There is no balm in Gilead—there is no physician *there*—if there had been, the health of the daughter of my people would long ago have been recovered. Where, then, is the balm? Look upward for it! Where is the physician? Look upward for Him! There is the Christ of God, "mighty to save," and there is the living Father Himself, and there is the almighty Spirit! Oh, that you would no longer be filled with suspicions as to the power of God! With God all things are possible. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Is the Lord's arm waxed short? Trust that He can do all things and do all things for you whether you are a saint or a sinner! I shall have to come again to you with the question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Do you not think, again, that we very much act as if the Spirit of the Lord were straitened *when we only look for little blessings*? I am very glad to see 300 to 400 persons in a year converted and added to this Church and this has long been the case. But if I ever imbibed the idea that this were *all* that might be done, I would be straitening the Spirit of God! If you

have had a number of conversions in the Sunday school—and I thank God that you have and you have never been without them—yet if you conceive that you have reached the maximum of success, I must come to you with this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Dear Friends, there is no reason that I know of why the sermon that brings one sinner into the Light of God, should not bring a thousand into the Light, supposing a thousand sinners to be hearing it! The same power which saves one is precisely that power that would save a thousand—

***"The very Law which molds a tear,
And bids it trickle from its source—
That power preserves the earth a sphere
And guides the planets in their course."***

The same Law, the same Power operates to little and to gigantic ends. Oh, for a mighty belief in that God who "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us"—and that Power is the Holy Spirit who cannot be straitened!

Why, then, should we not come up to the House of God with the prayer, "O Lord, work mighty marvels"? Is He not the God that does great wonders? Should we not expect Him to do large things? I know some will say, "Well, if I were to see a great many converted, I would be afraid that they would, many of them, go back." But my experience tells me that there is no reason to believe that when many are converted there are more mistaken persons in the number, in proportion, than when few are converted. In fact, I think that I have noticed that the more that are received into the Church, the better is the quality. And the reason is this—that, when few are coming, there is a strong temptation to accept them with less discretion. But, when there are a great many, we can afford to be somewhat more rigid so that the more the merrier, and the more the sounder! I think that it is often the case. Let us believe that the Spirit of God can save a parish, can save a city, can shake London from end to end! Oh, that God would enlarge the capacity of our faith! "According to your faith be it unto you." But we have not more than sixpenny-worth of faith and when we get as much as that represents, we think that we are getting rich! And yet there are mines of untold wealth of the Grace of God to be had. Oh, that we had the faith with which to take possession of them!

Again, dear Friends, do you not think that we also treat the Spirit of God as though He were straitened *when we imagine that our weakness hinders His working by us?* "Oh," says one, "I have no doubt that God can bless a great many by *you!*" Well, dear Friend, if you knew what I am often obliged to feel of myself, you would never talk so. I am the weakest of you all, in my own apprehension. Another says, "I know that I am inferior in ability, in knowledge, in opportunity." Just so, dear Friend, and, therefore, you suppose that the Spirit of God cannot use you? Do you not see that though you think such a confession is an evidence of humility, you are straitening the Spirit of God? However weak and feeble you may be, He can use you! If you think that He cannot, you deprive Him of power in your apprehension. It is not *yourself*, you see, that you are lowering, you are really lowering the power of God! He can use a person who is very insignificant, very obscure, very unlearned, very feeble. No, He *delights* to do

this, and He makes even those that are strong feel weak before He uses them, so that they say, "When I am weak, then am I strong." He will use empty vessels and if you do not need emptying because you are already empty, then that is one little thing that needs not be done and God can begin with you at once! There is nothing in you—nothing! Now, if God will use you, He will manifestly have all the Glory. Believe that He can use you—and get to work and do something! Proclaim His Gospel! Tell it over and over again. Tell it where you have told it, or where you have never told it, and believe that God can use you—AND HE WILL! Otherwise, if you say, "He cannot use me," I shall put the question to you again, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

But I hear another say, "I think, dear Sir, you do not know where I live. If you did, you would not think there could be any very great blessing." Where do you live? In No-Man's-Ground? At the other end of the world? At Land's End, just over the edge of the universe? Here is a word for the little places, little Churches, hamlets with scanty population, where only a few people come together for worship. Do not believe that the Spirit of the Lord is narrowed *by the smallness of the place*. Some of the greatest works for Christ have begun in hamlets and in small villages. The fire has commenced to burn there which has afterwards become a mighty conflagration, like the flames which are driven in terrible grandeur across the forests of America. It matters not how few begin, but where two or three are met together in Christ's name there He is! And if He is there, He will soon, by means of that little company, be somewhere else, and He will make the fire to fly abroad to the utmost ends of the earth! If you have only two or three souls committed to your charge, you have quite as many as you will give good account of. Do not hunger for big congregations—hunger to save those you have! If the Lord will but bless you to the Sunday school class, or to the two or three children in your own family, you cannot tell what good will come of it, for the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by the scantiness of the population!

A great many persons are guilty of thinking the Spirit of God to be straitened *when they fancy that He must always work in one way*. When I am seeing persons who come forward to confess their faith, I find they often begin by telling me how they were brought low under a sense of sin—and I like that old-fashioned way of conversion. But when I find one beginning by saying, "The Lord met me and filled my heart with joy and gladness under a sense of pardon, almost before I had any sense of sin, and the sense of sin followed after," I say to myself, "Let the Lord do His work in His own way." I am not going to make a pattern and lay them all on it and say that they must all be just that length, or else be stretched out a bit, or be cut shorter. No! Let the Lord save His own people in His own way! And if one is made to go down to the dark dungeon of law-work and gets whipped till he has not a bit of whole skin in his soul, I hope that it will do him good. But if another is gently led to Christ and does not know that there is a rod, but through love and kindness is led to rejoice in his Savior, I trust that he will remember it, and be glad all his days. Conversions are not run into molds. You cannot get a gross of conversions

like a gross of steel pens. Each living child is different from any other living child. A great painter never paints exactly the same picture twice. There is always a difference, somewhere, be it ever so slight. And when there is a work for eternity done in a Church, it is done in very varied ways. If we begin to tie the Lord down to one way of work, we shall make a great mistake.

“Oh,” says one, “we meet together, a number of us, and anybody speaks who likes—and that is God’s way of working. I do not believe in a one-man ministry.” But we are in great danger of grieving the Spirit of God if we think that *He only works with one set of men*, with one order of government, or with only those who have none. Another man, who goes to hear one particular individual, says, “I am profited by Mr. So-and-So’s preaching and do not get so much good under anybody else. I do not like that other open way of worship.” Brethren, let them worship as they like! God blesses a one-man ministry and God blesses a twenty-man ministry. If the ministry is in the power of His Spirit, let it take what shape it likes. God is not bound by our rules and regulations—if you see God at work, bless His name that He is there and let Him work as He wills. You must not think that God works only on one set of lines. “Oh,” says one, “I always get a blessing from So-and-So.” Yes, you expect it, and you pray God to send it. “But I do not expect a blessing from such-and-such a man. He has such a curious way of going to work.” Very likely. God has some very strange servants and, may I add, He has some very strange children!

We have strange families, ourselves, sometimes. Some parents have very old boys and a number of God’s sons and daughters are the oddest children that ever were born. Yet He bears with them and surely we may bear with them, too. Some of the most useful people one has ever known have also been very eccentric and have gone their own way to work. If you do not like their way, do not go with them—go your own way. They will not like your way, but they must not blame you, neither must you despise them. As the Lord directs you and as you find the Word of God guides you, set to work for Him and believe that the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! God blessed William Huntington, the coal-heaver, to many souls, though he preached a very strong Calvinism, while, at the same time, He was blessing some who preached a very weak Arminianism—but God blesses neither the Calvinism nor the Arminianism—but the Christ that is in the sermon! The true, eternal, evangelical Truth of God that is brought out, God Himself will bless to the souls of men! Let us not, therefore, speak of the Holy Spirit as tied to any set of men. “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?”

Once more—we act as if we did not believe in this Divine Truth concerning the Spirit of God when we think that *some men are beyond His reach*. Let us never imagine that those who have been sitting under the sound of the Word for years are so Gospel-hardened as to be past hope—or those who have gone deep into sin are too deeply-dyed ever to be cleansed—or those who have wandered from the fold are too far away ever to be recalled! Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened, that we should despair of any whom God has permitted to remain on this side of His judgement

bar? Have faith for the worst of men and the worst of women, too—great sinners, when saved, bring great Glory to that God whose Spirit leads them to the Truth.

And again, we may treat the Spirit of God as straitened *if we cannot believe that He can bless us today*. “I feel so gloomy,” you say. “I hope that I shall be better tomorrow.” Brother, why should you not be converted at this good hour? “Oh,” says some sister, “I mean to serve the Lord when I got a little older.” Do you? Well, you are a little older since I began to speak to you, and I think that your best time to begin is now. Believe in God’s *nows*. Believe that any moment is a good moment with God. “This day is a day of good tidings.” Why should not I, at this moment, dedicate myself afresh to God? Why should I not come to Christ, again, and ask Him to give me more life, more faith, more hope, more joy, more likeness to Himself now? “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?”

IV. On the fourth and last point, our words must be few, though the Truth of God affords much scope for instruction. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD WILL PROVE THAT HE IS NOT STRAITENED and at the last all men shall acknowledge His power, whether they have bowed to it or not! He will be magnified in those who are saved *and* in those who are lost.

He will exact punishment for resistance. Those who now despise the messages which are sent to them will, at last, be left to their own devices. “My Spirit shall not always strive with man,” says the Eternal God. And continual rejection will, at last, end in the total withdrawal of His Presence and the eternal ruin of all who have resisted Him.

But notwithstanding the rejection of men, *He will fulfill the Divine Decree*. Man’s obstinacy shall not frustrate the purpose of God and the things which He has predestinated shall surely come to pass. In this shall be clear evidence that the Spirit of the Lord was not straitened. Not one of God’s chosen shall be suffered to continue in the way to ruin—they shall all be effectually called and enabled to embrace Christ as He is freely preached to them in the Gospel!

Thus, the third proof will be given, in that *He will glorify Christ and prepare a people to welcome His Advent*. The Gospel shall be preached among all nations and out of every tribe and people witnesses shall be gathered to await the glorious appearing of the victorious Christ which cannot be long delayed. Then it shall be seen how grandly the Spirit of the Lord has perfected both the number and the character of the Church, which, like a chaste virgin, shall be presented to the Lamb as the reward of His agony and intercession!

You that are not converted, but are longing to be, what are you waiting for, seeing that the Spirit of the Lord is thus always ready to work and will never be more able at another time than He is now? The great point with many is to precipitate decision, to bring them across the border. You are almost over it! You have often been so. You are almost persuaded. O Spirit of God, make them believe in Jesus now! May they turn their eyes to Him who hung upon the Cross and look, now, and live! What reason should there be why tomorrow should be better for repenting than today? In what way can 1892 be better than 1891? I am at a loss to think, but I can eas-

ily find a great many reasons why delays are dangerous, why delays are expensive, why delays will end in rejections! May God the Holy Spirit come and turn you to God now, lest, at last, you should share in that awful judicial blindness which falls on those who spurn His entreaties—lest the Gospel should be hid from you because you are lost—lest standing in the way of God’s purpose, you should be cut down as a cumberer of the ground! Lest, at last, you should miss being numbered with that glorious throng who are now being called away from their idols to serve the living God and to wait for His Son from Heaven!

Has He not said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? *When* may they come? Whenever they come He will not cast them out! What sort of people will He receive? “Him that comes”—any, “him,” that comes, no matter who he or she is! How do they come? They must just *trust*—trust Jesus! May the Holy Spirit enable you to trust Him now! The Lord bless you, for His name’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Micah 4.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—454, 957, 972.**

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

During the past week MR. SPURGEON has not been making progress towards recovery. In fact, in most respects he has been going backward rather than forward. The increased inability to take necessary nourishment has produced great weakness and faintness, and left him very prostrate. As this note is being written, he appears to be again rallying. When weakest, he has been comforted by the assurance mentioned last week, that his life has been spared in answer to the prayers of Believers everywhere, and that the Lord will yet raise him up for further service. It may be many months before he will be fully restored and, meanwhile, perhaps the Lord will put the Church to the test and see how long His children can continue to plead for His servant who has been laid so much upon their hearts. “His ways are past finding out.” “He has done all things well.”

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A CLARION CALL TO SAINTS AND SINNERS NO. 2225

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
OCTOBER 11, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 2, 1891.**

***“Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted,
it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.”
Micah 2:10.***

THERE is a miserable tendency in men to cling to things that are seen. Though that which we behold is only temporal and shadowy, lacking any true substance or permanence—though the things round about us can only endure for a little while and then will vanish away—yet we give our hearts to them and are ensnared by their false glitter and glamour. Like the poor birds that light on birdlime and cannot get away, we are entangled by the things of time and sense, instead of rising, as on eagle wings, to a higher sphere. Forgetting that the soul of man cannot be satisfied with the poor baubles of earth, nor his yearning heart filled with the fleeting joys of time, we often put away from us the things that are unseen and eternal. One of the most necessary words for us to hear at such a time is this, “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.”

Suppose that the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt and were on the way to Canaan, instead of living in tents and moving as the fiery cloudy pillar guided them, had taken it into their heads to build houses and cities and temples wherever they stopped—as if they were to stop in the wilderness forever? Would they not have missed much by such a plan? In the wilderness, not only would all who came out of Egypt have perished, but their children and their children's children would also have found graves in the desert, nor ever have seen the goodly land promised to their fathers. On the contrary, as you know, they lived in their canvas cities and when the cloud moved, every tent was struck, and they began the march. When the cloud halted, they rested under canvas, never knowing how long they would continue in any one place, always expecting that they would be on the move, again, seeing that they had not yet come to the land that flowed with milk and honey. They well knew that in the wilderness was no abiding place for them, for the sand which was all around them yielded them no meat—and if their food had not dropped from above, they would have had no supply from the barren desert. They were strangers and pilgrims with God—and sojourners—as were their fathers.

Now, our sad tendency is to be building cities, digging out foundations, laying courses of brick and saying, “Here I am going to rest. I have jour-

neyed long enough and now I have come to a place where I can say, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years. Take your ease—eat, drink and be merry." It is a sorry business when the heirs of Heaven wish to dwell in the wilderness and when men who have an inheritance on the other side of Jordan forget the land that God has given them by Covenant and seek to enjoy their portion in this life! We do not wonder that the *un-godly* do so—they may well make as much as they can of their little enjoyment here, for, unless they repent of their evil ways, that is all that they will ever have! I do not wonder that such as have their lot in this life should seek after carnal merriment, fleshly pleasures and the giddy dance. What more do they have? It is not astonishing to see the swine greedy at the trough, pushing one another aside as they struggle to get their mash. But when those who have been redeemed with a strong hand and an outstretched arm sink into worldly conformity, worse, because more deadening, than the slavery of Egypt, then, indeed, we see the sad havoc sin can work and mourn because of it.

Unawakened men have not a thought above these minor things and yet, if they could for once shake off the spell that has lulled to sleep their immortal spirits and turned them into comrades of the brutes, they would begin to feel that this is not their rest and would hear a voice saying to them, "Arise you, and depart." Perhaps they would even answer, "I will arise and go to my Father. I will leave the husks with which I gladly would have filled myself, and I will eat of the bread, whereof in my Father's house there is enough and to spare." But the trumpet call to "arise" is not only needed by prodigals in the far country! Careless professors who once ran well, but have been hindered, and who now rest content with the world, as if they were to stay here forever, require to be awakened from their slumber. "Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." God means His Church to be a separated people on the earth. Our citizenship is in Heaven, yet too many of us and, perhaps, all of us, at times, fall into the ways of the unregenerate and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness—even if we, ourselves, do not do them. Because of this slothful and carnal tendency, even in the best of us, it is continually necessary that the awakening call should come, "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest."

I am going to talk, first, to God's people and sound an alarm for them. Then I shall have a word for awakened sinners and shall also sound the trumpet in their midst.

I. First, I shall view the text as A CLARION NOTE FOR BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. As a soldier hears the bugle in the early morning and starts up ready for the duty of the day, so may every servant of Christ who hears these words, arise girded for service! The soldier, at the sound of the awakening call, must forsake the warmest bed and turn out to take his place in the ranks. With hope of a similar result would I sound the trumpet today. Let the clarion note ring out shrill and clear, "Arise you, and depart."

To begin, I remark that *there are occasions when this call comes especially to us*. It may be heard in our everyday life above the din and bustle,

but it is most needed when, perhaps, we are least inclined to listen to it. "Arise you, and depart." This note needs to be sounded in the ears of saints when they begin to be comfortable. When you have been going up the Hill Difficulty with a very heavy pull, you have come to the arbor on the side of the hill which has a seat very hospitably provided by the Lord of the Way. There is a table put in front of the seat so that you can sit down and, if so minded, put your arms on the table and have a good nap. Now, these arbors are built for the refreshment of pilgrims, but they are not meant for them to sleep in! They may sit still and gather strength with which to go on up the hill. They may look back and be grateful that they have climbed so far. But they must *not* go to sleep! If they do, it will happen to them as it did to one Christian of whom Mr. Bunyan wrote, who lost his roll of assurance, there, and had to come back and search for it with many tears. If any of you are very comfortable just now and things are going well with you. If, after a long struggle, the tide has now turned and you are floating along without needing either oar or sail, I would caution you to beware—

***"For more the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests bursting over my head."***

Dear child of God, when you begin to be very comfortable, unless you take care to be very *grateful* and sanctify your prosperity, you will be likely to drift into a sad state. I take down the trumpet and venture to come very close to you and, though it may seem a rude thing to blow a blast right in your ear, yet I will do it! And this is the sound—"Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest." God has given you many blessings, but you will turn them into curses if you make them to be your god. Jonah had a gourd, but when he made a god of his gourd, it was very soon withered! Take heed when all things go well with you here below, lest you begin to be glued to this world and find your comfort here. It will not do—God will not permit it! If you say, like David, in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved. Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong," you may soon have to add like he, "You did hide Your face, and I was troubled."

This note, also, is very necessary in the ears of Christian people when they begin to fraternize with the world. Nothing but evil can come of such association, for, "what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial?" But you will say, "We have had some nice company lately. We have invited to our house some very decent people. It is true that we had no family prayer that night—we could not bring out the Bible and read a chapter before them, for we did not know if they would like it. But, in spite of that, they were a nice sort of people. We are going to *their* house another night—we do not quite know how they will propose to spend the evening, but we shall have to put up with their way of doing things because, you see, if you are in the world, you must do as the world does."

Now, Friends, I shall, without asking your leave, blow my trumpet on both sides of your head! And I shall give a very loud blast, too, as my friend, Mr. Manton Smith, sometimes does when he uses his silver cornet.

“Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted!” Beware when the world loves you, lest that which attracts them towards you is something that ought not to be there! Beware when men of the world are very fond of your society, for then surely you must have got out of touch with your Master, who says, “If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world *hates* you.” It is well, if consistent with righteousness, to have everybody’s love, but when saints begin to be the admiration of the ungodly, depend upon it, there is something about them that God does not admire—there is an unhallowed conformity that is a signal of danger!

When the world patronizes the Church, the Church will need tenfold Grace to maintain her spirituality, just as on an ocean steamer any speed beyond a certain limit is only attained by an expenditure of power altogether out of proportion to the increase of the distance traveled. “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!” Such praise is not for good soldiers of Jesus Christ! If the enemy begins to love one of the king’s generals, the king may half suspect that his general is turning traitor. God save us from such treachery! “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” So again I sound the trumpet—“Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.”

Perhaps there are some who are neither beginning to be comfortable, nor to fraternize with the world, but to whom this trumpet note will still come with special emphasis, for the Lord’s people need this call when they dream of long life on earth. You may, perhaps, have lived a long time, now, without any sickness or illness. You are certainly getting a little gray, your hair tells of the passing of years. Still, your father lived to a good old age. So did your grandfather and you reckon that you, also, will live for a long time to come. You have heard, this last week, perhaps, of the deaths of several people who were younger than you, but you do not reckon upon dying. Far from it—you have not even made your will yet, nor have you anything in order for your departure. A long stretch of health has a tendency to make us think that we are immortal. But though we may imagine this to be the case, the worms do not think so! The wood which will make your coffin may already be sawn and the linen which will be your shroud may be all ready. There is a spot of land where you must lie unless the Lord should suddenly come to His Temple. Here, certainly, we have no continuing city and, therefore, we ought not to make this world our rest.

Dear Friends who have been here one Sabbath have been called away before the next came round—and some who have seemed to be best in health have been the very persons who have gone first. Therefore, my Soul, stand on tiptoe—be not flat-footed as some beasts are—have your wings always ready for flight so that if your Lord should come at cock-crow, or at daybreak, or at midnight, you shall be equally ready, at His bidding, to be up and away! I sound for myself and for my beloved friends, this clarion note—“Boot and saddle, up and prepare! Arise you, and depart.” To whom that note may come with greatest point I cannot tell, for I

am no Prophet, but let it come to us all. Let none of us begin to strike root here below, for this is not our rest!

Having thus sounded this note, I make a second remark. *There is an argument by which this call is greatly strengthened.* The bugle note “Arise you, and depart,” is made doubly shrill by the statement that follows, “This is not your rest.” You see, that is given as a *reason* for our action. The word, “for,” which joins these two clauses of the text, is being used in the sense of, “because.” At times this argument appeals to us with special force. Of this reason and these seasons let me now speak.

Remember, child of God, that you have a rest of another sort. “This is not your rest.” “There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God.” That happy home, that flourishing business is not to be your abiding place. You would not like the change, I am sure, if the best portion here below might be yours forever instead of your dwelling place up above—

***“Oh, the delights, the heavenly joys,
The glories of the place
Where Jesus sheds the brightest beams
Of His overflowing Grace.”***

What must it be to be *there*, where saints and angels find a Heaven in beholding the face of the Lord of Glory and paying their humble adoration before Him! O Sirs, if we had a palace here, below, and parks and gardens reaching too far for a man to travel through them in a day—yes, if we had all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—we would not even, then, say, “This is our rest,” nor consent to exchange Heaven for such things as these! What is there that we could possess on this round globe, with all its treasures, at all comparable with the eternal felicity, the rivers of pleasure that are at God’s right hand forevermore? As you attempt to make the comparison, you will, each one of you, say, “I must not and I cannot cleave to these poor things below, for my rest is not here. Thank God that it is not here!”

I think you will hear this call very distinctly when troubles come. When a man begins to have pain of body. When the one who is dearer to him than his life, sickens before him and is carried to the grave. When everything goes amiss with him in business and daily life, he does not, then, so much need my trumpet, for he already has heard the call sounding very loudly and there are many things saying to him, “This is not your rest.” He knows that it is not! He is so troubled that he begins to let loose of all earthly things. He is like one at sea, tossed up and down with the billows—wave upon wave comes rolling over him and he says, “Now I clearly see that this is not my rest.” Come, then, tried child of God, at this moment! Let this Word of God sound as sweet music to you rather than as a disturbing trumpet blast. Let it be as a heart-note that can lull you to peace. “This is not your rest.” Do not wonder, therefore, if you find thorns and thistles growing here—your paradise lies in another land where no thorn or trial shall be brought forth to trouble and annoy you—

***“There everlasting spring abides
And never-withering flowers.
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.”***

The troubles of this life cause us to hasten forward to cross that Jordan and the call is thus all the more powerful. "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest."

We hear this same note when success is enjoyed. I think that the time in which I have been most humbled before God and in which I have been lowest in spirit, is the time when mercies have been multiplied and I have met with some great success. Though it seems very strange, I look back upon the hours which have immediately followed some great triumph in the service of my Lord as the saddest which I have spent. I could fight my Lord's battles with both hands, but when the day was won, those same hands seemed nerveless. When this House of Prayer was being built, I was able to face every difficulty, as it arose, full of earnestness, zeal and with unshaken confidence! But when the place was opened and the work completed, I felt like Elijah who was faint after he had done the Master's service with the priests of Baal.

Ah, dear Friends, God has only to give you what you want to make you feel the emptiness of it! If you are His child, the more you have the less you will see in it. The child of God who has possessions in this life, is just the man who says, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" When you look at that which has been bestowed, you say, "Why was I so anxious to get this? I thank God for it, as His gift, but there is nothing in it apart from His giving it to me! Toil and trouble and care come with increase of goods. This, this is not my rest." If any young man here thinks that if he gets on in business and reaches a point when he can retire upon a competence, he will then have reached his rest, he is very greatly mistaken! If he is a child of God and if he gets all that his heart wishes for, he will find that there is nothing satisfying in it whatever. There is, in God, an all-sufficiency, but in all the things of this life, apart from the Grace of God, there is no solid satisfaction or rest!

Beloved, I am sure that we feel that this is not our rest when we have gracious seasons. Do we not sometimes sit in this House of Prayer and feel as if we would like to sit here forever? Last Sunday morning, when I had done preaching, Brother Stott said that he did not want to go. He said that his willing soul would stay in such a frame as this and I suspect that there were a great many more in the congregation who, like the preacher, felt the same! A Brother was describing to me the effect of a certain amusement upon him—a very proper amusement in which there was no wrong whatever—but he said, "Well, you know, I felt like a man who had gone out of a warm house into the cold. There was nothing in it for me, though I saw others very much enjoying it. But I have been used to better things than that and I cannot get on with it." I believe that such is the experience of all God's people who delight themselves in Him, with reference to the pleasures of the worldly.

You will generally notice that when the Believer gets near to God, tastes the unseen joys and eats the bread that was made in Heaven, all the feasts of earth, all its amusements and all its glories seem very flat, stale and unprofitable! It is like drinking ditch water after having slaked your thirst from the cool brooks that come from the snows of Lebanon! After

having laid our heads on Jesus' bosom, we feel, with regard to the world, "No, this is not our rest." We have laid hold on something better, more substantial, more satisfying and enduring—and when we come to the best the world can give, we, somehow, turn our backs upon it and cry—"This is not our rest."

Surely we feel this strongly and hear very clearly the clarion note, "Arise you, and depart," when our many friends are taken Home. I can scarcely look upon any part of the Tabernacle without saying to myself, "Such a friend used to sit there, and such a friend there, and here, behind me, certain of my kind and good Elders and Deacons used to sit." I cannot look round without missing many. When you got well on in years, you will find that your best friends are on the other side of the river and that some of the dearest you have had are gone before you. When you think of it, you say to yourself, "I, too, must arise and depart; for this is not my rest." I have heard that sailors, when they leave England, drink to the health of those they leave behind them till they get a certain distance. And within so many weeks of the port to which they are sailing they change the toast and drink to the health of those that are before them, whom they hope soon to see. It might be better for the sailors and none the worse for their friends if they grasped the idea that such drinking tends to the health of neither, but such I understand is their custom and, undoubtedly there is such a change of outlook in the Christian life. I have nearly reached that state in which I am thinking more of those before me than of those behind me or with me! We are looking forward to the grand reunion when those who went before us shall again appear and we shall, with them, be welcomed by our Lord into everlasting habitations! With such anticipations we can rejoice to hear the bugle sound again and again, "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest."

In the third place, notice that *there is a fact by which this call is further enforced*. In the text there is another expression which puts confidence into this bugle note and gives us a new reason for continuing our pilgrim march. The reasons which exist in ourselves for answering the trumpet call are not the only ones—others may be found all around us—and I ask your attention to this for a moment. "This is not your rest: because it is polluted." You cannot go out into the world without feeling that it is polluted—therefore heed well the Word of God which comes to you, "Arise you and depart."

The call receives new strength by the pollution which is around us. Where do you live? You are a very happy man if you live in a part of London which is not defiled. Can you go down any of our streets without hearing conversation that makes you feel that the place is polluted? This region, indeed, I may say with deep sorrow, is polluted! And there are still lower depths. The newspapers bear daily testimony to the awful extent the pollution has reached. And the terrible poison seems to be continually spreading. Do you not feel, if you know anything of the Grace of God, that you cannot forever live in the midst of such evil? Even Lot, among the people of Sodom, "dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." To him, one

day, there came, by angelic messengers, the call to arise and depart! In his heart of hearts he must have been glad to get away! We, too, because of the pollution that surrounds us, should learn that this is not our rest.

But what shall I say of the way in which the call is enforced by the pollution which comes home to us, even the defilement of our own house, of our own business and of our own daily experience? I am sure that if you look well into it, you will see sin in even your holy things! And if there is sin in your holy things, certainly there will be much that grieves God and should grieve you in your ordinary daily life. Within your domestic circle you may have those that make you feel, "This is not your rest: because it is polluted." You have those whom you love, for whom you pray with deep anxiety, who make you often realize that your relationships in life are both strained and stained. How many a godly man has to say with David, "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure"! Yes, this is not our rest—the evil comes into such close contact with us that we long to be away from it all! We seek to arise and depart from the pollution which seems to cling to us like a wet garment. Thus the call is greatly enforced.

It becomes more forcible because of the holiness for which we sigh. Look at your own heart. Examine your own thoughts, your own words and even those actions which are right in motive. How often *pride* comes in! You say to yourselves, "I did that very well, indeed," and then the good deed becomes polluted, for you trust in yourself and distrust God. And the little self-confidence, or the little lack of faith in God will soon pollute that which you bring to the Lord. Oh, no, we can never rest till we got where there is no sin!—

***"Then shall I see, hear and know
All I desired or wished below,"***

but we shall never be content until we get up where Satan cannot tempt and where corruption will be done with forever—

***"Far from a world of grief and sin!
With God eternally shut in!"***

Blow the bugle again! Ring out the note with clarion clearness—"Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted."

In the fourth place, we must not forget that *there is a danger by which this call is rendered loudest*. There is one more note that gives new intensity to it, when it is added, "Because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you, even with a sore destruction.*" Upon this I will say to the children of God that the things of this world are our destruction. There is nothing here that helps us on our way to God. It is a wilderness at the very best—

***"Pricking thorns through all the ground,
And mortal poisons grow.
And all the rivers that are found
With dangerous waters flow."***

God keeps His own and preserves them to the end, but they get nothing out of this world save the discipline of avoiding it. Vain world! It is no friend to Grace! It does not help us on to God. Were it not for Grace, it would be our destruction!

Look at the temptations around you. Are you ever forced to cry, “Good Lord, help me”? Remember Bunyan’s pilgrim, Mr. Stand-Fast, when Madame Bubble encountered him? It was on the Enchanted Ground that she met him and offered him her purse and all manner of carnal delights. What did poor Stand-Fast do? In an agony he fell down and prayed! Because he was poor, he was tempted by her purse and his heart began to go after vanity—what could he do but kneel down and pray? Ah, this is not your rest! It is a place for wrestling rather than for resting! A place for prayer, not for sleep! It is not your rest, for it is polluted and, “because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction,” unless the Grace of God shall prevent it! Does not this consideration make the call become very loud?

Have you not felt the deadening influence of the world? Can you busy people be up and down the city, or in your shops all day, without feeling that these things tend to harden you? Grace comes in and raises you above it, but the thing, itself, and the care and the thought that you are obliged to give to it have a tendency to make you sink instead of rise. How grateful you ought to be for your Sabbaths! And how thankful you should be for this little sanctuary in the middle of the week, this appointed evening when you can steal away and shake the earth off your feet and brush the dust from your clothes and go back to your toil refreshed and strengthened! God grant us Grace to live above the world! The world, itself, will not help us—it will be our destruction if we do not arise and join the company who “Ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.” Thus the call waxes long and loud.

But it becomes loudest of all when we have to always mourn the fatal effect of worldliness in others. When I look over the Church Book, sometimes I cannot help shedding tears. There is the name of a Brother who used to pray so sweetly—where has he gone? There is the name of a Sister who used to be one of the most earnest followers of Christ—where is she now? I should hardly like to know where they are and yet they did once seem to run well. I remember a Brother who fell into gross sin, of whom I never heard any more, and one said, “If that man is not a child of God, I am not one, myself.” I could not help saying, “Hush, hush! Do not talk of staking your soul against any other man’s. You know but little about yourself and you do not know anything about him.”

I do not like to hear such a thing said and yet I have known some of whom I could almost have said the same! We have thought, “He *must* be a child of God” but, after all, the man has turned aside to crooked ways and proved that he never had the Grace of God in his heart. Ah, dear Friends, while those things happen, “this is not your rest.” As well seek for shelter in an enemy’s country, or seek rest in a storm at sea, as expect to find anything like rest here. No, “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction,” unless the God of Infinite Love and Mercy shall keep you as the apple of His eye!

Thus I have spoken to those who are Believers in Christ. God bless them! Now I turn to others for the few minutes that remain.

II. Secondly, my text may be viewed as AN AWAKENING NOTE FOR AWAKENED SINNERS. “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.” In dealing with this head, I want to say a word to those who are thoughtful, but are not yet Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. I desire to take my silver trumpet and come to each one of you and sound in your ear that same note which I tried to sound in the ears of God’s people. “Arise you, and depart.” Get up! Sleep no more! Lie in indifference no longer! God help you to say, “I will arise and go to my Father”! You must clear out of your present position or you will be lost. The name of the place where you now dwell is the City of Destruction and if you would escape, you must run from it. Flee from the wrath to come!

You are called upon to depart from sin and self. You must, through Divine Grace, be ready to quit self and the righteousness that is of self—and sin and the follies that go with sin. “Arise you, and depart.” O man, or woman, if you stay where you are by nature, you stay in a land which, like Sodom and Gomorrah, is given up to destruction by fire from Heaven! “Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.” You that are in a state of nature, a state of guilt and condemnation, arise you and depart. “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

And here is the reason why you should thus arise and depart—*you have found no rest in the world*—“This is not your rest.” I put it to you—have you found any true peace in the ways of sin? Ah, if you have been awakened to see your state before God, you know that you are not happy! How can you be? An immortal soul contort with mortal things? “Too low they build who build beneath the stars.” He has a poor treasury who has not a treasury in Heaven. If all your possessions are here, it is a poor all, for you lose it when you die, or it may at any moment be taken from you while you live. You now have no rest. You know many men and women who may enjoy themselves as much as they can, so far as means are concerned, but they never really enjoy themselves at all. They used to get pleasure when they were younger, but now they go to the same places and they come away dissatisfied. I am glad of it. I am glad that the Lord will not allow them to find satisfaction in the joys of this life.

And if you had a rest, here, you would soon have to leave it. What if you had to leave all you have tonight? What if, tonight, instead of my voice, it should be the angel who should sound the trumpet, “Arise you, and depart”? What if, instead of going home tonight, you went into the eternal state to meet your God and Judge? How would it be with you? How can you rest if you are unable to give a joyful answer to these questions? You are hanging over the mouth of Hell by a single thread and that thread is breaking! Only a gasp for breath, only a stopping of the heart for a single moment and you will be in an eternal world, without God, without hope,

without forgiveness! Oh, can you face it? I pray God that you may not have a bronze countenance, but may feel that it is time for you to listen to the voice that says, "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest."

But another reason why you should hasten to flee is because of the sins of your life. *You have polluted it.* And what happens to you? Why, the older you get, the more polluted you are! What a mercy it is that men do not live eight or nine hundred years, now, as they used to do! What monsters of sin would be on the earth if men kept on doing evil at the rate some of them do now! Living 80 years, sinners get to be quite sufficiently putrid in talk and life. But if they lived 800 years, this world would almost be a second Hell! Well might God, in the olden days, wash the world clean when there were sinners upon it so ripe for destruction, so rotten in their lives! Because sin thus fouls your nest, "Arise you, and depart."

With all the earnestness of my heart would I urge you to arise from your sin and hasten away from your peril, for *destruction threatens you.* You that have sinned cannot afford to always live here, for, even now, your sins begin to come home to you. They will come home even more as you grow older. When sickness begins to take away your spirits and departed health leaves you without the possibility of your present joys, your state will be almost too terrible for contemplation! Oh, I would not be the man who has lived a sinful life and who is about to die without hope! A pack of wolves around a man must be nothing to it! I heard the other day of one, in India, who was thought to be dead and the Parsee method, you know, is not to bury their dead—they leave them naked in what are called the "Towers of Silence," where there are vultures always waiting and, within three or four hours after a corpse is laid there, there is no flesh left upon the bones.

One poor man, who was only in a swoon, was thought to be dead and was laid out in the tower. The vultures came and one or two of them tore his flesh so terribly that he started up as from a dreadful dream! There were the vultures coming to devour him while he was yet alive and, defending himself as best he could, he managed to escape. What a plight to be in, lying in the place of the dead, surrounded by the cruel beaks of those fierce, ravenous birds! But in a far more awful position is a sinner when his sins come home to him. Only the Lord can drive those vultures away and restore him to life and safety. He comes for your deliverance and it is His voice that says, today, "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest." Fly to Him now, for if not, this rest of yours that you seem to have, will destroy you! You will grow more worldly and more callous as the years go on!

He that is filthy will become yet more filthy! As an old man, you will say, "It is no use talking to me. If I could have my curly hair back again and sit on my mother's knee once more, I might feel something, but now I am given up to hardness." The world will ruin you as the world has ruined its millions and is still ruining its thousands! Fly to Jesus, fly to Jesus! Sinner, fly this moment! God help you! I shall be well rewarded for having preached if but one soul should be awakened to flee away to Christ, my

Lord! And why should not many more, in answer to our prayers? The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Micah 2.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—854, 847, 848.**

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

The following letter from MR. SPURGEON to the congregation at the Tabernacle will show friends the progress he is making. He bore the journey well and at the time this note was sent to the printers, there was, on the whole, a little improvement in his condition—

Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood,
October 3, 1891.

“DEAR FRIENDS—I write a line on Saturday because the bright sun has tempted me to get to the seaside and I could not write you in time if I did not write now. As I have lost almost entirely my powers of eating, I feel it is time to do something and I steal away to the sea in the hope that God will there revive me.

“Your sacred unity and zeal are daily a comfort to me. Oh, that I could be well and serve you without a pause! But perhaps I am worth all the more as a worker because I have so fully been a sufferer!

“I am sure you will continue your prayers for me. May our God bless every one of you!

“Yours most lovingly,
“C. H. SPURGEON.”

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

THE BREAKER AND THE FLOCK

NO. 1954

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 20, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel, I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The Breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them.”
Micah 2:12, 13.

YOU will remember, dear Friends, from our reading last Sabbath morning, [Sermon #1952, *The Holy Spirit—The need of the Age*] in the second chapter of the Book of Micah, that the Prophet was delivering reproofs and rebukes against a sinful people, a people who tried to straiten the Spirit and silence the voice of prophecy and refused to listen to the messengers of God. He threatened them with deserved punishment from the Most High. To our surprise, in the very midst of the threat, he delivers a prediction brimming with mercy! Not only is not the Spirit of the Lord straitened, but even the people of the Lord are not to be straitened, for One has come forth who will be to them both Liberator and Leader. Judgment is God's strange work and He rejoices, even in the midst of threats, to turn aside and utter gracious words to obedient souls! Surely the brightest and most silvery drops of love that have ever distilled upon men have fallen in close connection with storms of Divine Justice. The acceptable year of the Lord is hard by the day of vengeance of our God. The blackness of the tempest of His wrath acts as a foil to set forth more brightly the Glory of His Grace. In this case the thunderbolts stay their course in mid-volley—when the Prophet is hurling destruction upon sin and sinners, he pauses to interpose a passage of promise most rich and gracious—a passage which I wish to open up to you at this time, as the Spirit of God shall enable me.

Certain willful persons were proudly confident that no enemy could reach them behind the walls of their cities, though the Lord declared that He would make Samaria a heap and would strip Jerusalem. They coveted fields and took them by violence and went on with their oppressions as if there had been no Judge of all the earth. The Lord warned them again and again—and assured them that they must not expect to be preserved from chastisement because they were the Lord's people. They boasted that God would protect them, yes, they leaned upon the Lord and said. “Is not the Lord among us? No evil can come upon us.” He told them that Zion

would be plowed as a field and Jerusalem would become heaps. They were by no means to escape the rod! Rather might they look for Grace after they had been severely chastened. They would be carried away into captivity, but yet there would come a day in which they would be gathered out of the places wherein they had been scattered and brought back to their own land. The Prophet cried to the daughter of Zion, "You shall go even to Babylon; there shall you be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem you from the hands of your enemies."

Truly, the Lord forgets not to devise means to bring, again, His banished ones. The words of Micah in the passage before us agree with many others which fell from the lips of Prophets, for it is the way of the Lord to restore His chosen in the day of their repentance. Did He not say, by His servant Amos, "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"? He will preserve the chosen race even in their scattering and then, in His own appointed time, He will seek them out according to His own Words—"He that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock." These gathered ones were to be led back to their land under the guidance of a great Shepherd whose business it would be to break down all obstacles and clear the road for them, so that they might safely reach their resting place.

I have no doubt that the first fulfillment of this prophecy was given when Cyrus conquered Babylon and gave permission for Israel to return to their own land. Cyrus may be regarded as "the Breaker," for the Prophet Isaiah wrote concerning him, "Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron." Then the willing-hearted of Israel gathered together to rebuild the House of the Lord, and to this center, multitudes hastened, the Lord being with them and sending them prosperity. It was of these favored ones that we find a striking fulfillment of our text as to the noise made by the concourse of men. Ezra tells us that, "the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off." Then was this promise, in a measure, fulfilled.

But, Brothers and Sisters, the promises of the Lord are perennial springs forever overflowing with new fulfillments. In the latter days, the God of Israel, in abundant Grace, will remember His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and will gather together His ancient nation who are, at this time, a people scattered and peeled. These shall be converted to the Christ of God and then shall be accomplished the Word of the Prophet—"I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them." The Son of David, whom their fathers slew, not knowing what they did, shall be made known to them as the promised Seed and then they shall look on Him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him. May this day soon come! Then shall the veil be taken away from their hearts and the cloud shall no longer hang over Israel's

head, but the Lord shall restore them and they shall rejoice in Him. The day comes when the Breaker shall go up before them and the King at the head of them—and they shall be brought again unto the inheritance of their fathers.

Even this will not exhaust the prophecy. I regard this passage as setting forth a vision of spiritual things in which Micah dimly saw the gathering together and the heavenward march of the *true Israel*, namely, the elect of God, whom He has given to His Son, Jesus, and whom the Lord Jesus has undertaken to save. “He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart” (Rom 2:29). As Paul, by the Spirit of God, interprets the whole story of the Covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it is clear that we, Brothers and Sisters, the children of the promise, are the true seed, even those who are born by Divine power and, as Believers, are the *spiritual* family of believing Abraham. If we have the faith of Abraham, we are the children of Abraham—and with us is the Covenant made—for the seed of Abraham is not reckoned according to descent by the flesh, otherwise would the Covenant blessing have fallen to Ishmael and not to Isaac, to Esau and not to Jacob!

The Covenant is to a *spiritual seed*, born according to Divine promise through Divine power. The line in which the Lord has determined that the Covenant blessing should run was ordered by Divine Sovereignty, “that the purpose of God according to election might stand.” The Lord purposed that they which are born after the Spirit should be the true heirs and not those that are born after the flesh. We, therefore, believe that to us, even to us who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh, appertain the promises and the Covenant! It shall come to pass that all the elect of God shall yet be gathered together from the places where they have wandered in their sin and, for them, a clear way shall be opened up to the land of their inheritance. The Breaker, who is also their King and God, shall lead them through all opposition and bring them without fail to their quiet resting place. Even as at the first, all Israel was brought out of Egypt and safely led with a high hand and an outstretched arm through sea and desert, so shall the Lord Jesus lead the whole host of His redeemed to the place of His Glory. Has not the Lord God declared it—“The redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away”?

An august spectacle is set before us in our text! May our eyes be anointed of the Holy Spirit that we may behold its glories, so that our hearts shall leap for joy!

First, in the text I see *the flock gathered*—“I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.” Secondly, we behold *the champion Shepherd clearing the way of the flock*—“The Breaker is come up before them.” He, with the arm of His strength, breaks all opposers and breaks up for them a way from their captivity. Thirdly, behold *the flock advancing*, with their great Shepherd at their head—“They

have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them." Jehovah leads the van and the hosts of His redeemed march triumphantly after Him!

I. To begin then, Brothers and Sisters—here is THE FLOCK GATHERED—"I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you."

Who knows where God's chosen are? Babylon was far off from Jerusalem, but our places of wandering are farther off from God than that. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way." In the cloudy and dark day we have wandered to the uttermost ends of the earth. The Lord's chosen ones lie wide of one another and they are far off from God, Himself. What a mercy it is that in the text we have a promise that they shall be Divinely gathered! "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel." Who else could gather them but the Lord? What power less than Divine could fetch such wanderers from their haunts and hidings? One is aloft yonder on the hillside in his pride and self-conceit. Another is down below in the dependency of his disappointment. One wanders in the pastures of worldliness, sporting himself in the plenty, thereof, and hard to be brought back for that reason. Another is entangled in the briars of poverty, half-starved and ready to die and hopeless of ever seeing the face of God with joy.

They are everywhere, my Brethren—these lost sheep! They seem to have chosen, as if deliberately, the most dangerous places! They stumble on the dark mountains; they are caught in the tangled thickets; they have fallen into pits. O Sin, what have you done? Rather, what have you *not* done? For men seem to have gone to the utmost extreme of rebellion against God and to have done evil with both hands! Therefore does God, Himself, come to the rescue! He, Himself, shall assemble Jacob and gather the remnant of Israel! Driving with the terrors of His Law, drawing with the sweetness of His Gospel, He shall surely bring them in! By one instrumentality or by another and, in some cases, apparently, without instrumentality at all, He will bring them from all points of the compass to the place where He will meet with them—

***"There is a period known to God
When all His sheep, redeemed by blood,
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,
Turn to the fold and enter in."***

This is the result of the Divine working and of that alone! Our hope for the salvation of God's elect lies in the fact that it is God, Himself, who undertakes to gather them! Remember His Word by the Prophet Ezekiel—"For thus says the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep and seek them out."

Following the text closely, we notice that this gathering is to be performed *surely*. I dwell with great pleasure upon that word, "surely," because it is spoken twice, "I will *surely* assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will *surely* gather the remnant of Israel." There are no, "ifs," where there is a God! There are no, "perhapses," where Divine predestination rules the day! Let Jehovah speak and it is done. Let Him command and it shall stand firm. Inasmuch as He says, "surely," *twice*, it reminds me of Jo-

seph's word to the Egyptian king—"And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God." God will not change His purpose, nor turn from His promise, nor forget His Covenant—He will surely gather together His chosen people wherever they may be!

O you that are buffeted by opposition and driven to sore distress in your holy service, be not dismayed, for the purpose of the Lord shall stand! *You* may fail, but the eternal God will not! Your work may be washed away like the work of little children in the sand of the seashore, but that which God does, endures forever! God shakes the earth out of its place, but who can move *Him*? When God says, *surely*, who shall cast doubt in the way? The Lord will, without fail, call out His redeemed from among men. As a worker and a soul-winner I grasp at these words, "I will surely gather the remnant of Israel," and I feel that I shall not labor in vain, nor spend my strength for nothing. When the end comes and the whole business of salvation shall be complete, it shall be seen that the Lord has achieved His purpose. Jesus says, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me," and it shall surely be so. Therefore let us be of good courage and seek out the lost ones in full confidence that they *must* and *shall be* found.

This leads us to notice that they shall be gathered *completely*. "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, *all of you*." Not some of the chosen, but *all* of them shall be brought out from the world which lies in the Wicked One. Not some of the redeemed, but each one of them shall be made to walk at liberty under the leadership of their Shepherd-King. The Lord will leave none of His sheep in their wanderings and surrender none to the lion or the bear. Dear Friend, sighing and crying afar off and thinking that God will never gather you, have faith in Him! Helpless as you are, trust Him to do His work as a Savior! It is written, "I will surely gather, O Jacob, all of you," and you may not think that you have wandered beyond the reach of the infinite arms. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? You must not dream that you have sinned yourself beyond the power of Grace, for His mercy endures forever! Only look unto Christ and let your soul stay itself on Him and God will not overlook you in the day when He gathers His own! Though you are least in Israel and most unworthy of His regard, yet He has expressly said, "I will seek that which was lost and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." He will not forget you, you weakest of all the flock! You are necessary to the completeness of the company. If you are not there, how shall the Lord keep His Word, "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, *all of you*"?

Further, our text declares that the people shall be gathered *unitedly*. There shall be a wonderful union among them—"I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah." Oh that the Lord would, in these days, more fully and evidently carry out this promise in the happy unity of His visible Church! Sinners hate each other while they wander in their different ways, but when the Lord brings them together, by His Grace, then love is born in their hearts! What enmities are cast out by the power of Divine

Grace! When lusts are conquered, wars and strife cease. God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace. It is Grace which causes that Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. I notice that sinners, when they are under conviction of sin, are not apt to quarrel with one another—and saints—when they behold the Savior and rejoice in pardoning love, come together in holy love!

In that visible community which stands for the Church of God—I mean the combined external organization of Christendom—there are many divisions and fierce heart-burnings. But in the real Church of God, that spiritual body which the Holy Spirit inhabits, these evils are buried. The truly spiritual are really one in heart. You may meet with a man from whom you differ in many respects, but if the life of God is in him and in yourself, also, you will feel a kinship with him of the nearest kind. Often have I read books which have awakened in my soul a sense of true brotherhood with their authors, although I have known them to be of a Church opposed to many of my own views. If they praise my Divine Lord. If they speak of the inner life and touch upon communion with God. And if they do this with that unction and living power which are the tokens of the Holy Spirit, then my heart cleaves to them, be they who they may! Is it not so with you?

When the Lord brings people to Himself, He brings them to one another. Though depraved nature divides and pride and self set men apart, yet the Lord overcomes these dividing elements by His renewing Grace—and His Divine Word is accomplished—"I will put them together!" When the Lord puts us together, no man can put us asunder. What is needed in the much-divided visible Church of God is that we should all come under the Divine hand more fully—that we should all feel the touch of the Divine Life and yield ourselves more completely to the teaching of the Divine Truth. Schemes of union are of small value—it is the *spirit* of union which is needed. Our Lord Jesus prayed, "that they all may be one; that the world may believe that You have sent Me," and His prayer cannot fall to the ground! The Church is one in Christ and none can tear the seamless vesture. Yet, more openly as the days pass on, the Lord will gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:52).

This gathering together will be done *happily*—they are to be gathered "as the flock in the midst of their fold." God's gathering of His chosen is not to a place of barrenness and misery, but to a place of security and quietude, even to His appointed fold! The Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, makes us to lie down in green pastures. He leads us beside the still waters. He folds His flock and makes it to lie down in peace. He says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." He gives us all things richly to enjoy. O you that are wandering afar from God, there can be no rest for you until the Lord gathers you to the fold of which Jesus is the center and the Shepherd. When you come to Jesus, you shall find rest unto your souls, but not till then. "The peace of God that passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus," but by Christ Jesus only! Christians are not a miserable company of restless spirits. They are not a pack of

dogs howling at one another and smarting under the keeper's lash—but they are a flock feeding in happy communion while Jesus in their midst finds for them a place where they may rest at noon! He so loves His own and so reveals Himself to His own that they are a happy people, highly favored and greatly honored. God has blessed them and they shall be blessed, let the world say what it will concerning them.

One more note must be made on this head—they shall be gathered *numerously*—“They shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.” The Lord's camp is very great. If you have taken into your head the idea that the Lord has chosen for Himself a very small company and, that in the end, there will be only a few saved, dismiss the notion! The redeemed are a number that no man can number! A man can count to a very great extent and if the chosen are beyond the numbering of men, they are a multitude, indeed! The Prophet represents them as making a great noise by reason of their multitude. He alludes to “the busy hum of men,” the buzz of the crowd as when the bees are swarming. As in a city there is an indescribable sound by reason of the multitude who are making traffic in it, so shall there be a noise in the Church of a great concourse of men. Conceive of the noise heard at Bozrah, in the sheep country of Edom, when all the flocks of the country were gathered together to be numbered for the purposes of tribute. Listen to the indescribable noise of the bleating myriads! What a suggestion of the voices of the innumerable hosts of the redeemed when they shall finally be brought together and shall all, in fullest joy, lift up their voices!

If all the gathered company were to pray together, what a sound of supplication would go up by reason of the multitude of men! But when they all *sing*—what a sound shall that be! Do you wonder that John said, “I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder”? It makes my eyes water to think of the incomparable armies of the redeemed gathered together in one place. Well might the Prophet turn poet when he began to picture that countless flock and speak of the “great noise by reason of the multitude of men”! I believe we shall not, any one of us, restrain our voices in that day when we shall meet together with our Lord at our head. I saw one stand up at the opening of this service to look around the Tabernacle, to see the multitude—and well he might—for it is a thing to do one's eyes good to behold this vast assembly! But what shall be our joy when we shall stand up in the midst of the great company of the redeemed? We shall look far and wide and see no end of the great gathering! When they begin to sing, how will our spirits bear the swell of that majestic Psalmody? I know I shall find my best voice that day, when in the midst of the congregation of the faithful I shall sing praise unto the Lord my God! The “great noise by reason of the multitude of men” sets forth the enthusiasm of the praise and the immense number of the perfected ones who shall pour out their hearts before the Throne of God! Thus have I set before you, in a feeble way, the gathering of the flock.

II. Follow me while, next, I speak of THE CHAMPION SHEPHERD clearing the way. “The Breaker is come up before them.” In the 10th verse the

Lord says to His people, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest: because it is polluted." But we say to ourselves—How are they to depart from the place where they now are and press forward to the pastures on the hilltops of Heaven? They are as sheep. How can they find their way? How can they face their foes? How can they break down barriers? A flock is not fitted to tramp over pathless deserts infested by ferocious wolves. How shall the Church attain to the abodes of the perfected? Long leagues of distance must be traversed. Hills of guilt must be crossed and nights of blackest darkness must be experienced! Ah, Lord God! How can You expect that this, Your Church, which is like a flock of sheep, should find its way unto Yourself through all difficulties and adversaries? The answer to our fears is before us—"The Breaker is come up before them." That great Shepherd of the sheep, whose name is "The Through-Breaker," or, "The Breaker-Up," makes a way for His people, yes, creates it by force of arms!

Between us and Heaven once lay the tremendous Alps of sin. Not one of all the flock of God could climb those hills! All must perish who attempt to cross those awful barriers. The way to Heaven was effectually blocked by these Heaven-defying mountains, for no passes existed—even the eagle's eyes could not discover a way. One sin might keep a man out of Heaven, but the *multitudes* of our iniquities, the *blackness*, the *aggravation*, the *repetition* of our offenses made the case hopeless to all human power or wisdom! I see those awful hills and wonder how the flock of God can hope to reach eternal bliss with those in the way. Behold He comes, "The Breaker," before whom the mountains sink! "He, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the tree; and by that bearing He put them all away." He took upon Himself the whole load of His people's iniquities! He endured the entire weight of the crushing burden! And by His atoning death He cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea! The pass of the Atonement is our clear way to Glory. In the sepulcher of Jesus all our sins are buried. To as many as believe in Jesus Christ no sin remains—

***"This Breaker once made sin to be,
Broke from the curse His people free.
He broke the power of death and Hell,
And cleared the road for Israel."***

"In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." The glorious Breaker, with His pierced hands, nailed feet and opened side, has worked a miracle of miracles by putting away sin through the Sacrifice of Himself! Jesus says, "I am the way"—and the way He is—the way which neither past nor present sin can effectually close. But, my Brothers and Sisters, if our sins were all forgiven us, there are other difficulties in the way, for we are without strength and the depravity of our nature is not readily overcome. Think of the hardness of our hearts, the waywardness of our wills, the blindness of our judgments, the readiness of our minds to yield to temptation! How can we force our way through such obstacles? Why, if the Lord would forgive me all my sin and give me Heaven on condition that I should find my way to it, mine would still be a hopeless case!

Even the regenerate find that they have a hard struggle with the flesh—how can we win our way in the teeth of our fallen nature?

Beloved, the Breaker has gone up before us! The Lord Jesus Christ assumed our Nature and was “tempted in all points like we are.” He overcame the adversary at every point of the conflict, that through His victory we might be more than conquerors! He sends forth the Holy Spirit to renew us in the spirit of our minds. He takes the stony heart out of our flesh. He rules the will, He governs the affections, He enlightens the understanding, He sanctifies the soul! And thus, though weak in ourselves, we are made strong in Him—so strong that we shall not perish in the wilderness, but shall pursue our pilgrimage till we cross the Jordan and stand in our lot at the end of the days! Because the Breaker has gone up before us, we shall break through the ramparts of sinfulness and cut our way to holiness and perfection!

Yet even though this is so, that sin is forgiven and our corrupt nature overcome—there is still another difficulty—the Prince of Darkness has set himself to obstruct the way! He defies us to advance—he stands across the road and swears that he will spill our souls. By no means let us be afraid, for the Breaker is gone up before us and the enemy knows the force of His strong right hand. In the wilderness and in the garden, our Lord vanquished this great adversary and therein gave us full assurance that He will shortly bruise Satan under our feet! We need not fear all the devils in Hell—if, by faith, we have courage to resist them, they will flee from us. We shall reach the haven of our rest, the Heaven of our bliss. Our glorious Breaker, with the mace of the Cross, has broken the head of leviathan and made an open show of His adversaries. Thus was it spoken of our Lord at the gates of Eden concerning the old serpent—“You shall bruise his heel.” And now, by His ascension to Heaven, He has done the deed, leading captivity captive—

**“Gone up as God’s co-equal Son,
With all His blood-stained garments on,
While seraphs sing His deathless fame,
And chant the Breaker’s glorious name.”**

This brings us face to face with the last enemy. *Death* blocks the way to eternal life. Be of good courage, the Breaker has also gone up before you in this matter! Jesus died—the Ever-Blessed bowed His head and yielded up the ghost. Listen yet again—He has risen from the dead! He slept, a while, in the cold prison of the tomb, but He could not be held with the bands of death and, therefore, in due time He arose! He arose in newness of life that all His own might also rise in Him. Come, be not afraid to die, for you will travel a well-beaten track! Be not afraid to go down into the heart of the earth, for there your Emmanuel has slept! Nor will He suffer you to go by this dark road alone. “He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” He will go down into this Egypt with you and He will surely bring you up again! The Breaker goes up before you.

But can I hope I shall ever enter the gates of Heaven? Those gates of pearl whose mild, pure radiance chides my perturbed and guilty heart—can I hope to pass their portal? Can I hope to stand where all is absolutely perfect? I shrink in the presence of such matchless purity! But, Brothers

and Sisters, the Breaker has gone up before us! He has opened the kingdom of Heaven to all Believers! It will be safe for us to enter where He has gone—yes, we *must* enter—for where He is, there, also, shall His servants be! He will welcome each one of us with, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord; why do you stand outside?” Down those streets of pure gold like unto transparent glass we shall walk without fear! And up to that blazing Throne of purest light we shall pass without dismay, for Jesus has gone in before us. Behold Him!—

**“He is at the Father’s side,
The Man of Love, the Crucified.”**

The way into the Holiest is now made manifest. The Breaker has torn the veil from the top to the bottom and given us free access to Heaven, itself!

But I must pause. Certainly my matter is not exhausted—time alone restrains.

III. Lastly, I have to show you for a minute or two THE FLOCK ADVANCING, their royal Breaker leading the way. As the Lord Jesus, in His death, Resurrection and Ascension, has gone up before us, so by His Grace we are led to follow Him from Grace to Glory. “They go from strength to strength.” He says to them, “Follow Me”—they know His voice—and as His sheep, they follow Him.

Along the way which the great Champion clears, we find the whole of the flock proceeding. “The Breaker is come up before them,” therefore they keep to His footprints. “They have broken up and have passed through the gate and are gone out by it.” Behold, my Brethren, the vision of visions—the whole company of God’s elect following their triumphant Leader! Do you see yonder the pillar of fire and cloud leading the way through the desert? Do you see the host of Israel in glorious order marching to their predestined inheritance? Such is the Church of God as it is seen by spiritual eyes! All down the centuries, in every land, they are marching along that appointed road which Jesus, the Breaker, has cleared for them. You and I, I hope, are in that goodly company—sometimes our following is lame and halting, but yet we are not turned out of the way. To whom else could we go if we were to leave our chosen Leader? Faint we may be, but pursuing we will be! Oh, that we could keep closer to the Breaker! Oh, that He would break our hearts with His love! Oh, that all our evil habits might be broken by His Grace. We would follow our King where ever He goes! Yes, we are in that company, I trust, and God grant we may never stray from it! No other road is prepared by a great Breaker as this road is prepared. This is the King’s Highway and we will keep to it all our days.

Observe that in the text the people of God are described as imitating their King, for it is written, “they have broken up.” He is the Breaker and are they breakers, too? Yes, they also have broken up. Christ is the great warrior for His people, but not without conflict will any one of them be crowned. It is so arranged in the wisdom of God that everything is so done for us as not to drive us into inaction, but to draw us into holy diligence. Christ’s warfare is repeated in His saints in their measure. The crown is of Grace, but we must strive for it! Christ has conquered sin, but we have to overcome through faith in Him. He has subdued the adversary, but we,

also, shall have to wrestle with spiritual wickedness. "They have broken up." Herein is condescending love. Christ might have saved us and there might have been nothing for us to do but display His Grace, but He intends to conform us to Himself, in conflict and in crown, in breaking up, and in going forth and in entering in. He makes us know the fellowship of His sufferings! Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us ask God to fulfill in us the words of the text, "They have broken up." Let us be resolved to break down all sin. Let us be determined to overcome through the blood of the Lamb. This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith! If we have it, let us use it to good purpose this day.

Notice that as these people were led on by the Breaker—they persevered in following Him. "They have broken up; they have passed through the grate and are gone out by it." They did a little at a time. They advanced step by step. They stopped at nothing, but went onward and upward. So do saints go from Grace to Grace, from faith to greater faith. Note the sentence—"they have broken up, they have passed through the gate and have gone out by it"—this looks as if they did it slowly but surely, gradually but grandly! So, when the Grace of God enters into the heart and we, the sheep of God, are made to follow Him, we are attentive to detail and notice each part of our obedience. You cannot, in Grace, any more than in anything else, do a great deal at once and do it effectually. I find that advance in Grace, if it is suppositious, can be rapid. But if it is *real*, it requires *patience*. Our Lord gives us line upon line, precept upon precept—here a little and there a little. Let us be sure, even if we are slow.

But now I would have you dwell upon the fact that they are marching under royal leadership—"Their King shall pass before them." Christ is always at the head of His own Church. Why? Because He loves it so that He cannot be away from it! He is at the head of His own flock because He has purchased it with His own blood! He will not send an angel to lead His chosen, but He, Himself, will watch over the objects of His everlasting love. He knows the necessities of His Church to be such as He, and He only, can meet. Therefore, as the King, He always remains at their head. Brothers and Sisters, let us always reverence, honor and obey Him! Our active, present King must be loyally and earnestly served. As Breaker, He did *us* service. As King we must render *Him* service! Remember how the Psalmist put it to the chosen bride—"He is your Lord, worship Him." As a Church, we know no other Head! As the people of His pasture, we know no other Leader. Let us follow Him boldly and gladly!

Let us give Him praise this day, yes, let us worship and adore Him, for He is Jehovah! He who is at our head is Lord! In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Is it not written, "The Lord shall go before you"? Let us rejoice because the Lord is our King and He will save us! Do you ever fear that the cause of truth and righteousness will fail? Shake this dust off! Banish such a thought! If Jehovah leads the van, who shall stand against Him? If Jesus Christ, once the Man of Sorrows, but now the King of Kings, is to the fore, He will reckon with our adversaries and make short work of their boasts! Therefore, follow quietly and unquestioningly as sheep follow the shepherd, and your way shall be prosperous. The Lord

of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge—therefore comfort one another with these words.

I cannot express the joy I feel in the belief that I am one of the company which is following the Breaker's lead! But my sorrow is that some of you are not of His flock. Oh, that you may belong to those of whom He says, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: they, also, I must bring." Oh, that He may bring you in speedily! Do you feel a desire towards Christ this morning? Have you any longings to be reconciled to God by Him? Then you may freely come with the confident assurance that he who comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out! He invites you to His Cross, yes, to Himself! Obey the gentle impulse which is now stirring your bosom. Jesus has come on purpose to seek and to save the lost—you are lost—therefore pray that He may save you.

Should the enemy of all good tell you that if you should believe, yet you would never hold out to the end, remind him that the Breaker has gone up before His people and their King at the head of them and, therefore, you are not afraid of meeting anything upon the road which can beat you back from hope and Heaven! Join the army which marches under our victorious Joshua—and through sin, and Hell, and death the Breaker will clear your way! To Him be praise forever and ever! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Isaiah 40:1-10 43:14-21.

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A VISION OF THE LATTER DAY GLORIES

NO. 249

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 24, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And it shall come to pas in the last days that the mountain
of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top
of the mountains and shall be exalted
above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it.”
Isaiah 2:2, & Micah 4:1.***

THE Prophets of God were anciently called Seers, for they had a supernatural sight which could pierce through the gloom of the future and behold the things which are not seen as yet, but which God has ordained for the last times. They frequently described what they saw with spiritual eyes after the form or fashion of something which could be seen by the eye of nature. The vision was so substantial that they could picture it in words, so that we also may behold in open vision, the glorious things which they beheld after a supernatural sort.

Let us imagine Isaiah as he stood upon Mount Zion. He looked about him and there were “the mountains that are round about Jerusalem” far out vying it in height, but yielding to Zion in glory. Dearer to his soul than even the snowcapped glories of Lebanon which glittered afar off was that little hill of Zion, for there upon its summit stood the temple, the shrine of the living God—the place of His delight, the home of song, the house of sacrifice, the great gathering place where the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord—to serve Jehovah, the God of Abraham. Standing at the gate of that glorious temple which had been piled by the matchless art of Solomon, he looked into the future and he saw with tearful eye, the structure burned with fire. He beheld it cast down and the plow driven over its foundations. He saw the people carried away into Babylon and the nation cast off for a season.

Looking once more through the glass he beheld the temple rising from its ashes, with glory outwardly diminished, but really increased. He saw on till he beheld Messiah Himself in the form of a little babe carried into the second temple. He saw Him there and he rejoiced. But before he had time for gladness his eye glanced onward to the Cross. He saw Messiah nailed to the tree. He beheld his back plowed and mangled with the whip. “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,” said the Prophet

and he paused awhile to bemoan the bleeding Prince of the House of David. His eye was now doomed to a long and bitter weeping, for he saw the invading hosts of the Romans setting up the standard of desolation in the city. He saw the holy city burned with fire and utterly destroyed. His spirit was almost melted in him.

But once more he flew through time with eagle wings and scanned futurity with eagle eyes. He soared aloft in imagination and began to sing of the last days—the end of dispensations and of time. He saw Messiah once again on earth. He saw that little hill of Zion rising to the clouds—reaching to Heaven itself. He beheld the New Jerusalem descending from above, God dwelling among men and all the nations flowing to the tabernacle of the Most High God, where they paid Him holy worship.

We shall not, today, look through all the dim vista of Zion's tribulations. We will leave the avenue of troubles and of trials through which the Church has passed and is to pass and we will come, by faith, to the last days. And may God help us while we indulge in a glorious vision of that which is to be before long, when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills. And all nations shall flow unto it."

The Prophet saw two things in the vision. He saw the mountain exalted and he beheld the nations flowing to it. Now will you use your imagination for a moment? For there is a picture here which I can scarcely compare to anything, except one of Martin's magnificent paintings, in which he throws together such masses of light and shade that the imagination is left at liberty to stretch her wings and fly to the utmost height. In the present instance, you will not be able to outstrip the reality, however high you may endeavor to soar. For that which is in our text will certainly be greater than that which the preacher can utter, or that which you may be able to conceive.

Transport yourselves for a moment to the foot of Mount Zion. As you stand there, you observe that it is but a very little hill. Bashan is far loftier and Carmel and Sharon outvie it. As for Lebanon, Zion is but a little hill-ock compared with it. If you think for a moment of the Alps, or of the loftier Andes, or of the yet mightier Himalayas, this mount Zion seems to be a very little hill, a mere molehill—insignificant, despicable and obscure. Stand there for a moment, until the Spirit of God touches your eyes and you shall see this hill begin to grow. Up it mounts, with the temple on its summit, till it outreaches Tabor. Onward it grows, till Carmel, with its perpetual green, is left behind and Salmon, with its everlasting snow sinks before it. Onward still it grows, till the snowy peaks of Lebanon are eclipsed. Still onward mounts the hill, drawing with its mighty roots other mountains and hills into its fabric. And onward it rises, till piercing the

clouds it reaches above the Alps. And onwards still, till the Himalayas seem to be sucked into its heart and the greatest mountains of the earth appear to be but as the roots that strike out from the side of the eternal hill. And there it rises till you can scarcely see the top, as infinitely above all the higher mountains of the world as they are above the valleys.

Have you caught the idea and do you see there afar off upon the lofty top, not everlasting snows, but a pure crystal tableland, crowned with a gorgeous city, the metropolis of God, the royal palace of Jesus the King? The sun is eclipsed by the light which shines from the top of this mountain. The moon ceases from her brightness, for there is now no night—but this one hill, lifted up on high, illuminates the atmosphere and the nations of them that are saved are walking in the light thereof. The hill of Zion has now outsoared all others and all the mountains and hills of the earth are become as nothing before her. This is the magnificent picture of the text. I do not know that in all the compass of poetry there is an idea so massive and stupendous as this—a mountain heaving, expanding, swelling, growing—till all the high hills become absorbed and that which was but a little rising ground before, becomes a hill the top whereof reaches to the seventh heavens.

Now we have here a picture of what the Church is to be. Of old, the Church was like Mount Zion, a very little hill. What saw the nations of the earth when they looked upon it?—a humble man with twelve disciples. But that little hill grew and some thousands were baptized in the name of Christ. It grew again and became mighty. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands began to break in pieces kingdoms and now at this day the hill of Zion stands a lofty hill. But still, compared with the colossal systems of idolatry, she is but small. The Hindu and the Chinese turn to our religion and say, “It is an infant of yesterday. Ours is the religion of ages.”

The Easterns compare Christianity to some noxious atmosphere that creeps along the fenny lowlands. Their systems, they imagine, to be like the Alps, outsoaring the heavens in height. Ah, but we reply to this, “Your mountain crumbles and your hill dissolves. Our hill of Zion has been growing, and strange to say, it has life within its bowels. And grow on it shall, grow on it must—till all the systems of idolatry shall become less than nothing before it—till false gods being cast down, mighty systems of idolatry being overthrown—this mountain shall rise above them all. And on and on and on, shall this Christian religion grow, until converting into its mass all the deluded followers of the heresies and idolatries of man, the hill shall reach to Heaven and God in Christ shall be All in All.” Such is the destiny of our Church, she is to be an all-conquering Church, rising above every competitor.

We may more fully explain this in two or three ways. The Church will be like a high mountain, for she will be pre-eminently conspicuous. I believe that at this period the thoughts of men are more engaged upon the religion of Christ than upon any other. It is true and there are few that will deny it, that every other system is growing old—gray hairs are scattered here and there, although the followers of these religions know it. As for Mahomet, has he not become now effete with gray old age? And the saber once so sharp to slay the unbeliever, has it not been blunted with time and retired into its scabbard? As for the old idolatries, the religion of Confucius, or of Buddha—where are their missionaries—where are the old activities that made minor idolatries bow before them? They are now content to be confined within their own limit, they feel that their hour is come that they can grow no further, for their strong man is declining into old age.

But the Christian religion has become more conspicuous now than ever it was. In every part of the world all people are thinking of it. The very gates of Japan—once fast closed—are now open to it and soon shall the trumpet voice of the Gospel be heard there and the name of Jesus, the Son of the Highest, shall there be proclaimed by the lips of His chosen servants. The hill is already growing and mark you, it is to grow higher yet. It is to be so conspicuous that in every hamlet of the world the name of Christ shall be known and feared. There shall not be a Bedouin in his tent, there shall not be a Hottentot in his kraal, there shall not be a Laplander in the midst of his eternal snow, or an African in that great continent of thirst, that shall not have heard of Christ! Rising higher and higher and higher, from north to south, from east to west, this mountain shall be beheld. Not like the star of the north which cannot be seen in the south, nor like the “cross” of the south which must give way before the “bear” of the north—this mountain, strange to say it, contrary to nature—shall be visible from every land.

Far-off islands of the sea shall behold it and they that are near shall worship at the foot thereof. It shall be pre-eminently conspicuous in clear, cloudless radiance gladdening the people of the earth. This I think is one meaning of the text, when the Prophet declares, “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains. and shall be exalted above the hills.”

This, however, is but a small part of the meaning. He means that the Church of Christ shall become awful and venerable in her grandeur. It has never been my privilege to be able to leave this country for any time, to stand at the foot of the loftier mountain of Europe—but even the little hills of Scotland, where half way up the mist is slumbering, struck me with some degree of awe. These are some of God’s old works, high and

lofty, talking to the stars, lifting up their heads above the clouds as though they were ambassadors from earth ordained to speak to God in silence far aloft. But poets tell us—and travelers who have but little poetry say the same—that standing at the foot of some of the stupendous mountains of Europe and of Asia, the soul is subdued with the grandeur of the scene.

There, upon the father of mountains, lie the eternal snows glittering in the sunlight and the spirit wonders to see such mighty things as these. Such massive ramparts garrisoned with storms. We seem to be but as insects crawling at their base, while they appear to stand like cherubim before the Throne of God, sometimes covering their face with clouds of mist, or at other times lifting up their white heads and singing their silent and eternal hymn before the Throne of the Most High. There is something awfully grand in a mountain, but how much more so in such a mountain as is described in our text, which is to be exalted above all hills and above all the highest mountains of the earth?

The Church is to be awful in her grandeur. Ah, now she is despised. The Infidel barks at her, it is all he can do. The followers of old superstitions as yet pay her but little veneration. The religion of Christ, albeit that it has to us all the veneration of eternity about it—"For His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting"—yet to men who know Him not, Christianity seems to be but a young upstart, audaciously contending with hoary-headed systems of religion. Yes, but the day shall come when men shall bow before the name of Christ, when the Cross shall command universal homage, when the name of Jesus shall stay the wandering Arab and make him prostrate his knee at the hour of prayer, when the voice of the minister of Christ shall be as mighty as that of a king, when the bishops of Christ's Church shall be as princes in our midst and when the sons and daughters of Zion shall be every man of them a prince and every daughter a queen. The hour comes, yes, and now draws near, when the mountain of the Lord's house in her awful grandeur shall be established on the top of the mountains.

There is yet, however, a deeper and larger meaning. It is just this—that the day is coming when the Church of God shall have absolute supremacy. The Church of Christ now has to fight for her existence. She has many foes and mighty ones too, who would snatch the chaplet from her brow, blunt her sword and stain her banners in the dust. But the day shall come when all her enemies shall die. There shall not be a dog to move his tongue against her. She shall be so mighty that there shall be nothing left to compete with her. As for Rome, you shall seek but find it not. It shall be hurled like a millstone in the flood. As for Mohamed's lustful superstition, they shall ask for it, but the imposter shall not be found.

As for false gods, talk to the bittern and the owl, to the mole and to the bat and they shall tell you where they shall be discovered. The Church of Christ at that time shall not have kings of the earth to bind her and to control her, as if she were but a puny thing, nor shall she have them to persecute her and lift up their iron arm to crush her. But she, then, shall be the queen and empress of all nations.

She shall reign over all kings. They shall bow down and lick the dust of her feet. Her golden sandals shall tread upon their necks. She, with her scepter, with her rod of iron, shall break empires in pieces like earthen vessels. She shall say, "Overturn! Overturn! Overturn! Until He come, whose right it is. And I will give it to HIM." The destiny of the Church is universal monarchy. What Alexander fought for, what Caesar died to obtain, what Napoleon wasted all his life to achieve, Christ shall have—the universal monarchy of the broad acres of the earth. "The sea is His and He made it and His hands formed the dry land." The whole earth shall come and worship and bow down and kneel before the Lord our Maker. For every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

You have now, I think, the meaning of the text—the Church growing and rising up till she becomes conspicuous, venerable and supreme. And now let me pause here a moment, to ask how this is to be done.

How is this to be done? I reply there are three things which will ensure the growth of the Church. The first is the individual exertion of every Christian. I do not think that all the exertions of the Church of Christ will ever be able to reach the climax of our text. I think we shall see something more than natural agency, even though employed by the Spirit, before the Church of Christ shall be exalted to that supremacy of which I have spoken. But, nevertheless, this is to contribute to it. In the olden times, when men raised mounds to the memory of departed kings, it was usual to put a heap of stones over the tomb and every passerby threw another stone. In course of age those mounds grew into small hills. Now the Church of Christ in the present day is growing something in that way. Each Christian converted to Christ throws his stone. We each do our measure. By the grace of God let us each make sure of one stone being deposited there and strive to add another by laboring to be the instruments of bringing someone else to Christ. In this way the Church will grow. And as year after year rolls on, each Christian serving his Master, the Church will increase. And it shall come to pass in the last times, that even by the efforts of Christ's people, owned by God the Holy Spirit, this mountain shall be highly exalted in the midst of the hills.

This, although all that we can do, is not, I think, all that we have to expect. We can do no more, but we may expect more. Besides, the Church of

Christ differs from all other mountains in this—that she has within her a living influence. The ancients fabled that under Mount Etna Vulcan was buried. Some great giant, they thought, lay there entombed. And when he rolled over and over, the earth began to tremble and the mountains shook and fire poured forth. We believe not the fable, but the Church of God, verily, is like this living mountain. Christ seems to be buried within her. And when He moves Himself His Church rises with Him. Once He was prostrate in the garden. Then Zion was but a little hill. Then He rose and day-by-day as He is lifted up His Church rises with Him.

And in the day when He shall stand on Mount Zion, then shall His Church be elevated to her utmost height. The fact is, that the Church, though a mountain, is a volcano—not one that spouts fire, but that has fire within her. And this inward fire of the living Truth of God and living grace, makes her bulge out, expands her side and lifts her crest. And onwards she must tower, for the Truth of God is mighty and it must prevail—grace is mighty and must conquer—Christ is mighty and He must be King of kings. Thus you see that there is something more than the individual exertions of the Church. There is a something within her that must make her expand and grow, till she overtops the highest mountains,

But mark you, the great hope of the Church, although it is reckoned madness by some to say it, is the second advent of Christ. When He shall come, then shall the mountain of the Lord's house be exalted above the hills. We know not when Jesus may come. All the prophets of modern times have only been prophets from the fact that they have made profit by their speculations. But with the solitary exception of that pun upon the word, I believe they have not the slightest claim upon your credit. Not even men who are doctors of divinity, who can spoil an abundance of paper with their prophesies of second Adventism—"Of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels of God." Christ may come this morning. While I am addressing you Christ may suddenly appear in the clouds of Heaven. He may not come for many a weary age. But come He must. In the last days He must appear. And when Christ shall come He will make short work of that which is so long a labor to His Church.

His appearance will immediately convert the Jews. They have looked for Messiah a king. There He is, in more than regal splendor. They shall see Him. They shall believe on Him. He will then tell them that He is the Messiah whom their fathers crucified. Then will they look on Him whom they have pierced and they will mourn for their sin and gathering round their great Messiah in glorious march they shall enter and be settled in their own land. They shall once more become a great and mighty nation, no, a Jew shall become a very prince among men, firstborn in the Church of God. Then shall the fullness of the Gentiles be converted and all kindreds

and people shall serve the Son of David. Mark, the Church is to rise first and when the Church has risen to eminence and greatness, the nations will flow unto her. Her rising will not be owing to the nations, but to the advent of Christ and after she has become great, conspicuous and supreme, then will the nations flow to her.

I am looking for the advent of Christ—it is this that cheers me in the battle of life—the battle and cause of Christ. I look for Christ to come, somewhat as John Bunyan described the battle of Captain Credence with Diabolus. The inhabitants of the town of Mansoul fought hard to protect their city from the Prince of Darkness and at last a pitch battle was fought outside the walls. The captains and the brave men of arms fought all day till their swords were knitted to their hands with blood. Many and many a weary hour did they seek to drive back the Diabolians. The battle seemed to waver in the balance, sometimes victory was on the side of faith and now and then, triumph seemed to hover over the crest of the Prince of Hell. But just as the sun was setting, trumpets were heard in the distance, Prince Emmanuel was coming, with trumpets sounding and with banners flying and while the men of Mansoul passed onwards sword in hand, Emmanuel attacked their foes in the rear. Getting the enemy between them two, they went on, driving their enemies at the swords point, till at last, trampling over their dead bodies, they met and hand to hand the victorious Church saluted its victorious Lord.

Even so must it be. We must fight on daily and hourly. And when we think the battle is almost decided against us, we shall hear the trump of the archangel and the voice of God and He shall come, the Prince of the kings of the earth. At His name, with terror they shall melt and like snow driven before the wind from the bare side of Salmon shall they fly away. And we, the Church militant, trampling over them, shall salute our Lord, shouting, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” Thus then, have I explained the first part of the text.

II. The second part of the text we have to consider, is this sentence—“AND ALL NATIONS SHALL FLOW UNTO IT.” Here is a figure, perhaps not so sublime, but quite as beautiful as the first. Still endeavor to retain in your minds the picture of this stupendous mountain, reaching above the clouds, seen by all mankind, in either hemisphere, a wonder of nature which could not be accomplished by the ordinary rules of art, but which Divine wisdom will be able to perform. Well, wonder of wonders, you see all the nations of the earth converging to this great mountain, as to a common center. Once in the year all the people of Israel were desirous to go to the little hill of Zion. And now, once and for all, you see, not Israel, but all the nations of the earth coming to this great hill of Zion, to worship the Most High God.

The white sails are on the Atlantic and the ships are dying before the wind, even as the bird flits through the sky. What do they bear? What is their noble cargo? Lo, they come from far, bringing the sons and daughters of Zion from the ends of the earth. See there the camels, the great caravan passing over the pathless desert? What are these and what is their costly freight? Lo, they are bringing the daughters of God and the sons of Zion up to the Most High God, to worship Him. From all parts of the earth you see them coming—from the freezing cold and from the burning heat, from the far-off islands of the sea and from the barren sands they come. They come, all converging towards the great center of their high and holy worship. This we are not to understand of course, literally, but as a figure of the great spiritual fact that all the souls of men shall tend to Christ and to union with His Church.

Again, I beg you carefully to observe the figure. It does not say they shall come *to it*, but they shall “flow unto it.” Understand the metaphor. It implies first their number. Now our Churches are increased, converts drop into the Churches—drop after drop the pool is filled. But in those days they shall flow into it. Now it is but the pouring out of water from the bucket. Then it shall be as the rolling of the cataract from the hillside, it shall flow into it. Now our converts, however numerous, are comparatively few, but then a nation shall be born in a day. The people shall renounce their gods all at once. Whole nations shall all of a sudden, by an irresistible impulse, flow into the Church—not one by one—but in one vast mass. The power of God shall be seen in bringing whole nations into the Church of God. You have seen the river flowing onward to the sea, with its banks all swollen, bearing its enormous contribution to the boundless ocean. So shall it be in the last days. Each nation shall be like a river, rolling towards the foot of this great mountain, the Church of the living God. Happy, happy, happy day, when India and China with their teeming myriads and all the nations of the earth, with their multitude of tongues, shall flow into the mountain of God!

But the text conveys the idea not only of numbers, but of—(I know the exact word, but then I do not like to use it, for fear some should not know the meaning of it, it means that the nations of the earth shall come willingly to it)—spontaneously. That was the word I wanted to use. But why should we use big words, when we might find little ones? They are to come willingly to Christ. Not to be driven, not to be pumped up, not to be forced to it, but to be brought up by the Word of the Lord, to pay Him willing homage. They are to flow to it. Just as the river naturally flows downhill by no other force than that which is its nature, so shall the grace of God be so mightily given to the sons of men, that no acts of parliament, no State Churches, no armies will be used to make a forced conversion.

“The nations shall flow unto it.” Of themselves, made willing in the day of God’s power, they shall flow to it. Whenever the Church of God is increased by unwilling converts it loses strength. Whenever men join the Church because of oppression, which would drive them to make a profession of religion, they do not *flow*, the Church is weakened and not strengthened. But in those days the converts shall be voluntarily won—shall come in willingly by Divine Grace. They shall flow unto it.

But yet again, this represents the power of the work of conversion. They “shall flow unto it.” Imagine an idiot endeavoring to stop the river Thames. He gets for himself a boat and there he stands, endeavoring to push back the stream. He objects to it flowing towards the sea and with his hands he tries to put it back. Would you not soon hear laughter along the banks? Ah, Fool, to attempt to stop the stream! Now, the word “flow,” here conveys just the idea. “The nations shall flow unto it.” The Secularist may rise up and say, “Oh, why be converted to this fanatical religion? Look to the things of time.” The false priests may rouse themselves with all their anger to defy Christ and endeavor to keep their slaves. But all their attempts to stop conversion will be like an idiot seeking to drive back a mighty stream with his puny hands. “All nations shall flow unto it.” What an idea it is!

Oh, take your stand today, like Prophets of the Lord and look into the future! Today the Church appears like the dry bed of a torrent. Here I stand and I see a little water flowing in a secret and thread-like stream, among the stones. So little is it that I can scarcely detect it, but I take the glass of prophecy, I look far onward and I see a rolling mass of water, such as is sometimes seen in the rapid rivers of Africa. And there it is, coming with thundering sound. Wait for a few more years and that torrent, like Kishon’s mighty river, sweeping all before it, shall fill this dry bed and swell on and on and on, with tumultuous waves of joy, till it meets the ocean of Christ’s universal reign and loses itself in God! Here you see, then, you have more than your imagination can grasp. This stupendous mountain and all the nations of the earth—vast numbers with immense force—spontaneously coming up to the house of the living God.

Now, I shall close by a practical address, very brief and I trust very earnest. Is it not a great subject for praise that the nations of the earth may flow to the hill of God and to His house? If I were to tell you that all the nations of Europe were climbing the sides of the Alps, you would ask me, “And what benefit do they gain thereby? They must pass over the slippery fields of ice and they may lose their lives in the midst of the bottomless chasms that are overhung by the mighty precipices. They may suddenly be overwhelmed and buried in the all-destroying avalanche and should they reach the summit they must fall down exhausted. What is there that men should covet in those barren heights? Rarefied air and cold would

soon destroy them, should they attempt to exist there.” Ah, but it is not so with God’s hill. There shall be no snow upon its summit, but the warmth and light of Jehovah’s love. There shall be no chasms in its side wherein souls may be destroyed, for there shall be a way and a highway, (the unclean shall not pass over it) a way so easy that the wayfaring man shall not err therein.

The mountains of which we read in Scripture were some of them such that if they were accessible no one would desire to climb them. There were bounds set round about Sinai, but had there been no bounds who would have wished to ascend it—a mountain that burned with fire and upon which there was a sound as of a trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long? No, Brethren, we are not come to a mountain like Sinai with its supernatural thunders. We are not come to a hill bare and barren and bleak and difficult to climb, like the mountains of earth. But the hill of God, though it is a high hill, is a hill up which on hands and knees the humble penitent may readily ascend. You are come to a mountain which is not forbidden to you. There are no bounds set about it to keep you off, but you are freely bid and freely invited to come to it. And the God who invited you will give you grace to come. If He has given you the will to come, He will give you grace to climb the sides of the hill till you shall reach its upper glories and stand on its summit transported with delight.

While I am talking about the nations that will flow to Christ, might we not weep to think that there are so many in this congregation that are not flowing to Christ but are going *from* Him? Ah, Soul. What are the splendors of the Millennium to you, if you are His enemy? For when He tramples His foes in His hot displeasure, your blood shall stain His garments, even as the garments of the wine pressers are stained with the blood of the grape. Tremble, Sinner, for the advent of Christ must be your destruction though it shall be the Church’s joy and comfort. You say, “Come quickly.” Know you not that to you the day of the Lord is darkness and not light, for that day burns as an oven and they that are proud and do wickedly shall be as stubble and the fire shall consume them with burning heat?

Oh, you people that today hear the words of Jesus! You are now this day invited to come to the mountain of His Church, on which stands His Cross and His throne. You weary, heavy laden, sin-destroyed sin-ruined souls—you that know and feel your need of Jesus—you that weep because of sin—you are bid to come now to Christ’s Cross—to look to Him who shed His blood for the ungodly and looking to Him, you shall find peace and rest.

When He comes with rainbow wreath and robes of storm, you shall be able to see Him, not with alarm and terror, but with joy and gladness, for

you shall say, “Here He is, the Man who died for me has come to claim me. He who bought me has come to receive me. My Judge is my Redeemer and I will rejoice in Him.” Oh, turn, you English heathens—turn unto God! You inhabitants of London, some of you as vile as the inhabitants of Sodom, turn, turn to God! O Lord Jesus! By Your Grace turn everyone of us to Yourself! Bring in Your elect. Let Your redeemed rejoice in You. And then let the fullness of the nations flow unto You and Yours shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

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MERCY FOR THE MEANEST OF THE FLOCK NO. 3201

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“In that day, says the Lord, will I assemble the lame, and I will gather the outcast, and those whom I have afflicted.”
Micah 4:6.*

THIS is spoken, I suppose, in the first place, of the Jewish people who have been so afflicted on account of their sin that they almost cease to be a nation. They are driven here and there among the lands and made to suffer greatly. In the last time, when Christ shall appear in His Glory in the days of halcyon peace, then shall Israel partake of the universal joy. Poor, limping, faltering Israel, afflicted with tempest, shall yet be gathered and rejoice in her God!

However, I am sure that the text applies to the Church of God and we shall not do amiss if we also find in it promises to individual Christians. We will regard the text in those two lights as spoken to the Church and as spoken to individual souls.

I. First, then, AS REFERRING TO THE CHURCH OF GOD. “In that day, says the Lord, will I assemble the lame, and I will gather the outcast, and those whom I have afflicted.”

The Church of God is not always equally vigorous and prosperous. Sometimes she can run without weariness and walk without fainting, but at other times she begins to limp and is lame. There is a deficiency in her faith, a lukewarmness in her love, doctrinal errors spring up and many things that both weaken and trouble her—and then she becomes like a lame person. And, indeed, Beloved, when I compare the Church of God at the present moment with the first Apostolic Church, she may well be called, “the lame.” Oh, how she leaped in the first Pentecostal times! What wondrous strength she had throughout all Judea and all the neighboring lands! The voice of the Church in those days was like the voice of a lion—and the nations heard and trembled. The utmost isles of the sea understood the power of the Gospel and before long the Cross of Christ was set up on every shore. Thus was the Church in her early days—the love of her espousals was upon her and her strength was like that of a young unicorn!

How the Church now limps! How deficient in vigor, how weak in her actions! If I compare the Church now with the Church in Reformation times, when, in our own land, our fathers went bravely to prison and to the stake to bear witness to the Lord Jesus! When, in Covenanting Scotland and Puritan England, the Truth of God was held with firmness and proclaimed with earnestness and, what is, perhaps, still better, when the

Truth of God was lived by those who professed it—then was she mighty, indeed, and not to be compared to “the lame,” as I fear she is now in these days of laxity of Doctrine and laxity of life—when error is tolerated in the Church and loose living is tolerated in the world!

I might almost use the same simile for the Church, today, as compared with those early days of Methodism when Whitefield was flying like a seraph in the midst of Heaven—preaching in England and America the unsearchable riches of Christ to tens of thousands! When Wesley and others were working with undiminished ardor to reach the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low! Those were good days with all their faults. Life and fire abounded, the God of Israel was glorified, and tens of thousands were converted! The Church seemed as though it had risen from the dead and cast off its grave clothes, and was rejoicing in newness of life! We are not without hopeful signs today. There is not everything to depress, but much to encourage. At the same time, the Church limps—she does not stand firm and run fast. Oh, that God would be pleased to visit her!

Moreover, if I look at the text, I perceive that the Church not only is sometimes weak, but, at the same time, or at some other time, *the Church is persecuted and made to suffer*, for the text speaks of “the out-cast.” And it has often happened that the Church has been driven right out from among men. It has been said of her, “Away with her from the earth! It is not fit that she should live.” But how wondrously God has shown His mercy to His people when they have been driven out! The days of exile have been bright days! The sun never shone more fairly on the Church’s brow than when she worshipped God in the catacombs of Rome, or when her disciples “wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.” In our own country, those who met in secret, perpetually pestered by informers who would bring them before the magistrate for joining in prayer and song, often said, when they got their liberty, that they wished they had the days, again, when they were gathered together in the lonely house and scarcely dared to sing loudly! They had brave times in those days, when every man held his soul in his hand. When he worshipped his God not knowing whether the hand of the hangman or the headsman might not soon be upon him. The Lord was pleased to bless His people when the Church was driven out. If the snowy peaks of Piedmont, if the lowlands of Holland, if the prisons of Spain could speak, they would tell of Infinite Mercy experienced by the saints under terrible oppression—of hearts that were leaping to Heaven while the bodies were bruised or burning on earth! God has been gracious to His people when they have been driven out.

Sometimes trouble comes to God’s people in another way. *The Church is afflicted by God Himself*. It seems as if God had put away His Church for a time and driven her from His Presence. That has happened often in all Churches. Perhaps some of you are members of such Churches now, or have been. Discord has come in and the Spirit of peace has gone. Coldness has come into the pulpit and a chill has come over the pews. The Prayer Meetings are neglected, the seeking of souls is almost given

up—the candlestick is there, but the candle seems to be gone, or not to be lighted. The means of Grace have become lifeless. You almost dread the Sabbath which once was your comfort. It is wretched for Christian people when it comes to this! And yet, in scores of villages and towns in England this is the case. The sheep look up and the shepherd looks down but there is no food for the sheep, neither does the shepherd, himself, know where to get the food because he has not been taught of God. It is a melancholy thing, wherever this has been the case, but I would encourage the saints to cry mightily for the return of God's Spirit, for the restoration of unity and peace, earnestness and prayerfulness, that once again the wilderness and the solitary place may be made glad and the desert may rejoice and blossom like the rose!

My Brothers and Sisters, may God never treat the Church in England as she deserves to be treated, for when I look around me and see her sins, they seem to rise up to Heaven like a mighty cry! We have been lately told in so many words, by an eminent preacher, that all creeds have something good in them—even the creed of the heathen—and that out of them all the grand creed is to be made, which is yet to be the religion of mankind! God save us from those who talk in this way and yet profess to be sent of God! They who know in their own souls what God's Truth is, will not be led astray by such delusions. But God may visit His Church and chasten her sorely by depriving her of His Spirit for a while. If He has done so, or is about to do so, let us still pray that He may gather the outcast and afflicted.

I may not dwell longer upon these points, but hasten to notice the blessing that will come, in answer to prayer, upon Churches that are weak, or sorely persecuted. There are scattering times, no doubt, but we should always pray that we may live in gathering times, that we may be gathered together in unity, in essential oneness around the Cross, in united action for our glorious Master, and that sinners who are far away may be gathered in, too, and backsliders who have wandered may be restored! Pray for gathering times, Brothers and Sisters, and may the day come when the Lord will assemble the lame and will gather the outcast and afflicted.

Notice that the text speaks of a "day." So we may expect that God will have His own time of benediction. "In that day, says the Lord, will I assemble the lame." I believe that to be a day in which we enquire after the Lord, a day in which we are prayerful, in which we become anxious, in which an agony lays hold upon the souls of Believers until the Lord shall return unto His people—a day when Christ is revealed in the testimony of the Church and the Gospel is fully preached—in that day will the Lord assemble the lame! May that day speedily come! But if we do not see the blessing tomorrow, let us remember that tomorrow may not be God's day, and let us persevere in prayer till God's day does come. There are better days in store for the Church—and before the page of human history closes, there will be times of triumph for her in which she shall be glorious—and God shall be glorified in her!

II. I shall, however, pass from this first point about the Church, because I wish to speak to mourners, to melancholy ones. I trust I have a message of mercy to some that are desponding. We shall look on the text, secondly, AS REFERRING TO INDIVIDUAL SOULS. “In that day, says the Lord, will I assemble the lame.” There are three characters described here. Let us look at each of them.

First, *the soul that limps*. Of course by that is intended those Christians who are very weak. Some are “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” It would be a great mercy if all God’s people were so, but there are some Christians who have faith of but a feeble sort. They have love to God, but they sometimes question whether they do love Him at all. They have piety in their hearts, but it is not of that vigorous kind one would desire. It is rather like the spark in the flax, or the music in the bruised reed. They are like Little-Faith and Miss Much-Afraid. They are alive, but only just alive. Sometimes their life seems to tremble in the balance and yet it is hidden with Christ in God and, therefore, it is really beyond the reach of harm! They are the weak ones and God speaks to such weak ones, and says, “I will assemble the lame.”

It not only means that they are weak, but that they are slow and limping persons. A lame person cannot travel quickly and, oh, how slowly some Christians move! What little advance they make in the Divine Life! They were little children ten years ago and they are little children now. Their own children have grown up to be men, but they themselves do not appear to have made any advance. They are just babes in Grace and still have need of milk. They are not strong enough to feed upon the strong meat of the Kingdom of God. They are slow to believe all that the Prophets and Apostles have spoken, slow to rejoice in God, slow to catch a Truth of God and perceive its bearing, but still slower to get the nutriment out of it and learn its application to themselves. But, slow as they are, I trust we may say of them that they are as sure as they are slow! What steps they do take are well taken. And if they come slowly, like the snail, yet they are like the snail in Noah’s days crawling towards the ark—they will eventually get in!

With this slowness there is also pain. A lame man walks painfully. Perhaps every time he puts his foot to the ground, a shock of pain goes through his whole system. And some Christians, in their progress in the heavenly life, seem afflicted in like manner. I meet with some Christians who are very sensitive and every time there is anything wrong they are ashamed and grieved. I wish some other Christians had more of that feeling, for it is an awful fact that many professors seem to tamper greatly with sin and think nothing of it at all. Better the sensitive soul that is fearful and timorous, lest it should in any way grieve the Spirit of God—with a watchful eye over itself and a conscience that is quick and tender as the apple of the eye—than such presumption and hardness of heart as others have! But some have this sensitiveness without the other qualities which balance it—and it makes their progress to Heaven a painful one, though a safe one. They do not look enough at the Cross. They do not remember that, “if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fel-

lowship, one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” They have not come to see that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to deliver us from all sin, so that indwelling sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the Law, but under Grace. So their progress is painful. But, limping one, this word is for you, “I will assemble the lame, when I call My people together, I will call her; when I send an invitation to a feast, I will direct one specially to her. She is weak, she is slow, she is in pain, but for all that I will assemble her with My people.”

The allusion, perhaps, is to a sheep that has somehow been lamed. The shepherd has to get all the flock together and, therefore, he must bring the lame ones in, too. And the Good Shepherd of the sheep takes care that the lame sheep shall be gathered. I find that the original word has somewhat of the import of one-sidedness—a lame sheep goes as if it went on one side. It cannot use this foot, and so it has to throw its weight on the other side. How many Christians there are that have a one-sidedness in religion and, unfortunately, that often happens to be the gloomy side! They are very properly suspicious of themselves, but they do not add to that a weight of confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking back upon their past and seeing their own unfaithfulness, they forget God’s faithfulness! Looking upon the present, they see their own imperfections and infirmities—and forget that the Spirit helps our infirmities—and that if we had no infirmities, there would be nothing for the Spirit to do to glorify Himself in our weakness! When they look forward to the future, they see the dragons and the dark river of death, but they forget that promise, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.” What a mercy it is that the Lord will not forget these one-sided limpers, but that even they shall be assembled when, with the Shepherd’s crook, He gathers His flock and brings them Home!

We may add to these, those who have got tired with the trials of the way. It is a weary thing to be lame. It saddens my heart to often see the sheep go through the London streets. They go limping along, poor things, so spent and spiritless. There are many Christians who are like they are—they seem to have been so long in trouble that they do not know how to bear up any longer. What with the loss of the husband and the loss of the child. What with poverty and many struggles and no apparent hope of deliverance. What with one sickness and then another in their own bodies. What with one temptation and then another temptation, and then a third, they feel very wearied by the way. They are like Jacob when he limped on his thigh. The blessing is that the Lord says, “I will assemble the lame.” Lay hold on that, you limping ones! I daresay you suppose you are the last one of the flock. You have got so tired and lame that you think that though all the others are close by the Shepherd’s hand, you are forgotten. You remember that the Amalekites in the wilderness fell upon the children of Israel and smote some of the hindmost of them and, perhaps, you are afraid that you will get smitten in that way. Let me remind you of a text—“The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel

will be your rereward.” Those that lead the way can rejoice that God goes before them, but you can rejoice that God is behind you, as we read again, “The glory of the Lord shall be your rereward.” He will take care that you shall not be destroyed.

But now, secondly, *the soul that is exiled*—“I will gather the outcast.” Perhaps I address someone here who has been driven out from the world. It was not a very great world, that world of yours, but still, it was very dear to you. You loved father, mother, brothers and sisters, but you are a speckled bird among them now. Sovereign Grace and electing love have lighted on you, but not on them. At first they ridiculed you when you went to hear the Gospel—but now that you have received it and they perceive that you are in earnest—they persecute you. You are one by yourself. You almost wish you did not live among them because you are farther off from them than if you were really away from them. Nothing you can do pleases them. There are sure to be a thousand faults and they fling the taunt at you when you fail, and say, “This is your religion!” You cry out, “Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech!” Do you remember what became of the man when the Pharisees cast him out? Why, the Lord met him and graciously took him in! Remember what Jesus said to His disciples, “If you were of the world, the world would love his own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” When I go to a man’s house and his dog barks at me, he does it because I am a stranger. And when you go into the world and the world howls at you—it is because you are different from worldlings and they recognize in you the Grace of God—and pay the only homage which evil is ever likely to pay to goodness, namely, persecute it with all their might!

Perhaps, however, it is worse than that. “I should not mind being driven out from the world,” you say, “I could take that cheerfully, but I seem driven out from the Church of God.” There may be two ways in which this may come about. Perhaps you have been zealous for the Lord God of Israel in the midst of a cold church and you have spoken, perhaps not always prudently. The consequence is that you have angered and vexed the brethren, and they have thought that you fancied yourself to be better than they, though such a thought was far from your mind. It is an unfortunate thing for a man to be born before his time, yet he may be a grand man. Some Christians in certain churches seem to live ahead of their brethren. It is a good thing but, as surely as Joseph brought down the enmity of his own brothers upon himself because he walked with God and God revealed Himself to him, so is it likely that you, if you are in advance of your brethren, will draw down opposition upon yourself which will be very bitter. Never mind if the servants repulse you! Go and tell their Master—do not go and grumble at them! Pray their Master to mend their manners. He knows how to do it!

But it is just possible that you have been driven out only in your own thoughts. Perhaps the members of the church really love you and esteem you, and think highly of you. But you have become so depressed in spirit that you do not feel that you have any right to be in the church. You

have made up your mind that you will not be a hypocrite and, therefore, you have given up all profession. You have a notion that some of your fellow members think evil of you and wonder how ever such an one as you can come to the church. Oh, the many poor little lambs that come bleating around me with their troubles! And when I tell them, "I never heard anything against you in my life! I never heard anybody speak of you but with love and respect. I never observed anything in you but tenderness of conscience and a quiet holy walk with God," they seem quite surprised!

Brethren, look after your fellow members—do not let them think you are cold to them. Some of them will think it whatever you may do. Some of you, Brothers and Sisters, are thought to be so proud that you will not look at people! If they did but know the truth, they would see that you are very different. Now, you lambs, do not be grieved about nothing. But you who are stronger than they, mind that you do not give any offense that can be prevented. It is impossible but that offenses will come, but "woe unto him through whom they come." Let us be careful not to break the bruised reed, even by accidentally treading upon it. But, dear Brother or Sister, if that is your condition, let me tell you that you are not driven out—it is quite a mistake. But if you think so—go to your Lord. If you will tell Jesus, He will make up for any apparent change that may come over His people.

Ah, but I think I hear one say, "It is not being driven out from the world that hurts me, nor being driven out from the Church. I could bear that—but I am driven out from the Lord, Himself! I seem to have lost His company and losing that I have lost all—

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

Thank God if you feel like that! If the world could fill your heart, it would prove that you are no child of God! But if the world cannot fill it, then Christ will come and fill it! If you will be satisfied with nothing but Him, He will satisfy you. If you are saying, "I will not be comforted till Jesus comforts me," you shall get the comfort you need. He never left a soul to perish that was looking to Him and longing for Him! Cry to Him, again, and this text shall be true to you, "I will gather the outcast." May that Word come home to some of you! I do not know where you may be, but the Master does—may He apply the promise to your hearts!

One other person is mentioned here—*the soul that is troubled*—"those whom I have afflicted." Yes, and in all Churches of God there are some dear, good friends that are more afflicted than others. They are often the best people. Are you surprised at that? Which vine does the gardener prune the most? That which bears the most and the sweetest fruit! He uses the knife most upon that because it will pay for pruning. Some of us seem scarcely to pay for pruning—we enjoy good health, but when trial comes, when the Lord prunes us, we may say—"Thank God! He means to do something with me after all!"

Perhaps this afflicted one is afflicted in body—scarcely a day without pain, scarcely a day without the prospect of more suffering. Well, if there is any child the mother is sure to remember, it is the sick one! And if there are any Christians to whom God is peculiarly familiar, they are His afflicted ones. “You will make all his bed in his sickness,” is said concerning a sick saint. The Lord makes your bed, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are suffering bodily pain!

Some are mentally afflicted. Much of the doubts and fears we hear about comes from some degree of mental aberration. The mental trouble may be very slight, but it is very common. I suppose that there is not a perfectly sane man among us. When that great wind blew, at the time of the Fall, a slate blew off everybody’s house—and some are more affected than others so that they take the black view of all things. This mental infirmity, for which they are not to be blamed, will probably be with them till they get to Heaven. Well, God blesses those who are thus troubled!

Then some are spiritually afflicted. Satan is permitted to try them very much. There is only one way to Heaven, but I find that there is a bit of the road that is newly stoned, a harder path to travel on, and some persons seem to go to Heaven all over the new stones—their soul is perpetually exercised—while God grants to others to choose the smoother parts of the way and go triumphantly on. Let those I have spoken of hear the Word of promise, “I will gather those whom I have afflicted,” for when God, Himself, gives the affliction, He will bring His servant through and glorify Himself thereby.

To close, let us regard this promise, “I will gather her,” as meaning, “I will gather My tried ones into the fellowship of the Church. I will bring My scattered sheep near to Me.” The Lord Jesus will gather His dear people into fellowship with Himself. “I will gather them every day around My Mercy Seat. I will gather them, by-and-by, on the other side of Jordan, on those verdant hilltops where the Lamb shall forever feed His flock and lead them to living fountains of waters.” Poor, tried, lame, afflicted, limping soul, the Shepherd has not forgotten you! He will gather all His sheep and they shall pass again under the hands of Him that counts them—there shall not be one missing! I cannot make out how some of my Brothers think that the Lord will lose some of His people—that there are some whom Jesus has bought with His blood who will get lost on the way to Heaven! It is an unhappy shepherd who finds some of his flock devoured by the wolf, but our Shepherd will never be in that strait with His sheep. He says, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” What do you say to that, you limping ones? What do you say to that, you, the last of all? He has given eternal life to you as much as to the strongest of the flock and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand! He will gather you with the rest of His sheep.

And when will He fulfill that promise, Beloved? He is always fulfilling it and He will completely fulfill it in the day when He is manifested. As this chapter describes Him, when He comes to make peace, and men beat their swords into plowshares, then will He gather you. Even now, when

He comes as the great Peace-Giver, He gathers those whom are lame. When the storms of temptation lie still, awhile, and He shows Himself in the heart as the God that walked the sea of Galilee of old, then are His people gathered into peace—they rest in that day. Thank God, the most tried and troubled Believer has some gleams of sunlight. In winter time, sometimes, you know there comes a day which looks like a summer's day when the gnats come out and think it is spring—and the birds begin to sing as if they thought that surely winter was over and past! In the darkest experience there are always some blessed gleams of light—just enough to keep the soul alive. That is in one measure the fulfillment of the promise, "I will assemble the lame...in that day."

But the day is coming when you and I who have been limping, feeble and weak, shall be gathered, never to limp, never to doubt and never to sin again! I do not know how long it may be. Some of you are a long way ahead of me, according to your years, but we cannot tell. The youngest of us may go soonest, for there are last that shall be first, and first that shall be last. But there is such a day written in the eternal decrees of God when we shall lay aside every tendency to sin, every tendency to doubt, every capacity for tribulation, every need for chastisement—and then we shall mount and soar away to the bright world of endless day! What a mercy it will be to find ourselves there! Oh, how we shall greet Jesus with joy and gladness and tell of redeeming Grace and dying love that brought Home even the limping ones and the weakest and the feeblest!

I think those that are reckoned strong and do the most for God are generally those who think themselves weakest when it comes to the stripping time. I read of a man who had been the means of the conversion of many hundreds of souls by personal private efforts—I refer to Harlan Page. On his dying bed he said, "They talk of me, but I am nothing, nothing, nothing." He mourned over his past life—to him it seemed that he had done nothing for his Master, that his life was a blank. He wept to think he had done so little for Christ while everyone was wondering how he had lived such a blessed and holy life! That man only is rich towards God who begins to know his emptiness and feels that he is less than nothing, and vanity.

Beloved, it is because those who serve God best often feel that they are lame, driven away, afflicted, and tossed with doubts and fears—it is because of this that this promise is put to the lowest case and the blessing given to the very meanest capacity! It is so in order that one who is strong may be able to come in, and when in depression of spirit say, "That promise will suit me! I will get a grip of it. I will come to God with it in my hands and at the Mercy Seat get it fulfilled to me, even to me." The Lord grant you, Beloved, to be numbered among His jewels in that day!

What shall I say to those who know nothing about the Divine Life at all, who, perhaps, are saying, "Well, we never get to limping or doubting. We have a merry time of it"? Yes and so does the butterfly, while the summer lasts, but the winter kills it. Your summer may last a little

while, but the chill of death will soon be on you—and then what is there for you but hopeless misery forever and forever? God give you Grace to fly to Jesus now and be saved with an everlasting salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MICAHA 4.**

Verse 1. *But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills and people shall flow unto it.* [See Sermon #249, Volume 5—A VISION OF THE LATTER DAY GLORIES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] God's cause and Kingdom shall not be hidden away in a corner—"the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains," an Alp upon other Alps, higher than all the other hills! The day is coming when the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be the most conspicuous thing in the whole world, "and people shall flow unto it." The heathen, the people who knew nothing about it, shall flow to it like a great river!

2. *And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.* That is the way the Grace of God works in us—He teaches and then we not only learn—but we obey.

2, 3. *For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off.* The Kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, shall attract people and nations that were far off from the holy city where He lived and died.

3. *And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.* They shall give up the study of the art of war. Their spirit shall be softened—in many cases renewed by Grace—and then they shall take to the useful arts. They shall not throw away their swords, but shall beat them into plowshares. They shall not hurl their spears into the earth, but shall bend them into scythes or pruning hooks. Oh, that the day were come when the wealth and ingenuity and power of nations were used in the pursuits of peace instead of in the arts of war! This is the tendency of the Kingdom of Christ, for wherever He comes, He makes peace. Nothing is more opposed to the spirit of Christianity than war—and when men are Christians, not in name only, but in deed and in truth—wars must cease.

4. *But they shall sit, every man under his vine and under his fig tree: and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of Hosts has spoken it.* The best evidence that this will be the case is that the Lord of Hosts, who has all power at His disposal, has said that it shall be so!

5. *For all people will walk, everyone in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.* When we learn to

know God in truth, we do not give Him up, but we walk in His name forever and ever. God's Covenant with us is an Everlasting Covenant, reaching beyond time and enduring throughout eternity. Some nations have discarded their idol gods, but those who really know and love the Lord will walk in His name forever and ever.

6. *In that day, says the LORD will I assemble the lame.* God will bring to Himself you that limp, that hesitate, that tremble, that fear—"I will assemble the lame."

6. *And I will gather the outcast.* Hunted by Satan and harassed by care. Frightened by depression of spirit. "I will gather the outcast"

6. *And those whom I have afflicted.* If God has laid His hand upon one of you so that you have a special affliction from Him you have this gracious promise that He will gather you to Himself!

7. *And I will make those who limped a remnant, and those who were cast far off, a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even forever.* Little scattered communities, Churches which have been weak and feeble, shall have the strengthening of God and they shall be, through His Sovereign Grace, a remnant saved by Grace to His praise and Glory! Note how everything here is done by God—you keep on reading, "I will," "I will," "I will." Oh, those blessed, "I wills" of God! Our wills are often defeated and disappointed, but God's, "I wills" stand fast forever!

8. *And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto you shall it come, even the first dominion; the Kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.* So it did. "Beginning at Jerusalem," was Christ's order concerning the preaching of the Gospel after His Resurrection. The first servants of Christ were of that ancient people who might be called the "tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion." Oh, that Christ would soon return in mercy to the—

***"Chosen seed of Israel's race,
A remnant weak and small"—***

and gather them to Himself, for that would be the fullness of the Gentiles, also!

9. *Now why do you cry out aloud? Is there no King in you? Is your Counselor perished?* Sometimes our prayers may be the utterance of our fears rather than of our faith—and then the question comes, "Is there no King in you? Is your Counselor perished?" Can we not trust to Him whose name is "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"?

10. *For pangs have taken you as a woman in travail.* They are sharp pangs, but they lead to life and, therefore, they are blessed pangs after all!

10. *Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shall you go forth out of the city and you shall dwell in the field, and you shall go even to Babylon: there shall you be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem you from the hand of your enemies.* It looks more like a threat than a promise that God would send His people to Babylon, but there they were to be delivered. And it oftentimes happens

with us that we must be brought into captivity before we are set free—we must feel the weight of the iron bondage of sin and Satan before we are brought out into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free!

11. *Now also many nations are gathered against you that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eyes look upon Zion.* All the enemies of Israel came together, hoping to destroy her. They saw that God had left her for a while in their hands, so they maliciously sought her destruction.

12. *But they know not the thoughts of the LORD.* They had their own thoughts and they thought that the Lord meant what they meant—the entire destruction of the chosen race! So the Prophet says, “But they know not the thoughts of the Lord”—

12. *Neither understand they His counsel: for He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.* God let them come together, great hosts of them, like the sheaves of wheat upon the threshing floor. Then see what the Lord says—

13. *Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs brass; and you shall beat in pieces many people.* She was to be like the ox that treads out the corn and she was to have horns of iron and hoofs of brass with which to break in pieces those that had oppressed her!

13. *And I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.* So that, when they expected to destroy her, she destroyed them! And there may come a day when all the great men and the wise men and the proud men of the world will come together to destroy the Church of Christ, but, oh, how mistaken they will be! For when their pride is at its height, then will the poor weak Church of Christ be suddenly strengthened by the Most High and she shall tread them under her feet and they shall be utterly defeated to the praise of the Glory of the God of Zion who lives forever and ever!

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

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

THE EVERLASTING COUNSELOR

NO. 3066

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

“Has your Counselor perished?”
Micah 4:9.

THIS question is addressed to the Church of God, for in the context it is written, “And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto you shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. Now why do you cry out aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your Counselor perished? For pangs have taken you as a woman in travail.” The poor Church of God had lost its way—it was doubting with regard to its direction. It knew not where to turn—to the right hand or to the left. In an agony of deep distraction, it bowed its head in fell dismay and thought that its King had disappeared and its Counselor perished. Forth comes the Prophet Micah, full of the Spirit, and addresses this question to the tried children of God, “Has your Counselor perished?”

We have before us a question implying three things. First, *a Doctrine*, namely, that our Counselor has not perished. Secondly, *a reproof*, for we sometimes act as if our Counselor had perished. And, thirdly, *an encouragement* for, however we may be situated and whatever may have perished—our Counselor has not perished.

I. First, then, here is A QUESTION IMPLYING A DOCTRINE, namely, the Doctrine that the Church of God has a Counselor and that that Counselor has not perished.

In olden times, the Lord’s people, whenever they were in a difficulty, could always find direction. Any man who doubted whether he should build his house, or whether he should go to war, or whether in any matter of his business he should do this or that, could at once receive instruction and advice by referring to the high priest who wore the ephod. And, being moved by the Spirit, the high priest spoke with his hand on the Urim and Thummim and gave an authoritative answer. Thus David told Abiathar to bring the ephod, and when he asked the Lord, “Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?” the Lord said, “They will deliver you up.” So in other critical periods of the history of the saints, you will find it recorded that they were constantly in the habit of going to the priest and seeking for direction. Some of us may bewail the loss of such priests. We may be thinking, “I know not which way to go. I have no direction, I have no means of obtaining guidance.” O Christian! Has your Counselor

perished? Ah, no! The Doctrine is assuredly taught us in Scripture that the Church of God still has an Infallible Guide!

There are some things, Beloved, in which we do not need a guide. Concerning morality, for instance, we need no other guide than that of the Sacred Volume. Wherever our course has two phases to it and the one is morally wrong and the other morally right, we have no need of a counselor. We only need, by the help of God's Spirit, to come to the Bible and we can always see which road to take. Whenever a thing is a sin, we need not appeal to Christ to know whether we shall commit it, for we are taught to avoid even the appearance of evil! If we consider that a thing is wrong, we have no right to do it, even though it might tend to our advantage in worldly affairs. We must not do evil that good may come, for if we were to do so, then indeed our damnation would be just! We have no occasion to ask whether we should go the road of sin or the road of righteousness. Is there not a sign clearly pointing, "This is the way"? When we see that it is the path which Christ has marked out, in which the holy Prophets have gone and that wherein Apostles followed, we know we ought to walk in it!

But the difficulty is when two things may be both right and we do not know which to choose—when there are two courses which seem to us to be indifferent as to moral propriety—when there is no Law against either and we can do as seems best to us without staining our profession as Christians, or forgetting to honor God in all our ways. We are in a great difficulty then. We know not what to do. We are resolved we will not commit a willful sin. Through Divine Grace we are determined that we will not sin to rid ourselves of our embarrassments, but we are in such a strait we do not know what to do. How are we to tell? Is there any means left in the Church of God whereby a distressed and entangled traveler on the road to Heaven may ascertain his way in the dubious paths of Providence, when it is left to his own choice?

We answer—Yes, there is. The Counselor has not perished. There are still appointed means whereby the members of the Church of Christ, individually, have found guidance. These means are not what some take them to be. For instance, they are not by casting lots. Mr. John Wesley very frequently cast lots to know what he should do. Now, I care not who it was that did so, it is all the same to me—it is tempting God. For a man to twist a piece of paper and say, "Black, I go. White, I stay," is tempting God's Providence. I remember a case that happened in the country when 12 jurymen were almost equally divided as to the guilt of a certain prisoner—and they had the impudence to appeal to God in the matter—and to toss up, "heads or tails," whether the person was innocent or guilty! They were Christians, too, and they thought they were appealing to God for they said that the lot was the end of contention. It is true that lots have been sanctioned in olden times. God has acknowledged lots and has blessed them, but we know of nothing to countenance lots now. We have no right to think we can appeal to God in such a manner! God by his Providence can direct it and no doubt He does. "The lot is cast into

the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” Still, God will take care that the direction will be such a painful one that we shall be chastised for our presumption in daring thus to appeal to Him. We do not believe in such things—“we have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place.”

Again, there are some persons who think they are counseled by God when they certainly are not. They will even come to their minister to ask his advice concerning things—when they have already made up their minds what they will do. We have heard a story of a good minister who was applied to by a young woman, to know what she should do in a certain matter. He could perceive full well that she had made up her mind, so he said, “Go outside and hear what the bells say.” The bells of course chimed in her ears, “Do it! Do it!” She went home and did it! A little while later, she found she had got into disgrace by doing it, so she came back to the minister and said, “Sir, you have advised me wrong.” “No, I did not,” said the minister. “You did not interpret the bells right—go and listen again.” She went outside and the bells said, “Never do it! Never do it!” There are many persons whom we might advise to listen to the bells, for they never seek counsel till they have made up their minds! They call it a guidance of Providence, whereas the truth is that they determine beforehand what they will do—and if our advice happens to suit them, they take it—but if not, they prefer their own opinion and give their inclination the benefit of a doubt.

Having thus exposed some of the fallacies in respect to guidance, you will ask me to tell you how our Counselor really does guide us. I will try to explain this to you briefly. There were two or three different manners whereby the Lord guided the children of Israel when they were passing through the wilderness which may serve to show us the methods of His counsel. One of them was the fiery cloudy pillar of His Providence. Another was the Ark of the Covenant which always went before them. Another was the advice of Hobab, the father-in-Law of Moses, who knew the best places to pitch the tents. And yet again they had the priest with Urim and Thummim who told them what they were to do. Each of these things has a spiritual meaning.

First of all, *the fiery cloudy pillar of God’s Providence is often a very precious guide to God’s people.* Beloved, there may be those among you who will not be able to understand my meaning and yet, if you live long enough, you will review with pleasure, in your old age, the Truth of God I am setting forth. Many a time when the night was dark, the hosts of Israel moved forward by the light of that pillar of fire. There was a necessity for them to proceed in one direction because there was no light in any other. So you will often find Providence going before you. Just now, you are in a dilemma. You are saying, “Which road shall I take?” Suddenly Providence stops one of the roads up. Well, you don’t need a guide, *then*, because there is only one road to go! You are saying, “Which of two situations shall I take?” One is taken by somebody else and there

is only one left—so that you have no alternative but to follow the cloud! Look at that pillar of Providence and you will find it will guide you better than anything else! Seek, when you're in difficulty and you know not what to do, to come before God and say to Him, "O Lord, show me by Your Providence what to do. Let events so turn out that I cannot avoid doing that which would be for the best. If there are two doors and I know not which is the proper one, shut one of them up, Lord, even though it should be the one I like best—and then I must go through the other—and so I shall be guided by Your Providence."

But instead of that, my Hearers, we often run before the cloud and, as the old Puritans had it, "They who ran before the cloud went on a fool's errand and they soon had to come back again." *Follow* the cloud, Beloved! Ask Providence to give you direction. You have not, perhaps, looked to God in the matter, to see His hand in Providence. Good Mr. Millet (of the Orphan Home) says, "In regard to placing out my children in situations for life. In regard to what servants I shall take into my house and whom I shall receive in my family, I always go and seek direction of God and exercise faith in His Word that, even in these little matters He will direct and guide me. And when I do so, I do not hear a voice from Heaven, but I hear something tantamount to it, in Providence, which teaches me that such-and-such a thing I ought to do, and that such-and-such a thing I ought not to do." Do not expect, Beloved, to hear voices, to see visions and to dream dreams, but rather look at Providence—see how God's wonder-working wheels turn round and, as the wheels turn, so do you! Whichever way His hand points, go there and thus God shall guide you, for your Counselor has not yet perished!

Again, there is not only the fiery cloudy pillar of Providence, but there is, next, *the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord resting in the Believer's heart which often guides him*. You know that the Ark is the type of Jesus, and Jesus often leads a Christian by His Holy Spirit immediately exercised upon the heart. Perhaps when you have read the lives of some eminent Quakers, you have laughed at what they conceived to be the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit "moving" them as they said, to go to certain places. Never laugh at that, Beloved. There is more in it than some of you imagine—some of you who are not moved by the Holy Spirit and who cannot understand it. Your nature is so hard and stubborn that you do not feel that gentle influence, that touch of God's hand moving you to do a thing. But it is not a fancy, mark you—they who know most of spiritual life will attest its reality. I myself, sometimes, (I speak honestly what I know. I testify what I have felt) have been moved to do certain things from altogether unaccountable reasons, not knowing in the least degree why I was to do them, or understanding why such things would be profitable. Perhaps a text has come forcibly to my mind and I have been obliged to take a certain course which I found, afterwards, was for the best.

I remember one incident which was a turning-point in my life and led me to this place. I had determined that I would enter a college. I had

made up my mind and resolved to see the principal. In fact, I had waited at his house some time to see him. But, by Divine Providence, though I waited in his house, he was shown into one room and I into another. He never knew that I was there and I never knew that he was there! So there we sat waiting for each other all the time—and I left without seeing him. I went home and the text came into my mind, “Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not.” Day after day, week after week, I could neither rest, sleep, nor do anything without those words ringing in my ears, “Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not.” And as I pondered them, I thought—I know what this means. I have been thinking of great things for myself, but I will no longer seek them. So I made up my mind the other way, and I said, “By God’s Grace, I will never go there.” Then I found rest for my spirit, by following God’s Word. I shall never doubt, as long as I live, that it was a Divine impulse—nor shall I ever cast away that thought from my mind. At any rate, it was such an impulse that my conscience could not be easy till I obeyed it. And you, Christians, who look at the inner life—you who live in much fellowship with God—will have Divine impulses. You will have Divine moving of the Holy Spirit. You will, at certain seasons, be moved to do a certain thing—and I beseech you, if you are so moved, however strange it may seem to yourselves, if you hear the whisper of the Spirit within you—go and do it at once!

There is a remarkable anecdote of an old Christian man who was stirred up, one night, to go to a certain house on a certain street. And though it was 15 miles away and it was eventide, he saddled his horse and rode with all haste to the place. He arrived at the city. The lamps were glistening and as he crossed the bridge, he paused at the sound of the river murmuring in his ears, as if to break the solemn stillness of the night. Still he felt a sacred impulse within him urging his steps forward till, at length he reached the street and the house. When he had arrived at the door and knocked, he waited a long time before there was an answer. Presently, down came a haggard-looking man who asked, “What are you after?” “Friend,” said he, “I am told to come and see you at this hour of the night. Why, I cannot tell. I know the Lord has some message for your soul.” The man started. “Bless God,” he said. “I had this halter around my neck five minutes ago to hang myself. Verily you were moved to come here.” Then he cast the rope aside and exclaimed, “Now I know that the Lord has not forgotten me, because He has sent His servant to deliver me out of the hand of the enemy.” If this is not a case of being moved by the Holy Spirit, I leave it to those who are so incredulous, or rather, so credulous in their unbelief, as to doubt it! There are such things, Beloved. They may not often happen in so remarkable a manner but, depend upon it, such things are occasionally experienced. The Counselor has not perished and He does speak to the heart! He does put Divine impulses there. He does move the soul. He does make us do things of which we would not have dreamed. And thus a strong necessity may be laid upon our circumstances, or it may be laid upon our will,

while our understanding is in either case kept in the dark, so that we are led in a way we think not, to prove that our Counselor has not perished!

But there was another mode of guidance. I told you that the children of Israel were guided by Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. He knew the places where to pitch their tents. He knew where the palm trees grew, he knew the shady side of the rock, he knew where the rippling rills flowed from beneath the rocky mountainside. He knew the best place of shelter from their foes. *Hobab guided them and he was a type of the Gospel ministry.* And those whom God has called to that honorable service will often be the means of guiding God's people. We have known many come to God's House seeking guidance and have heard them say that the minister described their case exactly. And they have gone away and said, "Although nobody could have told him about me, really, if I had told him all about myself, he could not have spoken more pointedly at me than he did." Have I not had hundreds of cases of that sort? Why, I have had letters written to me telling me not to be so personal, when I never knew anything whatever of the person who felt offended! What? Do any of you object to my being personal? As long as I live I will be personal to all of you! And if there is an error in any man's conduct, or judgment—by the help of God I will show him where he is wrong! Personal preaching is the best kind of preaching. We are not going to avoid personalities! We are striving to reach individual cases as much as possible, that every man may hear the Word of God in his own tongue—and hear it speaking to his own heart.

But how singularly, at times, you have heard your case described! You have gone to the House of God and sat down in the pew, and the minister has gone into the pulpit and taken a text just adapted to yourself. He begins to tell you what your exact position is and then he tells you the way you should go. You cannot help saying as you retire, "That man is a Prophet." Yes, and so he is, for as you will remember, I have often told you this is the way to find out a true servant of the Lord. Daniel was acknowledged to be a true servant of the Lord because he could tell the king both the dream and its interpretation. The astrologers could only tell the interpretation after they had been told the dream. Many can give you advice when they know your case, but the true servant of the Lord does not need to be informed about your case—he knows it beforehand. You come up here unobserved by your fellow creatures, but what you have done in your closet, that the Lord has told His servant! What you have done in your business, that He has revealed to him in secret communion and it will be made manifest to your conscience. He will tell you your dream and the interpretation of it, too! And you will say, "Verily, he is a servant of the Lord God of Israel." That is the way to tell a true Prophet of the Lord. And I beseech you believe no other. Do not go to the astrologer or the soothsayer who wishes to know your experience before he will open to you the future—but go where your experience is unfolded and where you have all your difficulties grappled with and removed! The Counselor has not perished! Though speaking not in visions, He still

leads His people by Providence, by Divine impulses on the mind and by a holy ministry which is the oracle of the most high and living God! Still does the gracious Counselor deign to counsel His people!

And the children of Israel were also guided in another way—when the priest inquired of the Lord by the Urim and Thummim. There is a sacred mystery about this, “of which we cannot now speak particularly.” Still, I doubt not that by this ordinance, God put a very high honor upon the priesthood and conferred a great privilege on His people. Now *the peculiar privilege of this dispensation* is not the Urim and Thummim—it is *the gift of the Holy Spirit*. This is the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ to all His disciples, to all who believe on His name! Ah, Beloved, you know not much of counsel and guidance if you have not yet received the Holy Spirit! Observe how it is written, “The anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you. But as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him.”

Do you ask me, “How does the Spirit of God guide us?” I answer, not by making fresh Revelations as the Swedenborgians pretend, but by shining upon the Word that has been revealed of old—and by shining in our hearts. So the Spirit witnesses with our spirits. So does He apply to us the promises. So does He open the Scriptures to our understanding and He opens our understanding to understand the Scriptures!

The blessed Spirit also makes intercession for us on earth even as Christ makes intercession for us in Heaven. Then He takes of the things of Jesus and shows them unto us. And He guides us by the old paths where we see the footprints of Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles and martyrs. Such is the Doctrine implied in the inquiry of my text, “Has your Counselor perished?”

II. Then, secondly, THIS QUESTION SUGGESTS A REPROOF—“Has your Counselor perished?”

It is a reproof because the child of God does not believe, doctrinally, that his Counselor has perished, but he does so practically. He at times runs of his own accord instead of waiting for the guidance of God. At other times he is afraid to move forward, even when the finger of Him who “is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,” has clearly pointed the way and made the vision so plain “that he may run that reads it.” How often does the child of God nurse his difficulties as Asaph did when he said, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.” But then he adds, “until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” O Beloved, remember how Habakkuk, in a time of danger, stood upon his watch and sat upon his tower to see what the Lord would say to him! Remember what Hezekiah did with the letter which he received from the hand of the messengers of Sennacherib, king of Assyria! When he had read it, “he went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord.” Alas, alas! That, your lives should be constantly vexed with trifling cares instead of “casting all your care upon

God.” The knowledge that “He cares for you” ought to drive all your anxious cares away!

One reason why many of us are slow to take counsel of the Lord is this—we *are not thoroughly emptied of our own conceits*. Let me remind you of that memorable passage in the history of the children of Israel when they came to Kadesh and were proceeding along the borders of Canaan. The spies were sent forth by Moses to bring in their report of the land. And of the twelve, only two brought in a cheering report. The other 10 discouraged the hearts of the people with a pitiful tale of walled cities and their giant population. In vain does Moses admonish them, “Dread not, neither be dismayed.” In vain does he assure them, “The Lord shall go before you, He shall fight for you.” In vain does he call to remembrance the wonders which the Lord had done in Egypt before their eyes! Faint-hearted and desponding in this thing, they did not believe the Lord their God!

Look again and you shall behold the counterpart. They were not more timid than they were presumptuous. The heart that is prone to resist is equally liable to presume. No sooner has the commandment been given to return into the wilderness than they gird on, every man, his weapons of war and go presumptuously up the hill to fight with the Amalekites and the Canaanites—and so they were smitten and fled before them. Who would imagine that the people who cringed at the mention of the sons of Anak yesterday, would dare to fly in the face of the Commandment of God on the morrow? With more humility they would have been braver men. Ah, Beloved! How closely we resemble those Israelites in measuring ourselves by ourselves! One day we feel so faint that we can attempt nothing for God. And another day our hearts beat so high that we could presume on anything! The young convert in particular will often complain that he is too weak in faith to pray—and then again he will boast that he feels so strong in faith that he could preach! The oldest of you have never yet learned the full meaning of these precious words, “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Ah, you may make a deal of ceremony about laying your great troubles before Him, but you do not seem to understand the length and breadth of “everything”—every little thing as well as every great thing! Paul could go into particulars and say, “Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do.” You seek counsel in foul weather but not when the sun shines. You consult the weather instead of watching “the cloud” to regulate your movements.

The reproof is intended to rebuke our folly as well as our sin. “Has your Counselor perished?” What would you think of a captain out at sea, near a coast where there are many rocks—as on the British coast which is exceedingly dangerous—if he should say, “Now, sailors, reef your sails. You must be kept still on the ocean, for there are so many rocks, we don’t know which way to go”? Imagine him as he walks up and down the deck in melancholy anxiety and says, “Sailors, we can’t go on. I don’t know which way to steer. I can’t tell what to do!” What would the sailors

say? “Sir, are all the pilots dead?” “No, they are not.” “Then run up a signal and fetch a pilot.” That is the way to steer through your difficulties but, very often, you are pacing up and down the deck and saying, “Oh, I shall never be able to steer through this narrow channel! I shall never be able to escape these dangers. I shall never be able to avoid that rock.” But run up the signal and fetch the Pilot! That is the way, for our Counselor has not perished. There is yet a Pilot on shore—He will see your signal and as sure as, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, you make known your requests unto God, He will guide you by His counsel—and afterward receive you to Glory!

But you often act as if you had no Counselor. You run to one friend and then to another friend and you ask their advice. But let me tell you that if you asked advice of the creature all day long, to however many different counselors you went, you would have as many different pieces of advice! We have heard of a man who, in order to test the doctors and ascertain whether they were true, wrote, I think, to 400 of them for a prescription, giving them all the same case. And I think he had 380 different prescriptions, many of them diametrically opposite to one another—and not above two of them at all like each other in the smallest degrees. Astonishing, is it not, that there should be such division? But there is equal division of opinion when you come to ask advice of your friends. One says, “I would do it.” *Another* says, “I would not do it.” Some of old said, “This is the blind man.” Others said, “He is like he.” There were those, again, who denied his identity. But there were some who said, “The best way is to go to the blind man himself.” And he said, “I am he.” It is the wisest plan to go to the Master and ask *Him*, instead of going to our fellow men! You may go round and round and round and take all the advice you like, but you will obtain no guidance, nor direction. Rather follow the example of the disciples who went to Jesus when they were in difficulties. He will guide you through the desert and bring you safely to Heaven.

“But,” says one, “how may I draw near to this great Counselor, for I am in deep distress?” Ah, then the question comes to you with full power as a reproof! Are you asking how you may find Him? What? Does He not abide with you? Do you not live with Him? Has your Counselor perished? Is He gone? Has He forgotten you? Or do you cease to remember Him—your Friend, your bosom Companion? Do you not hold to Him to walk with you and lodge with you? Do you not live in Him? Verily, this is a reproof to you, for you have lived as if your Counselor had perished! And if you ask, O Christian, how you may draw near, even to His seat, let me tell you there is the sacred ladder of prayer and faith up which you may climb, even to Heaven, and talk with Jesus! Let your difficulties be ever so great, go and tell them to your Lord!

You say, “Why, He knows them. There is no necessity for telling them to Him.” I would have you all, when you are in doubt, go and tell the Lord what you are in doubt about. Go and cross-examine yourselves in prayer. Draw out your confessions. Tell Him all your circumstances. Do not say,

“I need not utter them with my mouth, for He knows them”—but tell Him all about them! It will do you good and it will ease your aching hearts. God likes His people to make a clean breast of it. Speak it in plain English to God. Don’t go quoting human prayer-books, but breathe out the plaintive melody of your own sighs. Tell Him, “I am in such-and-such distress and I ask Your gracious guidance.” Don’t go around in circles, but go straight to the point. Tell Him what it is and when you have confessed your difficulty, the Lord will help you. Cast the anchor out and let the Pilot come on board. After that you may ship your anchor again and let the Almighty God of Jacob take the tiller, guide you over the stormy billows and land you in the haven of peace! The Counselor has not perished!

Here, then, is a reproof which may be often of use to us. When we observe the temper and the conduct of Christian people we frequently think them ill-advised, as if they had no Counselor. Why so timorous and so craven-hearted when duty calls? Why is zeal so wild and so little tempered with discretion? Why does adversity cast you down so much? Why does prosperity make you vaunt yourselves and behave so unseemly? The answer to such questions, I suppose, is not to be found in any wanton disrespect to the Word of God, or the statutes of His mouth, but you draw not near to the Lord as your Counselor—you hold not sweet fellowship with Him! You may spell over His ancient oracles with diligent care and yet, if you have no communion with your Counselor, if you order not your cause before Him and fill your mouth with arguments, then the reproof belongs to you, “Has your Counselor perished?” He is an ever-living Advocate! His secret is with them that fear Him. Our blessed Master did not leave His disciples like orphans, to shift for themselves. Why, then, should you perplex yourself with strange fears and forebodings? Why run here and there to one and another for advice? “Has your Counselor perished?”

III. Now, lastly, here is a word of comfort to the desponding. THE QUESTION IS INTENDED FOR ENCOURAGEMENT. “Has your Counselor perished?”

There are many things that have perished. There is one of you now lamenting the loss of a dear, pious father. And another is groaning over the corpse of a mother. The yet unburied body of a husband lies within your house. Or perhaps your dead child is yet unconfined and you have come here to seek some cordial for your griefs. Well, these have perished—objects of your sweet affection! As a dream they have passed away and lo, they are not! The place that knew them once shall know them no more. You may weep, Mourner, for Jesus wept! Yet you may not despair. If they are gone, your Counselor has not perished. You have lost some friends, but your Counselor is not dead. Some of the private soldiers are slain, but the General is alive! Some of the common people have fallen prey to a disease, but the Counselor still lives. If anyone had met poor Little-Faith and said to him, “Well, Little-Faith, you have been met by the robbers—what have you lost?” “Oh, he would have said,

“thank God! Thank God! Thank God!” “What for, Little-faith?” “Why, I have lost a great many things, but look here! I have not lost my jewels!” One of you goes home from business to your private house. As you go, you have to take a large bag with £500 in it. Going along, somebody comes behind you and steals your handkerchief. What do you say when you get home? “I did not like to lose the handkerchief, certainly, but never mind, the £500 are safe! I am glad they did not steal that.” So it is with you—some of your earthly comforts have been taken from you, but do not despair. “Has your Counselor perished?” “No, He has not. He is still my Counselor and He has not ceased to love me, nor has He ceased to live for me. His affection is not abated. His Grace is unchanged. His understanding is unsearchable. He knows the way that I take.”

But another says, “I have not lost my friends by death. I could almost wish I had. But, Sir, they have deserted me. I am a minister. I had deacons who stood by me once, but now they have turned their backs upon me. I had an affectionate church, but there are some who, like Diotrephes, have loved the pre-eminence and turned against me.” Is that your state, Brother? I can pity, if I cannot sympathize with your trouble. I have not felt the same, for my people love their pastor and gather round him in every possible way. But I can tell you this for your comfort, your Counselor has not perished! What though your principal supporter is determined that you should leave the place? What if your familiar friend with whom you went to the House of God in company has betrayed you? Your Counselor has not perished! I think again I hear a whisper from one who says, “I am not a minister, but I am engaged in seeking the welfare of my people. I had helpers once. I thought I was doing good, but one by one they have all left and I am left alone, faint and cheerless.” You may wish them back for they were good men, but console yourself with this thought—your Counselor is not gone and He is able to support you! We have heard of an ancient orator who, when he was speaking, had only one auditor. All who had come to listen at the commencement went away—but he still kept on with his oration. When he closed, the question was asked him, how he could keep on when there was only one person to hear him. “It is true,” he said, “I had only one auditor, but that auditor was Plato, and that was enough for me.” So, you may have only one Friend, but that one Friend is Jesus and He is enough—a host in Himself—“The Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God!” O deserted Soul, you who walk in solitary places—you who have neither friend nor helper—your Counselor has not perished!

And you sons of poverty, bereaved of your wealth. You children of indigence, bereft of all that you had. You whose health is weak and whose spirits are low and desponding—though you have lost wealth, health and friends—yes, though you are a total wreck now, there still remains one blessed reserve, “Has your Counselor perished?” No! Jesus lives! Write that down—Jesus lives! Then let every Believer in Jesus make his own application of that Truth of God! A great minister is dead, but Jesus lives! A kind friend is dead, but Jesus lives! My property is

gone, but Jesus lives! My comfort has failed, but Jesus lives! And because He lives—He, Himself, has said it—I shall live also. “Where I am, there shall also My servant be.” Then trust Him and give no quarter to fear or despondency. Your life is secure! He will preserve you!

O my Friends, my Friends, how much I mourn that there are some of you who are without a Guide! Oh, that I could picture that sad thought so that you might see your own unhappy case—without a Guide! See yonder desert? It is in the midst of Arabia. There are no trees, no shrubs, no cooling streams—nothing but the hot sky above and the burning sand beneath! And there is a man wandering there in awful solitude! Do you see him? He looks haggard, worn, forlorn. He is gazing on the ground to see if he can find a camel’s track, that he may follow it. He runs here and there seeking a path of escape, but he runs in vain! He turns round and round in a perpetual circle, while the fiery desert still encompasses him. Why does he wander thus? Because he has no guide! Watch him a while longer. He casts his eye around, but there is no hope. Deluded by the mirage for a moment, he thinks there are green plains around him, but alas, the vision mocks his hope! Stooping down to drink, he fills his mouth with hot sand. O Man! Why are you so foolish as to pursue the phantom? Because he has no guide! Watch him again. He lays himself upon the ground, the subject of despair. He groans and casts his eyes up at the death-bird wheeling in the air, expectant of his prey, for he has scented him from a distance and is come to devour him! Why does he not rouse himself? Because he has no guide!

And now he is dead, the vulture is upon him and his flesh is cleared away by the horrid bird. And as you go through the desert, there is nothing but a bleached skeleton to tell the harrowing tale. Why did that man die? Because he had no guide! And so shall the wicked perish! But the righteous “shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.”

God give you His Holy Spirit, that you may receive the instruction, listen to the reproof and enjoy the comforts of this Counsel evermore!

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

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

THE INCARNATION AND BIRTH OF CHRIST

NO. 57

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 23, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

“But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”
Micah 5:2

THIS is the season of the year when, whether we wish it or not, we are compelled to think of the birth of Christ. I hold it to be one of the greatest absurdities under Heaven to think that there is any religion in keeping Christmas day! There are no probabilities whatever that our Savior, Jesus Christ, was born on that day and the observance of it is purely of Popish origin. Doubtless those who are Catholics have a right to hallow it, but I do not see how consistent Protestants can account it in the least sacred! However, I wish there were ten or a dozen Christmas days in the year—for there is work enough in the world—and a little more rest would not hurt laboring people. Christmas is really a gift to us, particularly as it enables us to assemble round the family hearth and meet our friends once more. Still, although we do not fall exactly in the track of other people, I see no harm in thinking of the Incarnation and birth of the Lord Jesus. We do not wish to be classed with those—

*“Who with more care keep holiday
The wrong, than others the right way.”*

The old Puritans made a parade of *work* on Christmas day, just to show that they protested against the observance of it. But we believe they entered that protest so completely, that we are willing, as their descendants, to take the good accidentally conferred by the day and leave its superstitions to the superstitious!

To proceed at once to what we have to say to you, we notice, first, *who it was that sent Christ forth*. God the Father here speaks and says, “Out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel.” Secondly, *where did He come to at the time of His Incarnation*. Thirdly, *what did He come for*—“To be ruler in Israel.” Fourthly, *had He ever come before?* Yes, He had. “Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

I. First, then, WHO SENT JESUS CHRIST? The answer is returned to us by the words of the text. “Out of you,” says Jehovah, speaking by the mouth of Micah, “out of you shall He come forth unto Me.” It is a sweet thought that Jesus Christ did not come forth without His Father’s permission, authority, consent and assistance. He was sent of the Father that He might be the Savior of men. We are, alas, too apt to forget that

while there are distinctions as to the Persons in the Trinity, there are no distinctions of *honor*—and we do very frequently ascribe the honor of our salvation, or at least the depths of its mercy and the extremity of its benevolence, more to Jesus Christ than we do to the Father. This is a very great mistake! What if Jesus came? Did not His Father send Him? If He were made a Child, did not the Holy Spirit beget Him? If He spoke wondrously, did not His Father pour Grace into His lips that He might be an able minister of the New Covenant? If His Father did forsake Him when He drank the bitter cup of gall, did He not still love Him? And did He not, by-and-by, after three days, raise Him from the dead and at last receive Him up on high, leading captivity captive? Ah, Beloved, He who knows the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as he should know them, never sets One before Another! He is not more thankful to One than the Other, he sees them at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane and on Calvary all equally engaged in the work of salvation! “He shall come forth unto *Me*.” O Christian, have you put your confidence in the Man, Christ Jesus? Have you placed your reliance solely on Him? And are you united with Him? Then believe that you are united unto the God of Heaven, since to the Man, Christ Jesus, you are brother and hold closest fellowship! You are linked, thereby, with God the Eternal, and “the Ancient of Days” is your Father and your Friend! “He shall come forth unto *Me*.”

Did you never see the depth of love there was in the heart of Jehovah, when God the Father equipped His Son for the great enterprise of mercy? There had been a sad day in Heaven, once before, when Satan fell and dragged with him a third of the stars of Heaven and when the Son of God launching from His great right hand the Omnipotent thunders, dashed the rebellious crew to the pit of Perdition. But if we could conceive a grief in Heaven—that must have been a sadder day when the Son of the Most High left His Father’s bosom—where He had lain from before all worlds. “Go,” and the Father, “and Your Father’s blessing on Your head!” Then comes the unrobing. How do angels crowd around to see the Son of God take off His robes! He laid aside His crown, He said, “My Father, I am Lord over all, blessed forever. But I will lay My crown aside and be as mortal men are.” He strips Himself of His bright vest of Glory. “Father,” He said, “I will wear a robe of clay, just such as men wear.” Then He takes off all those jewels wherewith He was glorified. He lays aside His starry mantles and robes of light to dress Himself in the simple garments of the peasant of Galilee. What a solemn disrobing that must have been! And next, can you picture the dismissal? The angels attend the Savior through the streets, until they approach the doors. An angel cries, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors and let the King of Glory through!” Oh, I think the angels must have wept when they lost the Company of Jesus—when the Sun of Heaven bereaved them of all its light! But they went after Him. They descended with Him. And when His spirit entered into flesh and He became a Baby, He was attended by that mighty host of angels who, after they had been with Him

to Bethlehem's manger, and seen Him safely laid on His mother's breast—in their journey upwards appeared to the shepherds and told them that He was born King of the Jews! *The Father* sent Him! Contemplate that subject! Let your soul get hold of it and in every period of His life think that He suffered what the *Father* willed—that every step of His life was marked with the approval of the great I AM. Let every thought that you have of Jesus be also connected with the eternal, ever-blessed God, for, "He," says Jehovah, "shall come forth to Me." Who sent Him, then? The answer is His Father!

II. Now, secondly, WHERE DID HE COME TO? A word or two concerning Bethlehem. It seemed meet and right that our Savior should be born in Bethlehem and that, because of Bethlehem's history, Bethlehem's name and Bethlehem's position—*little in Judah*.

1. First, it seemed necessary that Christ should be born in Bethlehem *because of Bethlehem's history*. Dear to every Israelite was the little village of Bethlehem. Jerusalem might outshine it in splendor, for there stood the Temple, the glory of the whole earth and "beautiful for situation—the joy of the whole earth was Mount Zion." Yet around Bethlehem there clustered a number of incidents which always made it a pleasant resting place to every Jewish mind. Even the Christian cannot help loving Bethlehem! The first mention, I think, that we have of Bethlehem is a sorrowful one. There Rachel died. If you turn to the 35th Chapter of Genesis, you will find it said in the 16th verse—"And they journeyed from Bethel and there was but a little way to come to Ephratah. And Rachel travailed and she had hard labor. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not, you shall have this son, also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died), that she called his name Benoni. But his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephratah, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave, that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day." A singular incident, this—almost prophetic. Might not Mary have called her own son, Jesus, her Benoni, for He was to be the Child of Sorrow? Simeon said to her—"Yes a sword shall pierce through your own soul, also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." But while she might have called Him Benoni, what did God, His Father, call Him? Benjamin, the son of My right hand. Benoni was He as a Man. Benjamin as to His Godhead. This little incident seems to be almost a prophecy that Benoni—Benjamin, the Lord Jesus, should be born in Bethlehem!

But another woman makes this place celebrated. That woman's name was Naomi. There lived at Bethlehem in later days, when, perhaps, the stone that Jacob's fondness had raised had been covered with moss and its inscription obliterated, another woman named Naomi. She, too, was a daughter of joy and yet a daughter of bitterness. Naomi was a woman whom the Lord had loved and blessed, but she had to go to a strange land and she said, "Call me not Naomi, (pleasant), but let my name be

called Mara, (bitter), for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.” Yet was she not alone amid all her losses, for there cleaved unto her, Ruth, the Moabitess, whose Gentile blood would unite with the pure untainted stream of the Jew and should thus bring forth the Lord our Savior, the great King, both of Jews and Gentiles! That very beautiful Book of Ruth had all its scenery laid in Bethlehem! It was at Bethlehem that Ruth went forth to glean in the fields of Boaz. It was there that Boaz looked upon her and she bowed herself before her lord. It was there her marriage was celebrated. And in the streets of Bethlehem did Boaz and Ruth receive a blessing which made them fruitful, so that Boaz became the father of Obed and Obed the father of Jesse—and Jesse the father of David! That last fact gilds Bethlehem with glory—the fact that David was born there—the mighty hero who smote the Philistine giant, who led the discontented of his land away from the tyranny of their monarch and who, afterwards, by a full consent of a willing people, was crowned king of Israel and Judah! Bethlehem was a royal city because the kings were there brought forth! Little as Bethlehem was, it was much to be esteemed because it was like certain principalities which we have in Europe, which are celebrated for nothing but for bringing forth the consorts of the royal families of England! It was right, then, from history, that Bethlehem should be the birthplace of Christ!

2. But again—*there is something in the name of the place.* “Bethlehem Ephratah.” The word, *Bethlehem*, has a double meaning. It signifies, “the house of bread” *and*, “the house of war.” Ought not Jesus Christ to be born in “the house of bread”? He is the Bread of His people on which they feed! As our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, so do we live on Jesus here below! Famished by the world, we cannot feed on its shadows. Its husks may gratify the swinish taste of worldlings, for they are swine, but we need something more substantial. In that blessed Bread of Heaven, made of the bruised body of our Lord Jesus and baked in the furnace of His agonies, we find a blessed food! No food like Jesus to the desponding soul or to the strongest saint! The very meanest of the family of God goes to Bethlehem for his bread—and the strongest man, who eats strong meat, goes to Bethlehem for it, too. House of bread, where could our nourishment come from but you? We have tried Sinai, but on her rugged steeps there grow no fruits and her thorny heights yield no corn whereon we may feed. We have repaired, even, to Tabor, itself, where Christ was transfigured and yet there we have not been able to eat His flesh and drink His blood. But Bethlehem, House of Bread, rightly were you called, for there the Bread of Life was first handed down for man to eat!

But it is also called, “the house of war.” Because Christ is to a man, “the house of bread,” or else, “the house of war.” While He is food to the righteous, He causes war to the wicked, according to His own words—“think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am not come to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against

his father, the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Sinner, if you do not know Bethlehem as "the house of bread," it shall be to you a "house of war." If from the lips of Jesus you never drink sweet honey—if you are not like the bee, which sips sweet luscious liquor from the Rose of Sharon, then out of the same mouth there shall go forth against you a two-edged sword! And that mouth from which the *righteous* draw their bread, shall be to you the mouth of *destruction* and the cause of your ruin! Jesus of Bethlehem, house of bread and house of war, we trust we know You as our bread. Oh, that some who are now at war with You might hear in their hearts, as well as in their ears the song—

***"Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled."***

And now for that word, *Ephratah*. That was the old name of the place which the Jews retained and loved. The meaning of it is, "fruitfulness," or, "abundance." Ah, well was Jesus born in the house of fruitfulness, for where comes my fruitfulness and your fruitfulness, my Brothers and Sisters, but from Bethlehem? Our poor barren hearts never produced one fruit or flower till they were watered with the Savior's blood! It is His incarnation which fattens the soil of our hearts. There had been pricking thorns on all the ground—and mortal poisons, before He came—but our fruitfulness comes from Him. "I am like a green fir tree. From You is my fruit found." "All my springs are in You." If we are like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season, it is not because we were naturally fruitful, but because of the rivers of water by which we were planted. It is Jesus that makes us fruitful "If a man abides in Me," He says, "and My words abide in him, he shall bring forth much fruit." Glorious Bethlehem Ephratah! Rightly named! Fruitful house of bread—the house of abundant provision for the people of God!

3. We notice, next, *the position of Bethlehem*. It is said to be "little among the thousands of Judah." Why is this? Because Jesus Christ always goes among little ones. He was born in the little one "among the thousands of Judah." Not Bashan's high hill! Not on Hebron's royal mount! Not in Jerusalem's palaces, but in the humble, yet illustrious, village of Bethlehem! There is a passage in Zechariah which teaches us a lesson—it is said that the man on the red horse stood among the myrtle trees. Now the myrtle trees grow at the bottom of the hill—and the man on the red horse always rides there. He does not ride on the mountain-top. He rides among the humble in heart! "With this man will I dwell, says the Lord. With him who is of a humble and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word." There are some little ones here this morning—"little among the thousands of Judah." No one ever heard your name, did they? If you were buried and had your name on your tombstone, it would never be noticed. Those who pass by would say, "It is nothing to me. I never knew him." You do not know much of yourself, or think much of

yourself. You can scarcely read, perhaps. Or if you have some talents and ability, you are despised among men. Or, if you are not despised by them, you despise yourself! You are one of the little ones. Well, Christ is always born in Bethlehem among the little ones. Big hearts never get Christ inside of them! Christ lies not in great hearts, but in little ones. Mighty and proud spirits never have Jesus Christ, for He comes in at low doors. He will not come in at high ones. He who has a broken heart and a low spirit, shall have the Savior, but no one else. He heals not the prince and the king, but, “the broken in heart and He binds up their wounds.” Sweet thought! He is the Christ of the little ones! “You, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel.”

We cannot pass away from this without another thought here, which is, how “*wonderfully mysterious was that Providence which brought Jesus Christ’s mother to Bethlehem at the very time when she was to deliver!*” His parents were residing at Nazareth. And why should they need to travel at that time? Naturally they would have remained at home. It was not at all likely that His mother would have taken a journey to Bethlehem while in so peculiar a condition! But Caesar Augustus issues a decree that they are to be taxed. Very well, then, let them be taxed at Nazareth. No. It pleases him that they should all go to their city. But why should Caesar Augustus think of it just at that particular time? Simply because, while man devises his way, the king’s heart is in the hand of your Lord! Why, what a thousand chances—as the world has it—met together to bring about this event! First of all, Caesar quarreled with Herod. One of the Herods was deposed. Caesar says, “I shall tax Judea and make it a province, instead of having it for a separate kingdom.” Well, it must be done. But when is it to be done? This taxing, it is said, was first commenced when Cyreneus was governor. But why is the census to be taken at *that* particular period—suppose—December? Why not have had it last October? And why could not the people be taxed where they were living? Was not their money just as good, there, as anywhere else? It was Caesar’s whim, but it was God’s decree! Oh, we love the sublime Doctrine of Eternal Absolute Predestination! Some have doubted its being consistent with the free agency of man. We know well it is so and we never saw any difficulty in the subject. We believe metaphysicians have made difficulties. We see none, ourselves. It is for us to believe that man does as he pleases, yet notwithstanding, *he always does as God decrees*. If Judas betrays Christ, “thereunto he was appointed.” And if Pharaoh hardens his heart, yet, “for this purpose have I raised you up, to show forth My power in you.”

Man does as he wills, but God makes him do as he wills, too! No, not only is the will of man under the absolute Predestination of Jehovah—but all things, great or little, are of Him! Well has the good poet said, “Doubtless the sailing of a cloud has Providence as its pilot. Doubtless the root of an oak is gnarled for a special purpose, God compasses all

things, mantling the globe like air." There is nothing great or little that is not from Him. The summer dust moves in its orbit, guided by the same hand which rolls the stars along. The dewdrops have their father and trickle on the rose leaf as God bids them. Yes, the sear leaves of the forest, when hurled along by the tempest, have their allotted position where they shall fall, nor can they go beyond it. In the great and in the little, there is God—God in everything, working all things according to the counsel of His own will. And though man seeks to go against his Maker, yet he cannot. God has bound the sea with a barrier of sand and if the sea mounts up wave after wave, yet it shall not exceed its allotted channel. Everything is of God. And unto Him who guides the stars and wings sparrows, who rules planets and yet moves atoms, who speaks thunders and yet whispers zephyrs, unto Him be glory! For there is God in everything!

III. This brings us to the third point—WHY DID JESUS COME? He came to be "ruler in Israel." A very singular thing is this, that Jesus Christ was said to have been "born the King of the Jews." Very few have ever been, "*born king.*" Men are born *princes*, but they are seldom born kings. I do not think you can find an instance in history where any infant was born king. He was the prince of Wales, perhaps. But he had to wait a number of years—till his father died and then they manufactured him into a king by putting a crown on his head and a sacred chrism and other silly things. But he was not *born* a king! I remember no one who was born a king except Jesus. And there is emphatic meaning in that verse that we sing—

***"Born Your people to deliver
Born a Child, and yet a King."***

The moment that He came on earth, He was a king! He did not wait till His majority that He might take His empire—but as soon as His eyes greeted the sunshine, He was a king! From the moment that His little hands grasped anything, they grasped a scepter! As soon as His pulse beat and His blood began to flow, His heart beat royally and His pulse beat an imperial measure and His blood flowed in a kingly current! He was born a king. He came "to be ruler in Israel." "Ah," says one, "then He came in vain, for little did He exercise His rule—'He came unto His own and His own received Him not'—He came to Israel and He was not their ruler, but He was 'despised and rejected of men,' cast off by them all and forsaken by Israel, unto whom He came." Yes, but "They are not all Israel who are of Israel." Neither because they are the seed of Abraham shall they all be called such. Ah, no! He is not ruler of Israel after the *flesh*, but He is the ruler of Israel after the *spirit*! Many such have obeyed Him. Did not the Apostles bow before Him and acknowledge Him as their King? And now, does not Israel salute Him as their Ruler? Do not all the seed of Abraham after the spirit, even all the faithful, for He is "the father of the faithful," acknowledge that unto Christ belongs the shields of the mighty, for He is the King of the whole earth? Does He not rule over

Israel? Yes, verily He does, and those who are not ruled over by Christ are not of Israel. He came to be a ruler over Israel!

My Brother, have you submitted to the sway of Jesus? Is He ruler in your heart, or is He not? We may know Israel by this—Christ is come into their hearts, to be ruler over them. “Oh,” says one, “I do as I please. I was never in bondage to any man.” Ah, then you hate the rule of Christ! “Oh,” says another, “I submit myself to my minister, to my clergyman, or to my priest—and I think that what he tells me is enough, for he is my ruler.” Do you? Ah, poor slave, you know not your dignity—for nobody is your lawful ruler but the Lord Jesus Christ! “Yes,” says another, “I have professed His religion and I am His follower.” But does He rule in your hearts? Does He command your will? Does He guide your judgment? Do you ever seek counsel at His handling your difficulties? Are you desirous to honor Him and to put crowns upon His heads? Is He your ruler? If so, then you are one of Israel, for it is written, “He shall come to be ruler in Israel.” Blessed Lord Jesus! You are Ruler in Your people’s hearts and You always shall be! We want no other ruler save You and we will submit to none other! We are free, because we are the servants of Christ. We are at liberty because He is our ruler and we know no bondage and no slavery, because Jesus Christ, alone, is Monarch of our hearts! He came “to be ruler in Israel,” and mark you—that mission of His is not quite fulfilled, yet—and shall not be till the latter-day glories! In a little while you shall see Christ come again, to be Ruler over His people Israel and Ruler over them not only as *spiritual* Israel but even as natural Israel, for the Jews shall be restored to their land and the tribes of Jacob shall yet sing in the halls of their Temple! Unto God there shall yet again be offered Hebrew songs of praise and the heart of the unbelieving Jew shall be melted at the feet of the true Messiah! In a short time, He who at His birth was hailed King of the Jews by Easterns and at His death was written King of the Jews by a Western, shall be called King of the Jews everywhere—yes, King of the Jews and Gentiles, also—in that universal monarchy whose dominion shall be co-extensive with the habitable globe and whose duration shall be coeval with time itself! He came to be a Ruler in Israel and a Ruler most decidedly He shall be, when He shall gloriously reign among His people with His ancients!

IV. And now, the last thing is, DID JESUS CHRIST EVER COME BEFORE? We answer, yes. For our text says, “Whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.”

First, Christ has had His goings forth in His Godhead, “from everlasting.” He has not been a secret and a silent Person up to this moment. That new-born Child there has worked wonders long before now. That Infant slumbering in His mother’s arms is the Infant of today but it is the Ancient of eternity! That Child who is there has not made His appearance on the stage of this world—His name is not yet written in the calendar of the circumcised—but still though you wish it not, “His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.”

1. Of old He went forth as our Covenant Head in Election, “according as He has chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world”—

***“Christ be My first elect, He said,
Then chose our souls in Christ our Head.”***

2. He had goings forth for His people, as their Representative before the Throne of God even before they were begotten in the world! It was from everlasting that His mighty fingers grasped the pen, the stylus of ages and wrote His own name, the name of the eternal Son of God. It was from everlasting that He signed the compact with His Father that He would pay blood for blood, wound for wound, suffering for suffering, agony for agony and death for death on the behalf of His people! It was from everlasting that He gave Himself up, without a murmuring word, that from the crown of His head to the sole of His feet He might sweat blood, that He might be spit upon, pierced, mocked, torn asunder, suffer the pain of death and the agonies of the Cross! His goings forth as our Surety were from everlasting! Pause, my Soul, and wonder! You had goings forth in the Person of Jesus from everlasting! Not only when you were born into the world did Christ love you, but His delights were with the sons of men *before* there were any sons of men! Often did He think of them, from everlasting to everlasting He had set His affliction upon them. What? Believer, has He been so long about your salvation and will He not accomplish it? Has He from everlasting been going forth to save me and will He lose me, now? What? Has He had me in His hand as His precious jewel and will He now let me slip between His precious fingers? Did He choose me before the mountains were brought forth, or the channels of the deep scooped out and will He lose me now? Impossible!—

***“My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity cannot erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible Grace!”***

I am sure He would not love me so long and then leave off loving me. If He intended to be tired of me, He would have been tired of me long before now! If He had not loved me with a love as deep as Hell and as unutterable as the grave. If He had not given His whole heart to me, I am sure He would have turned from me long ago! He knew what I would be and He has had time enough to consider it—but I am His choice and that is the end of it. And unworthy as I am, it is not mine to grumble if He is contented with me. And He is contented with me—He must be contented with me—for He has known me long enough to know my faults! He knew me before I knew myself—yes, He knew me before I *was* myself! Long before my members were fashioned, they were written in His book, “when as yet there were none of them.” His eyes of affection were set on them. He knew how badly I would act towards Him and yet He has continued to love me—

***“His love in times past forbids me to think,
He’ll leave me, at last, in trouble to sink.”***

No! Since, “His goings forth were of old, from everlasting,” they will be, “to everlasting.”

Secondly, we believe that Christ *has come forth of old, even to men, so that men have beheld Him*. I will not stop to tell you that it was Jesus who walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, for His delights were with the sons of men. Nor will I detain you by pointing out all the various ways in which Christ came forth to His people in the form of the Angel of the Covenant, the Paschal Lamb, the Brazen Serpent, the Burning Bush and ten thousand types with which the sacred history is so replete! But I will rather point you to four occasions when Jesus Christ, our Lord, has appeared on earth as a Man, before His great Incarnation for our salvation. And, first, I beg to refer you to the 18th Chapter of Genesis, where Jesus Christ appeared to *Abraham*, of whom we read, “The Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. And he lifted up his eyes and looked and lo, three men stood by him. And when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door and bowed himself toward the ground.” But whom did he bow to? He said, “My Lord,” only to one of them. There was one Man between the other two, the most conspicuous for His Glory, for He was the God-Man, Christ Jesus. The other two were created angels who, for a time, had assumed the appearance of men. But this was the Man, Christ Jesus. “And he said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, pass not away, I pray You, from Your servant. Let a little water, I pray You, be fetched and wash Your feet and rest yourselves under the tree.” You will notice that this majestic Man, this glorious Person, stayed behind to talk with Abraham. In the 22nd verse it is said—“And the men turned their faces from there and went towards Sodom”—that is, two of them, as you will see in the next Chapter, “But Abraham stood yet before the Lord.” You will notice that this Man, the Lord, held sweet fellowship with Abraham and allowed Abraham to plead for the city He was about to destroy. He was in the positive form of Man—so that when He walked the streets of Judea it was not the first time that He was a Man—He was so before, in “the plain of Mamre, in the heat of the day.”

There is another instance—His appearing to *Jacob*, which you have recorded in the 32nd Chapter of Genesis and the 24th verse. All his family were gone, “And Jacob was left alone and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh. And the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with Him. And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, unless You bless me. And He said unto him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no more, Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince have you power with God.” This was a Man and yet God! “For as a prince have you power with God and with men and have prevailed.” And Jacob knew that this Man was God, for he says in the 30th verse—“for I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved.” Another instance

you will find in the Book of *Joshua*. When Joshua had crossed the narrow stream of Jordan and had entered the promised land and was about to drive out the Canaanites, lo, this mighty Man-God appeared to Joshua. In the 5th Chapter, at the 13th verse, we read—“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked and, behold, there stood a Man over against him with His sword drawn in His hand and Joshua went unto Him and, (like a brave warrior, as he was), said unto Him, Are You for us, or for our adversaries? And He said, No, but as Captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.” And Joshua saw at once that there was Divinity in Him—for Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship and said to Him, “What says *my LORD* unto His servant?” Now, if this had been a created angel, he would have reproved Joshua and said, “I am one of your fellow servants.” But no—“the Captain of the LORD’S host said unto Joshua, Loose your shoes from your feet; for the place whereon you stand is holy. And Joshua did so.”

Another remarkable instance is that recorded in the third Chapter of the Book of Daniel, where we read the account of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego being cast into the fiery furnace, which was so fierce that it destroyed the men who threw them in. Suddenly the king said to his counselors—“Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” How should Nebuchadnezzar know that? Only that there was something so noble and majestic in the way in which that wondrous Man bore Himself—and some awful influence about Him, who so marvelously broke the consuming teeth of that biting and devouring flame—so that it could not so much as singe the children of God! Nebuchadnezzar recognized His Humanity. He did not say, “I see three men and an angel,” but he said, “I see four positive men and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” You see, then, what is meant by His goings forth being “from everlasting.”

Observe for a moment, here, that each of these four great occurrences happened to the saints when they there engaged in very eminent duty, or when they were about to be engaged in it. Jesus Christ does not appear to His saints every day. He did not come to see Jacob till he was in affliction. He did not visit Joshua before he was about to be engaged in a righteous war. It is only in extraordinary seasons that Christ thus manifests Himself to His people. When Abraham interceded for Sodom, Jesus was with him, for one of the highest and noblest employments of a Christian is that of intercession. And it is when he is so engaged that he will be likely to obtain a sight of Christ. Jacob was engaged in wrestling and that is a part of a Christian’s duty to which some of you never did attain—consequently, you do not have many visits from Jesus. It was when Joshua was exercising bravery that the Lord met him. So with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—they were in the high places of persecution, on account of their adherence to duty, when He came to them and said, “I

will be with you, passing through the fire.” There are certain peculiar places we must enter to meet with the Lord. We must be in great trouble, like Jacob. We must be in great labor, like Joshua. We must have great intercessory faith, like Abraham. We must be firm in the performance of duty, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, or else we shall not know Him, “whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.” Or, if we know Him, we shall not be able to “comprehend with all the saints what is the height, depth, length and breadth of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.”

Sweet Lord Jesus! You whose goings forth were of old, even from everlasting, You have not yet left Your goings forth! Oh, that You would go forth this day to cheer the faint, to help the weary, to bind up our wounds, to comfort our distresses! Go forth, we beseech You, to conquer sinners, to subdue hard hearts—to break the iron gates of sinners’ lusts and cut the iron bars of their sins in pieces! O Jesus! Go forth, and when You go forth, come to me! Am I a hardened sinner? Come to me. I need You—

***“Oh, let Your Grace, my heart subdue—
I would be led in triumph, too!
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the honors of Your Word.”***

Poor Sinner! Christ has not yet left going forth. And when He goes forth, remember He goes to Bethlehem! Have you a Bethlehem in your heart? Are you little? He will yet go forth to you! Go home and seek Him by earnest prayer. If you have been made to weep on account of sin and think yourself too little to be noticed, go home, little one! Jesus comes to little ones. His goings forth were of old and He is going forth now! He will come to your poor old house. He will come to your poor wretched heart. He will come, though you are in poverty and clothed in rags—though you are destitute, tormented and afflicted—He will come, for His goings forth have been of old from everlasting! Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him! And He will go forth to abide in your heart forever!

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

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

OUR LORD'S TRANSCENDENT GREATNESS NO. 3382

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1913.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 2, 1866.

*"Now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth."
Micah 5:4.*

THERE can be no doubt but what the Prophet here spoke of the Messiah—of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not need to enter into any discussion of that subject here, but shall take it at once for granted that the passage means, "Now shall the Lord Jesus be great unto the ends of the earth." This does not mean that Jesus Christ will be any greater than He always is essentially and naturally. As the Son of God, He is Infinite in Glory and can be no greater. As King of kings and Lord of lords, His Glory fills immensity. Before Him all intelligent spirits that are obedient to God pay their constant homage. He is so great that as we look up to Him, we can both rejoice in Him as our Brother and be humbled in His Presence when we reflect that He is our God. Jesus Christ is not to be greater, then, essentially than He now is. He is "God over all, blessed forever." The greatness here spoken of is not one of essence, but of manifestation. Christ is to be made great in the judgment, hearts and understandings of men, as He is at all times really great in Himself. When we read in the text, "Now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth," we may remember that *He is already great in Heaven*. Albeit that man rejects Him—painful as the thought is that multitudes in this world have not even heard His name and that multitudes more only know it to revile it—yet there is a place where His name is great.

In every golden street that name is celebrated. The strings of every holy harp in Heaven are set to the melodies of His praise. All of "the melodious sonnets sung by angel hosts above" are to extol and magnify Him. They delight to do Him service. We may comfort ourselves with this thought when blasphemy abounds and the love of many grows cold. There is at least one shrine where He is always adored—one happier and better land where the sound of blasphemy never profanes Him—where He is loved, adored and revered by every creature!

And it is also sweet to remember that although Jesus Christ is not as yet great unto the ends of the earth, yet He is exceedingly *great in the hearts of the multitudes of His people*. When we meet here tonight, a comparatively little band, we are not the only worshippers of the Crucified. At this moment the sacred song is going up from tens of thousands of sincere hearts in this island. Across the Continent there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal, but who delight to join with angels and

archangels in singing the praises of Jesus. And far, far across the sea, men of our own kith and kin love Him as we do. No, no, where is there a place where the name of Jesus is not now known? As the wide sea is everywhere whitened with the sails of our commerce, so do these swift ships bear in them the servants of God!

The desert has been heard to ring with the songs of His praises! Adventurous missionaries have forced their way to what seemed to be impenetrable swamps and deserts that never could be trodden by the foot of man—and Jesus Christ's name has been made known—at least as a witness *against* the people, even where it has not been received by the people. Little is the Light of God, but we thank God we have some Light! Few there are that find the narrow road, but still, there is a goodly company who, as they march along, sing of Jesus—the way, the truth and the life! “The whole world lies in the Wicked One,” but, like an oasis in the midst of the desert, we can see the Christian Church! Like a handful of salt scattered over a mass of putridity, like here and there a lamp hung up in the thick darkness, God has a chosen people and in their hearts Jesus Christ is great—and shall be great in time and in eternity!

But the text does mean this, that throughout the whole world—north, south, east, and west—Jesus Christ shall yet be made great! We will speak of this tonight, first, *by showing that He deserves to be great*. Then by reminding you that *God has decreed that He shall be great*. Thirdly, by asking you, my Brothers and Sisters, *whether you do not also agree with that decree* and now, in His strength, *that you will make Him great*. And then I shall close by asking *whether there are not some here whose hearts, as yet unbowed to His dominion, shall tonight come and acknowledge His sway, that they also may feel and proclaim His greatness unto the ends of the earth*. In the first place, what a task I have undertaken in endeavoring to show that—

I. JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE MADE GREAT!

Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, it needs an angel to set forth the Person of the Lord Jesus, and yet an angel might fail, for an angel was never washed in the Savior's blood and never redeemed from wrath by Jesus the Substitute! What are my lips but poor, cold clay, and what are my words but air, and how shall I, then, set forth the Son of God, the Eternal One, “who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich”?

Does the world ring with the name of the *Conqueror*? It was but a few years ago that everywhere the name of Napoleon was dreaded and men trembled at the very thought of that mighty destroyer of the human race. Ah, well, if a conqueror's name always seems to have a spell about it which fascinates men with its glitter and its glare, I will say that Jesus is a greater Conqueror than all the Napoleons, or Alexanders, or Caesars who ever devastated the world, for He has overcome that which overcame them!

Kings as they were, they were often the victims of great sin. Alexander drowned himself in the bowl long before he died, for he was the slave of drunkenness. But Christ has fought with sin and overcome it, leading it

captive at His chariot wheels. Behold the conqueror, smitten in the breast by the skeleton hand, lies as motionless as the slave he slew! Death is the conqueror of conquerors, and casts noble dust upon the same grave as the poorest and most ignoble! But my Lord and Master has conquered death—

***“He, Hell in Hell laid low,
Made sin, He sin overthrew,
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death, by dying, slew.”***

My Master met Satan face to face and put His foot upon his neck. He met sin and trod it as men tread grapes in the winepress! He met Death, itself, the master of all, and rent the grave, rolled away the stone and proclaimed a Resurrection to the buried sons of men! This Conqueror is, and well does He deserve to be made great!

Some men who will not applaud a conqueror will sometimes speak well of a *deliverer*. I saw on the triumphal arch at Milan, at the far end of the Corso, a well-deserved encomium on the man who, whether with or without his own will, helped at first to snap the chains of Italy. There was a grateful recognition on the part of Italy of the deeds of Victor Emmanuel and of Louis Napoleon—and the horses of triumph on the top of the Arch of Victory seemed well placed as a tribute to one who had helped to set a nation free, which long had felt the tyrant's chain. It is said that when Macedonia was first set free, the Greeks were assembled at their games and they gave to him who freed Greece the name of “Sotea” or “Savior,” and the shouting was such that they said the birds fell dead, astonished! 'Twas an exaggeration, but I can understand the joy of a nation when a savior comes to deliver them from bondage! But what shouts shall be equal to the praises of the Son of God! The fetters He has broken are the fetters of your souls! The dungeons from which He delivers are the dungeons of eternal fire! The rescue that He brings you is not for this life, only, but for the life to come! As everlasting as the age of God is the deliverance which Jesus brings! Sound, sound His name abroad! Daughters of music, give Him your sweetest notes. Look, the triumphant Hero comes! Now let every heart give forth its glad peal of holy joy for all that He has done! He deserves to be great, both as Conqueror and as Deliverer!

In these more peaceful times, too, men are inclined to make those great who are *full of learning*. When a man has penetrated through the shell of ignorance and has gotten to the central core of knowledge, men say that he is great. We speak of a great geologist, a great mathematician, or a great astronomer. Men are proud of their fellow man when he has threaded the stars, walked with his staff above and become familiar with planet and with comet, as though they were his next of kin! But what shall I say of my Lord, for in Him dwells all “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”? To know Him is life and by His knowledge shall His righteous one justify many. If you get Christ, you get wisdom! His name is “wisdom.” Solomon, the wise one, called Him so. He is Wisdom

without faintest folly, Knowledge without mistake. Oh, let Him, then, be made great!

Great *discoverers, too*, are highly honored and valued. It was right of Her Majesty the Queen to confer knighthood upon those who had bound two lands together, moored two distant nations side by side, so that they could speak to each other in friendly terms. 'Twas well done, good Sirs, to make the depths of the sea a highway for human thought! But what has Jesus done? He has not merely linked England and America together, but Heaven and earth! He has thrown a connecting cable between the sinner, far off from God, and the Eternal One who, hating sin, was far off from man. Now, through Him we can speak with God and, through Him, God returns an answer to the message of our misery and the sigh of our grief! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, Christ has established a communication which is swifter than the telegraph! "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." He has bridged a gulf such as no human mind ever imagined could be bridged! As far as Hell is from Heaven was man from God—but Christ has bridged the chasm! The mountains of our sins are greater than a thousand Alps heaped on each other—and they stood between us and God—but the Cross has tunneled the mountains and there is now a highway for souls to come to God! Now shall He be great, indeed, if He gets His just deserts!

Men also, now-a-days, are wise enough to think those great *who show great generosity*. She is great who goes into the hospital, devoting the prime of her days to the relieving of human misery. He is truly great who, having acquired wealth, gives it with more than a princely hand to build habitations for the poor. He is great who, having won a nation, gives it up as freely as he won it and who lives unrestrained by the smiles or frowns of kings and is the true, though uncrowned, king, the world's hero, whom we all delight to honor! But oh, my Master, my Lord Jesus as much excels all these as the sun excels the stars! He gave not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but He gave Himself, His heart, His soul, His Deity! He gave such a jewel for us that if Heaven and earth were sold, they could not buy another like it! He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from iniquity! Speak of entering into hospitals? He came unto this great hospital—this huge leper house, the world—and He Himself took our infirmities, bore our sicknesses and by His stripes we are healed! Speak of the disinterestedness that has made men heroes from the mere love of their fellow men? What had Christ to gain? Oh, you lamps of Heaven, what had He to gain? Your splendor was enough for Him! What could He win but shame, disgrace, abuse, the spit on His face and the scourging on His shoulders?

It was for the love of His enemies, the love of those who hated and despised Him and nailed Him to the Cross—it was for this transcendent, unparalleled love that Christ came to earth! He deserves to be great and I am sure that if you do not think that Jesus Christ is great, it is because you do not know Him—

***"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too."***

There is no biography that has ever been written that is like that given us by the four Evangelists. There is no story of human sacrifice that can rival it, or that can be mentioned in the same breath! Oh, men, it was for you He lived! Oh, men, it was for you He died!

The angels love Him, though for them He laid not down His life—and shall men, alone, be dumb, or earth, alone, fast close her mouth and refuse to praise Him? The very stones, surely, would speak, if we did not say, “Now, shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”

Thus much upon a theme that defies our power to set forth fully. And now, in the second place, the text may be viewed as—

II. A SOLEMN PURPOSE AND DECREE ON THE PART OF GOD.

Christ shall be made great to the ends of the earth. There are idol-gods that are worshipped by the largest proportion of our race, but the idols He shall utterly abolish! The false prophets have more followers on earth than Christ has. There are more Muslims than Christians of all kinds. But the crescent of Mohamed must wane. The Papacy has still a firm hold upon the minds of millions, but, like a millstone which is hurled into the flood to rise no more, so must the anti-Christ of Rome be utterly cast away! Everything that stands in the place of Christ must be broken into a thousand shivers, for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet! Brothers and Sisters, the very signs of the times, as well as the Word of God, lead us to the comfortable belief that there should be a wider enlightenment of the human mind. It may be, certainly it may be, that the Lord will speedily come, but it does not seem to me at all likely that He will. We are to live anticipating His coming, as servants who know they will have to give an account when He does come. That is the practical bearing of the Doctrine upon our life, but there are many prophecies yet to be fulfilled which seem to show that He is not coming just now. I believe that there will be a gradual enlightenment of the human race. I see but little of it at present, but, still, He *must* be great unto the ends of the earth! Hard hearts will melt before the preaching of His Gospel. Perhaps they will melt suddenly. Perhaps a nation shall be born in a day. That preaching which now wins tens might, if God willed it, win hundreds, no, it might win thousands and hundreds of thousands! I have never seen any reason why, if God blesses half a dozen in the Tabernacle under a sermon, He should not bless the whole congregation! I do not see any reason why, if He blesses the preaching of the Word here, He should not bless it everywhere! No, I see a great many reasons why He should and I hope that He will—and that Pentecost will be outdone until we shall talk of that blessed day as being but a trifling beginning of a much greater result! Pentecost was only the feast of the first-fruits. It was not the harvest. The first-fruits were just one sheaf and, surely the harvest is to be much more than that! Let us, then, expect far greater things than even Pentecost knew!

We would not be surprised if news should come, long before these heads of ours sleep among the sweet clods of the valley, that there has been an awakening through Germany and France—that the Gospel has

spread all down the Apennines—that the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, has shaken Italy from end to end! That Turkey has submitted to the Cross! That the Euphrates has dried up its rebellion, that the multitudes of India have cast away Vishnu and Siva and bowed before Christ! That Confucius is no longer the great philosopher of China, but that the Man of Nazareth is the Teacher of millions in that strange people—that from Eastern Coast to Western—the people have set their faces towards Christ and desire to learn concerning Him! We may be living upon the threshold of mighty times. “There were giants upon the earth” in days gone by. There may be giants yet again and the Gospel which has crept along at a steady pace may yet take to itself its great power and, swift as the chariot of the sun, the light of Truth shall fly the whole world over! This, then, is God’s purpose and decree, “Now, shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”

I want, now, in the third place, to ask Christians here—

III. WHETHER, AS THIS IS GOD’S DECREE, IT HAS NOT OFTEN ALSO BEEN THE EXPRESSION OF OUR HEARTS?

When you and I were first converted, did we not say that we would make Him great? And we did try to do it. We began to talk to our friends. We got a handful of tracts and gave them away. We tried to get into a little cottage to speak about Christ and our resolve then was that, as far as ever our power would go, we would make Christ great to the ends of the earth! Ah, we have fallen very sadly short of those first days. I am afraid we have not kept up our first love, but I wish that every Christian here would go back to that first moment when he received his pardon and say, “Yes, I have been loved much and, having had much forgiven, in God’s name, I will love Him much in return. And as far as I can, I will make His name great.”

Since that period we have had some very happy seasons. I know that in this very House of Prayer we have sometimes felt that we could stay here forever. It has been like Heaven below to us, and then we have said, “Oh, what will I not give Him? I will consecrate my substance. I will use my tongue, my mind, my hands—I will do anything for Him—He has loved me so much that I cannot help talking about it! I will make my children and all my family know what a precious Savior He is.” Oh, I wish that we had come to this and that we not only said it, now and then, but that it was our prayer night and day and the one comfort of our hearts! Beloved, there are some of us who can say before God, the Heart-Searching One, that the one thing we care about is to make Jesus Christ great. I have sometimes prayed from this platform a prayer which has made some of you wonder when I have asked that, if the crushing of me might lift Christ one inch higher, it might be done at once. Well, it is my daily feeling. I thank God that if it would more honor Him to cast me where He wills, if I might but be permitted to love Him and He will but love me, the thing may be done and He shall have all the praise! While Mr. Tennant was being greatly helped of God in preaching, it came to pass on a certain Sunday that a sermon which he had very carefully prepared suddenly went from his mind and, instead of preaching, he was

compelled to be silent. It was a painfully humbling thing for him, but it was the means of the conversion of one of his hearers, who said, "Then I am to understand that as Mr. Tennant preaches so mightily sometimes to the people, but could not preach on this occasion, he must have been helped of God before—and so it has been God that has spoken to me." This thought pricked the man to the heart. Oh, it were a good thing to be made a shame, a blessed thing to be a butt, a jest, a jeer, a byword—if Christ were but lifted up thereby!

When Sir Walter Raleigh laid down his cloak and covered the mire for Queen Elizabeth's sake, it was, I fear, but a courtier's trick. But for Christians to be willing to lose their reputations and even their very lives to make Christ glorious—this is the only truly Christian way of living! God forbid that we should ever think about sparing or pampering self. I saw a good Christian Brother last Friday, whom God has greatly blessed. But, when working in a very bad part of London, he used to be constantly teased by abominable stories which were made up against him. I said to Him, "I see you have got something that no Evangelist can afford to have." "What is that?" he said. "Why," was the reply, "you have got a good reputation and you must get rid of it for Christ's sake. That is to say, live a holy life and then let men call you 'devil' if they like. Let them lay every sin to your charge, but never heed them, never speak nor fight for yourself, but speak and fight for your Master! Contend for Him and think it to be your honor and your glory to become a butt, an outcast and as the offscouring of all things if Jehovah-Jesus may but wear the crown—and you can win but one single soul to Jesus Christ forever."

I think, then, that we are all agreed upon this point. We mean, God helping us, to hold fast to this and to do what we can that Jesus Christ may be great unto the ends of the earth!

And now we can spend only two or three minutes in asking the question—

IV. ARE THERE NOT SOME HERE TONIGHT IN WHOM JESUS CHRIST MAY BE MADE GREAT?

Now, you good people who have never done anything wrong and who have got a very good righteousness of your own—I do not ask you to glorify Christ—because you cannot! If I wanted to praise up some doctor and said, "Now, here he is—he can cure all diseases! Will you come and help him to get a name?" I would know that you who were not sick could not help him, but the man who was most sick would be the very one that would get the doctor the best name if he could cure him! So when Christ's name is to be lifted up and we want to preach Him so that He may be extolled, you who feel your guilt are the very men who can help us! Supposing now, Jesus Christ should take the drunk and wash out his mouth and make a sober man of him—and a Christian—would not that make Christ to be exalted? And ah, if there should be, even here, a woman of an evil and vicious life, and Christ should change her so as to make her chaste and honorable—oh, how great it would make Him to become! And if some black villain has crept in here and one who has said of him—

self that there is no hope of his being converted and no mercy possible for him—supposing he should find pardon and peace by believing in Jesus? And then suppose he become a preacher of His Gospel—would that not make Christ's name to be made great? John Newton was once the vilest of the vile and oh, it made London wonder when the African blasphemer stood up in the pulpit of the church of St. Mary, Woolnooth, to preach the Christ and the Cross which he had so blasphemed! And oh, may God make London wonder yet again by taking some of the worst of the worst, and saving them, and making them proclaimers of the Gospel of His Grace! Why should He not do it? He has often done it. Are you willing and anxious that He should do it again? Then cry to Him and He will do it!

Perhaps there is one here who has been a backslider. Ah, Backslider, you can make Christ's name great if you come back to Him! Mr. Whitfield's brother had once been a very sad backslider. He had gone far, far from the way of Christ. At last his conscience was pricked and he fell into despair. Sitting at tea one day with the Countess of Huntingdon, he said to the Countess, "I know what you have said is very proper, and I believe in the infinite mercy and goodness of God, but I do not believe in its application to me, for I am a lost man." The Countess put down the tea and said, "I am glad to hear it, Mr. Whitfield! I am glad to hear it!" "Madam," he said, "I did not think you would rejoice and glory in a thing so terrible as that!" "I am glad to hear you say you are lost, Mr. Whitfield," she said, "for it is written that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost." His eyes sparkled and he said, "I thank God for that text, and for the extraordinary power with which it has now come into my heart." He died that night and God had just sent him the word of peace in time to gather him into the fold. Why should not many of you who are lost glorify the name of Christ by trusting Him, for He came to seek and to save the lost?

Andrew Fuller was once preaching in Scotland and there was a wicked, abandoned woman, whose life had been given up to all sorts of filthiness. She noticed that the church was very full and that many people were standing outside. So she asked what was doing. They told her that an Englishman was preaching. She desired to hear him—she pressed into the crowd, as some of you may have done tonight—and Mr. Fuller just then used this blessed expression, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." "Oh," said the woman, "is there an invitation to the ends of the earth? Surely I am one of the ends of the earth!" She looked, according to the gracious command, and Christ got a good name in that Scottish parish through her being so wondrously saved! Oh, I wish He could be great to some of you who are in the ends of the earth! I feel as if I could give my eyes, both of them, if Christ could but be great with some of you!

The devil has been great with you. He has had his bit in your mouth. He has ridden you, and will yet ride you down to Hell! Will you never kick against him? Oh, that Christ might come and lay hold upon your bridle

and say, "You shall go no further," so turning you into a new course and making you willing in the day of His power!

Last of all, there may be one here who has been an infidel. If there is, I only hope that he will yet come to make Christ's name great. I remember hearing that Mr. John Cooke, of Maidenhead, was once blessed to the conversion of a man when he was preaching upon the unpardonable sin. In the town where he preached there was a young man who was a member of a club which was very common some 50 years ago, but now happily, I hope, extinct, called, "The Hell-Fire Club."

The object of the club was to meet once or twice a week and each member of the club was to invent some new oath or be fined. The young man went to hear Mr. Cooke only with the design of picking up some new religious phrase that he might turn into a fresh blasphemy and so delight the unhappy men with whom he was accustomed to meet at the public-house.

The subject was, as I have said, the unpardonable sin. And Mr. Cooke showed what that sin was *not*, and who had *not* committed it—and the man found, as he listened, that he was one of those who had not committed it. He went home and fell, bathed in tears, before God, to think that he had gone so far, but had not been permitted to go quite as far as the unpardonable sin! That man became a Christian and a useful servant of the Lord Jesus. I will be bound to say that "The Hell-Fire Club" began to feel that Jesus Christ's name was great! I wish that some of you who are practically Hell-Fire men and women might become Heaven's men and women and become so tonight! Oh, it would be a fine thing if you went home and your wife should find you saying—instead of cursing and swearing—"I think we must pray." How struck she would be! There is a good woman here now with her husband—I think they are both to be received into fellowship tonight—and what a happy time it was for her—though even she then knew little or nothing about Christ—when one night, as they were going to bed, her husband knelt down and prayed! She had never heard such a thing before, but after a little while she thought she had better pray, too. You cannot do better, good woman, when the Lord blesses your husband, than to try to get a blessing, too. They could not long pray in quiet—and soon she asked how it had all come about—and so she learned that it came to pass that God had met with the husband. Oh, I wish He would meet with some of you! He has, in His love, turned many a lion into a lamb, and many a raven into a dove.

Let us all pray this short prayer—

***"Oh, Sovereign Grace, my heart subdue,
I would be led in triumph, too!
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the triumph of His Word."***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 12.**

Verse 1. *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.* This is that woman of whom the promise runs, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." John saw this in a vision in the heavenly places. He saw the Church of God, enthroned, made glorious, clothed with the sun, having the brightness of Divine Light about her, with all that is variable, changeable as the moon under her feet, and upon her head the crown "that her Lord had given her"—twelve Patriarchs, twelve Prophets, twelve Apostles, a complete number of glorious lights kindled from Heaven!

2. *And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.* That Child that is born of her, that Seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent's head is first, Christ, and then all the first-born, of whom He is the great Representative.

3, 4. *And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her Child as soon as it was born.* The spirit of evil in the heavenlies fighting with the power of light and goodness and Grace, a mysterious being with great power, high intelligence, seven heads, ten horns, and having mighty influence over multitudes of men, so that there were seven crowns upon his seven heads. "And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." The crocodile, which, I suppose, was the earthly figure from which John's dream sprang, has great force in its tail and Satan, doubtless of old, drew from heaven a number of its stars—other angels fell with him. And there are times in the heavens of the Church when the ministers fall—they seem to go in companies. Those who should be lights for God are into darkness and become teachers of heresy. "He did cast them down to the earth." They lost their brightness, they betrayed their earthly origin. "And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her Child as soon as it was born." Remember how he sought to slay Jesus and the like is the case of all the man-children born unto God, who will be of service in the Kingdom of God. The main attack of the dragon was against the Child—the main attack of the power of evil is against Christ and everything Christly. If he could destroy the Gospel, he would not care about the Church one whit—the woman might go if the Man-Child could be destroyed.

5. *And she brought forth a Man-Child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her Child was caught up unto God, and to His Throne.* That is the brief history of the birth of Christ and of His going from us. He "was caught up unto God, and to His Throne." God will take care of the great principle of truth. If it cannot have a refuge on earth, He will find it a refuge in Heaven.

6. *And the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.* The church of God was long in obscurity. You can

hardly find it among the Albigenses and Waldenses. It was hidden away among the mountains. The Wycliffites, the Lollards and others held fast the Truth of God, but history scarcely records their names. The woman was in the wilderness, hidden away for many a day. "And there was war in heaven." You are not to think of "heaven" as a place, but among the heavenlies. John, in a vision, saw the great contending powers of evil. He was like the Prophet when he saw a mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire.

7, 8. *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in Heaven.* You remember how our Lord, who is the true Michael, the only great Archangel, said at the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel, "I beheld Satan as lightning falling from Heaven." His power among the heavenlies is gone! He was cast out of the place called Heaven. So is he now, by the preaching of the Gospel, and by the death of Christ, cast down from among the heavenly influences.

9. *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.* This was done in the olden time as a matter of fact. It is done continually, spiritually, as Christ is lifted up and His Gospel gets the victory.

10. *And I heard a loud voice saying in Heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.* Always at it, this Prince of Evil pretending to goodness, and daring to bring accusations against the Holy One of God. But he is not permitted, now, to stand in the court—he is hurled from his high place. He used his place with a desperate pertinacity of malice, accusing the brethren day and night.

11, 12. *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time.* "Therefore rejoice you heavens, and you that dwell in them." Let great joy be in the hearts of all spiritual beings, whether angels or men, for Satan is cast down from among them! But the battle is not over—the scene of it is only transferred from the heavenlies to the earthly. "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath because he knows that he has but a short time." We may expect him to rage more and more as the time of his destruction comes nearer and nearer. He is like a bad tenant—he will damage the house out of which he is to be ejected. But he is to be ejected! And let God be glorified for it!

13. *And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the Man-Child.* He had changed

his place, but he did not change his nature—and so he still perseveres in his attack upon God.

14, 15. *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.* Read history and see what fierce and brutal persecutions were used like floods against the Gospel of Christ!

16. *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.* It is poor help that the earth can give, and yet God has overruled to make it useful. The kings and the powers of this world have for their own reasons sometimes protected the Church. It was so in Luther's day. The jealousy that was felt of the influence of the Court of Rome politically tended to the preservation of Luther and those round about him, so that the Gospel was not destroyed. "The earth helped the woman," and we may expect that even those political disasters, which we often dread, will all tend that way. How often has priestly arrogance been put to the blush even for political reasons! We have nothing to do with that, but still we can see how God can overrule. It is always amiss when a woman begins to help the earth—she has nothing to do with that—let the Church leave the State alone. But sometimes it happens that in the political Providence of God the earth helps the woman.

17. *And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have testimony of Jesus Christ.* "And the dragon was angry with the woman." If ever you meet with a church of God which the devil likes, it is good for nothing! But if it is a true Church of God—if it holds the Truths of God and if it walks in holiness, it will always be true! "And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed." He had destroyed many already with that flood of persecution and he kept on a battle with the remnant of her seed, "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Into the deep mysteries of this passage I have not attempted to go, but have simply skimmed the surface. God bless the reading to us.

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

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

CHRIST IS GLORIOUS—LET US MAKE HIM KNOWN NO. 560

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 20, 1864.
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the
majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they shall abide:
for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”
Micah 5:4.*

You have a very vivid idea of the sufferings of Christ. Your faith has seen Him sweating great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane. You have looked on with amazement while He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them who plucked off the hair and He hid not His face from shame and spitting. With sorrowful sympathy you have followed Him through the streets of Jerusalem, weeping and bewailing Him with the women. You have sat down to watch Him when He was fastened to the tree. You have wept at His bitter complaint—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And you have rejoiced in His shout of victory—“It is finished!”

With Magdalene and Nicodemus you have followed His dead body to the tomb and seen it wrapped about with spices and left to its lonely sleep. Are your perceptions quite as keen concerning the Glory which did follow and is following? Can you see Him quite as distinctly when on the third morn the Conqueror rises, bursting the bonds of death with which He could not be held? Can you as clearly view Him ascending up on high, leading captivity captive? Can you hear the ring of angelic clarions, as with dyed garments from Bozrah, the Victor returns from the battle, dragging Death and Hell at His chariot wheels?

Do you plainly perceive Him as He takes His seat at the right hand of the Father, from this time forth expecting until His enemies be made His footstool? And can you be as clear this morning about the reigning Christ as you have been about the suffering Christ? Lo, my Brethren, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the Book and to loose the seven seals!” At this hour He goes forth, riding upon His white horse, conquering and to conquer. Lo, at His girdle swing the keys of Heaven and Death and Hell, for “the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

“God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” Behold Him, my Brethren, in His present plenitude of Glory and endeavor to get as clear a perception of it as you have had of His shame. Not only weep at His burial, but rejoice at His Resurrection! Not only sorrow at His Cross, but worship at His Throne! Do not merely think of the nails and of the spear, but behold the imperial purple which hangs so nobly upon His royal shoulders and of the Divine crown which He wears upon His majestic brow!

I want to conduct you in such a frame of mind through the glories of my text. First, bidding you observe the perpetual reign of Christ—"He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God" Then I shall beg you to observe that flowing from this is the perpetual continuance of His Church—"and they shall abide." And then proceeding both from His continued reign and from the Church's consequent perpetual existence comes the greatness of our King—"for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth."

I. At the outset, observe carefully THE PERPETUAL REIGN OF CHRIST. He lives, He reigns, He is King over His people. Notice first that His reign is shepherd-like in its nature. The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but our Master washed His disciples' feet. Earthly monarchs are often tyrants. Their yoke is heavy and their language domineering. But it is not so with our King. His yoke is easy and His burden is light, for He is meek and lowly of heart. He is a Shepherd-King.

He has supremacy, but it is the superiority of a wise and tender Shepherd over His needy and loving flock. He commands and receives obedience, but it is the *willing* obedience of the well-cared-for sheep, rendered joyfully to their beloved Shepherd, whose voice they know so well. He rules by the force of love and the energy of goodness. His power lies not in imperious threats, but in imperial loving kindness. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King, for "men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed." Never people had such a king before!

His service is perfect freedom! To be His subject is to be a king! To serve Him is to reign! Blessed are the people who are the sheep of His pasture. If they follow in His footsteps their road is safe. If they sleep at His feet no lion can disturb their peace. If they are fed from His hands they shall lie down in green pastures and lack nothing. If they abide close to His Person they shall drink rivers of delight. Righteousness and peace are the stability of His Throne. Joy and gladness are the ornaments of His reign. Oh, how happy are we who belong to such a Prince! You King in Jesurun, we pay You homage with loyal hearts. We come into Your Presence with thanksgiving, and into Your courts with praise, for You are our God and we are, by Your Grace, the people of Your pasture and the sheep of Your hands!

Notice that the reign of Jesus is practical in its character. It is said, "He shall stand and feed." The great Head of the Church is actively engaged in providing for His people. He does not sit down upon the Throne in empty state, or hold a scepter without wielding it in government. No, He stands and feeds. The expression "feed," in the original is like an analogous one in the Greek, which means to shepherdize, to do everything expected of a shepherd—to guide, to watch, to preserve, to tend as well as to feed.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, is always actively engaged for the Church's good. Through Him the Spirit of God constantly descends upon the members of the Church. By Him ministers are given in due season and all Church officers in their proper place. When He ascended up on high He received gifts for men. "And He gave some, Apostles. And some Prophets. And some Evangelists. And some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for

the edifying of the body of Christ.” Our Lord does not close His eyes to the state of His Church.

Beloved, He is not a listless spectator of our wants. He is, this day, standing and feeding His people. They are scattered, I know—wide as the poles asunder—but our mighty Shepherd can see every sheep and lamb of His flock and He gives them all their portion of meat in due season. He it is that like a mighty breaker, goes forth at the head of His flock and they follow where He clears the way, “He shall stand and feed.” Oh, blessed carefulness and Divine activity of our gracious King! Always fighting against our enemies and at the same the shedding His kind and gracious influences upon His friends.

Consider again, for it is in our text, that this active reign is continual in its duration. It is said, “He shall stand and feed,” not, “He shall feed now and then and then leave His position.” Not, “He shall one day grant a revival, and then the next day leave His Church to barrenness.” Beloved, there is no such pastor as Christ. “I know My sheep,” He can say, in a very high and peculiar sense. He knows them through and through. He feels with them. In all their afflictions He is afflicted—He is one with them eternally. There is no such wakeful watchman as the Lord Jesus. Is it not written, “I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day.” Those eyes never slumber and those hands never rest! That heart never ceases to beat with love, and those shoulders are never weary of carrying His people’s burdens.

The Church may go through her dark ages, but Christ is with her in the midnight. She may pass through her fiery furnace, but Christ is in the midst of the flames with her. Her whole history through—wherever you find the Church—there you find the Church’s Lord. The Head is never severed from the body, nor is the watchful care of this gracious Husband towards His spouse suspended for an instant. I beseech you, labor to realize the noble picture! Here are His sheep in these pastures this morning and here is our great Shepherd with the crown upon His head, standing and feeding us all. No, not us all alone, but dispensing His tender mercies to all the multitudes of His elect throughout the whole world!

He is at this moment King in Zion, ruling and overruling, present everywhere and everywhere showing Himself strong in the defense of His saints. I would that our Churches could be more influenced by a belief in the abiding power, Presence and pre-eminence of their living and reigning Lord! He is no dead King whose memory we are bid to embalm, but a living Leader and Commander whose behests we must *obey*, whose honor we must *defend*. Do not fail to discern that the empire of Christ in His Church is effectually powerful in its action—“He shall feed in the strength of Jehovah.”

“Wherever Christ is, there is God. And whatever Christ does is the act of the Most High. Oh, it is a joyful Truth to consider that He who redeemed us was none other than God Himself! He who led our captivity captive was Jehovah-Jesus! He who stands today representing the interests of His people is very God of very God! He who has sworn that every one of His people whom He has redeemed by blood shall be brought safe to His Father’s right hand, is Himself, essential Deity!

O my Brethren, we rest upon a sure foundation when we build upon the Incarnate God. And O you saints of God, the interests of each one of

you and of the one great Church must be safe because our champion is God! Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King! He will save us! How can He fail or be discouraged? When He makes bare His arm, who shall stand against Him? Let us rehearse the mighty deeds of the Lord and tell of His wonders of old. Remember how He got victory upon Pharaoh and the pride of Egypt? Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?" Ten plagues of terrible majesty taught the boaster that the Lord was not to be despised and the humbled tyrant bade the people go their way.

With a high hand and an outstretched arm did the Lord bring forth His people from the house of bondage. When the proud high stomach of Egypt's king again rose against the Most High, the Lord knew how to lay His adversary lower than the dust. I think I see the hosts of Mizraim with their horses and their chariots hurrying after the Lord's fugitives! Their mouths are foaming with rage. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My lust shall be satisfied upon them."

See how they ride in all their pompous glory, swallowing the earth in their fury! O Israel, where shall be your defense? How shall you escape from your tyrannical master? Be still, O seed of Jacob! Sons of Abraham rest patiently, for these Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see no more forever. With their horses and their chariots the fierce enemy descended into the depths of the sea, but the Lord looked upon them and troubled them. "You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." "The depths have covered them. They sank into the bottom like a stone."

"Let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." Surely it shall be so at the last with Jesus our King and all His saints. We also shall sing "the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb," in that day when the arch-enemy shall be overthrown and the hosts of evil shall be consumed and they who hate the Lord shall become as the fat of rams. Into smoke shall they consume, yes, into smoke shall they consume away.

One other word remains—our Lord's kingdom is most majestic in its aspect. You will observe it is written by the Prophet—"He shall feed in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God." Jesus Christ is greatly to be revered. The familiarity with which we approach Him is always to be tempered with the deepest and most reverent adoration. He is our Brother, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, but still He counts it not robbery to be equal with God. I know He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant, and He calls Himself today our Husband and makes us to be members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

But yet we must never forget that it is written, "Let all the angels of God worship Him," and, "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Yes, Christ is majestic in His Church. I would, Brethren, we always thought of this. There is a Glory and a majesty about all the Laws of Christ and all His commands, so that whether we baptize at His command, or break bread in remembrance of Him, or lift up His Cross in ministry—in whatever we do in His name, which is in fact, what *He* does

through *us*—there is an attendant majesty which should make our minds feel perpetually reverent before Him.

O that the world could see the Glory of Christ in the Church! O that the world did but know who it is that is in the midst of the few, the feeble, the weak, the foolish as they call them. O Philistia! If you did but know who is our Champion, your Goliath of Gath would soon hide his diminished head! O Assyria, if you did but know that the ancient might of Him who smote Sennacherib still abides with us, your hosts would turn their backs and yield us an easy victory! There is a true and mysterious Presence of Christ with His people, according to the promise, “Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

It is because the world ignores this that she despises and sneers at the Church of God. There is our comfort and our glory—we have a majesty about us, if we are the people of God, which is not to be denied. Angels see it and wonder—a majesty of indwelling Godhead—for the Lord is in the midst of us for a Glory and around us for a defense.

II. We will now occupy one or two minutes with THE CONSEQUENT PERPETUITY OF THE CHURCH. Because of the unseen but most certain Presence of Christ as King in the midst of His people, His Church ABIDES—so says the text. Here reflect first, that a Church exists. What a wonder is this! It is, perhaps, the greatest miracle of all ages that God has a Church in the world! You who are conversant with human history will hear me out when I say that the whole history of the Church is a series of miracles—a long stream of wonders!

A little spark kindled in the midst of oceans and yet all her boisterous waves cannot quench it! Here is the great wonder which John saw in vision and which history reveals in solemn, sober fact. A woman, “being with child, cried, travailing in birth and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in Heaven. And behold a great red dragon... stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.” The Man-Child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron was brought forth and caught up to God and to His Throne.

As for the woman, the Church, she fled as on eagles’ wings to her wilderness shelter prepared of God, until, in great wrath, the dragon pursued and persecuted her. Apt enough is that metaphor, “The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the dragon was angry with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the Commandments of God and have the Testimony of Jesus Christ.” Yet, my Brethren, as surely as that glorious Man-Child, the Lord Jesus, lives and sits upon the Throne, so surely shall the woman, the poor afflicted Church, live on until the dragon’s time is over, and the King shall reign upon the earth!

To what trials, my Brethren, has not the Church of God been subjected? What new invention can Satan bring forth? The fire, the rack, imprisonment, banishment, confiscation, slander—all these have been tried—and in them all the Church has been more than conqueror through Him who loved her. False doctrine without, heresy and schism within! Hypocrisy, formalism, fanaticism, pretences of high spirituality, worldliness—these have all done their worst. I marvel at the wondrous ingenuity

of the great enemy of the Church, but I think his devices must nearly have come to an end. Can he invent anything further?

We have been astounded in these ages by the prodigy of an infidel bishop! We have been struck dumb with sorrow and amazement at a decree which declares that a Church professing to be a Church of Christ must permit men to be her ministers who deny the Inspiration of Holy Scripture! This is a new thing under the sun. Popery and infidelity are to be both legalized and fostered in a Church professing to be Christian and Protestant! What next? And what next? But what of all this? The Church, I mean the company of the Lord's called and faithful and chosen, still exists. The Lord has His elect people who still hold forth the Word of Truth and in the most reprobate Church still He may say, "I have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments. And they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy."

Observe, the text says, "she abides," which means not that she exists now and then by starts and spasms, but she exists *always*. This is wonderful! Always a Church! When the full force of the Pagan Emperors came like a thundering avalanche upon her, she shook off the stupendous load as a man shakes the flakes of snow from his garment and she lived on uninjured. When papal Rome vented its malice yet more furiously and ingeniously—when cruel murderers hunted the saints among the Alps—or worried them in the low country. When Albigenses and Waldenses poured out their blood in rivers and dyed the snow with crimson, she lived still and never was in a healthier state than when she was immersed in her own gore!

When after a partial reformation in this country the pretenders to religion determined that the truly spiritual should be harried out of the land—God's Church did not sleep or suspend her career of life or service. Let the Covenant signed in blood witness to the vigor of the persecuted saints. Harken to her Psalm amidst the brown heath-clad hills of Scotland and her prayer in the secret conventicles of England. Hear the voices of Cargill and Cameron thundering among the mountains against a false king and an apostate people! Hear the testimony of Bunyan and his compeers who would sooner rot in dungeons than bow the knee to Baal!

Ask me "Where is the Church?" and I can find her at any and every period from the day when first in the upper room the Holy Spirit came down even until now. In one unbroken line our Apostolic succession runs—not through the Church of Rome—not from the superstitious hands of priest-made popes, or king-created bishops, (what a varnished lie is the apostolic succession of those who boast so proudly of it)! But through the blood of good men and true, who never forsook the testimony of Jesus—through the loins of true pastors, laborious evangelists, faithful martyrs and honorable men of God—we trace our pedigree up to the fishermen of Galilee and glory that we perpetuate, by God's Grace, that true and faithful Church of the living God, in whom Christ did abide and will abide until the world's crash.

Observe, dear Friends, that in the use of the term, "Abide," we have not only existence and continued existence, but the idea of quiet, calm, uninjured duration. It does not say she lingers, hunted, tempted, worried—but she *abides*. Oh, the calmness of the Church of God under the attacks of her most malicious foes! You cruel adversary, the virgin daughter of Zion

has shaken her head at you and laughed you to scorn! She abides in peace when the world rages against her. It is most noteworthy how in most instances the Church of God still keeps her foothold where she has been most savagely persecuted.

In modern times we find in Madagascar, after years of exterminating persecution, the Church of God rises from her ashes like the phoenix from the flames. The chief wonder is that she abides perfect. Not one of God's elect has gone back! Not one of the blood-bought has denied the faith. Not one single soul which ever was effectually called can be made to deny Christ, even though his flesh should be pulled from his bones by hot pincers, or his tormented body flung to the jaws of wild beasts. All that the enemy has done has been of no avail against the Church. The old rock has been washed and washed and washed again by stormy waves and submerged a thousand times in the floods of tempest, but even her angles and corners abide unaltered and unalterable!

We may say of the Lord's tabernacle, not one of the stakes there has been removed, nor one of her cords been broken. The House of the Lord, from foundation to pinnacle, is perfect still—"The rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell not." No, nor a single stone of it, "for it was founded upon a Rock." But why all this, dear Friends? Why is it that we have seen the Church endure to this day? How is it that we are confident that even should worse times arrive, the Church would weather the storm and abide till moons shall cease to wax and wane? Why this security?

Only because Christ is in the midst of her! You do not believe, I hope, in the preservation of orthodoxy by legal instruments and trust deeds. This is what too many Dissenters have relied upon. We certainly cannot depend upon creeds. They are good enough in their way, as trust deeds are, too, but they are as broken reeds if we *rely* upon them. We cannot depend upon Parliament, nor kings, nor queens. We may draw up the most express and distinct form of doctrine, but we shall find that the next generation will depart from the Truth of God unless God shall be pleased to give it renewed Grace from on high.

You cannot, by Presbytery, or Independency, or Episcopacy, secure the life of the Church—I find the Church of God has existed under an Episcopacy—a form of government not without its virtues and its faults. I find the Church of God flourish under a Presbytery and decay under it, too. I know it can be successful under an Independent form of Church government and can decline into Arianism quite as easily. The fact is that *forms of government* have very little to do with the vital principle of the Church! The reason why the Church of God exists is not her ecclesiastical regulations, her organization, her formularies, her ministers, or her creeds—but the Presence of the Lord in the midst of her!

And while Christ lives and Christ reigns and stands and feeds His Church, she is safe. But if He were once gone, it would be with her as it is with you and with me when the Spirit of God has departed from us—we are weak as other men and she would be quite as powerless.

III. But now, thirdly, flowing from both these, from the perpetual Presence of Christ and from the continued existence of His Church, is THE GREATNESS OF OUR KING. "Now shall He be great unto the ends of the

earth.” “Christ is great in His Church.” Oh, how great in our hearts where He reigns supreme! My heart, it does leap at the sound of His name—

***“Jesus, the very thought of You,
With rapture fills my breast.”***

O for crowns! For golden crowns! Let us crown Him King in Zion! O for a well-tuned harp and for David’s feet, to dance before the ark at the very mention of Jesus’ name! Now shall He be great, indeed, in our hearts! But He is to be great to the ends of the earth. That is a promise of which we will say it is accomplished in a measure even now. Christ is made great till the conversion of every sinner. When the suppliant penitent cries, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and the peace-speaking blood comes dropping upon the troubled conscience and the soul bows meekly to accept the finished righteousness, then is Christ great! And He is great in the consecration of every one of His blood-bought saints—when they live for Him. When in their prayers they make mention of Him. When they give Him their heart’s music, their life’s light and their lips’ testimony.

When they feel that tribulation is joyous if endured for Him and the sternest toil a dear delight when undertaken for His sake—then Christ is great. Think, my Brothers and Sisters, this morning, how many ships are now furrowing the blue sea in which there are hearts which love the name of Jesus. Hark! Across the waves of the Atlantic and the Pacific I hear the sound of prayer and praise from many a vessel bearing the British flag. From many an islet of the sea the song is borne upon the breeze. And there across the waters in the land of our American Brethren, now so sadly chastened with war, multitudes of hearts beat as high as ours at the mention of the Savior’s name!

Here across yon narrow Channel, in Holland, in Sweden, in Germany, in Switzerland and even in France and Italy, how many own His name and praise Him this day! We speak of our Queen’s dominions and say that the sun never sets upon them. We may in truth say this of our Lord Jesus—men of all colors trust in His blood. They who look upward to the southern cross and they who follow the Polar star alike worship His dear name. And when England ceases her strain of joy, in the hush of night, Australia takes up the song and so from land to land and from shore to shore, a sacrifice of a pure offering is brought to His shrine! It is accomplished, in some degree, but oh, how small the degree when we think of the thick darkness which covers the multitude of the people.

Again, it is a promise which is guaranteed as to its fulfillment in the fullest sense. Courage! Brethren, courage! The night is not forever, the morning comes! Watchman, what do you say? Are there not streaks reddening the east? Has not the God of Day, the Lord Jesus, began to shoot His Divine arrows of light upwards into the thick darkness? It is even so. As I think of the signs of the times, I would fondly hope that we shall live to see brighter and better days. “Now,” says the text, “shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”

Prophet, I would that your “now” were true this day! Now, even now, let Him reign! Why does He tarry? Why are His chariots so long in coming? Will it be, my Brethren, that Christ will come before the world is converted? If so, welcome, Jesus! Or will the world be converted first? If so, thrice welcome the mercy! But whether or not, this we do know, He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river even unto the ends of the earth. They who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His

enemies shall lick the dust. The day shall come when the fifth great monarchy shall be co-extensive with the world's bounds and everywhere the Great Shepherd shall reign.

But remember, dear Friends, that while this promise is thus *guaranteed* as to its fulfillment, it is to be *prayed* for as to its accomplishment. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Ezek. 36:37). The mountain of the Lord shall be in the latter days, but mark you, though there is no sound of trowel or a hammer, there will be heard the sound of prayer and praise, as upward the mountain of God's House shall ascend!

You know the picture. The Prophet had seen the Lord's House standing, as it were, in a valley and as he looked upon it, presently it became a little hill. The ground began to heave and by-and-by it had swollen from a little hill into a lofty mountain and up it rose and grew more great before his eyes, till Alps were dwarfed and Himalayas were stunted and up it still went—not the House only—but the mountain, too, till infinitely higher than the projected tower of Babel, which man meant to be the world's center! This House stood out clear and sharp above the clouds, having pinnacles high up in God's Heaven and yet deep foundations in man's earth and all nations began to flow to it as to the great center.

What a dream! What a vision! Yet such shall it be. The Church is, as it were, in a plain just now—she begins to move. Oh, stupendous movement! She begins to rise, her mountains swell and grow. She attracts observers. She cannot be held down. Who can attempt to restrain the swelling mass? Who shall prevent the gigantic birth? Up rises the mountain, as though swollen by some inward fire—and up it swells and swells and swells—till Earth touches Heaven and God communes with men. Then shall be heard the great hallelujah! The Tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them!

But then, and this is the conclusion, and I hope God may help me to press it on your hearts. All this is to be labored for as well as prayed after. My soul pants and pines to see Christ glorious in the eyes of men. Lives there a Christian here with soul so dead that he does not desire the extension of his Master's kingdom? Sirs, is there one among you who counts it little to see Jesus Christ lifted up in men's hearts? I know I speak to a people—and the Lord knows it—to many of whom Christ is the dearest of all which is beloved, the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Now, if Christ is to be glorified, He must be glorified by *you*. If His kingdom is to come, it must come through *you*.

God works, but God works by *means*. He works in you "to will and to do of His own good pleasure." Souls are to be saved, but they are not saved without *instruments*. The feast is to be furnished with guests, but you are to go into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in. I know my Master is to have many crowns, but they are to be crowns for which you race and which you have fought—which you have won through His Divine Grace—and you place at His feet that He may honor you by wearing them upon His brow.

Now we, as a people, have been greatly blessed and helped of God and I believe the Master has a very high claim upon us. We, above all the Churches in the world, are indebted to the Grace and mercy of God and we ought to be doing something for the extension of the Savior's kingdom.

We cannot boast of wealth. We cannot profess to build all over London a multitude of Churches as the Bishop hopes to do. Any scheme of raising three millions of money by us must be looked upon as being entirely a dream. We cannot attempt such a thing.

If London is to be converted by *money* we must give up the task. We have no mitred bishops, no queens to subscribe and no nobles and dukes and the like to add their thousands and their tens of thousands of pounds. We are a feeble folk. What, then, can we do for God? Why, do as much as the strong! What can we do for God? Do as much as the mighty! No, my Brethren, our very weakness and want of power shall be our adaptation to God's work! And He who often puts by the sword of Saul and the armor of the son of Kish will use David and his sling and his stone and strike Goliath's brow.

I have been musing all this week upon that celebrated scene in ancient history which seems to me to be so much like the state of our Church just now. The story of Gideon, the son of Joash, threshing wheat in the winepress, because he was afraid to be seen. The Midianites having spoiled the land. Now we, as Baptists, have generally been too much afraid to be seen. We have threshed our corn somewhere away in the winepress—up a back court—down a narrow street. Any dirty hole would do to build a Chapel in—so long as people could not find it—the site was thought advantageous.

And if nobody could ever see it that was the place for our fathers and for some who still linger among us. It was threshing wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the enemy. Well now, I think the time has come that we should not be afraid of these Midianites any longer. Long has the Church of God been oppressed and kept back. She has been content to let the world devour her increase. There have been few additions to the Churches. They remain very much what they were twenty or thirty years ago.

But, my Brethren, some of us think that we have seen our fleece wet with dew, while all around was dry. And we believe the Lord has said to us, "The Lord is with you, you mighty men of valor." We think we have had the Lord's commission, "Go in this, your strength." We do not expect all of you to go with us, for the people are too many. We expect that there are many of the trembling and faint-hearted who will step back from the battle—men who are took ill for their families, and must provide for them. Men who are saving up money and grudge their sovereigns and so on—these, of course, will stand back and so let them—such men encumber our march.

We fear that you are not all men who lap. But we have a few who care very little for the ease and repose of life and who snatch a hasty draught as they run and with heat and zeal and passionate earnestness run to meet the adversary. Now *these* we expect to go with us to the fray. In the name of the Lord, I proclaim a new crusade against the sin and vice of this huge city! What are we to do? The hosts of Midian are to be counted by millions. Here in this great city we have three millions of people and what if I were to say, two-and-half millions of them do not know their right hand from their left in matters of religion?

I believe I should speak too charitably—for if I could believe there were half a million true Believers in London, I should have vastly greater hopes

of it than I have now. But, alas, that is not the case. Millions—millions are gathered in the Valley of Indecision who are not upon the Lord's side! What can you and I do? We can do *nothing* of ourselves, but we can do *everything* by the help of our God. Where Christ is, there is might and where God is, there is strength! Let us, therefore, in God's name, determine to plant new Churches wherever openings occur. Like Gideon's men let us rally under our Church officers and follow where a warm heart leads the way.

Gideon took his men and bade them do two things—covering up a torch in an earthen pitcher, he bade them, at an appointed signal, break the pitcher and let the light shine and then sound with their trumpets, crying, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon! The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" This is just what all Christians must do. First, you must shine! Break the pitcher which conceals you! Throw aside the bushel which has been hiding your candle, and shine! Let your light shine before men! Let your good works be such that when men look upon you, they shall know that you have been with Jesus! There is much good done by the shining.

Then there must be the *sound*—the blowing of the trumpet. O dear Friends, the great mass of London will never hear the Gospel unless you go and blow the trumpet in their ears! Many who are members of this Church never heard a Gospel sermon until they heard some of you preaching in the street. "Why," said one, "I never went to a place of worship. But I went down a street and there stood a young man at the corner. I listened to him and God was pleased to send the arrow to my conscience and I came into the House of God afterwards."

Take the Gospel to them! Carry it to their door! Put it in their path! Do not suffer them to escape it! Blow the trumpet right against their ears! In the name of God, I pray you do this! Remember that the true war cry of the Church is Gideon's war cry, "The sword of the Lord!" *God* must do it. It is *God's* work! But we are not to be idle—instrumentality is to be used—"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" Mark you, if we only cry, "The sword of the Lord!" we shall be guilty of an idle presumption and shall be tempting God to depart from His fixed rule of procedure.

This is the cry of every lazy lie-in-bed. What good ever comes of saying, "The Lord will do His own work, let us sit still"? Nor must it be, "The sword of Gideon," alone, for that were idolatrous reliance on an arm of flesh. We can do nothing of ourselves. Not, "The sword of the Lord," only—that were idleness. But the two together, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

O my Brethren, God help you to learn this lesson well and then you will go forth shining and sounding, living and teaching, testifying and living out the Truth of God! You shall most assuredly make the kingdom of Christ to come and His name shall be honored if you will do this. It seems to me that now is a glorious opportunity. There is a spirit of hearing upon the people. Almost anyone may get a hearing who is willing to preach Christ. Now or never!

Sons of Jacob! You are to be like a lion among the flock of sheep and will you lie down and slumber? Up and every man to the prey! Sons of Jacob! You are to be as dew upon the grass and will you tarry for men and wait for the sons of men? No. In God's name go forward and let something be done for God, and for His Christ, for a perishing age, for a dark world,

for Heaven's Glory, and for Hell's defeat. Up, you who know the Lord! You swordsmen of our Israel, up and at them and God give you a great victory and deliverance!

I want you to make some practical point of these things today. God has been pleased to put a sword into my hand and to give me my lamp and my pitcher. My College of young men is now become, in the Lord's hands, a marvelous power for good. A blessing greater than I could have expected rests on this work. We are continually sending them out and God owns them in the conversion of souls. I have never seen any agency more blessed to the conversion of souls than the agency of our College. Without saying anything to depreciate other efforts, I do believe God has conferred on our Institution a crowning and special blessing and will continue to do so yet more and more.

I want you all, both hearers and readers of my sermons, to feel that this is *your* work and to help me in it while I continue to cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" God works and therefore we work. God is with us and therefore we are with God and stand on His side. Inasmuch as many of these men raise Churches, we want you to help to build the places where the new congregations can be accommodated afterwards. And to that end we have strived to raise a fund of five thousand pounds to be lent out to these new Churches on loan to be repaid by installments without interest.

It is but a small sum, but it is as much as I think we can do and frugal care will turn it to good account. Some three thousand pounds have been promised by our seven shepherds and principal men. But there are many who have not promised anything yet and we shall be glad if they will come forward, for otherwise this useful fund cannot be raised. When this is done with, once and for all, we will go on and do something else for Jesus. Do break this pitcher! Get this done and let the light of this thing shine! We must be doing something for God.

I speak to you now upon the practical point and come to it at once. If you are content to live without serving God, I am not. And if you are willing to let these hours roll by without doing something to extend the kingdom of Jesus, let me be gone from you! Let me be gone from you to those of warmer spirits and of holier aspirations, for I *must* fight for God! There must be victories won for Him! We must extend the range of the Gospel! We must find places where souls can be brought to hear the Word. Hell shall not forever laugh at our inactivity and Heaven shall not eternally weep at our sloth!

Let us be up and doing and let this thing be done by the many—the few have already done their parts! Promises reaching over five years are asked of you, you can all do something. And then, every one of you, when you have done your share in this, go out personally and serve with your flaming torch of holy example and with your trumpet tones of earnest declaration and testimony—go out and serve your Lord! And God shall be with you and Midian shall be put to confusion and the Lord of Hosts shall reign forever and ever. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned." Hear that note, O dead Souls, and live!

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WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD

NO. 1557

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord
require of you, but to do justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God?”
Micah 6:8.***

WE shall chiefly dwell upon the last line—“To walk humbly with your God.” Man asks, “Why should I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God?” and, as if he must set himself to answer his own question, he farther enquires, “Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” Sacrifice of some sort is his idea—he supposes that he must supply the sacrifice himself and would gladly know what it should be. The answer which is given him chides him for the supposition that he is to answer his own question, for it begins thus—“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you.”

If we had been attentive to God's voice we should not now be asking, “why should I come?” for He has already shown us the way. The worship of God is the subject of Revelation, not of invention. True religion is not a new design displaying each man's taste, but a copy from a plan, framed and fixed by the Lord Himself. We are to follow a path well defined and not map out a course for ourselves. We are not like children crying in the dark after an unknown Father whom we seek by ways of our own, but we are as babes who follow where the warm hand of Love gently draws them. To us it is not night, for the true light has risen and is shining round about us—the Father has revealed Himself and we have an unction from the Holy One so that all things necessary for this life and godliness are lifted out of the region of the unknown and placed among the matters concerning which the Prophet says, “He has shown you, O man.”

The true worship of God is not left to be a matter of conjecture, to be worked out by a man's thoughts from within, but it is a matter of distinct Revelation to be received by faith from above. Do we all know this? Are there not some among us, or at least *around* us, who desire a religion of their own? Is not this one of the special follies of the period? Let us escape from this snare! “He has shown you, O man, what is good.” Abstain, therefore, from further invention. When once we know from God, Himself, what His requirements are, it becomes *treason* to debate the question any further! The statement inspired by Infinite Wisdom satisfies every loyal heart. What God says is to be accepted as final fact—to raise further question is a shuffling method of calling God a liar.

He who still asks the road, virtually denies that God has shown it to Him. It is not altogether their humility which keeps certain minds in what

they call a receptive condition, never dogmatic, never confident—or, as Paul more plainly puts it—“ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” To me it would be high presumption not to be sure and confident when God is the Teacher. To push further enquiries where Revelation speaks is either to deny the Revelation or to question its sufficiency. It cannot be that the declarations of God need to be supplemented by opinions and views of our own. “He has shown you, O man, what is good”—let this suffice us and, ceasing to theorize, let us practically obey!

Let us become disciples and in this frame of mind we shall gain one of the first essentials of true worship. True worship cannot, therefore, be will-worship and will-worship cannot be true worship. We are to bring to God that which God requires of us. We are to act towards God as He commands us and to accept from God that which He presents to us. Our approaches to the Most High are no longer to be a matter of our own taste and cleverness, but to be obedient movements of reverent faith, bowing before the solemn Word of the great King. “He has shown you, O man, what is good.” It is clear from the text before us that God has once and forever settled the way by which He is to be honored among men—and He has declared that it is not by *outward rites and ceremonies*. He pours contempt upon these in many Scriptures when He regards them by themselves.

In our text He says not a single word as to burnt offerings and calves of a year old. The question has been asked, but in His answer He makes no allusion to the rams and to the rivers of oil of which the questioner thought so much. No, but He says “What does the Lord require of you, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?” It seems, then, that it is far more important to do *right* than to perform the most imposing religious rites—better to act mercifully than to offer the most costly sacrifices. Much more value is attached to a man’s moral character than to all his outward religiousness, however far he may carry it. The upright and generous actions of daily life are better signs of a gracious heart than lavish gifts to the temple and its priests. God judges a man rather by what he does *ordinarily* among his fellows than by what he does sumptuously when he is gorgeously arrayed in his profession and stands in a chief place of the synagogue and is admired as a chief speaker, or a generous giver to the holy cause.

“To *obey* is better than sacrifice and to *listen* than the fat of rams.” Those who are acceptable with God are those who do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Him. Every man who is a true Christian does justly. If faith does not make a man honest, it is not an honest faith! If our conversion has not made us upright, may the Lord convert us again! When a man’s heart is right with God, he longs to deal rightly with his fellow men and shrinks from the idea of taking undue advantage. He who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ will not knowingly and willfully defile himself with unjust gain. To his employees, his customers, his employer, he aims to do justly. Nor is this all, for he loves mercy. He tries to love his neighbor as himself. If there is an act of kindness to be done, he delights to do it—if there is misery to be helped, needs to be relieved,

good to be bestowed, he says, "Let me have a hand in it, for it is good for me to do good." The man who is loved by the All-Merciful is one who loves mercy. The God of Mercy cannot take pleasure in the churlish and brutal. The hard, the cruel, the grasping, the oppressing, the sternly unforgiving are not such as the Lord delights in.

Another point remains. It is the third thing and it is put third because it is of the highest importance—"to walk humbly with your God." This is an *inward* thing, but little observed. It is observable enough in its consequences, but not in itself and, therefore, very apt to be overlooked. "To walk humbly with your God" is as necessary as to do justly and to love mercy, but few there are that do it and, therefore, at this time I would earnestly insist upon this vital, this essential point. I pray God the Holy Spirit to make humble walking with God to seem as important to you as it does to me and to me as important as it does to Him—for He puts it here in the very forefront of spiritual necessities.

I. First, Brothers and Sisters, we may say of the humble walk which God demands and accepts that IT IS EXCELLENT IN ITSELF. This is one of the things which is good, good morally, good in present effect, good in eternal results. Nothing is better for you, O man, than to walk humbly with your God. Notice every single word of our text, for under this head I will explain humble walking, that you may see its excellence. Humble walking with God signifies, first, a perception of God's Being and Presence. In order to our acceptance with God, we must know that He is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. We must distinctly recognize that there is a God and that He is near us—that He is real and true and that we are living in actual nearness to Him.

We are to walk with Him and this cannot be done unless we know that He is near—men do not walk with myths, or ideas, or remote existences. To have a *real* God is the backbone of character and to keep company with Him day by day is the right arm of godliness. How many live as if God were a nonentity, a dream, a theological fable, a respectable fancy and no more? But the acceptable character is made and formed mainly by the fact that God is and that God surrounds us. It is only in the sunlight of God's own Countenance, consciously *experienced*, that true holiness can be produced and ripened. The godly man is moved to action, helped in endurance, nerved with courage, fired with zeal, elevated with devotion and purified in life by the Presence of God. "You, God, see me," is a great sanctifier!

The Lord said to Abraham, "Walk before Me and be you perfect"—otherwise there is no perfection. David said, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living"—there is no other safe walking. We are never right unless God is the Friend of our pilgrimage, the Companion of our thoughts, the Rest of our weariness, the Home of our delight, the very Element of our life! Such nearness to God is good—do we know what it means? In addition, there must be an appropriating and accepting of this ever-present God as our God. The text says, "Walk humbly with *your* God." Observe that. He must be *our* God. We must feel that if no other beings will worship Jehovah, we will do so with our whole hearts. "This God

is our God forever and ever.” “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You.”

We believe that Jehovah is our Creator, Preserver and Redeemer and if no other creature through whose veins life is throbbing will acknowledge Him as its God, we will, alone, adore and worship Him. We take Him to be our Ruler, Leader, Law-Giver, Helper and Confidence—and if all the world shall set up other gods, we, alone, will serve Jehovah. “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” This firm allegiance is good and works towards all that is good. When a man feels that he can call God, his God and that he can take hold upon His Covenant, then is he strong for honor and virtue and all things that are pleasing unto God. Because God has entered into covenant with us in Christ Jesus and we have given ourselves over unto Him by a Covenant of Salt, therefore we stand firm against temptation and endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

Come, Brothers and Sisters, are your hearts thus fixed on God at this moment? Do your spirits walk with your God? Or are you at a distance from God, wandering away from Him? Have you forgotten that God is yours? Are you looking upon Him as another man’s God? Oh, you cannot be strong, clear and joyous in spirit till God is *yours* and all your life is spent with Him—till whether you roam, or rest, or sleep, or wake—you still abide with your own God and find your happiness in Him. As the fish abides in the ocean and the bird in the air and each calls the sea and the sky its own, so do we dwell in God and He is ours forever and ever! This is not all, the text sets forth the accepted man as always active in the Presence of His God.

“To walk” with God denotes an active habit, a communion in the common movements of the day. Some bow humbly before God in the hour of prayer. Others sit humbly in His Presence at the time of meditation and others string themselves up to draw near to God in seasons of religious excitement. But all this falls short of walking with God. Walking is a very common pace, an ordinary rate of progress and it does not seem to require great effort—but then it is a practical working pace, a rate at which a man can continue on and on and make a day’s journey by the time the sun is down. So walking with God means being with God *always*, being with God in common things, being with Him on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday—as well as on the Sabbath!

It means being with Him in the shop, with Him in the kitchen, with Him in the field, feeling His Presence in buying and selling, in weighing and measuring, in plowing and reaping—doing as unto the Lord the most common acts of life. This it is which is acceptable with the Most High and this is the man who has gotten into a right condition before His Maker—the man who “walks” with His God! Then comes in the qualifying word of, “humbly,” about which we have to speak most at this time. It was necessary to remind you of the other matters first. God must be recognized as always present, appropriated as our God and felt to be a power in all our life or else there can be no humble walking with Him. You must have the verb or there is no sense in the adverb—you must *walk* before there is any sense in the exhortation to walk humbly.

But now comes the humbling—we are to live towards God in all that we do in a lowly, reverent spirit. We are not bid slavishly to crouch, but humbly to walk. How lowly and penitently we are to walk, let gracious men remind us. If we are favored to walk with God as Abraham did, in all the sweet familiarity of friend with Friend, yet must we remember, as he did, that we are but dust and ashes. Our closest communion must take the form of *worship*. When we see our Lord, best, we must fall at His feet with awe. When our walk with God is closest and clearest, we must be overwhelmed with adoring wonder at the condescension which permits us to think of speaking with the Eternal One. To this reverence must be added a constant sense of dependence—walking humbly with God in the sense of daily drawing all supplies from Him and gratefully admitting that it is so. We are never to indulge a thought of independence from God, as if we were *anything*, or could *do* anything apart from Him.

Walking humbly with God involves a profound deference to His will and a glad submission to it—yielding both active obedience and passive acquiescence. Humble walking with God cries under cutting afflictions, “It is the Lord! Let Him do what seems good to Him.” When the Lord bids me serve Him, I must cry for Grace to run in the ways of His commandments! And when the Lord chastens me, I must beg for patience to endure His appointments. Walking humbly with God implies all this and much more than just now we could particularly state. May the Holy Spirit teach us all what a broken and contrite spirit means and keep us always low before the Lord. The practical result of all this inward humbling will be an acting towards others and a moving in all matters as under the influence of a humble spirit.

If a man once really comes to live and act as in the sight of God, his life must be one of eminent holiness and, if under a sense of God’s Glory, he abides in deep humility of spirit, we may expect to see about him all that is tender and quiet. Like his Lord, he will be meek and lowly in heart. He will not domineer over his fellow men. He will not be hard, cruel, unkind. He cannot be! He who feels that he must walk with great softness and tenderness before his God cannot trample on others as if they were only fit to be the dust of his feet. You will not see him supremely disdainful, carrying his head among the stars as though he were some great one. No, he has learned to walk humbly with God and he thinks of himself soberly, as he ought to think. For a man to put on humility before God and throw it off before men would be hypocrisy of the vilest kind. Alas, it is too often seen, but it is base to the utmost—flee from it as you would from forgery and counterfeit and, in very truth, “walk humbly with God.”

I cannot tell you all that my text means, nor if you know it, yourself, can you make others understand it. Still, they will know that it is something very admirable which makes you to be a good neighbor and a considerate friend, the comfort of the sorrowful, the helper of all. They may not understand from where the quiet spirit derives its gentle dew, but they will perceive its freshness, its sparkling purity and its goodness and wonder at its cause. True humility begets a gentleness, a tenderness, a Christ-likeness which men may mock for a while, but which, for the most part, wins their hearts. The more instructed, the sooner they take knowledge of

a meek-spirited man that he must have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

I do not prescribe to any man that he should try to walk humbly with his fellow man, for without great watchfulness his spirit may glide into meanness and he may lose conscientiousness in a desire to please. But if he will aim at walking humbly with *God*, he will get into such a proper spirit that he will be in his right position towards all his surroundings below and above—and his life will be such as will commend itself both to God and men. Thus I have tried to show, while explaining what was meant by walking humbly with our God, that it is a thing most excellent in itself. O Holy Spirit, work it in us for the lowly Savior's sake!

II. Secondly, this walking humbly with God is very important, for IT IS A TEST OF SALVATION. The man that walks humbly with God is a saved man—the man who does not walk humbly with God should question his condition before God, for in proportion as he fails *here*—he fails altogether. We will ask a few questions concerning this matter. Friend, if you are walking humbly with God you have taken your right place as a sinner condemned by the Law, for certainly you have broken the Law and that Law requires absolutely perfect obedience which you have not rendered and never will render! God's Law, then, has condemned you—have you condemned yourself? Have you taken your place as a condemned one and pleaded guilty before God?

If you have not done so, your view of yourself differs from God's view of you. Your view of yourself is a proud one. You are not walking humbly with God and you are not saved. He that never felt himself lost never felt himself saved—he who never confessed himself guilty has never been forgiven. He who has never accepted the sentence which dooms him has never received the pardon which absolves him. Mark this. Again, if you are walking humbly with God you have given Jesus Christ His right place. What is that? He came into the world to be the Savior of *sinners* and the only place He will deign to occupy towards you is that He shall save you and save you completely. Some say, "Yes, oh yes. Jesus shall be my Savior and do something toward my salvation."

But He replies, "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End." Christ will save us from the beginning to the end or He will have nothing to do with our salvation! He will have *all* the Glory of the work and the work itself must be all His own—from the foundation to the top stone—or else He will leave the ruin upon its own heap. Jesus will never consent to be a make-weight for our deficiencies. He will not come at our beck and call to be our lackey, to patch up our old rags and mend our clouted shoes. No! The Lord Jesus Christ must be everything and we must be *nothing*, or we shall never agree. Have you given Christ His due place, dear Friend? If you have not done so, your view of Christ and God's view of Christ are very different and yours is a *proud* view, for you are putting *yourself* into the Savior's place in some degree and you are not walking humbly with God.

It is dangerous to the last degree to be pushing the Lord of Glory into a corner so that we may occupy His Throne. The Lord our God is a jealous God and He is specially jealous of the prerogatives of His Son! If we are so

vain as to rob Christ of His Glory and deck ourselves out in stolen honors, we shall quickly incur His hot displeasure. When our heart feels that the blood and righteousness of Jesus constitute her *only* plea, then is she walking rightly and humbly with God and all is well. One other question is a very important one—is salvation seen by you to be wholly of Grace? Do you, my Friend, judge salvation to be partly by your own works and merits? Do you think that you must at least contribute an ounce weight in the scale so that you must add at least a fraction to the Savior's lump sum? Yes? Then it is a question whether you know anything about salvation.

I do not want to make doctrinal opinions a test, but it does seem to me that there is something wrong in the heart which looks for salvation anywhere but to the free favor of God. To walk humbly with God is to feel, "If ever such a poor, condemned soul as I am shall be saved, it must be by an act of free and Sovereign mercy, for if Justice has its way apart from mercy I am driven forever into the darkness of despair." I am come to this pass, myself—that if salvation is at all of myself—if any merit is required of me, though it is as little as the small dust of the balance, or the drop that trembles in the bucket after it is turned upside down, I cannot find it. Grace must save me or I am lost! When the soul has come to that pass, it is walking humbly with God. But those who are, even in the smallest degree, out of the circle of Grace, are not walking humbly with God and they have grave cause to question their spiritual state.

This suggests to me another thought. I know several persons who seem to be seeking peace with God and mercy in Christ, but never get it because, as it seems to me, they are not walking humbly with God as to their *intellect*. The last thing that some men will do is to bow their *understanding* to the teaching of God. They are always carping and raising quibbles with God instead of believing Him. They need to be silenced as Job was before the manifested Glory of God, or they will die asking questions. Those mysterious Truths of God which relate to the Most High—such creatures as we are can never expect to understand! In the region of the Infinite there is ample space for faith, but reason loses her track. Faith is our *privilege*—let us exercise it freely towards the Lord.

In God's great family is the comprehension of the Father's mind to be a *sine qua non* of our affection for Him? Am I never to believe what my Father tells me till I *understand* it? Must all Your gold, great God, be tried in my crucible before I will accept it at Your hand? Are You a liar unless my *brain* prove You true? Am I, after all, to be lord over my own thoughts and are You to have no supremacy in the kingdom of my mind? Does any man fancy that his soul can ever be right while this is his theory? How can the heart stand in an even place and be at peace while it refuses to acknowledge the sway of God? We must yield our intellect to the *superior* intellect, permitting the drop to be borne along by the *river*! The Infallible speech of Him who cannot err must satisfy the obedient mind!

To the true heart there is no self-denial in agreeing that Omniscience shall stand instead of personal discovery; Infallible Revelation in the place of research and argument and the witnessing Spirit in the place of authority and evidence. Every Word of God is surer than the most certain deductions of mathematics or the clearest inferences of reasoning! God's slight-

est hint, though it comes not to a positive declaration, is to be treasured up by us as a priceless gem! Well does the Apostle say, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." There is more light in God's *darkness* than in man's light! His every Word is Infallible, but as for the thoughts of man—we know that they are vanity. This seems to be a test, then, by which we may try whether we are saved or not. Are we walking humbly with God or not?

Are we trying to *be* something, to *do* something, to *think* something, or in some way or other to let it be manifest that we are not to be overlooked? If so, there is great fear that we are not yet right with Heaven. God says, "I Am and there is none beside Me." Do we consent to shrink into nothingness, or are we eager to cry out, "I, too, am something! I must not be ignored, for I have my right and claims which may not be forgotten." Beloved, I delight to hear the Divine Voice crying, "I Am," and to run and hide myself beneath His eternal wings, cowering down beneath them, even as the little chicks hide beneath the mother and are as though they were not apart from her. It is good to shrink into a happy insignificance, to feel that we are nothing, save only as we are hidden away with Christ in God. God Is and as for our existence, it is but that of God displaying Himself in us—we are nothing—God is All in All.

When we are thus humbled we are saved. What is it to not be lost? The eternal burning of the Divine greatness has consumed the vainglory of the creature and that which remains has no cause to fear. With this man will God dwell forever on terms of peace, even with him who is of a humble and a contrite spirit and trembles at His Word.

III. I must pass on very briefly to say, in the third place, of walking humbly with God, that IT IS A SYMPTOM OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH. You can tell, dear Friend, not only whether you are saved, but afterwards, whether your new life is in a growing state, by examining whether you are walking humbly with God. Let me dwell upon that matter for a minute. We are healthy in soul if we have lowly views in reference to ourselves upon matters of Divine Grace. Come, now, what do you think of yourself this morning? Are you a fine fellow, a disciple, indeed, an example to others? Do you now account yourself to be a very experienced Christian, quite a useful member of the Church, an ornament to society, a person considerably looked up to and well worthy of a large measure of respect?

It would be very improper to put you in a back seat, or invite you to take a lower room, for are you not a prince in Israel? Among those who might be counted as pillars, you feel that you must be mentioned. But be careful what you are thinking! It is very easy to feel great. It is, by no means, an eminently difficult thing to be exalted. I have reached that point, myself, without great effort and I take no credit, but much shame for it. A sense of rising to be somebody is not a sign of health—it is a token of the reverse, sometimes, and may be the forerunner of most solemn catastrophes. Puffing up may mean bloating and swelling with deadly tumors, therefore beware of it!

Signs of health lie in quite another line. Will you try and follow me, for a minute, in a humbling meditation? Remember what you were a little while ago. Then, the thought that you would even be a member of the

Church of Christ seemed too good for you! If anyone had said, "You will be numbered with God's people. You will enjoy, with them, the sweets of pardoning Grace," you would have said, "Then I do not care where they put me. If I am only one of the dogs under the Master's table, I shall be perfectly satisfied to eat the crumbs." Like the prodigal, we were ready to cry, "Make me as one of Your hired servants!" So long as we might but eat the bread from the Father's table we had no care for honor.

Ah, you did not think you would be such a big man as you are now, did you? When you filled the swine trough and fed the unclean, yourself hungry and faint, you had no idea to what you would grow. God grant you may have every particle of boasting removed from you at this time as you remember the hole of the pit from which you were quarried! Taken from the dunghill and placed among princes, let our grateful hearts renounce all self-glory and magnify only the Lord! Another set of reflections may rise up on considering what you now are. What are you now? At your best—what have you to boast of? You are thought by others to be something very great and respectable, but what are the facts of the case as *God* sees them? You are a branch of the true Vine—yes, how much fruit do you bear?

Compare yourself with those branches that bring forth much fruit to God—and how thin and lean is your vintage! You are weighed down by the responsibilities which your position thrusts upon you, but are you bearing them worthily? Are you doing for God what some would do if they had your opportunities? Are you doing for Christ what once you thought you would do if you ever had the means? Are you now living according to your own notion of how a Christian should live—are you anywhere near it? Oh, my Brother, when you think of what you are now, there is more to make you blush than to make you boast! There is more to make you cover your face than to cause you to lift up your head! At least, such is *my* case.

Once more, I beg you to think of what you would be within a very short time if you were left by Divine Grace. We sometimes condemn men for their acts and are right in condemning them—and yet if we had been in their position we might have done much worse. "Oh," says one, "what a mercy it is I have been kept these 30 years and have never dishonored my profession!" Yes, Brother, it is a mercy, a *great* mercy, a greater mercy than you dreamed! You do not happen to have a vixen for a wife, or a troublesome family, or a provoking neighbor—or you would have lost your character long ago. Domestic comfort may deserve more praise than any goodness on *your* part. It is a mercy for you that the evil person who used to have such influence over you was taken away, or else I do not know where you would have been!

Many an evil character has been the result of vicious influence. A great deal of apparent virtue may be due to our not happening to be tempted at the time when we are in a certain condition, or else if our tinder and the devil's sparks had met, who knows but what the best of us might have been ablaze by now? Oh, how much we owe to *preventing* Grace! We are debtors both to the Providence and the Grace of God which have kept us out of harm's way! When sometimes we have been compelled to condemn sin in a Brother and to speak very solemnly, as we are bound to do, we

have remembered *ourselves* lest we, also, should be tempted—and we have remembered that Grace, alone, has kept us out of sin. “Such an one was drunk,” says one, “after making a profession of religion.” We do not exonerate him for a moment! It was a shameful crime, but oh, my Friend, had you been precisely in his condition—had you been once a victim to that degrading vice, met by the same company and in other respects surrounded as he was—you might have been intoxicated long before he became so!

Walk humbly with your God at any rate, my Friend. The true way to live is to give God all the glory and take to ourselves all the shame. When God gives us great temporal enjoyments, then let us think, “Why do I have these comforts while many of His servants are without them? Is it possible that He is giving me my portion in *this* life?” That will lay a cool hand on your hot forehead and forbid all pride in wealth! If God makes you rich, instead of doting on your riches, say to yourself, “How can I best use my substance for His Glory?” The working out of that practical question should be quite sufficient to keep you from self-esteem. He who truly serves the Lord will walk humbly with Him. Have you more talent than other people? You will be a great fool if you begin to rejoice in it, for serious responsibilities come with special ability. Remember you have to do more for God than other people and that thought should, by God’s Grace, be as ballast for your wide-spread sail. Great talent might be a sun to smite you if a sense of responsibility did not come in like a cloud to shield you.

Are you honored among men? Then say to yourself, “Ah, they do not know me or they might judge me otherwise. If I deserve their esteem for some things, yet there are many things which make me hang my head.” If we deserve all the gratitude of our fellows, we should still be deeply anxious not to take a grain of praise to ourselves lest God should be angry with us for robbing Him of His revenue of Glory. What have we that we have not *received*? We must always have lowly views of ourselves before God in regard to matters of Grace and it should be the same in reference to His Providence. For instance, if one of you shall have been much tried in business and have lost much money—suppose you are angry with God and quarrel with Him about it—is that walking humbly with Him? When we complain at the loss of children or friends, is not that the pride of our heart?

To walk humbly with God would lead you to say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him!” But a proud heart virtually cries, “God shall do as *I* like, or else He shall have no obedience from me! He shall always use His right hand and pour into *my* lap all that I desire, or else we will part company.” It is the hypocrite who will not always call upon God—a little trial cools his love. Ah, Friend, this will not do. Complaining and rebelling are not walking humbly with God! Humbly walking with God yields itself entirely to the Divine will and says, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Humbly walking with God will enable a man to receive Providences from God without expecting to understand why they came. “I cannot com-

prehend,” says a man, “why, in the very midst of my usefulness, I am laid aside.” Is God bound to tell you why? When you are denied an explanation, are you walking humbly with God? Has the father to tell his little son the reason for everything he does? Is that the way you govern your family? No, my Brothers, fathers have their honor and much more our heavenly Father! God gives no account of His matters. It is a part of my humbly walking with God to accept Providences of which I cannot see the object or design and to be *grateful* for them. When God sends, as it seems to us, the wrong Providence—when He does to us that which seems unwise and unkind, we are still to say, “He must be good to Israel and all His dealings must be wise and kind. I am but as a wild ass’s colt and know nothing and can judge nothing—God knows all things, so let His will be done.”

This is to walk humbly with Him. If the Lord turns His hand and multiplies your treasure and gives you the bright and sunny days, the elastic step and cheery heart, take heed that you walk humbly with Him. It is easy to think something of yourself when the purse is bulky—but fling away such folly! Hold your possessions loosely and say, “Lord, I am grateful for these, but if You, in the future, take them away, by Your Grace, I will not murmur. I do not suspend my love to You upon these outward things. I love You for Yourself and for Your richer Grace. My love is not held by the tenure of Your favoring me with health and strength. By Your Grace I will trust You though You slay me. Though You take all away, out of the very dust will I still praise You.”

I think I have thus shown that it is a symptom of spiritual health when a man can walk humbly with God.

IV. And now, fourthly, we may say of this humble walking that IT IS A CAUSE FOR VERY GREAT ANXIETY. We must walk humbly, my Brothers and Sisters, but this is more easily said than done. This is no child’s play! Humility of spirit is a virtue which is likely to be overlooked—we pay some attention to doing justly and loving mercy, but walking humbly with God is so inward, so ethereal and so spiritual that we are apt to overlook it—yet it is the main thing and all our thoughts should go to the securing of it. You may, if you will, give all your substance to the poor and your bodies to be burned, but if you walk not humbly with God you have missed the essence of godliness.

It is easy enough to keep up private devotion and family devotion and public devotion and to be regular at sacraments and sermons and to be everything that is moral and just and upright and yet, after all, to not be walking humbly with God and, therefore, a failure here is highly probable, but none the less terrible. Humble walking is so difficult to come at that thousands sit down content with that which *looks* like it, but is by no means the same thing. It is so easy to think yourself humble. To feign humility is, of all things, most shocking and yet to be truly humble is, of all things, most difficult. Have you never noticed how, when you fancied you were lowly before God, it was only that you were unbelieving or out of health? Do not mistake indigestion for humility!

When you said to yourself, “Now I am on familiar terms with God and living near Him in communion,” it turned out to be presumption rather than faith. And supposed humility has, in like manner, full often con-

densed into despair. Are you now saying, “I think I am humble”? Is there ever a time when a man is so *proud* as when he judges that he is humble? “Ah,” you say, “but I cannot exalt myself, I am in such a condition of heart I must walk humbly with God.” My Beloved, I beseech you to be more on your guard, now, than ever, against pride, for a haughty spirit lurks in an assurance of humility like a lion in its den! The leaven of self is brought into our meal in the measure of a *supposed* necessity of humbleness. To be really lowly, really *nothing* before God, really to yield yourselves up to Him—this is such a work and such a difficulty that I commend you to attempt it in order that you may see how impossible it is to you apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, who, alone, can help us to walk humbly with God.

V. With this I close, when I have said, in the fifth place, in praise of walking humbly with God, that IT IS THE SOURCE OF THE DEEPEST CONCEIVABLE PLEASURE. If you walk humbly with God you will feel safe. What can harm the man who sits at the feet of the great Lord and waits on His will? Ah, now you feel that, happen what may, nothing can harm you, for you are ready to bow before it and let the Lord, alone, reign. What peace it gives when you feel that if there is anything about you which grieves your God, you will gladly let it go—you have already surrendered it—you would not retain it for an hour! The tempest rolls overhead but all is calm below when the heart has learned full surrender and is even as a weaned child. Your spirit must rest, then—it cannot help resting—for it dwells in God!

Into this quietness and rest there comes *enjoyment*, for the man that leaves everything to God finds joy in everything. Mercies which to others are commonplace are sweet to him. He marvels at the love which God displays in them all! As mercies come to him, he receives them with songs of thankfulness. He is grateful to think that he has bread to eat and clothes to wear, for he knows how unworthy he is. And when great mercies are showered on him, he sits down before God and cries, “Why this to *me*? What am I and what is my father’s house?” He is the man who joins Mary in her Magnificat, singing, “My soul does magnify the Lord.”

He sings with the Psalmist, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul and all that is within me bless His holy name.” He sits at Heaven’s gate waiting to enter and he shall not long be detained outside, for as joy and peace and a heavenly mind have come to him, so shall they soon bring him to their Home. He who has learned to walk humbly with God shall soon see the face of God in His Glory! God teach us all this sacred art for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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MICAH'S MESSAGE FOR TODAY

NO. 2328

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 1, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1889.

“Walk humbly with your God.”
Micah 6:8.

THIS is the essence of the Law of God, the spiritual side of it—its Ten Commandments are an enlargement of this verse. The Law is spiritual and touches the thoughts, the intents, the emotions, the words, the actions—but especially God demands the *heart*. Now it is our great joy that what the Law requires, the Gospel gives. “Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.” In Him we meet the requirements of the Law, first, by what He has done for us and next, by what He works in us. He conforms us to the Law of God. He makes us, by His Spirit, not for our righteousness, but for His Glory, to render to the Law the obedience which we could not present of ourselves. We are weak through the flesh, but when Christ strengthens us, the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Only through faith in Christ does a man learn to do righteously, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God—and only by the power of the Holy Spirit sanctifying us to that end do we fulfill these three Divine requirements. These we fulfill perfectly in our desire—we would be holy as God is holy if we could live as our heart aspires to live—we would always do righteously, we would always love mercy and we would always walk humbly with God. This, the Holy Spirit daily aids us to do by working in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure. And the day will come and we are pining for it, when, being entirely free from this hampering body, we shall serve Him day and night in His Temple and shall render to Him an absolutely perfect obedience, for, “they are without fault before the Throne of God.”

Tonight I shall have a task quite sufficient if I dwell only upon the third requirement, “Walk humbly with your God,” asking first, *What is the nature of this humility?* And secondly, *Where does this humility show itself?*

I. First, WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS HUMILITY? The text is very full of teaching in that respect.

And, first, *this humility belongs to the highest form of character.* Observe what precedes our text, “to do justly and to love mercy.” Suppose a man has done that? Suppose that in both these things he has come up to the Divine standard, what then? Why, then he must walk humbly with God! If we walk in the Light of God, as God is in the light, and have fellowship with Him, we still need to walk before God very humbly, always looking to the blood, for even then, the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses and

continues to cleanse us from all sin. If we have done both these things, we shall still have to say that we are unprofitable servants and we must walk humbly with God. We have not reached that consummation yet, always doing justly and loving mercy, though we are approximating to it by Christ's gracious help. But if we did attain to the ideal that is set before us and every act was right towards man—and more, every act was delightfully saturated with a love to our neighbor as strong as our love to ourselves—even then there would come in this precept, "Walk humbly with your God."

Dear Friends, if ever you should think that you have reached the highest point of Christian Grace—I almost hope that you never will think so—but suppose that you should ever think so, do not, I pray you, say anything that verges upon boasting, or exhibit any kind of spirit that looks like glorying in your own attainments, but walk humbly with your God! I believe that the more Grace a man has, the more he feels his deficiency of Grace. All the people that I have ever thought might have been called perfect before God, have been notable for a denial of anything of the sort—they have always disclaimed anything like perfection! They have always laid low before God and if one has been constrained to admire them, they have blushed at his admiration. If they have thought that they were, at all, the objects of reverence among their fellow Christians, I have noticed how zealously they have put that aside with self-depreciatory remarks, telling us that we did not know all, or we should not think so of them. And therein I admire them yet more. The praise that they put from them returns to them with interest!

Oh, let us be of that mind! The best of men are but men at the best, and the brightest saints are still sinners, for whom there is still the Fountain open, but not opened, mark you, in Sodom and Gomorrah, but opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that even they may still continue, with all their lofty privileges, to wash, therein, and to be clean. This is the kind of humility, then, which is consistent with the highest moral and spiritual character. No, it is the very *clothing* of such a character, as Peter puts it, "Be clothed with humility," as if, after we had put on the whole armor of God, we put this over all to cover it all up! We do not want the helmet to glitter in the sun, nor the armor of brass upon the knees to shine before men, but clothing ourselves like officers in civilian clothes, we conceal the beauties which will eventually the more reveal themselves.

The second remark is this, *the humility here prescribed involves constant communion with God*. Observe that we are told to walk humbly *with* God. It is of no use walking humbly *away* from God. I have seen some people very proudly humble, very boastful of their humility. They have been so humble that they were proud enough to doubt God! They could not accept the mercy of Christ, they said. They were so humble. In truth, theirs was a devilish humility, not the humility that comes from the Spirit of God. Oh, no! This humility makes us walk with God and, Beloved, can you conceive a higher and truer humility than that which must come of walking with God? Remember what Job said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Remember how Abraham, when he communed with God and pleaded with him for Sodom, said, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." "Dust"—that set forth the frailty of his nature. "Ashes"—as if he were like the refuse of the altar which could not be burnt up—which God would not have. He felt himself to be, by sin, like the sweeping of a furnace, the ashes, refuse of no value whatever—and that was not because he was *away* from God, but because he was *near* to God. You can get to be as big as you like if you get *away* from God, but coming *near* to the Lord you rightly sing—

***"The more Your glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall lie."***

Depend upon it that it is so. It might be a kind of weather gauge as to your communion—whether you are proud or humble. If you are going up, God is going down in your esteem. "He must increase," said John the Baptist of the Lord Jesus, "but I must decrease." The two things go together—if this scale rises, that scale must go down. "Walk humbly with your God."

Dare to stay with God! Dare to have Him as your daily Friend! Be bold enough to come to Him who is within the veil! Talk with Him, walk with Him as a man walks with his familiar friend—but walk humbly with Him. You will do so if you walk truly. I cannot conceive such a thing—it is impossible—a man walking proudly with God! He takes his fellow by the arm and feels that he is as good as his neighbor, perhaps superior to him, but he cannot walk with God in such a frame of mind as that! The finite with the Infinite! That alone suggests humility, but the sinful with the Thrice-Holy? This throws us down into the dust.

But, next, *this humility implies constant activity*. "Walk humbly with your God." Walking is an active exercise. These people had proposed to bow before God, as you notice in the sixth verse, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" But the answer is not, "*Bow* humbly before God," but, "*Walk* humbly with God." Now, Beloved, when we are very actively engaged, pressed with business, one thing after another coming in, if the great Master employs us in some large concern—large, of course, only to us—if we have work after work, we are too apt to forget that we are only servants, we are doing all the business for our Master, we are only commission agents for Him. We are apt to think that we are the head of the firm. We would not think so if we thought steadily, for a moment, for we would know our right position. But in the midst of activity we get cumbered with much serving and we are too apt to get off our proper level.

We have, perhaps, to rule others, and we forget that we also are men under authority. It is easy to play the little king over the little folk, but it must not be so. You must learn not only to be humble in the closet of communion—and to be humble with your Bible before you—but to be humble in preaching, to be humble in teaching, to be humble in ruling, to be humble in everything that you do when you have as much as ever you can do! When, from morning to night, you are still pressed with this and that service, still keep your proper place. That is where Martha went wrong, you know—not in having much serving, but by getting to be mistress. She was, "Mrs. Martha," and the housewife is a queen! But Mary sat in the *servant's* place at Jesus' feet. If Martha's heart could have been

where Mary's body was, then had she served aright. The Lord make us Martha-Marys, or Mary-Marthas, whenever we are busy, that we may walk humbly with God!

Next, I do not think that it is far-fetched if I say that *this humility denotes progress*. The man is to walk—and that is progress—advancing. “Walk humbly.” I am not to be so humble that I feel that I cannot do any more, or enjoy any more, or be any better—they call that humility—but it begins with an “S” in English and the full word is SLOTH. “I cannot be as believing, as bold, as useful as such a man is.” You are not told to be humble and sit still, but to be humble and walk with God! Go forward! Advance! Not with a proud desire to excel your fellow Christians—not even with the latent expectation of being more respected because you have more Grace—but still walk, go on, advance, grow! Be enriched with all the precious things of God. Be filled with all the fullness of God. Walk on, always walk. Lie not down in despair! Roll not in the dust with desperation because you think high things impossible for you. Walk, but walk humbly.

You will soon find out, if you make any progress, that you have *need to be humble*. I believe that when a man goes back he gets proud. And I am persuaded that when a man advances, he gets humbler—and that it is a part of the advance to walk more and more and more humbly. For this the Lord tries many of us. For this He visits us in the night and chastens us, that we may be qualified to have more Grace and get to higher attainments, by being more humble, “for God resists the proud, and gives Grace to the humble.” If you will climb the mountainside, you shall be thirsty among the barren crags. But if you will descend into the valleys, where the red deer wander and the brooks flow among the meadows, you shall drink to your full! Does not the hart pant for the water brooks? Do you pant for them? They flow in the Valley of Humiliation! The Lord bring us all there!

Next, *the humility here prescribed implies constancy*—“Walk humbly with your God.” Not sometimes be humble, but always walk humbly with your God. If we were always what we are sometimes, what Christians we would be! I have heard you say, I think, and I have said the same, myself, “I felt very broken down and lay very low at my Master's feet.” Were you so the next day? And the day after—did you continue so? Is it not very possible for us to be one day, because of our great debt to our Master, begging that He would not be hard with us and is it not possible, tomorrow, to be taking our brother by the throat? I do not say that God's people would do that, but I do feel that the spirit that is in them may lead them to *think* of doing it—one day acknowledging your Father's authority and doing His will—and another day standing outside the door and refusing to go in because the prodigal son has come home. “You never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. I have been a consistent Believer, yet I never have any high joys, but as soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf. Here is a wretched sinner only just saved and he is in an ecstasy of delight! How can this be right?”

O elder son, O elder brother, walk humbly with your Father! Always be so under any circumstances. It is all very fine to have a lot of humility

packed away in a box with which to perfume your prayers and then to come out and to be, "My Lord," and some very great one in the midst of the Church and in the world. This will never do! It is not said, "Bow humbly before God *now and then*." But as a regular, constant thing, "Walk humbly with your God." It is not, "Bow your head like the bulrush under some conscious fault which you cannot deny," but, in the brightness of your purity and the clearness of your holiness, still keep your heart in lowly reverence bowing before the Throne of God!

Once more, only, and then we will quit this part of the subject—the *humility that is here prescribed includes delightful confidence*. Let me read the text to you, "Walk humbly with God." No, no, we must not maul the passage that way! "Walk humbly with *your* God." Do not think that it is humility to doubt your interest in Christ—that is unbelief! Do not think that it is humility to think that He is another man's God and not yours—"Walk humbly with your God." Know that He is *your* God! Be sure of it—come up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved. Have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a doubt, that you are your Beloved's and that He is yours! Rest not for a moment if there is any question upon this blessed subject. He gives Himself to you—take Him to be yours by a Covenant of salt that never shall be broken—and give yourself to Him, saying, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." "Walk humbly with your God."

Let not anything draw you away from that confidence. But then, in comes the humility. This is all of Grace! This is all the result of Divine Election! Therefore, be humble. You have not chosen Christ, but He has chosen you! This is all the effect of redeeming love—therefore, be humble. You are not your own, you are bought with a price, so you can have no room to glory. This is all the work of the Spirit—

***"Then give all the glory to His holy name,
To Him all the glory belongs."***

"Walk humbly with your God." I lie at His feet as one unworthy and cry, "Why did this come to me? I am not worthy of the least of the mercies that You have made to pass before me." I think this is the humility prescribed in the text. May the Spirit of God work it in us!

II. And now, secondly, with great brevity upon many points, I have to answer the question, WHERE DOES THIS HUMILITY SHOW ITSELF? I have what might be a long task—a Puritan would want an hour and a half more for the second part of the subject. Our Puritan forefathers preached, you know, by a glass, an hourglass which stood by them, and sometimes, when they had let one glass run out at the end of the hour, they would say to the people, "Let us have another glass," and they turned it over, again, and went on for another hour! But I am not going to do that. I do not wish to weary you and I would rather send you away longing than loathing. Where, then, does this humility show itself? It ought to show itself in every act of life. I would not advise any of you to *try* to be humble, but to *be* humble. As to *acting* humbly, when a man forces himself to it, that is poor stuff. When a man talks a great deal about his humility—when he is very humble to everybody—he is generally a canting hypocrite. Humility must be in the *heart* and then it will come out spontaneously as the outflow of life in every act that a man performs.

But now, especially, walk humbly with God *when your Graces are strong and vigorous*, when there has been a very clear display of them, when you have been very patient, when you have been very bold, when you have been very prayerful, when the Scriptures have opened themselves up to you, when you have enjoyed a grand season of searching the Word and, especially, when the Lord gives you success in His service, when there are more souls than usual brought to Christ, when God has made you a leader among His people and has laid His hand upon you, and said, "Go in this, your might." Then, "Walk humbly with your God." The devil will tell you when you have preached a good sermon—perhaps you will not have preached a good one when he tells you that you have, for he is a great liar—but *you* may go home wonderfully pleased with a sermon with which God is *not* pleased, and you may go home wonderfully humble about a sermon that God means to bless. But when there really does seem to be something that the Evil One tempts you to glory in, then hear this word, "Walk humbly with your God."

Next, *when you have a great deal of work to do* and the Lord is calling you to it, then, before you go to it, walk humbly with your God. Do you ask, "How?" By feeling that you are quite unfit for it, for you *are* unfit in yourself—and by feeling that you have no strength, for you have not any! When you are weak, by acknowledging your weakness, you will grow strong. Lean hard upon your God, cry to Him in prayer. Do not open your own mouth, but from your heart pray, "Open, You, my lips, and my mouth shall speak forth Your praise." Be intensely subservient to the Spirit of God. Yield yourself up to be worked upon by Him that you may work upon others. Oh, there is such a difference between a sermon preached by our own power and a sermon preached in the power of the Holy Spirit! If you do not feel the difference, my Brother, your people will soon find it out—

***"Oh, to be nothing, nothing!
Only to lie at His feet!"***

Then it is, when walking humbly with our God in service, that He will fill us and make us strong.

Next, walk humbly with God in *all your aims*. When you are seeking after anything, mind what your motive is. Even if it is the best thing, seek it only for God. If any man, or any woman, tries to work in the Sunday school, or if anyone preaches in the open-air, or in the House of God with a view of being somebody, with the idea of being thought to be a very admirable, zealous Brother or Sister, then let this word come into your ears—"Walk humbly with your God." There is a word which Jeremiah spoke to Baruch which we need to have said to ourselves sometimes—"Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not." You young men of the College, do not always be hunting up big places. Be willing to go to small places to preach the Gospel to poor people. Never mind if the Lord sends you right down to the lowest slum—go and let your aim always be this—"I do not desire for myself anything great except the greatest thing of all, that I may glorify God!" "Walk humbly with your God." You are the kind of man who will be promoted in due time if you are willing to go down. In the true Church of Christ, the way to the top is downstairs! Sink yourself into

the highest place. I say not this that even in sinking you may think of the rising—think only of your Lord's glory. "Walk humbly with your God."

Walk humbly with God, also, *in studying His Word, and in believing His Truth*. We have a number of men, nowadays, who are critics of the Bible. The Bible stands bound at their bar, no, worse than that, it lies on their table to be dissected and they have no feeling of decency towards it. They will cut out its very heart. They will rend asunder its most tender parts, even the precious Song of Solomon, or the Beloved Apostle's Gospel, or the Book of Revelation is not sacred in their eyes. They shrink from nothing—their scalpel, their knife—cuts through everything. They are the judges of what the Bible ought to be and it is deposed from its throne. God save us from that evil spirit! I desire to always sit at the feet of God in the Scriptures. I do not believe that, from one cover to the other, there is *any* mistake in it of any sort whatever, either upon natural or physical science, or upon history or anything whatever! I am prepared to believe whatever it says and to take it, believing it to be the Word of God, for if it is not all true, it is not worth one solitary penny to me. It may be to the man who is so wise that he can pick out the true from the false, but I am such a fool that I could not do that. If I do not have a Guide, here, that is Infallible, I would as soon guide myself, for I shall have to do so, after all. I shall have to be correcting the blunders of my guide, perpetually—but I am not qualified to do that and so I am worse off than if I had not any guide at all.

Sit down, Reason, and let Faith rise up! If the Lord has said it, let God be true and every man a liar! If science contradicts Scripture, so much the worse for science—the Scripture is true, whatever the theories of men may be. "Ah," you say, "you are an old-fashioned fogey." Yes, I am. I will not disclaim any compliment which you choose to pass upon me and I will stand or fall by this blessed Book! This was the mighty weapon of the Reformation—it smote the Papacy—and I shall not throw it down, whoever does. Stand still, my Brother, and listen to the voice of the Lord, and "walk humbly with your God" as to His Truth.

Walk humbly with God, next, *as to mercies received*. You were ill a short while ago and now you are getting well. Do not let pride come in because you feel that you can lift so many pounds. You are getting on in business. You wear a much better coat than you used to come here in, but do not begin to think yourself a mighty fine gentleman! Now you get into very good society, you say, but do not be ashamed to come to the Prayer Meeting along with the Lord's poor—and to sit next to one who has not had a new coat for many a day. "Walk humbly with your God," or else it may be that He will take you down a notch or two and bring you back to your old poverty—and then what will you say to yourself for your folly?

Next, walk humbly with God *under great trials*. When you are brought very low, do not kick against the pricks. When wave after wave comes, do not begin to complain. That is pride—murmur not, but bow low. Say, "Lord, if You strike me, I deserve more than You lay upon me. You have not dealt with me according to my sin. I accept the chastisement." Let not the rebellious spirit rise when a child is taken away, or when the wife is taken from your bosom, or the husband from the head of the house. Oh, no—say, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him."

And next, walk humbly with God in *your devotions, as between yourself and God* in your chamber. Do you read? Read humbly. Do you pray? Pray humbly. Do you sing? Sing joyfully, but sing humbly. Take care, when your God and yourself are together, and no one else—that when you show Him your humble heart with deep humility—that it is no more humble than it is.

And then, next, walk humbly *as between yourself and your brethren*. Ask not to be head choir master. Desire not to be the principal man in the Church. Be lowly. The best man in the Church is the man who is willing to be a doormat for all to wipe their boots on—the Brother who does not mind what happens to him at all so long as God is glorified. I have heard Brothers say, “Well, but you must stand up for your dignity.” I lost mine a long time ago and I never thought it was worth while to look for it! As to the dignity of the pastor, the dignity of the minister, if we have no dignity of character, the other is a piece of rag. We must try to earn our position in the Church of God by being willing to take the lowest place—and if we will do so, our Brethren will take care that, before long, they will say to us, “Go up higher.” In your dealings with weak Christians, with feeble Christians, do not always scold. Remember that if you are strong, now, you may very soon be as weak as your Brethren are.

And *in dealing with sinners*, “walk humbly with your God.” Do not stand a long way off, as if you loved them so much that distance lent enchantment to the view! Do you not think that, sometimes, we deal with sinners as if we would like to pluck them from the burning if there were a pair of tongs handy, but we do not care to do it if our own dainty fingers would be smutted by the brands? Ah, Beloved, we must come down from all lofty places and feel a deep and tender pity towards the lost, and so walk humbly with God!

Now, I have not time to go through all this subject *as to your circumstances*. If you are poor, if you are obscure, do not be pining after a higher place—“walk humbly with your God.” Take what He gives you. In looking back, rejoice in all His mercy and walk humbly at the recollection of all your stumbling. In looking forward, anticipate the future with delight, but do not be proudly imagining how great you will yet be made. “Walk humbly with your God.” In all your thoughts of holy things, be humble. Thoughts of God should lay you low. Thoughts of Christ should bring you to His feet. Thoughts of the Holy Spirit should make you grieve for having vexed Him. Thoughts of every Covenant blessing should make you wonder that such privileges ever came to you. Thoughts of Heaven should make you marvel that you should ever be found among the seraphim. Thoughts of Hell should make you humble—

***“For were it not for Grace Divine,
That fate so dreadful had been mine.”***

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, may the Lord help us to walk humbly with God! This will keep us right. True humility is thinking rightly of yourself, not meanly. When you have found out what you really are, you will be humble, for you are nothing to boast of. To be humble will make you safe. To be humble will make you happy. To be humble will make music in your heart when you go to bed. To be humble, here, will make you wake up in

the likeness of your Master, by-and-by. The Lord bless this word, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MICAH 6.**

Verse 1. *Hear you now what the LORD says.* And yet some doubt the Infallible Inspiration of Scripture! I would commence every reading of the Scripture with such a word of admonition as this—"Hear you now what the Lord says." That is what the Prophet said, but God spoke by the Prophet—"Hear you now what the Lord says."

1. *Arise, contend you before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.* As men were hardened and turned away their ears, the Prophet was told to speak to the mountains, those mountains which had been disfigured with the shrines of idols, with altars on every high hill, or, perhaps, those higher hills that were never cultivated and that remained untouched by the defiling hands of men. God makes an appeal to these ancient things.

2. *Hear you, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and you strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD has a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel.* It was amazing condescension on God's part that He should deign to come as a Defendant before the august court of the mountains and in the presence of the deep foundations of the earth. It is a noble conception—in poetry, most excellent—in grandeur, worthy of God. He made His appeal to the ancient hills to hear His pleading while He condescended to argue and ask His people why they had rejected their God and turned aside to idols. Then He pleaded with Israel.

3. *O My people, what have I done unto you?* "What but good, what but mercy, have I done unto you?"

3. *And wherein have I wearied you? Testify against Me.* He asks them to give any reason whatever why they had turned away from Him. Beloved Friends, have any of you, who are the people of God, grown cold in your love to Him? Are you neglecting the service of the Most High? Are you beginning to trust in an arm of flesh? Are you seeking your pleasures in the world? Have you lost the love of your espousal, your first love to your Blessed Lord? Then hear Him plead with you! Be not as Israel was, but let the *Lord* speak to you rather than to the hills—"What have I done unto you? And wherein have I wearied you? Testify against Me." O Lord, we have nothing to testify against You! We have very much to testify *for* You and we blush to think that we have not done so more often. Oh, that we had felt more love to You and had borne a bolder and more consistent testimony to Your love, Your Grace, Your faithfulness!

4. *For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of servants; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.* God constantly refers to Israel's coming out of Egypt—on every great occasion He begins, "I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." And to His people, the Lord still says, "I brought you up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery." Is it not so? Do we not still delight in His redeeming work, in the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal Lamb and in

the high hand and outstretched arm with which the Lord delivered us from the bondage of our sin? Remember that you, also, were a slave! Forget not who bought you and with what price! Remember who delivered you and led you out with mighty power! Remember this and let your cold love burn, again, and let your indifference turn to enthusiasm! O Lord, revive Your people! The Lord further says to His people, "I sent before you Moses (the Lawgiver), Aaron (the priest) and Miriam (the prophetess)." One to teach you, another to plead for you and to sacrifice for you, and the third to sing for you, to sing your song of gladness at the Red Sea. God has given to His people many ministries in many forms—and they are all concentrated in His Son who is everything to us. Oh, by the greatness of His gifts to us, let us come back to our former love to Him and to something more than that!

5. *O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that you may know the righteousness of the LORD.* Balak endeavored to get Balaam to curse the people of God, but they could not be overcome by human power. He sought to destroy them by superhuman agency, but Balaam's curses turned to blessings. God would not permit the false prophet to curse Israel and He has in our case turned the curse of the great adversary into a blessing. He has delivered us and our trials have strengthened us and taught us more of God. Will we not remember this? Shittim was the last encampment on the far side of Jordan. Gilgal was the first in the Promised Land—therefore they are united, here, with God's righteousnesses to His people, for the word is in the plural. It is a remarkable idiom—"That you may know the righteousnesses of the Lord." He is always righteous, in every way, towards everything and under every aspect! I wish we knew this, for sometimes we begin to think that He deals harshly with us. When we are severely tried, we begin to doubt the righteousness of the Lord. Remember all that He has done to you from the first day to the last, "that you may know the righteousness of the Lord." Now the plaintiff takes up the case, but he, too, turns defendant, and asks what he can do to bring about a reconciliation.

6, 7. *Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* The people will give God everything but what He wants. They begin, you see, by saying that they will bring burnt offerings—they are ready to do that. The axe shall fall upon the head of numberless young bullocks, such as God demanded under the Law. The people are ready enough for that sacrifice—and as for rams, they will shed their blood by thousands! If oil is needed for the meat offering, rivers of it shall flow! When they have offered what God would have, they offer what He would *not* have—what God abhorred and loathed—for they offered to give their first-born for their transgressions! They insulted Jehovah with the sacrifices of Moloch, with human slaughter, offering their children to obtain atonement for their sins! They were willing to go, even, to that length, and to do anything but what God wants. And men will still give to God anything but what He asks for, majestic edifices, gorgeous

services, ecstatic music, gold and silver—anything but what the Lord demands! Here is God's answer:

8. *He has showed you, O man, what is good and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?* It was a *spiritual* worship that the Lord required—not externals, not outward gifts—but the HEART! If you will bring an offering, bring *yourself*—there is no other gift that the Lord so much desires. The Prophet mentions three things that the Lord required of His people—“To do justly”—here are the equities of life. “To love mercy”—here are the kindnesses of life which are to be rendered cheerfully. The Prophet does not say, “to *do* mercy,” but to “*love*” it, to take a delight in it, to find great pleasure in the forgiveness of injuries, in the helping of the poor, in the cheering of the sick, in the teaching of the ignorant, in the winning back of sinners to the ways of God. “And to walk humbly with your God.” These are the things which please Him. And when we are in Christ and He becomes our righteousness, these are the sacrifices with which God is well-pleased. They make an offering of a sweet smell, a holy incense which we may present before Him. Talk no more of your outward ordinances, your will-worship with abundance of music, or human eloquence and learning and what-not. These things do not delight the Lord—no offering is acceptable unless the outward conduct shows that the *heart* is right with Him.

9. *The LORD'S voice cries unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see Your name: hear you the rod, and who has appointed it.* God's voice to His people is often uttered by means of their affliction—“Hear you the rod.” He wishes us to understand that judgments and calamities are His voice crying to the city. Oh, that we were men of wisdom, that we would hear what God has to say! Alas, Israel did not hear and Judah would not listen, even, to God's own voice!

10. *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?* Here He comes to practical details. In Micah's day, men had grown rich by oppression, by a lack of justice—they had wronged their fellow men—and God asked them whether they expected to be pleasing to Him when their houses were full of treasure which they had virtually stolen by giving scant measure and short weight. God condescends even to point out these minute particulars of moral conduct and so should His servants. It is not for us, His ministers, to be soaring into the clouds, to astonish you with the grandeur of our thoughts and words—but to come to your shops, to look at your bushel-measures and your pecks, your yardsticks and your weights!

11, 12. *Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouths.* They were, I suppose, very much what Orientals still are. You cannot trade with them without having need of more than two eyes. Their price has to be beaten down and their quantities must be counted. God would not have His people like this. He says nothing about the Moabites or the Babylonians doing this, but for His people to do it was very grievous to Him.

13. *Therefore also will I make you sick in smiting you, in making you desolate because of your sins.* They lied and they cheated—so God would

give them a sorry tongue, betokening their ill health. He would make their present distress to get worse and worse till they should be sick through their wounds.

14. *You shall eat, but not be satisfied.* The satisfaction that comes to us through eating is of His mercy and when He wills, He can say, "You shall eat, but not be satisfied."

14. *And your casting down shall be in the midst of you.* "You shall feel an inward sinking—even when you have eaten, you shall be faint—as a man who has eaten nothing."

14. *And you shall take hold, but shall not deliver; and that which you deliver will I give up to the sword.* So that in every project they would be disappointed—in every design they would be frustrated because God would be against them.

15. *You shall sow, but you shall not reap; you shall tread the olives, but you shall not anoint you with oil; and sweet wine, but shall not drink wine.* God can let men have every form of outward prosperity and yet make nothing of it. I fear that some, perhaps some present, have every outward religious blessing yet nothing comes of it. You hear sermons, you come to meetings, you tread the olives, but you are not anointed with the oil. The grapes are in the wine vat, but you drink not the wine. God save us from that sad condition!

16. *For the statutes of Omri are kept.* They would not keep the statutes of God, but they kept the foul statutes of Omri, which appear to have been especially objectionable to God.

16. *And all the works of the house of Ahab, and you walk in their counsels.* He was an arch rebel against God. Remember his murder of Naboth to get his vineyard? And these people followed his evil example.

16. *That I should make you a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore you shall bear the reproach of My people.* Very hard was it to bear that reproach when there would be none of the comforts of the Spirit to go with it. There are some professors who bear the reproach of Christ, but will never share His crown—that is a fearful state of things. Gladly enough would we take up that reproach that we may be truly His. But if we profess to be God's people and act inconsistently, we shall bear all the reproach, but have nothing to sustain us under it. O Lord, in Your mercy, save us from this!

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

FAST-DAY SERVICE

NOS. 154, 155

**HELD AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE, SYDENHAM,
ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.**

**Being the Day appointed by Proclamation for a Solemn Fast,
Humiliation and Prayer before Almighty God—in order to obtain
Pardon of our Sins and for imploring His Blessing and Assistance
on our Arms for the Restoration of Tranquility in India.**

BRIEF INVOCATION

O GOD, the God of Heaven and of earth, we do this day pay You reverence and meekly bow our heads in adoration before Your awful Throne. We are the creatures of Your hand. You have made us and not we ourselves. It is but just and right that we should pay You our adoration. O God, we are met together in a vast congregation for a purpose which demands all the power of piety and all the strength of prayer. Send down Your Spirit upon Your servant, that he, while trembling in weakness, may be made strong to preach Your Word, to lead forth this people in holy prayer and to help them in that humiliation for which this day is set apart.

Come, O God, we beseech You. We bow our hearts before You. Instead of sackcloth and ashes give us true repentance and hearts meekly reverent. Instead of the outward guise, to which some pay their only homage, give us the *inward spirit*. And may we really pray, really humble ourselves and really tremble before the Most High God. Sanctify this service. Make it useful unto us and honorable to Yourself. And O You dread Supreme, unto You shall be the glory and the honor, world without end. Amen.

Let us now praise God by singing the first Hymn. I shall read it through and then, perhaps, you will be kind enough to sing it through—

***“BEFORE Jehovah’s awful throne,
You nations bow with sacred joy.
Know that the Lord is God alone
He can create and He destroy.
His sovereign power, without our aid,
Made us of clay and formed us men!
And when like wandering sheep, we strayed,
He brought us to His fold again.
We are His people, we His care,***

Our souls and all our mortal frame.

**What lasting honors shall we bear,
Almighty Maker to Your name?
We'll crowd Your gates with thankful songs,
High as the Heavens our voices raise.
And earth with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill Your courts with sounding praise.
Wide as the world is Your command,
Vast as eternity Your love,
Firm as a rock Your Truth must stand,
When rolling years shall cease to move."**

EXPOSITION

DANIEL 9:1-19

1. *"In the first year of Darius the Son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;*
2. *"In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years, whereof the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the Prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*
3. *"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.*
4. *"And I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the Covenant and mercy to them that love Him and to them that keep His Commandments,;*
5. *"We have sinned and have committed iniquity and have done wickedly and have rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and from Your judgments.*
6. *"Neither have we hearkened unto Your servants the Prophets, which spoke Your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers and to all the people of the land.*
7. *"O Lord, righteousness belongs unto You but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day. To the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and unto all Israel, that are near and that are far off, through all the countries where You have driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against You.*
8. *"O Lord, to us belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You.*
9. *"To the Lord OUR God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him."*

There is the first bright star which shines in the midst of the darkness of our sins. God is merciful. He is just—as just as if He were not merciful. He is merciful—as merciful as if He were not just and in very deed more

merciful than if He were too lenient. My Brethren, we should rejoice that we have not this day to address the gods of the heathens. You have not today to bow down before the thundering Jove. You need not come before implacable deities who delight in the blood of their creatures, or rather, of the creatures whom it is pretended that they have made.

Our God delights in mercy and in the deliverance of Britain from its ills. God will be as much pleased as Britain. Yes, when Britain shall have forgotten it and only the page of history shall record His mercies, God will still remember what He did for us in this day of our straits and our difficulties. As to the hope that He will help us it is a certainty. There is no fear that when we unite in prayer God will refuse to hear. It is as sure as that there is a God, that God will hear us. And if we ask Him aright, the day shall come when the world shall see what Britain's God has done and how He has heard her cry and answered the voice of her supplications.

10. *“Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the Prophets.*

11. *“Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your Law, even by departing, that they might not obey Your voice. Therefore the curse is poured upon us and the oath that is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.*

12. *“And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil—for under this whole Heaven has not been done as has been done upon Jerusalem.*

13. *“As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us—yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your Truth.*

14. *“Therefore has the Lord watched upon the evil and brought it upon us—for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He does—for we obeyed not His voice.*

15. *“And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have gotten You renown, as at this day. We have sinned, we have done wickedly.”* The Prophet in his prayer pleads what God has done for them as the reason why He should make bare His arm. He tells how God delivered Israel out of Egypt. And he therefore prays that God would deliver them from their present trouble. And, my Brethren, not Israel itself could boast a nobler history than we, measuring it by God's bounties. We have not yet forgotten an armada scattered before the breath of Heaven, scattered upon the angry deep as a trophy of what God can do to protect His favored Isle.

We have not yet forgotten a fifth of November, wherein God discovered many plots that were formed against our religion and our commonwealth.

We have not yet lost the old men, whose tales of even the victories in war are still a frequent story. We remember how God swept before our armies the man who thought to make the world his dominion, who designed to cast his shoe over Britain and make it a dependency of his kingdom. God worked for us. He worked with us. And He will continue to do so.

He has not left His people and He will not leave us but He will be with us even to the end. Cradle of liberty! Refuge of distress! Storms may rage around you but not upon you, nor shall all the wrath and fury of men destroy you—for God has pitched His tabernacle in your midst and His saints are the salt in the midst of you.

16. *“O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I beseech You, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain—because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are become a reproach to all that are about us.*

17. *“Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Your servant and his supplications and cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake.*

18. *“O my God, incline Your ear and hear. Open Your eyes and behold our desolations and the city which is called by Your name—for we do not present our supplications before You for our righteousnesses but for Your great mercies.*

19. *“O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O lord, hearken and do. Defer not, for Your own sake, O my God—for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”*

And now for a few moments let us endeavor to pray—“OUR Father, which are in Heaven,” we will be brief but we will be earnest if You will help us. We have a case to spread before You this day. We will tell our story and we will pray that You would forgive the weakness of the words in which it shall be delivered and hear us, for Jesus’ sake.

O Father, You have smitten this our land, not in itself but in one of its dependencies. You have allowed a mutinous spirit to break out in our armies and You have suffered men who know You not, who fear neither God nor man, to do deeds for which earth may well blush and for which we, as men, desire to cover our faces before You. O Lord God, You could not bear the sin of Sodom. We are sure You can not endure the sin which has been committed in India. You did rain Hell out of Heaven upon the cities of the plain. The cities of India are not less vile than they, for they have committed lust and cruelty and have much sinned against the Lord. Remember this, O God of Heaven.

But, O Lord our God, we are not here to be the accusers of our fellow man. We are here to pray that You would remove the scourge which this great wickedness has brought upon us. Look down from Heaven, O God

and behold this day the slaughtered thousands of our countrymen. Behold the wives, the daughters of Britain, violated, defiled! Behold her sons, cut in pieces and tormented in a manner which earth has not beheld before. O God, free us, we beseech You, from this awful scourge! Give strength to our soldiers to execute upon the criminals the sentence which justice dictates. And then, by Your strong arm and by Your terrible might, we ask You to prevent a repetition of so fearful an outrage.

We pray You, remember this day the widow and the fatherless children. Think You of those who are this day distressed even to the uttermost. Guide the hearts of this great multitude that they may liberally give and this day bestow of their substance to their poor destitute Brethren. Remember especially our soldiers, now fighting in that land. God, shield them! Be a cover from the heat! Will You be pleased to mitigate all the rigors of the climate for them? Lead them on to battle. Cheer their hearts—bid them remember that they are not warriors merely but executioners.

And may they go with steady tramp to the battle, believing that God wills it that they should utterly destroy the enemy, who have not only defied Britain but thus defiled themselves among men. But, O Lord, it is ours this day to humble ourselves before You. We are a sinful nation. We confess the sins of our governors and our own particular iniquities. For all our rebellions and transgressions, O God have mercy upon us! We plead the blood of Jesus. Help everyone of us to repent of sin, to fly to Christ for refuge and grant that each one of us may thus hide ourselves in the Rock, till the calamity is over, knowing that God will not desert them that put their trust in Jesus.

Your servant is overwhelmed this day. His heart is melted like wax in Your midst. He knows not how to pray. Yet Lord if You can hear a groaning heart which cannot utter itself in words, hear his strong impassioned cry, in which the people join. Lord save us! Lord arise and bless us. And let the might of Your arm and the majesty of Your strength be now revealed in the midst of this land and throughout those countries which are in our dominion. God save the Queen! A thousand blessings on her much-loved head! God preserve our country!

May every movement that promotes liberty and progress be accelerated and may everything be done in our midst which can shield us from the discontent of the masses and can protect the masses from the oppression of the few. Bless England, O our God. “Shine, mighty God, on Your Britain.” And make her still glorious Britain, “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” Lord accept our confessions. Hear our prayers and answer us by Your Holy Spirit! Help Your servant to preach to us. And all

the glory shall be unto You, O Father, to You, O Son and You, O Holy Spirit. World without end. Amen and Amen.

Let us now sing the second hymn. It is made up of verses selected from different Psalms, which I thought to be appropriate to the occasion—

***“OUR God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.
Under the shadow of Your Throne,
Your saints have dwelt secure
Sufficient is Your arm alone,
And our defense is sure.
Our foes insult us but our hope
In Your compassion lies
This thought shall bear our spirits up,
That God will not despise.
In vain the sons of Satan boast
Of armies in array
When God has first despised their host,
They fall an easy prey.
Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come
Be You our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.”***

Hoping to receive help from God’s Holy Spirit, I shall now proceed to address you from a part of the 9th verse of the 6th chapter of Micah—

SERMON

***“Hear you the rod and who has appointed it.”
Micah 6:9***

THIS world is not the place of punishment for sin. Not *the* place. It may sometimes be a place but not usually. It is very customary among religious people to talk of every accident which happens to men in the indulgence of sin, as if it were a *judgment*. The upsetting of a boat upon a river on a Sunday is assuredly understood to be a judgment for the sin of Sabbath-breaking. In the accidental fall of a house, in which persons were engaged in any unlawful occupation, the inference is at once drawn that the house fell because they were wicked.

Now, however some religionists may hope to impress the people by such childish stories as those, I, for one, forswear them all. I believe what my Master says is true when He declared, concerning the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, that they were not sinners above all the sinners that were upon the face of the earth. They were sinners. There is

no doubt about it. But the falling of the wall was not occasioned by their sin, nor was their premature death the consequence of their excessive wickedness.

Let me, however, guard this declaration, for there are many who carry this doctrine to an extreme. Because God does not usually visit each particular offense in this life upon the transgressor, men are apt to deny altogether the doctrine of judgments. But here *they* are mistaken. I feel persuaded that there *are* such things as *national* judgments, *national* chastisements for *national* sins—great blows from the rod of God—which every wise man must acknowledge to be either a punishment for sin committed, or a monition to warn us to a sense of the consequences of sins—leading us by God’s grace to humble ourselves and repent of our sin.

O, my Friends, what a rod is that which has just fallen upon our country! My poor words will fall infinitely short of the fearful tale of misery and woe which must be told before you can know how smartly God has smitten and how sternly He has chided us. We have today to mourn over revolted subjects, for today a part of our fellow-countrymen are in open arms against our government. That, of itself, were a heavy blow. Happily the government of this land is so constituted that we know little of revolutions except by name.

But the horrors of anarchy, the terrors of a government shaken to its foundations are so great, that should I preach alone upon that subject, you might hear the rod and cry aloud beneath its strokes. But this is as but the letting forth of water. A flood succeeds. The men that have revolted were our subjects and I challenge all the world to deny what I am going to say—they were our subjects rightly. Whatever the inhabitants of India might be (and undoubtedly that people have grave faults to find with us), the Sepoys had voluntarily given themselves up to our dominion.

They had themselves taken oaths of fealty to Her Majesty and their officers and they have no cause to murmur if they are made to endure the sentence uttered by a government of which they were the sworn and willing supporters. They were always petted, always rocked upon the knee of favoritism. Their revolt is not the revolt of a nation. If India had revolted, history might perhaps have taught us that she had patriots in her midst who were delivering her from a tyrannical nation. But in the present case it is only men who are impelled by a lust and ambition for an empire who have risen against us. And, ah, my Friends, what crimes have they committed!

Not today shall I detail their acts of debauchery, bloodshed and worse than bestiality—this tongue will not venture to utter what they have dared to do. You would rise from your seats and hiss me from the pulpit which I

now occupy if I should but dare to hint at the crimes which have been done by them—not in secret but in the very streets of their cities! And, again, equally as painful, we have now rebels to be executed. I look upon every gallows as a fearful chastisement. I regard every gibbet as being a dreadful visitation upon our land. And I think that whenever the arm of the ruler is outstretched for the punishment of death it must always be looked upon by the country as a serious affliction to it.

Just as the father thinks it a high affliction to chastise his child, so should a country ever esteem it to be a visitation when they have to punish, especially with the punishment of death. Now, these men must be punished. Both Heaven and earth demand it. I am no soldier, I love not war. I do not believe that this is a war at all, in the proper sense of the term. We are not fighting with enemies. Our troops are going forth against revolted *subjects*—against men who, by their crimes, by their murder and by other unmentionable sins, have incurred the punishment of death.

And as the arrest of a murderer by authority of the Law is not war, so the arrest of Indian Sepoys and their utter destruction is not war—it is what earth demands and what I believe God sanctions. But it is a horrible necessity. It is a dreadful thing to think of taking away the lives of our fellow subjects. We must look upon *it* as being an *affliction*—and, today, among the other evils that we bemoan, we must bemoan this—that the sword must be taken out of its sheath to cut off our fellow subjects by their thousands.

The rod, *the rod*, THE ROD has indeed fallen heavily! No mortal tongue can tell the anguish it has caused, nor perhaps can we yet dream where its ill effects shall end. Remember, however, the words of my text. It is a rod. But it is an *appointed* rod. Every deed that has been done against us has been appointed by God. God is most fully to be cleared from the sin of it but it is undoubtedly true that He has overruled and permitted it. The rod was ordained of God. I myself see God everywhere. I believe that “the foreknown station of a rush by the river is as fixed as the station of a king and the chaff from the hand of the winnower as steered as the stars in their courses.”

And I see God in this war. The wheels of Providence may revolve in a mysterious manner but I am certain that wisdom is the axle upon which they revolve—so that at last it shall be seen that God, who ordained the rod—only permitted it that greater good might follow and that His name might be exalted through the earth. The *sin* is man’s own deed, but the affliction that we suffer through it, God has ordained. Let us bow before it and let us now hearken to the exhortation of the text—“Hear you the rod and Him that has appointed it.”

I shall have your attention while as briefly as I can I endeavor to bid you hear this rod of God.

First, let me remark it would have been as well if we had heard this rod BEFORE IT FELL upon us. God's rod by the wise man may be heard before it smites. He that understands God's moral government knows that sin carries punishment in its heart. A wise man believing Revelation, could have prophesied that God would visit us. The sins of the government of India have been black and deep. He who has heard the shrieks of tormented natives, who has heard the well-provoked cursing of dethroned princes might have prophesied that it would not be long before God would unsheathe His sword to avenge the oppressed.

With regard to India itself, I am no apologist for our dominion there. With regard to the Sepoys, they are our voluntary subjects—they deserve the utmost rigor of the Law. From their own oath they were our subjects. And if they have revolted let them suffer the punishment of their treason. But had it been the Indian nation that had revolted, I would have prayed God that they might have been brought under British rule again for the sake of civilization. But I would not have preached a crusade against them, lest haply we should have been smiting patriots who were but delivering an oppressed country.

My Brethren, I say it would have been as well if the rod had been heard before it fell. If in the midst of sin the Indian government had paused and endeavored to undo the evil, it would have been well for them—if instead of following the policy of creed they had followed the policy of right, they might have looked for Divine support. They never ought to have tolerated the religion of the Hindus at all. I believe myself (for it in no way infringes the Law of right) entitled to my religion. But if my religion consisted in bestiality, infanticide and murder, I should have no right to my religion, unless I were prepared to be hanged for it.

Now, the religion of the Hindus is neither more nor less than a mass of the rankest filth that ever imagination could have conceived. The gods they worship are not entitled to the least atom of respect. Had they given a decent character to their demons we might have tolerated their idolatry. But when their worship necessitates everything that is evil, not religion but morality must put it down. I do not believe that in this land there ever ought to have been any toleration for the Agapemone, a place of lust and abomination, where sin is committed before which God's sun might blush.

Any religion that does not infringe upon morality is beyond the force of legislature. But when once religious teachers teach immorality and when once a religion compels men to sin, down with it! No toleration to it. It is impossible that there should be any quarter strewn to vice, even though embellished with the name of religion. If it is any man's religion to blow

my brains out, I shall not tolerate it. If it is any man's religion to meet me as the thugs do and murder me, I shall not tolerate his Thugism. If it is a man's religion to commit bestial acts in public, I for one would touch his conscience, but believing that he has none, I would touch him somewhere else.

Such a religion as the religion of the Hindu, the Indian Government were bound, as in the sight of God, to put down with all the strength of their hand. But they have allowed it, in some cases they have even aided and abetted their filthy deeds. And now God visits them. And, I repeat, it would have been well if they had heard the rod before it fell. They might have perhaps avoided all this evil and certainly they would have avoided the remorse which some of them must feel in having thus brought it upon themselves.

But it *has* fallen. The rod has smitten. The scourge has plowed deep furrows upon India's back. What then? "Hear you the rod" that has fallen. Now, it is an opinion published by authority—and who am I, that I should dispute the great authorities of England?—that one part of the reason for this dreadful visitation is the sin of the people of England themselves. We are exhorted this day to humble ourselves for sin. Granting that as being a truth—and mark, I am not the originator of it. It is in the Proclamation—who am I, that I should dispute such a high authority as that?

The Proclamation states it is our sin that has brought this on us. So they say—what, then, are our sins? Now, I will be honest with you—as honest as I can and I will try and tell you. What are the most glaring sins for which—if it is true that God is now punishing us—what are the most likely sins to have brought this visitation upon us?

First, there are sins in the community that never ought to have been allowed. O Britain, weep for deeds which your governors have not yet strength of mind to stop. We have long been allowing the infamous nuisances of Holywell Street. Bless God they are pretty well done for! But now what do I see every night? If I return from preaching in the country—in the Haymarket and in Regent Street, what stares me before my eyes? If there is a crime for which God will visit England, it is the sin of allowing infamy to walk before our eyes thus publicly.

I do not know whose fault it is—some say it is the fault of the police—it is somebody's fault—that I do know and against that somebody I do now most solemnly protest. It is a most fearful thing that those who are honest and moral cannot walk the streets without being insulted by sin in the robes of the harlot. My voice perhaps this day may reach some who have power to repeat this protest powerfully and successfully. I see before me gentlemen who are the representatives of the press. I believe they will do

their duty in that matter. And if they will sting as some of them can sting, right sharply, they perhaps may be able to sting a little virtue into some of our governors and that will be a good thing.

But I do protest that this has been one of the causes why God has visited us, if indeed our sins have brought this evil upon us, as I verily believe. Look you, too, men and Brethren, at some of those amusements of yours, in which you are likely to indulge. God forbid I should deny you those of your amusements which are innocent but I must maintain that they should be always moral. When we know that lords and ladies of the land have sat in playhouses and listened to plays that were a long way from decent, it is time that some voice should be lifted up against them. These are glaring sins. I am not raking now for private faults. We have had these things before our eyes and there have been some that have dared to protest against them long ago. I say, these sins of the community in part have brought the rod upon us.

But, my Friends, I am inclined to think that our *class sins* are the most grievous. Behold this day the sins of the rich. How are the poor oppressed! How are the needy downtrodden! In many a place the average wage of men is far below their value to their masters. In this age there is many a great man who looks upon his fellows as only stepping stones to wealth. He builds a factory as he would make a cauldron. He is about to make a brew for his own wealth. "Pitch him in." He is only a poor clerk, he can live on a hundred a year. *Put him in!*

There is a poor time-keeper—he has a large family. It does not matter. A man can be had for less—in *with him!* Here are the tens, the hundreds and the thousands that must do the work. *Put them in.* Heap the fire, boil the cauldron, stir them up. Never mind their cries. The cry of the laborers kept back may go up to Heaven—it does not matter, the millions in gold are safe. The law of supply and demand is with us, who is he that would interfere? Who shall dare to prevent the grinding of the faces of the poor?

Cotton lords and great masters ought to have power to do what they like with the people—ought they not? Ah, but you great men of the earth, there is a God and that God has said He executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. And yet the seamstress in her garret and yet the tailor in his den and yet the artisan in his crowded factory and yet the servants who earn your wealth, who have to groan under your oppression, shall get the ear of God and He will visit you. "Hear you the rod." It is for this the rod falls on you.

Mark, again, the sins of merchants. Was there ever an age when the merchants of England had more fallen from their integrity? The mass of them, I believe, are honest to the core. But I do not know who among them are so. We can trust none in these times. You heap up your

companies and you delude your myriads. You gather the money of fools. You scatter it to the winds of Heaven and when the poor call upon you, you tell them it is gone—but where? O, England, you were once true, upright, honest! Men could not rightly call you, then, “Perfidious Albion.”

But now, O Britain, alas, for you! Unless you do recover yourself, who can trust you? God will visit the nation for this and it shall be seen that this alone is one of the things which God would have us hear, when we hear the rod. There are many of you that are poor. I saw you smile when I spoke to the rich. I will have at you also. If we are to humble ourselves this day as a nation, you have cause also to be humbled. Ah, my God, what multitudes there are of men who deserve but little of their employers, for they are eye-servers, men-pleasers and do not with singleness of heart serve the Lord.

Were men better workmen, their masters would be better. There are hundreds of you that are here today who are the best hands in all the world to prop up walls, when you ought to be busy at your own work—who, when your time is bought and paid for, steal it for something else. And how many there are in what are called the lower ranks—and God forgive the man that invented that word, for we are none of us lower than the other before the Judge of all the earth—how many are there that do not know what it is to look up to God and say, “Though He has made me a servant, I will discharge my duty and I will serve my master and serve my God with all my might.”

Many are the sins of the poor. Humble yourselves with the rich. Bow your heads and weep for your iniquities. For these things God does visit us and you should hear the rod. It is impossible for me today to enter into all the sins of illiberality, of deceit, of bigotry, of lasciviousness, of carnality, of pride, of covetousness and of laziness which infest this land. I have tried to indicate some of the chief and I pray God humble us for all for them.

And now, “Hear you the rod.” O Church of God, the rod has fallen and *the Church* ought to hear it. I am afraid that it is the *Church* that has been the greatest sinner. Do I mean by “the Church” that established by Law? No, I mean the Christian Church as a body. *We*, I believe, have been remiss in our duty. For many and many a year pulpits never condescended to men of low estate. Our ministers were great and haughty. They understood the polish of rhetoric, they had all the grandeur of logic. To the people they were blind guides and dumb dogs—for the people knew not what they said—neither did they regard them.

The churches themselves slumbered. They wrapped themselves in a shroud of orthodoxy and they slept right on. And while Satan was devouring the world and taking his prey, the Church sat still and said,

“Who is my neighbor?” and did not arouse herself to serve her God. I do hope that we have already seen the beginning of a revival. The last year has seen more preaching than any year since the days of the Apostles. We are stirring in ragged schools and in various efforts for doing good. But still the Church is only half awake. I fear she still slumbers. O Church of God! Awake! Awake! Awake! for verily the rod has fallen for *your* sake. “Hear you the rod and Him that has appointed it.”

We have had many rods, Friends. We have had many great afflictions and we did bear them for a time. And now I close my sermon by saying, “Hear you the rod, when the rod SHALL AGAIN BE STILL.” We trust that in a little while our soldiers will carve us out peace and victory with their triumphant swords. We trust that perhaps this very day a great fight is being fought and a great victory being won. I seem to hear today the shout of the triumphant warrior. I think I hear the trump of victory even now. The hour of prayer is often the hour of deliverance.

At any rate, we hope that before long this black cloud will be overblown and then I fear you will all forget it. You will pray *today*—will you pray when victory comes? You will buy some fireworks, will you not? That is how you will thank God! You had a victory over a potent enemy and peace was established—your votive offerings consisted of rockets and illuminations—grand offerings to the Dread Supreme! If a heathen were here he would say, “Their God is the God of humiliation, not the God of victory—their God is a God of trouble, certainly not the God of blessings, for they forget Him when they receive deliverance.”

I remember, when last time the cholera swept through your streets—you hurried to your Churches and you prayed. Terror sat upon your countenances and many of you cried aloud for deliverance. It came. What did you do? Alas, for your piety! It was as the morning cloud and as the early dew—it passed away. It will be so again. It is but as the lashing of the water. It is smitten but it soon recovers itself and all marks are erased. It is so with this land. I fear it is so with each of us to a degree. How often have you and I been laid upon our beds with cholera, or with fever, or with some other disease which threatened to take us away! We prayed. We sent for the minister. We devoted ourselves to God. We vowed if He would spare us, we would live better.

Here you are, my Hearer, just what you were before your sickness. You have forgotten your vow. But *God has not forgotten it*. Your resolutions were filed in Heaven and in the Day of Judgment God shall take them forth and say, “Here is one solemn Covenant broken. Here is another vow forgotten, another resolution made in sickness broken after recovery!” I do think that today will be a most solemn mockery if our humiliation ends today. With some of you it will not even begin today and therefore, it will

not end, for it is not begun. But the mass who will pray today—will they pray in a week?

Not they. They will go their way to heap again the fire wood of their sins upon the pile of vengeance and still stand by and weep, because the fire is burning, the fire which they themselves have kindled. Oh, my Hearers, permit me to charge home to your hearts. And would God that He would make the charge of my language against your consciences as heavy as the charge of British soldiers against the enemy! How many of you have been awakened, convicted of sin, of righteousness and of judgment? How many times have you vowed you would repent? How many times have you declared that you did hear the rod and that you would turn to God?

And yet you have been liars to the Almighty. You have defrauded the Most High. And while the bill is due it still stands dishonored. Tremble! God may smite you yet. And if today you are despisers of Christ—remember you have no guarantee that you will be in this world another hour. You may before this sun is set stand before your Maker's bar. What then? What then? What then? To perish *forever* is no light matter. To be cast into the flames of Hell is no little consideration. "Turn you, turn you, turn you. Why will you die, O house of Israel!"

Repent! "The times of your ignorance God winked at but now commands all men everywhere to repent." And remember that when He *gives* you repentance and faith He has appended the blessing to them. "Jesus Christ of the seed of David" was nailed to a Cross. He died that we might *not* die and to every Believer Heaven's gate is open, to every penitent the path to Paradise is *free*. Sinner! Do you believe? If so, Christ has blotted out your sin. Be happy! Soul! Do you repent? You are safe. God has helped you to repent and inasmuch as He has done it, He has proved that He loves you.

Oh, if I might but have some souls won to Christ today, what would I give? What is all this great gathering to me? It is an extra labor, that is all. For this I do not labor. God is my witness, I sought you not. Never once have I said a thing to court a smile from any man. When God first sent me to the ministry He bade me fear no man and I have not yet met the man to whom I have feared to tell of God's Gospel. Nor have I sought to please you, nor have I sought to gather you here. I would preach the Gospel—may God give me some souls as my reward! And if but one poor sinner shall look to Jesus, clap your wings, you angels! Enough is done, for God is honored. I have done my sermon but I want to make an appeal to you to give liberally.

Lives there a man in England who will this day refuse his help to those of his countrymen who have suffered? No. There does not live such a man—not such a Briton. Is there a miserable miscreant without a heart,

who will—when God has given him enough—shut up his heart of compassion against those whose sons and daughters have been murdered and who themselves have escaped as by the skin of their *teeth*? No, I will not slander you by such a supposition. I cannot think that I have such a monster here. When the box shall pass round, give—give as you can afford. If it be a penny, let the working man give. You that are rich must not give pence, however.

Many a man has said, “There is my mite.” He was worth a hundred thousand pounds and it was not a mite at all. If he had given a thousand it would only have been a mite to him. Give as you can afford. May God be pleased to grant a liberal spirit.

The following Chorus was then sung—

**“GLORY, honor, praise and power,
Be unto the Lamb forever.
Jesus Christ is our Redeemer,
Hallelujah. Amen.”**

After which, the benediction having been pronounced, the service terminated. There were upwards of 24,000 persons present at this service. And the amount collected towards the Indian Relief Fund amounted to nearly £500, of which £25 was given by Miss Nightingale. The Crystal Palace Company contributed £200 in addition—making a total of nearly £725.

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

RIPE FRUIT

NO. 945

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 14, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“My soul desired the first ripe fruit.”
Micah 7:1.*

THE nation of Israel had fallen into so sad and backsliding a condition—it was not like a vine covered with fruit, but like a vineyard after the whole vintage has been gathered—there was not to be found a single cluster. Not one righteous man could be found, not one to be trusted or found faithful to God. The whole state had become like a field that has been closely reaped, in which nothing remains but the stubble—like a vineyard that has been completely stripped, in which there remains no vestige of fruit.

The Prophet, speaking in the name of Israel, desired the first ripe fruits, but there were none to be had. The lesson of the text, as it stands, would be that good men are the best fruit of a nation—they make it worth while that the nation should exist. They are the salt which preserves it, they are the fruit which adorns it and blesses it. Pray we then for our country, that God will continually raise up a righteous seed, a faithful band, who, for His name's sake, shall be a sweet savor unto God, for whose sake He may bless the whole land.

But I mean to take our text out of its connection and use it as the heading of a discourse upon ripeness in Divine Grace. I think we can all use the words of Micah in another sense, when he said, “My soul desired the first ripe fruit.” We would desire not to be merely the green blade, we desire to be the full corn in the ear. We would not merely show forth the blossoms of repentance and the young buds of struggling faith, but we would go on to maturity and bring forth fruit unto perfection, to the honor and praise of Jesus Christ.

This morning, then, I speak about ripeness in Grace, maturity in the Divine life, fruit ready to be gathered—and our first point shall be the marks of this ripeness. The second, the causes that work together to create this ripeness. The third, the desirability of the ripeness. The fourth, the solemnity of the whole subject.

I. First, then, let us speak upon THE MARKS OF RIPENESS IN GRACE. Let us begin with the mark of beauty. There is a great beauty in a fruit tree when it is in bloom. Perhaps there is no more lovely object in all nature than the apple blossom. But this beauty soon fades—one shower of rain, one descent of hail, one puff of the north wind—and very soon the

blossoms fall like snow. And if they remain their full time, speedily, indeed, in any case, they must withdraw from view.

Much loveliness adorns youthful piety. The love of his espousals, his first love, his first zeal, all make the newborn Believer comely. Can anything be more delightful than our first graces? Even God Himself delights in the beauty of the blossoming Believer. "I remember you," says He, "the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." Autumn has a more sober aspect, but still it rivals the glory of spring. Ripe fruit has its own peculiar beauty. As the fruit ripens, the sun tints it with surpassing loveliness and the colors deepen till the beauty of the fruit is equal to the beauty of the blossom, and in some respects is superior.

What a delicacy of bloom there is upon the grape, the peach, the plum, when they have attained perfection! Nature far excels art, and all the attempts of the modeler in wax cannot reach the marvelous blends of color, the matchless tints of the ripe fruit, worthy of Eden before the Fall. It is another sort of beauty altogether from that of the blossom, yielding to the eye of the farmer, who has the care of the garden, a fairer sight by far. The perfumed bloom yields in value to the golden apple, even as promise is surpassed by fulfillment. The blossom is painted by the pencil of hope, but the fruit is dyed in the hue of enjoyment.

There is in ripe Christians the beauty of realized sanctification which the Word of God knows by the name of "the beauty of holiness." This consecration to God, this setting apart for His service, this watchful avoidance of evil, this careful walking in integrity, this dwelling near to God, this being made like unto Christ—in a word, this beauty of holiness is one of the surest emblems of maturity in Grace. You have no ripe fruit if you are not holy.

If your passions are still not subdued, if still you are carried about by every wind of temptation—if still, "Lo here, and lo there," will attract you to the right hand and to the left, you have not reached to anything like maturity—perhaps you are not even fruit unto God at all. But where holiness is perfected in the fear of God, and the Christian is at least striving after perfect holiness—and aiming to be conformed to the image of Christ—one of the marks of the ripe fruit is plainly present.

Another mark is never absent in a mature Believer—namely, the weight which is evidenced in humility. Look at the corn in the field, it holds its head erect while it is green, but when the ear is filled and matured, it hangs its head in graceful humbleness. Look at your fruit trees, how their blossoming branches shoot up towards the sky, but when they begin to be loaded with fruit, since the riper the fruit the greater its weight, the branch begins to bow, until it needs oftentimes to be propped up and to be supported, lest it break away from the stem. Weight comes with maturity, lowliness of mind is the inevitable consequence.

Growing Christians think themselves nothing. Full-grown Christians know that they are *less* than nothing. The nearer we are to Heaven in

point of sanctification, the more we mourn our infirmities, and the humbler is our estimate of ourselves. Lightly laden vessels float high in the water, heavy cargo sinks the boat to the water's edge. The more Grace, the more the need of Grace is felt. He may boast of his Grace who has none. He may talk much of his Grace who has little, but he who is rich in Grace cries out for more, and forgets that which is behind.

When a man's inward life flows like a river, he thinks only of the Source, and cries before his God, "All my fresh springs are in You." He who abounds in holiness feels more than ever that in him, that is in his flesh, there dwells no good thing. You are not ripened, my Brothers and Sisters, while you have a high esteem of yourself. He who glories in himself is but a babe in Christ, if indeed he is in Christ at all. When you shall see death written on the creature, and see all your life in Christ. When you shall perceive even your holy things to have iniquity in them, and see all your perfectness in Him who is altogether lovely. When you shall lie prostrate at the foot of the Throne, and only rise to sit and reign in Him who is your All, then are you ripening, but not till then.

Another mark of ripeness which everyone perceives in fruit, and by which, indeed, the maturity of many fruits is tested, is tenderness. The young green fruit is hard and stone-like. But the ripe fruit is soft, yields to pressure, can almost be molded, retains the mark of the finger. So is it with the mature Christian—he is noted for tenderness of spirit. Beloved, I think if I must miss any good thing, I would give up many of the Graces if I might possess very much tenderness of spirit. I am persuaded that many Christians violate the delicacy of their consciences, and there lose much of true excellence.

Do you not remember, my Brothers and Sisters, when you used to be afraid to put one foot before another for fear you should tread in the wrong place? I wish we always felt in that same manner. You remember when you were afraid to open your mouth lest, perhaps, you should say something that would grieve the Spirit? I would we were always so self-diffident. "Open You my lips"—I am afraid to open them myself. "Open You my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise."

An extreme delicacy concerning sin should be cultivated by us all. When the Believer can listen to a song with a lasciviousness tone and does not feel himself indignant, let him be indignant with himself. When he can come across sin and feel that it does not shock him as once it did, let him be shocked to think that his conscience is being so seared. I would give you for a prayer—that verse from Wesley's hymn—

***"Quick as the twinkle of an eye,
O God, my conscience make,
Awake my heart, when sin is near.
And keep it still awake."***

The sensitive plant, as soon as it is touched, begins to fold up its leaves. Touch it again and the little branches droop, until at last it stands

like the bare poles of a vessel—all its sail of leaf is furled, and it seems as if it would, if it could—shrink into nothing to avoid your hand. So should you be, so should I be, tender to the touch of sin, so as to say with the Psalmist, “Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Your Law.” Such tenderness is a prominent mark of ripeness, and it should be exhibited, not only in relation to sin, but in other ways.

We should manifest tenderness towards the Gospel—glad to hear it, thankful even for a little of it. Glad to eat the crumbs from the Master’s table. Tenderness towards Christ so that the heart does leap at the sound of His name. Tenderness towards the motions of the Spirit so as to be guided by His eye. The Spirit often, I doubt not, comes to us and we do not perceive Him because we are heavy of hearing, we are dull of understanding. The photographer may place his plate in the camera, and the object to be taken may be long before it, and well focused, too—and yet no impression may be produced. But when the plate is made sensitive, thoroughly sensitive—then it receives the image at once.

O that your heart and mine might be sensitive to receive the impression of the Holy Spirit so that on us there shall be printed at once the mind and will of God! Dear Friend, bear this in your memory, and forget not that it shall be a token of your ripeness when the hardness is departing, when the heart of stone is being supplanted by the heart of flesh, and when the soul yields promptly to the Presence of Christ, and the touch of His Spirit.

Another mark of ripeness is sweetness, as well as tenderness. The unripe fruit is sour, and perhaps it ought to be, or else we should eat all the fruits while they were yet green. If pears and apples had the same flavor when they are but small, as afterwards, I am sure where there are children, very few of them would come to their full development. It may, therefore, be in the order of Grace a fit thing that in the youthful Christian some sharpness should be found which will ultimately be removed.

There are certain Graces which are more martial and warlike than others, and have their necessary uses—these we may expect to see more in the young men than in the fathers. And they will be toned down by experience. As we grow in Grace, we are sure to grow in charity, sympathy, and love. We shall have greater and more intense affection for the Person of “Him whom having not seen we love.” We shall have greater delight in the precious things of His Gospel. The doctrine which perhaps we did not understand at first, will become marrow and fatness to us as we advance in Grace. We shall feel that there is honey dropping from the honeycomb in the deeper truths of our religion.

We shall, as we ripen in Grace, have greater sweetness towards our fellow Christians. Bitter-spirited Christians may know a great deal, but they are immature. Those who are quick to censure may be very acute in judgment, but they are as yet very immature in heart. He who grows in Grace remembers that he is but dust, and he therefore does not expect his

fellow Christians to be anything more. He overlooks ten thousand of their faults, because he knows his God overlooks twenty thousand in his own case. He does not expect perfection in the creature, and, therefore, he is not disappointed when he does not find it.

As he has sometimes to say of himself, "This is my infirmity," so he often says of his Brethren, "This is their infirmity." And he does not judge them as he once did. I know we who are young beginners in Grace think ourselves qualified to reform the whole Christian Church. We drag her before us and condemn her straightway. But when our virtues become more mature, I trust we shall not be more tolerant of evil, but we shall be more tolerant of infirmity, more hopeful for the people of God, and certainly less arrogant in our criticisms. Sweetness towards sinners is another sign of ripeness.

When the Christian loves the souls of men. When he feels that there is nothing in the world which he cares for so much as endeavoring to bring others to a knowledge of the saving Truth of God. When he can lay himself out for sinners, bear with their ill manners, bear with anything, so that he might but lead them to the Savior—then is the man mature in Grace. God grant this sweetness to us all. A holy calm, cheerfulness, patience, a walk with God, fellowship with Jesus, an anointing from the Holy One—I put all these together—and I call them sweetness, heavenly lusciousness, full-flavored of Christ. May this be in you and abound.

I hope I shall not weary you with these marks and signs. I shall not if you can find them in yourselves. Fullness, again, is the mark of ripeness, seen when the fruit is plumped out and arrived at its fair and full proportions. The man in Christ Jesus has a fullness of Grace. As he advances in the Divine life, all the Graces which were in him at his new birth are strengthened and revealed. I suppose that in the newly formed ear of wheat all the kernels are present, but they are not yet manifested. As the ear advances to maturity these grains begin to solidify and become more full.

So with the Believer. There is repentance in him, but not such repentance as he will have as he sees more the love of Christ in pardoning his sin. There is faith in him, certainly, but not such faith as he shall have when afterwards he shall boldly declare, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him." There is joy in him at the very first, but not the joy which he will possess when he will rejoice in the Lord always, and yet again rejoice. Experience deepens that which was there before.

Young Christians have the first draughts, the outline of the image of Christ, but as they grow in Grace there comes the filling up, the coloring, the laying on of the deeper tints, the bringing out of the whole picture. This it is to grow mature when we know whom we have believed by acquaintance with Him, when we know sin by having struggled with it, when we know the faithfulness of God by having proved it, when we know the

preciousness of the promise by having received it, and having it fulfilled in our own souls—this it is to be a ripe Christian, to be full of Grace and Truth like our Master.

Only one other mark of ripeness, and a very sure one, is a loose hold of earth. Ripe fruit soon parts from the bough. You shake the tree and the ripest apples fall. If you wish to eat fresh fruit you put out your hand to pluck it, and if it comes off with great difficulty you feel you had better leave it alone a little longer. But when it drops into your hand, quite ready to be withdrawn from the branch, you know it to be in good condition.

When, like Paul, we can say, “I am ready to depart,” when we set loose all earthly things, oh, then it is that we are ripe for Heaven! You should measure your state of heart by your adhesiveness, or your resignation in reference to the things of this world. You have some comforts here, some of you have money, and you look upon it, and you feel, “it were hard to part with this”—this is green fruit. When your Grace is mature, you will feel that though God should give you even greater abundance of this world, you are still an exile longing for the better land.

“Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire beside You.” This is the mature Believer’s question. His song often is—

***“My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up and come away.’”***

It is a sure token of ripeness when you are standing on tiptoe, with your wings outspread, ready for flight. When no chain any longer binds you further to earth. When your love to things below is subordinate to your longing for the joys Above. Oh, it is sweet to sing with Dr. Watts—

***“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode;
I’d leave Your earthly courts, and flee
Up to Your seat, my God.”***

When we get to this in our very hearts, we are getting ripe, and we shall soon be gathered. The Master will not let His ripe fruit hang long on the tree. Thus I have given you the marks of ripeness.

II. Briefly, Brethren, let us notice THE CAUSES OF THIS RIPENESS. So gracious a result must have a gracious cause. The first cause of ripeness in Grace is the inward working of the sap. The fruit could never be ripe in its raw state were it taken away from the bough. Outward agencies alone may produce rottenness, but not ripeness. Sun, shower, whatnot, all would fail—it is the vital sap within the tree that perfects the fruit. It is especially so in Grace.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, are you one with Christ? Are you sure you are? Are you sure your profession is connected with vital godliness? Is Jesus Christ formed within you? Do you abide in Him? If not, you need not think about maturity in Grace—you had need to do your first works and

repent—and turn unto Him. Everything between Hell and Heaven which denotes salvation is the work of the Spirit of God, and the work of the Grace of Jesus. You not only cannot begin to live the Christian life, but you cannot continue in it except as the Holy Spirit enables you.

That blessed Spirit, flowing to us from Christ—as He is the Creator of the first blossom—so He is the Producer of the fruit, and is the Ripener of it until it is gathered into the heavenly garner. Your sacraments, your attendance at a place of worship, your outward bowings of the knee in prayer—these are all vanity and less than nothing—unless there is this vital sap of the inward, spiritual Grace.

When the Truth of God is present in the hidden part, outer influences help. Fruit is ripened by the sun. His beams impart or produce in the fruit its perfectness of flavor. Sunless skies cause tasteless fruit. How sweetly Christians grow when they walk in the light of God's Countenance! What a ripening influence the love of Jesus Christ has on the soul! When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, how rapidly the Christian advances! I believe we ripen in Grace more in ten minutes when we live near to God than we might do in ten years of absence from His Presence.

Some fruit on a tree will not ripen fast, it is shielded from the sun. We have the cottagers pluck off the leaves from their vines in our chilly climate in order to let the sun get at the vine, and bring out the color and ripeness of the clusters. Even thus the great Husbandman takes away many of the leaves of worldly comfort from us, that the comfort of His own dear Presence may come at us, and ripen us for Himself. We cannot have too much joy in the Lord, we cannot get too near to Him. We may well sing—

***“When will You come unto me, Lord?
O come, my Lord, most dear!
Come near, come nearer, nearer still,
I'm blessed when You are near.”***

The joy of the Lord is your strength, and the joy of the Lord is your perfectness.

Still, Brethren, the fruit is no doubt equally ripened, though not as evidently so, by the shower and by the dew. All heat and no moisture, and there must be scarcely any fruit. So the dew of God's Spirit falling upon us, the constant shower of Grace visiting us, and what if I add, even the trials and troubles of life, which are like showers to us—all these teach us by experience, and by experience we ripen for the skies. Some fruit I have heard of, especially the sycamore fig, never will ripen except it is bruised.

It was the trade of Amos to be a bruiser of sycamore figs. They were struck with a long staff, and then after being wounded, they sweetened. How like so many of us! How many, many of us seem as if we never would be sweet till first we have been dipped in bitterness—never would be perfected till we have been smitten! We may trace many of our sharp trials,

our bereavements and our bodily pains to the fact that we are such sour fruit. Nothing will ripen us but heavy blows. Blessed be the Lord that He does not spare us. We would be ripe even if we were struck again and again. We cannot be content to continue in our sourness and immaturity—therefore, we meekly bless Him that He will strike us and make us ripe.

One idea I would correct before I pass from this—it is the notion that ripeness in Grace is the necessary result of age. It is not so at all. Little children have been ripe for Glory! Yes, there have been authentic cases of their ripeness for Heaven even at three years of age—strange things dying babes have said of Christ—and deeply experimental things, too. “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings” the Lord not only brings childlike praise, but He has “perfected praise,” or, as David has it, “You have ordained strength because of Your enemies.” “Many an aged Christian is not an experienced Christian, for his experience—though it may be the experience of a Christian—may not have been Christian experience of an advanced kind.

An old sailor who has never left the river is not an experienced mariner. An old soldier who never saw a battle is no veteran. Remember it is in the kingdom of God very much as it is with God Himself, one day may be as a thousand years. God can, as Solomon tells us, give subtlety to the simple and teach the young man knowledge and discretion. Years with Grace will produce greater maturity, but what I want to say is that years *without* Divine Grace will produce no such maturity. The mere lapse of time will not advance us in the Divine life. We do not ripen necessarily because our years fulfill their tale—gray hairs and great Grace are not inseparable companions.

Time may be wasted as well as improved. We may be petrified rather than perfected by the flow of years. Here it may be well to note that there is no reason why a young Christian should not make great advance towards this maturity, even while young. The Lord’s Grace is independent of time and age. The Holy Spirit is not limited by youth, nor restrained by fewness of days. Young Samuel may excel aged Eli. A holy babe is riper than a backsliding man. Timothy was more mature than Diotrephes.

Jesus can lead you, my youthful Brothers and Sisters, to high degrees of fellowship with Himself. He can make you to be a blessing even while yet you are young. I pray you aspire to the nearest place to Jesus, and like young John, lie in the Master’s bosom. Truly, the aged have the help of experience, and in any case they deserve our reverent esteem. But let neither old nor young imagine that the merely natural fact of age has any influence in the spiritual life. God’s work is the same in old and young, and owes nothing to the merely natural vigor of youth, or equally natural prudence of age.

III. Thus we have given you the causes of ripeness. Briefly let us show you THE DESIRABILITY OF RIPENESS IN GRACE. It is necessary to dwell

on this head because many Christians appear to think that if they are just Believers it is enough. We do not in business think it enough if we barely escape bankruptcy. A man does not say, if his dear child has been ill in bed for years that it is quite enough so long as the child is alive.

We do not think that of our own bodies, that so long as we can breathe it is enough. If anyone were dragged out of the Serpentine and life was just in him, we should not feel it sufficient to discover the vital spark and there leave it. No, we pursue the processes of resuscitation till the person is perfectly restored. To be just alive as a Christian is horrid work. It is a poor state to be in to be always trying to see whether we are alive by putting the looking glass of evidences to the lips to see if there is just a trace of gracious vapor on the surface. It is a dolorous thing to be always groaning—

***“It is a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”***

Yet too many are content to continue in this ignominious condition. Brethren, it is desirable that you should get out of it, and come to ripeness in Grace by God’s Spirit, for, first, ultimate ripeness is an index of the health of your soul. The fruit which under proper circumstances does not ripen is not a good fruit—it must be an unwholesome production. Your soul can surely not be as it should be if it does not ripen under the influence of God’s love and the work of His Grace. The gardener’s reward is the ripe fruit. You desire that Christ should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied—do you think He will find that satisfaction in sour grapes?

Is He to find His recompense in griping apples? No, Sir. The gardener wants the mature productions of the soil and he does not count that he has a return for his labor till he gathers ripe fruit. Let the Redeemer find ripe fruit in you. Say with the spouse, “Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.” Endeavor to imitate her when she said, “At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for You, O Beloved.” Present yourself to Him, and may He present you to the Father made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

It is the ripe fruit which proves the excellence of the tree. The tree may bear a name in very good repute, but if the fruit never ripens, very soon the gardener will remove it from the orchard. The Church’s repute among wise men is gained not from her raw and green members, but from her ripe Believers—these are they by whose steadfast holiness those whose verdict is worth the having will be ruled. I would have men compelled to own that the Church is a goodly vine and her fruit most pleasant to the taste.

To break the metaphor, the Church wants mature Christians very greatly, and especially when there are many fresh converts added to it. New converts furnish impetus to the Church, but her backbone and substance must, under God, lie with the mature members. We want mature Christians in the army of Christ to play the part of veterans, to inspire the rest with coolness, courage, and steadfastness. For if the whole army is made up of raw recruits the tendency will be for them to waver when the onslaught is fiercer than usual.

The old guard, the men who have breathed smoke and eaten fire before, do not waver when the battle rages like a tempest—they can die but they cannot surrender. When they hear the cry of, “Forward,” they may not rush to the front so nimbly as the younger soldiers, but they drag up the heavy artillery and their advance, once made, is secure. They do not reel when the shots fly thick, but still hold their own, for they remember former fights when Jehovah covered their heads.

The Church wants in these days of flimsiness and timeserving, more decided, thorough-going, well-instructed, and confirmed Believers. We are assailed by all sorts of new doctrines. The old faith is attacked by so-called reformers who would reform it all away. I expect to hear tidings of some new doctrine once a week. So often as the moon changes, some “prophet” or other is moved to propound a new theory, and believe me, he will contend more valiantly for his novelty than ever he did for the Gospel! The discoverer thinks himself a modern Luther—and of his doctrine he thinks as much as David of Goliath’s sword—“There is none like it.”

As Martin Luther said of certain men in his day, these inventors of new doctrines stare at their discoveries like a cow at a new gate—as if there were nothing else in all the world but the one thing for them to stare at. We are all expected to go mad for their fashions, and march to their piping. But do we give place?—no, not for an hour! They may muster a troop of raw recruits, and lead them where they would—but for confirmed Believers they sound their bugles in vain. Children run after every new toy. Any little performance in the street, and the boys are all agog, gaping at it.

But their fathers have work to do abroad, and their mothers have other matters at home. Your drum and whistle will not draw them out. For the solidity of the Church, for her steadfastness in the faith, for her defense against the constantly recurring attacks of heretics and infidels. For her permanent advance and the seizing of fresh provinces for Christ we want not only your young, hot bloods, which may God always send to us, for they are of immense service and we cannot do without them. But we need also the cool, steady, well-disciplined, deeply-experienced hearts of men who know by experience the Truth of God. Those that hold fast what they have learned in the school of Christ. May the Lord our God, therefore, send us many such. They are wanted.

IV. And now I shall close by calling your attention to THE GREAT SOLEMNITY OF THE SUBJECT. We have tried to treat it pleasantly, and to

instruct after the Master's example by parables, but there is much of weight here, much of deep and solemn weight. The first is to me, to you, professor of the faith of Christ, a solemn question—am I ripening?

I remember when a child, seeing on the mantel a stone apple, wonderfully like an apple, too, and very well colored. I saw that apple years after, but it was no riper. It had been in unfavorable circumstances for softening and sweetening, if it ever would have become mellow. But I do not think if the sun of the Equator had shone on it, or if the dews of Hermon had fallen on it, it would ever have been fit to be brought to table. Its hard marble substance would have broken a giant's teeth.

It was a hypocritical professor, a hard-hearted mocker of little children, a mere mimic of God's fruits. There are Church members who used to be unkind, covetous, censorious, bad-tempered, egotistical—everything that was hard and stony—are they so now? Have they not mellowed with the lapse of years? No, they are worse if anything—very dogs in the house for snapping and snarling, rending and devouring. They are great men at hewing down the carved work of the sanctuary with their axes, or at filling up wells and marring good pieces of land with stones. When the devil wants a stone to fling at a minister he is sure to use one of them.

Well, now, are these people Christians at all? Are they? Let your senses exercise themselves. I leave you each one to judge. If these are extreme cases, let me ask—are there not many in whom ripeness is certainly not very apparent? No growing downwards in humility, no growing upwards in fellowship with God, no doing more, no giving more, no loving more, no praying more, no praising more, no sympathizing more. Are you, then, a fruit unto God at all? Solemn question! I put it to myself as in the sight of God, and I ask you to do the same to yourselves.

Another question also rises up. There is constantly going on in every man, specially in every professed Christian, some process or other. And I believe that one of two processes will go on in us—the one is ripening, the other is rotting. Now rotting and ripening are exceedingly like each other in appearance up to a certain stage. You will sometimes find upon your tree a fruit which seems perfectly ripe and has all the signs of ripeness a month before the proper time, outstripping thus all the other fruit.

You must not think it is ripe. Cut it open, there is a worm inside. That noxious worm is to all appearances producing the same effect as the blessed sun and dew. So the worm of secret sin will eat out the heart of a professor, and yet it will outwardly produce in him the same quality of speech, the same apparent sanctity of life which the Holy Spirit truly produces in a real Christian—but still the fair outside conceals a foul interior. The whitewashed sepulcher is full of decay. That fruit which mimics ripeness is rotten. Leave it alone, and it will soon be a thing fit only for the dunghill.

My dear Friends, I have lived long enough, young as I am, to have seen some turn out to be very rotten hypocrites, though once they were in gen-

eral esteem as more than ordinarily good men. I am sure we have all admired and loved persons who after awhile have turned out to be utterly unworthy. They looked the more ripe because they were rotten—they were obliged to try and look like holy men because they feared that their real unholiness would be found out.

Just as some failing merchants make all the greater show to conceal their insolvency—you will rot if you do not ripen, depend on it. He that in the Church of God does not grow more heavenly will become more devilish. It is a hard thing to be in the hot house of an earnest Church without growing more rank if you do not grow more fruitful. Mind this, and God give you to grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

One other reflection, and a very solemn one it is. While good fruits ripen, evil plants ripen, too. While the wheat ripens for the harvest, the tares ripen, also. They may grow together, and ripen together, but they will not be housed together. Dear Hearers, some of you have been in this place now for years, and you are not converted. Well, you are ripening, you cannot help that. Even weeds and tares come to maturity. “Let both grow together till the harvest.”

Look at these galleries and this vast area. I see before me three great fields of corn and tares. You are mingled while you grow. “Let both grow together till the harvest,” that is the ripening and the dividing time. You are all growing, all ripening. Then, when all are ripe in the time of harvest, He will say to the reapers, “Gather together first the tares, bind them in bundles to burn them. Gather the wheat into My barn.”

O Sinner, your unbelief is ripening and it will ripen into despair! Your enmity to God is ripening and it will ripen into everlasting rebellion against Him. Even now your heart grows harder and more stubborn, and your death in sin becomes more hopeless every hour you live. Remember there shall be no hope that your character will undergo improvement in another world. Then shall be fulfilled the saying which is written, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.”

Forever and forever the processes which ripen sin will continue to operate on condemned spirits, “where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.” God grant you Grace to believe in Jesus Christ NOW—that you may receive the new nature—and having received it, may grow up into ripeness, so that God may be glorified. May we all be housed in the garner of ripe fruit in the King’s own Palace above! Amen and Amen.

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A SWEET SILVER BELL RINGING IN EACH BELIEVER'S HEART NO. 1819

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
FEBRUARY 1, 1885,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON DECEMBER 18, 1884.**

***"My God will hear me."
Micah 7:7.***

WHAT a charming sentence! Can you say it? Only five words, but what meaning! Huge volumes of poetry have appeared from Chaucer to Tennyson, but it seems to me that the essence of poetry lies hidden in a marvelously condensed form within these few words! It shall take you many an hour to suck out all their sweetness. There is an almost inconceivable depth of meaning in them—and of richness of assured experience and of sweet conclusions of a hallowed faith they are full to the brim!

"My God will hear me." There is more eloquence in that sentence than in all the orations of Demosthenes! He that can speak thus can say more than if he were able to truthfully declare that all worlds were his own, for he grasps *God*, Himself, and holds the present and the future in the hollow of his hands!

"My God will hear me." It is prophetic, but the Prophet has taken upon himself no unusual power and neither does he intend his prophecy to be true of himself alone. He puts this Divine sentence into the mouth of every Believer! Every child of God may dare say that his God will hear him, for he may dare to say the truth! I feel as if I could not preach from the text and did not want to do so. It needs no aid of wit or words. For myself, I would be well content to exhibit this diamond with many facets by merely holding it up and letting the light fall on it and flash back from it in variety of brilliance.

"My God will hear me." It is a choice song for a lone harp which is half afraid of the choir of musicians and loves to have its strings touched in solitude. I feel, as I repeat it, that I need to sit down and quietly enjoy it. As I see the cows lie in the meadow, quietly chewing the cud, so would I ruminate on these few but precious words. Let me hear the sounds again and again, till my tongue, learning their rhythmic melody, repeats as a matter of habitual delight, the assurance, "My God will hear me!"

A charming sentence, as I have said, but in what a strange place we find it! Just as they find gold in the dark mine and as we see stars in the black night, so do we find these rich words in the midst of floods of grief and woe! The man of God is pricked and torn by the briars of the age in

which he travels. He is vexed and wearied with the bribery and corruption all around him. He cannot find peace either at home or abroad—no, not even in the bosom of her whom he loves. He is everywhere disquieted and driven to and fro—and yet it is just at that time that he cries, “My God will hear me.” From this I gather—and I gather it not from this, alone, but from my own *personal experience*—that it is generally when things are at their worst that we know most about the best. When we are disappointed of men, then we become most contented with our God. When earth-born springs are dry, then the eternal fountainheads flow more freely than ever. And as we drink of them, our soul is more satisfied than ever it had been before. God is good when goods are fewest. Heaven is warmest when earth is coldest. It is a great blessing for you, dear Friend, that you can say, “My God will hear me.” I do not mind much about your surroundings—they may be grievous and trying—but if they have helped to bring you to this pass—that you have a solid confidence that God will hear you—I congratulate you upon the priceless consequences, even though I may sorrow with you for the sufferings that have brought them to you! We do not weep over the mud which bespatters the gold-digger when he finds his nugget! And neither will we fret over the affliction which makes God to be more precious to our friends.

Again, come back to the short and sweet sentence of the text, and may it be inexpressibly delightful to our hearts while we meditate upon it for a while. “My God will hear me.”

I. The first thing I shall note at this time is THE TITLE. This is the bottom of the whole text, really, the true foundation of the confidence which is expressed in it. The title is “*my God*.” It is not God, alone, but God in Covenant with me, to whom I look for help. I shall be heard by “*my God*.”

I am afraid that some of you will have to draw back a little from the text at the very commencement. As I remarked the other day, to *say* there is a God is not much. It is the same as to say there is a bank—there may be a bank and you may be miserably poor. There certainly is a God, but that God may be no source of comfort to you. The joy of the whole thing lies in that word, “*my*.” “*My God will hear me*.”

Begin, then with the enquiry, put to your own soul—Can I truly think of God and call Him, “*my God*”? If so, that means *election and selection*. There were many gods in the day of the Prophet Micah—at least, men spoke as if there were. Men talked of this god and of that god. Each nation had its own peculiar deity and each man walked in the name of his god, and gloried in it. But the Prophet, in effect, says of Jehovah, the one living and true God, the God that made Heaven and earth—“This God is *my God*. Others may worship gods of wood, or of stone, or of silver, or of gold—but as for me, my heart shall only worship the great Invisible, whom none has seen, to whom none can approach. The eternal Creator, alone, will I adore.”

Now, every man at this present time has a god. Alas, how many make their *belly* their god! The golden calf is never without its crowds of devoted worshippers. Gods, today, are as numerous in England as in any heathen country! Let me then ask—have you taken the God who is your Maker,

your Preserver, your Redeemer, to be the great object of your life? That is your god which rules your nature—that which is your motive power—that for which you live. Do you live for Jehovah as your God, or are you only living for yourself or for some temporary end and purpose? Will the object of your life die with your dying and be buried in your grave? Or can you say unto the living God, “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You. You are my God forever and ever: You shall be my God even unto death!” If so, it supposes your election of this God beyond every other and I put it to you—is this election made? And made once and for all? Can you cry with Joshua, “As for me and my house we will serve Jehovah”? Is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ your God for all time? Be it so! You shall never regret the choice!

“My God”—that supposes *an appropriation by faith*. Have you taken Jehovah to be your God? Have you boldly taken Him for your very own? In the Covenant of Grace, God gives over to His people, Himself—all that He is and all that He has—by a Covenant of salt. As the Believer becomes God's portion, so the Lord becomes the Believer's portion! He declares Himself to be ours and puts Himself at our disposal, exercising a boundless condescension of love in so doing. Our part in it is that we accept this Covenant gift and, by an act of faith, say, “This which God gives me, I, unworthy though I am, do freely accept. Though I deserve it not, yet as He has given Himself to me, I, with gladness, receive Him to be my God, my portion, world without end.”

Well do I remember the joyous day when my heart first took this possession to herself. It had appeared to be like a land of fire and terror and I desired it not. But when the Spirit of God had instructed and renewed me, then I perceived that God was as the land of Goshen—yes, as the land of Canaan that flows with milk and honey! Yes, as the land Beulah, where the sun goes down no more forever, where all is joy, peace and love! Yes, as Heaven itself, for God is the very soul, center, source and fullness of bliss! My heart annexed this blessed territory with trembling joy. Yes, she seemed to have no other possession left except her God. From that hour she grew rich and remained so. What is there more for me but my God? How can I go an inch beyond, “my God, my Heaven, my All”?

Now, beloved Hearer, have you thus appropriated the Eternal God to be your own? Can you say, today, “First and foremost among my possessions is my God. I will not say that I have this and that, and ever so many other things, but I will sing, ‘My God, You are mine!’ Perhaps I could not say that I have much of this world's goods, but I have the highest Good. If I have not all, yet I have the All-in-All who is more than all and He is everything to my spirit”? I trust you can say, “my God,” first, by your choice of Him and, secondly, by your appropriation of Him through faith. Wherever this is the case, it is the work of the Spirit of God and He must have our reverent love for thus enriching us.

“My God”—this signifies *knowledge and acquaintance*. Does it not? For unless the words are meaningless, you know who it is that you are talking of and you have had some acquaintance and dealings with Him. If I say, “So-and-So is my friend,” I give you to understand that I know him. And if

I say, "Jehovah is my God," I profess that I know Him and have fellowship with Him. You remember the inscription which Paul discovered upon an altar at Athens, "To the unknown God"? I would not have you worship there, my Brother, but I would have you understand that word of the Apostle, "After that you had known God, or rather were known of God." There is an intimate knowledge subsisting between God and His people. "The Lord knows them that are His," and all His people know Him, so that among them no one has need to say to his brother, "Know the Lord," for they all know Him, from the least even to the greatest.

Now, what do you know of God? Have you ever spoken with Him? Has He spoken to you? Have you told Him your secrets? Has He revealed Himself to you, as it is written, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant"? Now, I am not talking about fancies. If any of you deem this to be fanciful, it is because you are strangers to the Covenant of Promise. I am speaking, now, to a people who know more than I can tell them of what this means. As for myself, I know something of nature and of the works of God's hands, but my soul cares little for that knowledge compared with knowing HIM. Willingly and gladly I would forget all else I know if I might but know more of *Him*, for well am I persuaded that when old age comes on and memory fails me, that which my soul shall hold, as with a death grip, will not be historical remembrance, classical love, or theological learning, but what she knows by inward experience of the Lord her God!

When the veil shall drop upon all mortal shadows, to be uplifted upon eternal realities, then my heart shall care *nothing* for what she knew of things terrestrial! But she shall value beyond conception what she shall then know of the Immortal, the Invisible, the only wise God, her Savior! I am sure that I am speaking to many of you who can use the expression, "My God," and mean by it that the God in whom you live and move and have your being is your Friend and your Father—that He dwells in you by the Holy Spirit—and that in Him you dwell as you hide yourselves in the wounds of Christ. Oh happy men and women that can, with knowledge and affection, say, "My God"! Unhappy are you who have neither part nor lot in this matter. Your sorrows shall be multiplied which hasten after another god, for your vanities will fail you! But as for you who know the Lord, to you shall joy increase even as the growing light of the rising sun!

If you have come as far as this, I am sure that you can follow me farther by admitting that the title, "My God," implies an embrace of *love*. You know God as you know your child. And as you look at your boy, you cry, "My child, my child," and you mean a great deal by that because your child is much more yours on account of the affection that you feel for him than any other possession that you have upon the face of the earth. You would lose everything else sooner than lose the darling of your bosom! The expression, "My God," has an inexpressible amount of sweet affection wrapped up in it. I delight in that line of our old Psalm—

"Yes, my own God is He."

He is my very own! My God belongs to me as much as if He belonged to no other! My heart has twisted her tendrils around about Him as fast and

firm as if no other tiny plant had dared to grasp Him. The Divine Father—oh, what joy lights up the soul when we think of that splendid Fatherhood, that infinite relationship of the Divine One to us, whom He has “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” How have we sometimes sung with David—

**“Such pity as a father has
Unto his children dear,
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship Him in fear.”**

We love the Father and call Him, “My God.”

And as for Jesus, the second Person in the Divine Unity, Incarnate God—does not your very heart leap at the sound of His name? Is there not all music condensed into two syllables in that name, “Jesus”? I know that it is so to you. He is your very own Christ, your Savior, forever and ever! And the blessed Spirit—do we not, with equal affection, lay hold upon Him, the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Quickener, the Illuminator, the best of Friends, bearing with our ill behavior and still abiding in us, making us meet for the eternal Kingdom? Yes, Beloved, we do love our God! Do not our hearts say in our prayers, “O Lord, do not believe our actions, for, disobedient as we are, we do love You. Do not believe our forgetfulness, do not believe the lukewarmness which occasionally creeps over us, for You know all things, You know that we love You”? Such affection makes us cry, “My God!” We cannot comprehend Him, but we apprehend Him with the grip of hallowed love. We feel that we can never give Him up, even as He will never give us up. I am not what I ought to be, but I cannot give up my God! Hard as my heart feels, yet it melts with love to Him who has loved me from before the foundations of the world! Who shall separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord?

What a deal there is in the title! But we have not exhausted it by a long way—let us have another drink from the well. You feel that now *the obedience of your life is rendered to Him most cheerfully*, for this is a sure outcome of the heart's crying, “He is my God.” A man cannot call God, *his God* in truth unless he desires to *obey* Him, for God is a name to adore, to reverence, to worship. He who speaks of God but never obeys Him is a practical atheist—he or she has no God! That man who talks about God in the synagogue, but who has no regard for Him in the market, makes Jehovah to be no better a deity than the idols of the heathen who are only gods in their own temples, even if there. The man upon whose heart and hands the Godhead has no kind of influence—such a man is a liar and knows not God, but renders to Him lip service which is to God's dishonor, and *not* to His Glory. Yes, Beloved, if you are what you profess to be, you can declare, “With all my infirmities and imperfections, I desire that my whole life should be obedience to the Divine precepts. I wish in all things to do that which is right and good, and true and kind according to the mind of Christ, in which I see the mind of God, my Father.” Concerning these things let there be great searching of heart. Come and look in this mirror and see if you bear the features of “imitators of God as dear children”—for it will go hard with you if you turn out to be pretenders.

Let me only add that this expressive phrase, "My God," hints at *a joy and delight in Him*. As men would say—"my love," "my choice," "my treasure," "my delight"—so does the Prophet say, "My God." The very name wakes all the music of his soul! As when the sleeping flowers, being touched by the first beams of the rising sun, open their bright eyes to look on Him who is the foster-father of all their beauty and seem, each one, to say, "My King," so do our hearts rejoice in the Presence of the Lord and our quickened spirits cry, "My God!"

So much for the title. May it be written on your hearts by the Holy Spirit.

II. The second point in our brief text is THE ARGUMENT, for I believe the title contains within itself a secret logical force. "My God *will hear me*." As surely as He is my God, He will hear me. Why?

Well, He will hear me, first, *because He is God*—because He is the living and true God. Those gods of stone cannot hear me, but my God will hear me. The gods that many men choose will not hear them in the day of trouble. To which of them will they call in the hour of their affliction? But my God will hear me! It is His memorial that He hears prayer. The oracles of the heathen were but liars. Those who sought the false gods did but dote upon lies—they were deceivers and deceived. But my God will hear me! As surely as He is God, He will answer prayer! If He does not answer prayer, then He is no more a God than Jupiter, or Saturn, or Venus. For us as Christian people and worshippers of the Most High, it is a Truth of God never to be questioned that Jehovah is the living and true God, whose memorial is that He hears the prayers of His people. "My God will hear me."

You see in what a tone of confidence this Prophet speaks—and why should not every child of God speak with the same confidence? The joy of religion lies in a hearty faith in it. You begin handling it with dainty fingers, criticizing it everlastingly, questioning this and questioning that with anxious debate of heart—and the consequence is that you miss its sweetness. It is nothing to your comfort till it is everything to your faith. You must believe it and the more thoroughly you believe it, the more will it prove itself true to you. The proof of the Gospel lies in the testing of it, by which I mean, in the practical proving and enjoying of it. Suppose you try to pray and do not believe in prayer? Well, you do not pray. You get nothing by such praying—you work a dry pump! You must have confidence in the Mercy Seat if the Mercy Seat is to be a place of refuge for you. "He that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." "He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

To my mind it seems the right thing to believe in the living God right up to the hilt—to believe in His promises without stint or limit. His Word is either true or false. If it is false, I will never preach it—if it is true, I will never doubt it! There let it stand like a column of brass—*though all things else should fail, God must hear prayer*. He may do this and He may do that, but He *must* hear prayer! My God will hear me because He is a true

God and no liar and He has, Himself, declared, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me." He has laid it down as unquestionable fact, "He that seeks, finds; he that asks, receives and to him that knocks it shall be opened." How can He run back from this? Why should I imagine that He will lie?

But why am I so sure, as a matter of argument, that God will hear prayer? The answer is again in the title, "*My God.*" *Because He has made Himself my God, He will hear me.* O you that are familiar with your God, who can therefore call Him by the dear title of, "My God," you will see the overwhelming conclusiveness of this reasoning. To hear a petitioner is a small thing compared to giving yourself over to him. "My God will hear me," for doubtless, if He has given Himself to be my God, He will hear me! He has done the *greater* thing, He will surely do the lesser! If, in infinite condescension, He permits me to call Him, "my God," and I perceive all through His Gospel that He invites me to do so, then, surely, He will hear me! He that has said, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God," will do the much smaller thing—He will, without doubt—hear them when they call upon Him. "You, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children. How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?"

Is not that clear enough? He has given us Himself and His Son—how can He shut out our cries? After what He has done for us in the past, we cannot doubt that He will hear us. What? Give us cleansing by His blood and then not *hear* us? What? Give us the new birth and then not *hear* us? Did He bless us when we did not seek Him and will He not hear us when we *do* seek Him? What? Look after us when we were like stray sheep, deaf to all His calls—seek after us till He restored us—and then not *hear* us when we become the sheep of His pasture? Impossible! The argument is irresistible—My God will certainly hear me!

Moreover, *my God has heard me so many times, already*, and, therefore, be it far from me to doubt His present and future favor. A Brother in prayer reminded us, just now, that we ought to have greater faith than the saints of the olden times because we have many more centuries of the Divine faithfulness to read of and to see. It is so, but I fear that observation seldom acts upon us so forcibly as actual personal *experience*. What shall I say to my beloved Brothers and Sisters who are getting old? They have had such experience. God has heard your prayers many times, my aged Brethren, and your faith is thereby confirmed. When we first began to pray, we were staggered if objectors questioned us. "You talk about God having heard your prayer." "Yes," we said, "He did hear us," and we stated our case. The skeptic sneered and said, "That was merely a coincidence."

When we heard that remark for the first time, we were somewhat taken aback. We admitted that we could not draw an inference from two or three facts, for, perhaps, in later years there might be 30 facts which would tell the other way. But, my veteran Brothers and Sisters, we are not in that condition tonight, for some of us have had 30 or 40 years' experience of

God's hearing prayer and our facts are as many as the hairs of our heads! Do opponents say that these are coincidences? We do not care to answer such perverse jangling! If they were in our position, they would not wish to answer such remarks. They would laugh and that is all that they would find in their hearts to do! A man puts on warm clothing and is not pinched by the frost. His acquaintance tells him that he does not believe in flannel and broad-cloth. He shivers in his unbelief and tells the well-clad man that his comfort is a mere coincidence! Humorous, is it not?

But if the objector gets frozen to death, the wit grows rather grim! When we have not prayed and have not received a blessing—and have been ready to perish—I suppose our failure has been a coincidence! And when we have betaken ourselves to our knees and have cried mightily to God, pleaded the promises, and God has answered us as visibly as if He had split the blue heavens and thrust out His almighty arm to help us—has that been a coincidence? I call such things plain answers to prayer, but those who have never experienced the like think me a fanatic! I will therefore let them use their own terms. We will not wrangle over words—"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." As to the delivering mercy of God—you may call it a coincidence if you like—but to us it will always be a blessed proof that the Lord hears prayer.

Using this sweet title, containing, as it does, within itself a whole century of logic, we say, joyfully, "My God will hear me." What bliss it is to have so sweet an assurance always at hand! It is a versicle of heavenly music—"My God will hear me." The Lord has entered into Covenant with us that He will not turn away from us from doing us good and *in that Covenant His hearing prayer is included*. He could not be our Friend and be deaf to our appeals! He could not be in fellowship with us and shut out our cries! Listen to some of His own Covenant Words—"Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me" (Psa 50:15). "He shall call upon Me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him" (Psa. 91:15). "The Lord is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psa. 145:18, 19). "And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24). "Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you know not" (Jer. 33:3). Do you need more than this? The Lord has said it and He will make it good! He has never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain.

Were not the Lord to hear prayer and bear His people through their troubles, *He would, Himself, be a great loser*. He would lose all that His wisdom has planned, all that His sovereignty has ordained, all that His love has begun, all that His power has worked and all that upon which His heart is set! If Jehovah did not hear prayer, it were to Him as though a father no more heard the voice of his child—he would lose that which charms his fatherly mind and miss that which is a solace to his loving heart. If God does not hear me, He will lose me—and this I feel He will not do, for He has engraved me upon the palms of His hands, that I may

never be forgotten of Him. O, yes, my God will hear me! His truth and honor cannot be imperiled by a refusal to hear the pleadings of His own child!

III. Bear with me while I invite you, in the third place, to notice the FAVOR ITSELF. "My God will *hear me*." You notice that in Scripture we do not often find the expression, "My God will *answer me*." We do read that He answers prayer, but more frequently God is said to be the God that *hears* prayer. It is better for us to have a promise that God will *hear* us than a promise that God will always answer us. In fact, if it were a matter of absolute fact that God would *always* answer the prayers of His people as they present them, it would be an terrible Truth. I would shrink from ever praying again if I were absolutely sure that the Lord would answer my prayer, whatever it might be. I might curse myself seven times deep by a prayer within the next seven minutes, if there were no safeguards and limits to the promise of prayer being answered!

It is neither desirable nor possible that all things should be left to our choice! So much do I feel this, that if my Lord should say to me, "From this hour I will always answer your prayer just as you pray it," the first petition I would offer would be, "Lord, do nothing of the sort." Because that would be putting the responsibility of my life upon *myself*, instead of allowing it to remain upon God. It were, in fact, to make me the master of the house and to make me my own shepherd—the very first thing I would wish would be to strip myself of such a power! I would cry, "Lord, do as You will about answering me; I will be well content if You will *hear me*." I like that kind of hearing prayer of which Ralph Erskine says—

***"I'm heard when answered, soon or late,
Yes, heard when I no answer get—
Most kindly answered when refused,
And treated well when harshly used."***

It is enough for a praying heart that it has a *hearing* God.

But notice, "My God will hear me." It means, first, literally that He will hear me *as a Listener*. A good Brother of my acquaintance, a minister of the Gospel, going to preach from the text that God will hear prayer, called upon one of his poor people who said, when the visit was over, that she had greatly enjoyed his call. He thought to himself, "I have scarcely said a word and yet she says that I have done her good." Turning to her, he enquired, "Sister, how can I have done you good, for I have hardly spoken with you?" "Ah, Sir," she replied, "you have *listened* so kindly. You have heard all I had to say and there are very few who will do that." Just so. People in deep trouble like somebody to hear them all through—even little children are comforted by telling mother all about it. We are in such a hurry with poor troubled spirits that we hasten them on to the end of the sentence and try to make them skip the dreary details. But to them this seems unkind, for their story is sacred and, therefore, they go slowly on with it till we are quite tired.

I have often hurried on a poor despondent creature till I have seen the uselessness of it—it is always best to let them spin on. It does them good. To spill out the heart to a patient listener is a great relief to a burdened spirit—and the heart must do it in its own way. Here is a sweet assur-

ance, "My God will hear me." I may be very bad and what I say may be very broken. And I may groan a good deal and I may say the same thing over and over again—and my whole ditty may be very stupid—but, "My God will hear me." *He* is in no hurry! He is the God of patience. He will listen to my dreary talk and endure each gloomy detail. I need not hold Him as the Ancient Mariner held the wedding guest who was unwilling to hear his weary rhyme of the sea—my God will willingly listen to me right through, from beginning to end, groans and all! "My God will hear me."

And then the Lord will listen *as a Friend full of sympathy*. Some people listen but do not hear. You tell them your story, but it does not help you a bit because their minds are no more moved by your case than if they were far away. They are just saying to themselves, "We will hear this poor old lady's story; it will please her." But it does *not* please her because she perceives that they have no sympathy, no feeling for her. The kind of person you like to tell your story to is one who weeps with you—who is really afflicted with your affliction. It is greatly comforting to have a person with you who feels just as you feel, who, when you are very stupid, seems to be stupid, too; who frets as you fret and groans in your groans.

"Mother," said a little girl, once, "I cannot make it out. Mrs. Smith says I do her so much good. Poor Mrs. Smith has lost her husband, Mother, and she is very sad. She sits and cries and I get up and lay my cheek on her cheek, and I cry and say that I love her. And then she says that she loves me and that I comfort her." Just so. That is the truest form of consolation, is it not? "Weep with them that weep." That is how God, my God, will hear me, feeling with me, sympathizing with me. "In all their affliction He was afflicted and the angel of His Presence saved them." "I am with you, says the Lord."—

***"I feel in my heart all your sighs and your groans,
For you are most near Me, My flesh and My bones.
In all your afflictions your Head feels the pain,
They all are most needful, not one is in vain,"***

"My God will hear me." He will listen to me and He will sympathize with me.

"My God will hear me." That is, He will turn it over and discriminate in His own mind, and He will not allow me to be condemned by the hurried judgment of men. He will hear me as a *judge patiently hears a case*. Others will come in and clamor against me and refuse to listen to a word of explanation. But my God will hear me! That was a splendid utterance of the holy Patriarch, Job! He went a long way further than he knew he went when he said it—"I know that my Redeemer lives." His unkind friends charged him very terribly and Job spoke up for himself, but he did not get on at it. He could not plead his own cause successfully and, therefore, in his desperation, he cried, "I have a God that will yet plead my cause, and if He does not do it while I am alive, yet I know that He lives! And though after my skin, worms devour my body, yet in my flesh shall I behold Him, and I shall be cleared from this misrepresentation! I shall be delivered from this suspicion. I know I shall! My God will hear me! He will hear my suit right through and do me justice and I shall behold Him, whom my eyes shall see, for myself, and not another." Job felt assured of being

cleared at last. Dear child of God, you may do the same! Your character shall not be injured by malicious tongues. They lie against you; they refuse you a hearing; they wrest your words; they empty the buckets of their contempt upon you, but your God will hear you!

Then, at the back of that, of course, comes the conclusion of every loving heart that, as God will hear the case right through, so He will certainly *hear as a Helper*. "My God will hear me." Now, child of God, go away with this promise in your hands and in your heart—"My God will hear me"—and then use it like a magic wand. Turn it whichever way you will and it will clear your path. You are going to preach the Gospel in a distant country, perhaps, and your spirit sinks as you sigh, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Lift up your heart to God and His Grace shall be sufficient for you and His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness, for your God will hear you! Or you have to go home, tonight, to a sick house and to lose one that is dear to you. You shall be sustained, for in your ear is this Word of God, "My God will hear me."

Or, perhaps, you yourself have to sicken and die. Do you enquire—"What shall I do in the swellings of Jordan"? Here is your happy answer, "My God will hear me!" I shall cry to Him and He will answer me. He will have a desire to the work of His hands. Yes, though I go down into the valley of the shadow of death, my God will hear me! And when I lie in the tomb, my God will remember me and He will call me up with sound of a trumpet—and my body shall live again! My God shall hear me singing His praises before His Throne! My God shall hear me, world without end, as my whole being shall lift up her joyous notes of, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah," unto Him who loved me out of the Pit and lifted me up to His own right hand!

IV. My only sorrow about this text is my fear that it could not honestly fall from some of your lips—you could not truthfully say, "My God will hear me." So I close by noting THE PERSON to whom it belongs—"My God will hear me." Will He hear you? Dear Heart, are you cast down under a sense of sin? Do you seek forgiveness? He will hear you! Are you burdened because you cannot live without sin? Would you be free from all evil? He will hear you! Are you persecuted for righteousness' sake? Are the men of your household turned to be your foes? He will hear you and cause you to rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer for Jesus' sake! Are you assured of the result of prayer? You shall not be disappointed. Your God will hear you! Have you been praying long? Cease not from importunity, but solace yourself with this sure belief—*My God will hear me*. Will you now come and cast yourselves into the arms of Jesus, the Crucified? Your God has heard you! Be of good cheer!

O, my dear Hearer, have you a God? Strange question, but I press it even with tears—have you a God? If you have no God, of course you have nobody to hear you when the great floods of water prevail! My dear Hearer, if you make the *world* your god, it cannot hear you in the day of your trouble! You may be a very rich man and have large estates, but I would sooner occupy the place of the poorest believing pauper in the workhouse than take your position without a God and without a Throne of

Grace! How do people live that have no God to go to? If a man were to say to me, "I never get a morsel of bread to eat at all," I would wonder how he lived. But when a man says, "I never pray and God never hears me," I am in equal wonder! How can the poor creature exist?

These are hard times with a great many of you. You have not many worldly comforts. Indeed, some of you cannot even find work. What can you do without a God to fly to? I suppose your head aches, sometimes, like mine. I suppose cares and troubles eat into your mind as they do into mine. I suppose you have your difficulties and your knots that you cannot untie, just as I have mine. How do you keep your *souls* alive without a God? I pray God that I may never live a day without prayer and without trusting my God. How do you bear up, some of you? I do not wonder that you go and get drunk to drown your thoughts! I do not wonder that you need frivolities and theatricals and all sorts of childish toys to put your cares out of your minds, for you need something or other to help you forget the miseries which are coming upon you thick and heavy!

Yet is it not madness to drive away wise thoughts? What a wretched business it must be to be in dread of your own thoughts! You dare not sit alone in your chamber for half-an-hour and *think*, because if you did you would begin to think of dying—and you could not bear to think of that without a God! You might even be driven to think of Hell and of a judgment to come—and that you could not endure. If you dare not think of them, how will you bear them? Oh poor souls! Poor souls! You are in a sad state, indeed! But you need not remain so. If any man wills to have God to be his own God, Grace has given him that will! If you *desire* Christ, you may have Him!

What is the price? Nothing at all! Receive Him freely! Believe in Jesus Christ—that is, trust yourself with Him—and God is your God and you may go on your way full of joy and thankfulness! God bless you and comfort you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Micah* 7.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—622, 999, 981.**

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A SWEET SILVER BELL RINGING IN EACH BELIEVER'S HEART NO. 1819

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
FEBRUARY 1, 1885,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON DECEMBER 18, 1884.**

***“My God will hear me.”
Micah 7:7.***

WHAT a charming sentence! Can you say it? Only five words, but what meaning! Huge volumes of poetry have appeared from Chaucer to Tennyson, but it seems to me that the essence of poetry lies hidden in a marvelously condensed form within these few words! It shall take you many an hour to suck out all their sweetness. There is an almost inconceivable depth of meaning in them—and of richness of assured experience and of sweet conclusions of a hallowed faith they are full to the brim!

“My God will hear me.” There is more eloquence in that sentence than in all the orations of Demosthenes! He that can speak thus can say more than if he were able to truthfully declare that all worlds were his own, for he grasps *God*, Himself, and holds the present and the future in the hollow of his hands!

“My God will hear me.” It is prophetic, but the Prophet has taken upon himself no unusual power and neither does he intend his prophecy to be true of himself alone. He puts this Divine sentence into the mouth of every Believer! Every child of God may dare say that his God will hear him, for he may dare to say the truth! I feel as if I could not preach from the text and did not want to do so. It needs no aid of wit or words. For myself, I would be well content to exhibit this diamond with many facets by merely holding it up and letting the light fall on it and flash back from it in variety of brilliance.

“My God will hear me.” It is a choice song for a lone harp which is half afraid of the choir of musicians and loves to have its strings touched in solitude. I feel, as I repeat it, that I need to sit down and quietly enjoy it. As I see the cows lie in the meadow, quietly chewing the cud, so would I ruminate on these few but precious words. Let me hear the sounds again

and again, till my tongue, learning their rhythmic melody, repeats as a matter of habitual delight, the assurance, "My God will hear me!"

A charming sentence, as I have said, but in what a strange place we find it! Just as they find gold in the dark mine and as we see stars in the black night, so do we find these rich words in the midst of floods of grief and woe! The man of God is pricked and torn by the briars of the age in which he travels. He is vexed and wearied with the bribery and corruption all around him. He cannot find peace either at home or abroad—no, not even in the bosom of her whom he loves. He is everywhere disquieted and driven to and fro—and yet it is just at that time that he cries, "My God will hear me." From this I gather—and I gather it not from this, alone, but from my own *personal experience*—that it is generally when things are at their worst that we know most about the best. When we are disappointed of men, then we become most contented with our God. When earth-born springs are dry, then the eternal fountainheads flow more freely than ever. And as we drink of them, our soul is more satisfied than ever it had been before. God is good when goods are fewest. Heaven is warmest when earth is coldest. It is a great blessing for you, dear Friend, that you can say, "My God will hear me." I do not mind much about your surroundings—they may be grievous and trying—but if they have helped to bring you to this pass—that you have a solid confidence that God will hear you—I congratulate you upon the priceless consequences, even though I may sorrow with you for the sufferings that have brought them to you! We do not weep over the mud which bespatters the gold-digger when he finds his nugget! And neither will we fret over the affliction which makes God to be more precious to our friends.

Again, come back to the short and sweet sentence of the text, and may it be inexpressibly delightful to our hearts while we meditate upon it for a while. "My God will hear me."

I. The first thing I shall note at this time is THE TITLE. This is the bottom of the whole text, really, the true foundation of the confidence which is expressed in it. The title is "*my God*." It is not God, alone, but God in Covenant with me, to whom I look for help. I shall be heard by "*my God*."

I am afraid that some of you will have to draw back a little from the text at the very commencement. As I remarked the other day, to *say* there is a God is not much. It is the same as to say there is a bank—there may be a bank and you may be miserably poor. There certainly is a God, but that God may be no source of comfort to you. The joy of the whole thing lies in that word, "*my*." "*My God will hear me*."

Begin, then with the enquiry, put to your own soul—Can I truly think of God and call Him, "*my God*"? If so, that means *election and selection*.

There were many gods in the day of the Prophet Micah—at least, men spoke as if there were. Men talked of this god and of that god. Each nation had its own peculiar deity and each man walked in the name of his god, and gloried in it. But the Prophet, in effect, says of Jehovah, the one living and true God, the God that made Heaven and earth—“This God is *my* God. Others may worship gods of wood, or of stone, or of silver, or of gold—but as for me, my heart shall only worship the great Invisible, whom none has seen, to whom none can approach. The eternal Creator, alone, will I adore.”

Now, every man at this present time has a god. Alas, how many make their *belly* their god! The golden calf is never without its crowds of devoted worshippers. Gods, today, are as numerous in England as in any heathen country! Let me then ask—have you taken the God who is your Maker, your Preserver, your Redeemer, to be the great object of your life? That is your god which rules your nature—that which is your motive power—that for which you live. Do you live for Jehovah as your God, or are you only living for yourself or for some temporary end and purpose? Will the object of your life die with your dying and be buried in your grave? Or can you say unto the living God, “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You. You are my God forever and ever: You shall be my God even unto death!” If so, it supposes your election of this God beyond every other and I put it to you—is this election made? And made once and for all? Can you cry with Joshua, “As for me and my house we will serve Jehovah”? Is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ your God for all time? Be it so! You shall never regret the choice!

“My God”—that supposes *an appropriation by faith*. Have you taken Jehovah to be your God? Have you boldly taken Him for your very own? In the Covenant of Grace, God gives over to His people, Himself—all that He is and all that He has—by a Covenant of salt. As the Believer becomes God's portion, so the Lord becomes the Believer's portion! He declares Himself to be ours and puts Himself at our disposal, exercising a boundless condescension of love in so doing. Our part in it is that we accept this Covenant gift and, by an act of faith, say, “This which God gives me, I, unworthy though I am, do freely accept. Though I deserve it not, yet as He has given Himself to me, I, with gladness, receive Him to be my God, my portion, world without end.”

Well do I remember the joyous day when my heart first took this possession to herself. It had appeared to be like a land of fire and terror and I desired it not. But when the Spirit of God had instructed and renewed me, then I perceived that God was as the land of Goshen—yes, as the land of Canaan that flows with milk and honey! Yes, as the land Beulah,

where the sun goes down no more forever, where all is joy, peace and love! Yes, as Heaven itself, for God is the very soul, center, source and fullness of bliss! My heart annexed this blessed territory with trembling joy. Yes, she seemed to have no other possession left except her God. From that hour she grew rich and remained so. What is there more for me but my God? How can I go an inch beyond, "my God, my Heaven, my All"?

Now, beloved Hearer, have you thus appropriated the Eternal God to be your own? Can you say, today, "First and foremost among my possessions is my God. I will not say that I have this and that, and ever so many other things, but I will sing, 'My God, You are mine!' Perhaps I could not say that I have much of this world's goods, but I have the highest Good. If I have not all, yet I have the All-in-All who is more than all and He is everything to my spirit"? I trust you can say, "my God," first, by your choice of Him and, secondly, by your appropriation of Him through faith. Wherever this is the case, it is the work of the Spirit of God and He must have our reverent love for thus enriching us.

"My God"—this signifies *knowledge and acquaintance*. Does it not? For unless the words are meaningless, you know who it is that you are talking of and you have had some acquaintance and dealings with Him. If I say, "So-and-So is my friend," I give you to understand that I know him. And if I say, "Jehovah is my God," I profess that I know Him and have fellowship with Him. You remember the inscription which Paul discovered upon an altar at Athens, "To the unknown God"? I would not have you worship there, my Brother, but I would have you understand that word of the Apostle, "After that you had known God, or rather were known of God." There is an intimate knowledge subsisting between God and His people. "The Lord knows them that are His," and all His people know Him, so that among them no one has need to say to his brother, "Know the Lord," for they all know Him, from the least even to the greatest.

Now, what do you know of God? Have you ever spoken with Him? Has He spoken to you? Have you told Him your secrets? Has He revealed Himself to you, as it is written, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant"? Now, I am not talking about fancies. If any of you deem this to be fanciful, it is because you are strangers to the Covenant of Promise. I am speaking, now, to a people who know more than I can tell them of what this means. As for myself, I know something of nature and of the works of God's hands, but my soul cares little for that knowledge compared with knowing HIM. Willingly and gladly I would forget all else I know if I might but know more of *Him*, for

well am I persuaded that when old age comes on and memory fails me, that which my soul shall hold, as with a death grip, will not be historical remembrance, classical love, or theological learning, but what she knows by inward experience of the Lord her God!

When the veil shall drop upon all mortal shadows, to be uplifted upon eternal realities, then my heart shall care *nothing* for what she knew of things terrestrial! But she shall value beyond conception what she shall then know of the Immortal, the Invisible, the only wise God, her Savior! I am sure that I am speaking to many of you who can use the expression, "My God," and mean by it that the God in whom you live and move and have your being is your Friend and your Father—that He dwells in you by the Holy Spirit—and that in Him you dwell as you hide yourselves in the wounds of Christ. Oh happy men and women that can, with knowledge and affection, say, "My God"! Unhappy are you who have neither part nor lot in this matter. Your sorrows shall be multiplied which hasten after another god, for your vanities will fail you! But as for you who know the Lord, to you shall joy increase even as the growing light of the rising sun!

If you have come as far as this, I am sure that you can follow me farther by admitting that the title, "My God," implies an embrace of *love*. You know God as you know your child. And as you look at your boy, you cry, "My child, my child," and you mean a great deal by that because your child is much more yours on account of the affection that you feel for him than any other possession that you have upon the face of the earth. You would lose everything else sooner than lose the darling of your bosom! The expression, "My God," has an inexpressible amount of sweet affection wrapped up in it. I delight in that line of our old Psalm—

"Yes, my own God is He."

He is my very own! My God belongs to me as much as if He belonged to no other! My heart has twisted her tendrils around about Him as fast and firm as if no other tiny plant had dared to grasp Him. The Divine Father—oh, what joy lights up the soul when we think of that splendid Fatherhood, that infinite relationship of the Divine One to us, whom He has "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." How have we sometimes sung with David—

***"Such pity as a father has
Unto his children dear,
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship Him in fear."***

We love the Father and call Him, "My God."

And as for Jesus, the second Person in the Divine Unity, Incarnate God—does not your very heart leap at the sound of His name? Is there

not all music condensed into two syllables in that name, "Jesus"? I know that it is so to you. He is your very own Christ, your Savior, forever and ever! And the blessed Spirit—do we not, with equal affection, lay hold upon Him, the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Quickener, the Illuminator, the best of Friends, bearing with our ill behavior and still abiding in us, making us meet for the eternal Kingdom? Yes, Beloved, we do love our God! Do not our hearts say in our prayers, "O Lord, do not believe our actions, for, disobedient as we are, we do love You. Do not believe our forgetfulness, do not believe the lukewarmness which occasionally creeps over us, for You know all things, You know that we love You"? Such affection makes us cry, "My God!" We cannot comprehend Him, but we apprehend Him with the grip of hallowed love. We feel that we can never give Him up, even as He will never give us up. I am not what I ought to be, but I cannot give up my God! Hard as my heart feels, yet it melts with love to Him who has loved me from before the foundations of the world! Who shall separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord?

What a deal there is in the title! But we have not exhausted it by a long way—let us have another drink from the well. You feel that now *the obedience of your life is rendered to Him most cheerfully*, for this is a sure outcome of the heart's crying, "He is my God." A man cannot call God, *his* God in truth unless he desires to *obey* Him, for God is a name to adore, to reverence, to worship. He who speaks of God but never obeys Him is a practical atheist—he or she has no God! That man who talks about God in the synagogue, but who has no regard for Him in the market, makes Jehovah to be no better a deity than the idols of the heathen who are only gods in their own temples, even if there. The man upon whose heart and hands the Godhead has no kind of influence—such a man is a liar and knows not God, but renders to Him lip service which is to God's dishonor, and *not* to His Glory. Yes, Beloved, if you are what you profess to be, you can declare, "With all my infirmities and imperfections, I desire that my whole life should be obedience to the Divine precepts. I wish in all things to do that which is right and good, and true and kind according to the mind of Christ, in which I see the mind of God, my Father." Concerning these things let there be great searching of heart. Come and look in this mirror and see if you bear the features of "imitators of God as dear children"—for it will go hard with you if you turn out to be pretenders.

Let me only add that this expressive phrase, "My God," hints at *a joy and delight in Him*. As men would say—"my love," "my choice," "my treasure," "my delight"—so does the Prophet say, "My God." The very name

wakes all the music of his soul! As when the sleeping flowers, being touched by the first beams of the rising sun, open their bright eyes to look on Him who is the foster-father of all their beauty and seem, each one, to say, "My King," so do our hearts rejoice in the Presence of the Lord and our quickened spirits cry, "My God!"

So much for the title. May it be written on your hearts by the Holy Spirit.

II. The second point in our brief text is THE ARGUMENT, for I believe the title contains within itself a secret logical force. "My God *will hear me.*" As surely as He is my God, He will hear me. Why?

Well, He will hear me, first, *because He is God*—because He is the living and true God. Those gods of stone cannot hear me, but my God will hear me. The gods that many men choose will not hear them in the day of trouble. To which of them will they call in the hour of their affliction? But my God will hear me! It is His memorial that He hears prayer. The oracles of the heathen were but liars. Those who sought the false gods did but dote upon lies—they were deceivers and deceived. But my God will hear me! As surely as He is God, He will answer prayer! If He does not answer prayer, then He is no more a God than Jupiter, or Saturn, or Venus. For us as Christian people and worshippers of the Most High, it is a Truth of God never to be questioned that Jehovah is the living and true God, whose memorial is that He hears the prayers of His people. "My God will hear me."

You see in what a tone of confidence this Prophet speaks—and why should not every child of God speak with the same confidence? The joy of religion lies in a hearty faith in it. You begin handling it with dainty fingers, criticizing it everlastingly, questioning this and questioning that with anxious debate of heart—and the consequence is that you miss its sweetness. It is nothing to your comfort till it is everything to your faith. You must believe it and the more thoroughly you believe it, the more will it prove itself true to you. The proof of the Gospel lies in the testing of it, by which I mean, in the practical proving and enjoying of it. Suppose you try to pray and do not believe in prayer? Well, you do not pray. You get nothing by such praying—you work a dry pump! You must have confidence in the Mercy Seat if the Mercy Seat is to be a place of refuge for you. "He that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." "He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

To my mind it seems the right thing to believe in the living God right up to the hilt—to believe in His promises without stint or limit. His Word

is either true or false. If it is false, I will never preach it—if it is true, I will never doubt it! There let it stand like a column of brass—*though all things else should fail, God must hear prayer*. He may do this and He may do that, but He *must* hear prayer! My God will hear me because He is a true God and no liar and He has, Himself, declared, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.” He has laid it down as unquestionable fact, “He that seeks, finds; he that asks, receives and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” How can He run back from this? Why should I imagine that He will lie?

But why am I so sure, as a matter of argument, that God will hear prayer? The answer is again in the title, “*My God.*” *Because He has made Himself my God, He will hear me*. O you that are familiar with your God, who can therefore call Him by the dear title of, “My God,” you will see the overwhelming conclusiveness of this reasoning. To hear a petitioner is a small thing compared to giving yourself over to him. “My God will hear me,” for doubtless, if He has given Himself to be my God, He will hear me! He has done the *greater* thing, He will surely do the lesser! If, in infinite condescension, He permits me to call Him, “my God,” and I perceive all through His Gospel that He invites me to do so, then, surely, He will hear me! He that has said, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God,” will do the much smaller thing—He will, without doubt—hear them when they call upon Him. “You, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children. How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?”

Is not that clear enough? He has given us Himself and His Son—how can He shut out our cries? After what He has done for us in the past, we cannot doubt that He will hear us. What? Give us cleansing by His blood and then not *hear* us? What? Give us the new birth and then not *hear* us? Did He bless us when we did not seek Him and will He not hear us when we *do* seek Him? What? Look after us when we were like stray sheep, deaf to all His calls—seek after us till He restored us—and then not *hear* us when we become the sheep of His pasture? Impossible! The argument is irresistible—My God will certainly hear me!

Moreover, *my God has heard me so many times, already*, and, therefore, be it far from me to doubt His present and future favor. A Brother in prayer reminded us, just now, that we ought to have greater faith than the saints of the olden times because we have many more centuries of the Divine faithfulness to read of and to see. It is so, but I fear that observation seldom acts upon us so forcibly as actual personal *experience*.

What shall I say to my beloved Brothers and Sisters who are getting old? They have had such experience. God has heard your prayers many times, my aged Brethren, and your faith is thereby confirmed. When we first began to pray, we were staggered if objectors questioned us. "You talk about God having heard your prayer." "Yes," we said, "He did hear us," and we stated our case. The skeptic sneered and said, "That was merely a coincidence."

When we heard that remark for the first time, we were somewhat taken aback. We admitted that we could not draw an inference from two or three facts, for, perhaps, in later years there might be 30 facts which would tell the other way. But, my veteran Brothers and Sisters, we are not in that condition tonight, for some of us have had 30 or 40 years' experience of God's hearing prayer and our facts are as many as the hairs of our heads! Do opponents say that these are coincidences? We do not care to answer such perverse jangling! If they were in our position, they would not wish to answer such remarks. They would laugh and that is all that they would find in their hearts to do! A man puts on warm clothing and is not pinched by the frost. His acquaintance tells him that he does not believe in flannel and broad-cloth. He shivers in his unbelief and tells the well-clad man that his comfort is a mere coincidence! Humorous, is it not?

But if the objector gets frozen to death, the wit grows rather grim! When we have not prayed and have not received a blessing—and have been ready to perish—I suppose our failure has been a coincidence! And when we have betaken ourselves to our knees and have cried mightily to God, pleaded the promises, and God has answered us as visibly as if He had split the blue heavens and thrust out His almighty arm to help us—has that been a coincidence? I call such things plain answers to prayer, but those who have never experienced the like think me a fanatic! I will therefore let them use their own terms. We will not wrangle over words—"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." As to the delivering mercy of God—you may call it a coincidence if you like—but to us it will always be a blessed proof that the Lord hears prayer.

Using this sweet title, containing, as it does, within itself a whole century of logic, we say, joyfully, "My God will hear me." What bliss it is to have so sweet an assurance always at hand! It is a versicle of heavenly music—"My God will hear me." The Lord has entered into Covenant with us that He will not turn away from us from doing us good and *in that Covenant His hearing prayer is included*. He could not be our Friend and be deaf to our appeals! He could not be in fellowship with us and shut out our cries! Listen to some of His own Covenant Words—"Call upon Me in

the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me" (Psa 50:15). "He shall call upon Me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him" (Psa. 91:15). "The Lord is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psa. 145:18, 19). "And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24). "Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you know not" (Jer. 33:3). Do you need more than this? The Lord has said it and He will make it good! He has never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain.

Were not the Lord to hear prayer and bear His people through their troubles, *He would, Himself, be a great loser*. He would lose all that His wisdom has planned, all that His sovereignty has ordained, all that His love has begun, all that His power has worked and all that upon which His heart is set! If Jehovah did not hear prayer, it were to Him as though a father no more heard the voice of his child—he would lose that which charms his fatherly mind and miss that which is a solace to his loving heart. If God does not hear me, He will lose me—and this I feel He will not do, for He has engraved me upon the palms of His hands, that I may never be forgotten of Him. O, yes, my God will hear me! His truth and honor cannot be imperiled by a refusal to hear the pleadings of His own child!

III. Bear with me while I invite you, in the third place, to notice the FAVOR ITSELF. "My God will *hear me*." You notice that in Scripture we do not often find the expression, "My God will *answer me*." We do read that He answers prayer, but more frequently God is said to be the God that *hears* prayer. It is better for us to have a promise that God will *hear* us than a promise that God will always answer us. In fact, if it were a matter of absolute fact that God would *always* answer the prayers of His people as they present them, it would be an terrible Truth. I would shrink from ever praying again if I were absolutely sure that the Lord would answer my prayer, whatever it might be. I might curse myself seven times deep by a prayer within the next seven minutes, if there were no safeguards and limits to the promise of prayer being answered!

It is neither desirable nor possible that all things should be left to our choice! So much do I feel this, that if my Lord should say to me, "From this hour I will always answer your prayer just as you pray it," the first petition I would offer would be, "Lord, do nothing of the sort." Because that would be putting the responsibility of my life upon *myself*, instead of allowing it to remain upon God. It were, in fact, to make me the master of

the house and to make me my own shepherd—the very first thing I would wish would be to strip myself of such a power! I would cry, “Lord, do as You will about answering me; I will be well content if You will *hear* me.” I like that kind of hearing prayer of which Ralph Erskine says—

***“I’m heard when answered, soon or late,
Yes, heard when I no answer get—
Most kindly answered when refused,
And treated well when harshly used.”***

It is enough for a praying heart that it has a *hearing* God.

But notice, “My God will hear me.” It means, first, literally that He will hear me *as a Listener*. A good Brother of my acquaintance, a minister of the Gospel, going to preach from the text that God will hear prayer, called upon one of his poor people who said, when the visit was over, that she had greatly enjoyed his call. He thought to himself, “I have scarcely said a word and yet she says that I have done her good.” Turning to her, he enquired, “Sister, how can I have done you good, for I have hardly spoken with you?” “Ah, Sir,” she replied, “you have *listened* so kindly. You have heard all I had to say and there are very few who will do that.” Just so. People in deep trouble like somebody to hear them all through—even little children are comforted by telling mother all about it. We are in such a hurry with poor troubled spirits that we hasten them on to the end of the sentence and try to make them skip the dreary details. But to them this seems unkind, for their story is sacred and, therefore, they go slowly on with it till we are quite tired.

I have often hurried on a poor despondent creature till I have seen the uselessness of it—it is always best to let them spin on. It does them good. To spill out the heart to a patient listener is a great relief to a burdened spirit—and the heart must do it in its own way. Here is a sweet assurance, “My God will hear me.” I may be very bad and what I say may be very broken. And I may groan a good deal and I may say the same thing over and over again—and my whole ditty may be very stupid—but, “My God will hear me.” *He* is in no hurry! He is the God of patience. He will listen to my dreary talk and endure each gloomy detail. I need not hold Him as the Ancient Mariner held the wedding guest who was unwilling to hear his weary rhyme of the sea—my God will willingly listen to me right through, from beginning to end, groans and all! “My God will hear me.”

And then the Lord will listen *as a Friend full of sympathy*. Some people listen but do not hear. You tell them your story, but it does not help you a bit because their minds are no more moved by your case than if they were far away. They are just saying to themselves, “We will hear this poor old lady’s story; it will please her.” But it does *not* please her because she perceives that they have no sympathy, no feeling for her. The kind of per-

son you like to tell your story to is one who weeps with you—who is really afflicted with your affliction. It is greatly comforting to have a person with you who feels just as you feel, who, when you are very stupid, seems to be stupid, too; who frets as you fret and groans in your groans.

“Mother,” said a little girl, once, “I cannot make it out. Mrs. Smith says I do her so much good. Poor Mrs. Smith has lost her husband, Mother, and she is very sad. She sits and cries and I get up and lay my cheek on her cheek, and I cry and say that I love her. And then she says that she loves me and that I comfort her.” Just so. That is the truest form of consolation, is it not? “Weep with them that weep.” That is how God, my God, will hear me, feeling with me, sympathizing with me. “In all their affliction He was afflicted and the angel of His Presence saved them.” “I am with you, says the Lord.”—

***“I feel in my heart all your sighs and your groans,
For you are most near Me, My flesh and My bones.
In all your afflictions your Head feels the pain,
They all are most needful, not one is in vain,”***

“My God will hear me.” He will listen to me and He will sympathize with me.

“My God will hear me.” That is, He will turn it over and discriminate in His own mind, and He will not allow me to be condemned by the hurried judgment of men. He will hear me as a *judge patiently hears a case*. Others will come in and clamor against me and refuse to listen to a word of explanation. But my God will hear me! That was a splendid utterance of the holy Patriarch, Job! He went a long way further than he knew he went when he said it—“I know that my Redeemer lives.” His unkind friends charged him very terribly and Job spoke up for himself, but he did not get on at it. He could not plead his own cause successfully and, therefore, in his desperation, he cried, “I have a God that will yet plead my cause, and if He does not do it while I am alive, yet I know that He lives! And though after my skin, worms devour my body, yet in my flesh shall I behold Him, and I shall be cleared from this misrepresentation! I shall be delivered from this suspicion. I know I shall! My God will hear me! He will hear my suit right through and do me justice and I shall behold Him, whom my eyes shall see, for myself, and not another.” Job felt assured of being cleared at last. Dear child of God, you may do the same! Your character shall not be injured by malicious tongues. They lie against you; they refuse you a hearing; they wrest your words; they empty the buckets of their contempt upon you, but your God will hear you!

Then, at the back of that, of course, comes the conclusion of every loving heart that, as God will hear the case right through, so He will certainly *hear as a Helper*. “My God will hear me.” Now, child of God, go away

with this promise in your hands and in your heart—"My God will hear me"—and then use it like a magic wand. Turn it whichever way you will and it will clear your path. You are going to preach the Gospel in a distant country, perhaps, and your spirit sinks as you sigh, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Lift up your heart to God and His Grace shall be sufficient for you and His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness, for your God will hear you! Or you have to go home, tonight, to a sick house and to lose one that is dear to you. You shall be sustained, for in your ear is this Word of God, "My God will hear me."

Or, perhaps, you yourself have to sicken and die. Do you enquire—"What shall I do in the swellings of Jordan"? Here is your happy answer, "My God will hear me!" I shall cry to Him and He will answer me. He will have a desire to the work of His hands. Yes, though I go down into the valley of the shadow of death, my God will hear me! And when I lie in the tomb, my God will remember me and He will call me up with sound of a trumpet—and my body shall live again! My God shall hear me singing His praises before His Throne! My God shall hear me, world without end, as my whole being shall lift up her joyous notes of, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah," unto Him who loved me out of the Pit and lifted me up to His own right hand!

IV. My only sorrow about this text is my fear that it could not honestly fall from some of your lips—you could not truthfully say, "My God will hear me." So I close by noting THE PERSON to whom it belongs—"My God will hear me." Will He hear you? Dear Heart, are you cast down under a sense of sin? Do you seek forgiveness? He will hear you! Are you burdened because you cannot live without sin? Would you be free from all evil? He will hear you! Are you persecuted for righteousness' sake? Are the men of your household turned to be your foes? He will hear you and cause you to rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer for Jesus' sake! Are you assured of the result of prayer? You shall not be disappointed. Your God will hear you! Have you been praying long? Cease not from importunity, but solace yourself with this sure belief—*My God will hear me*. Will you now come and cast yourselves into the arms of Jesus, the Crucified? Your God has heard you! Be of good cheer!

O, my dear Hearer, have you a God? Strange question, but I press it even with tears—have you a God? If you have no God, of course you have nobody to hear you when the great floods of water prevail! My dear Hearer, if you make the *world* your god, it cannot hear you in the day of your trouble! You may be a very rich man and have large estates, but I would sooner occupy the place of the poorest believing pauper in the workhouse than take your position without a God and without a Throne of Grace!

How do people live that have no God to go to? If a man were to say to me, "I never get a morsel of bread to eat at all," I would wonder how he lived. But when a man says, "I never pray and God never hears me," I am in equal wonder! How can the poor creature exist?

These are hard times with a great many of you. You have not many worldly comforts. Indeed, some of you cannot even find work. What can you do without a God to fly to? I suppose your head aches, sometimes, like mine. I suppose cares and troubles eat into your mind as they do into mine. I suppose you have your difficulties and your knots that you cannot untie, just as I have mine. How do you keep your *souls* alive without a God? I pray God that I may never live a day without prayer and without trusting my God. How do you bear up, some of you? I do not wonder that you go and get drunk to drown your thoughts! I do not wonder that you need frivolities and theatricals and all sorts of childish toys to put your cares out of your minds, for you need something or other to help you forget the miseries which are coming upon you thick and heavy!

Yet is it not madness to drive away wise thoughts? What a wretched business it must be to be in dread of your own thoughts! You dare not sit alone in your chamber for half-an-hour and *think*, because if you did you would begin to think of dying—and you could not bear to think of that without a God! You might even be driven to think of Hell and of a judgment to come—and that you could not endure. If you dare not think of them, how will you bear them? Oh poor souls! Poor souls! You are in a sad state, indeed! But you need not remain so. If any man wills to have God to be his own God, Grace has given him that will! If you *desire* Christ, you may have Him!

What is the price? Nothing at all! Receive Him freely! Believe in Jesus Christ—that is, trust yourself with Him—and God is your God and you may go on your way full of joy and thankfulness! God bless you and comfort you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Micah 7.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—622, 999, 981.**

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

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

MY OWN PERSONAL HOLDFAST

NO. 2069

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1889,
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"My God will hear me."
 Micah 7:7.*

OBSERVE that the Prophet has no sort of doubt. He insinuates no "if" or "an" or "but" or "perhaps," but he says it straight out as a fact of which he is infallibly convinced—"My God will hear me." What a blessed thing it is that the child of God knows and feels that this is true! Wherever he may fail, he will succeed at the Throne! If all other friendly ears are closed, his Friend of friends will hear him. Lose your confidence in the power of prayer and I know not what remains for you. If you are obliged to say, "My God will *not* hear me"—if that is the language of your unbelieving spirit—your Achilles tendon is cut and you cannot stand with confidence, much less run with delight.

With faith in prayer you have Heaven's infinite treasures at your disposal. But if you ask waveringly, you find that warning true, "He that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." You must know with absolute certainty that God is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, or you will not be among those whom the Father seeks to worship Him. To be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" you must be strong upon your knees. "My God will hear me" is a sentence which you must know by heart.

It is a very wide question, that of God's hearing the prayers of men, and I should need a considerable time to describe particularly whose prayers the Lord will hear and what prayers He will hear and how it is true that He always hears, whatever His answer may be. But it will be a far better thing if, without debate, you can personally say for yourself, "Let others say what they will and judge what they please in this matter, I am persuaded by the Spirit of all Grace that my God will hear me." If, so far as you yourself are concerned, you have this assurance, your own feet are upon a rock and you need not trouble about the sand and the mire.

This assurance, "My God will hear me," is better than all the aid of mortal men and a greater wealth than the mines of India could afford you. I desire to preach, not only from these few words but also from their connection. The position of the text in the Sacred Book is highly instructive. May the Author of the Book make it so at this time!

I. I shall try to speak, in the first place, UPON THE RESULTS OF CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER IN BELIEVERS. When they can truly say, "My God will hear me," the best consequences will come of it. Think of what will happen to them.

To begin with, in the worst of times God is their resort. In reading the chapter we saw that the times were desperate. The nation had become

rotten throughout. "The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men." Justice was openly sold. Bribes were unblushingly taken and even openly demanded. In business all were dishonest. "The best of them is as a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge." In domestic life there was no trusting friend, or husband, or wife, or son, or daughter.

The whole land had become corrupt. And as the Prophet surveyed it with tears in his eyes, he could see nothing worth the looking upon, and he cried, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." His conviction that God would hear his prayer was his last comfort and it led him to close his eyes upon the spectacle of universal crime and look heavenward and heavenward only. When you have faith in prayer you will, in the cloudy and dark day, find consolation in looking to God who is the blessed sun from whom a brighter day will come.

Instead of being overcome by doubt you will gather up your faith, which otherwise might have been scattered among men, and you will place the whole of it upon God, who still remains true and faithful and holy. Men who have confidence in prayer have perpetual errands at the Throne, for they have abundant trials in the wickedness of men and they look for more abundant mercies from the Lord. If they are in straitened circumstances they run to their Father in Heaven to ask that their daily bread may be given them. And if they enjoy plenty, with equal earnestness they pray that their abundance may be sanctified.

In any case, the Believer has abundant reasons for praying without ceasing. If a man had no confidence in prayer, would he thus resort to God in the worst of times and in the best of times? Would he seek deliverance from evil things and the consecration of good things? I think not. We resort to God because He bids us do so. We accept His method of granting blessings and prayer because we conceive prayer to be a part of the Divine Decree. The same God that ordains to give a certain blessing has also ordained that we shall pray for it. We do not expect to change the will of God but we believe our prayer to be a part of His will. It is not contrary to predestination for us to pray—it is itself a part of it.

As coming events cast their shadows, so does a coming mercy cast upon our heart a desire to pray. That I should pray is as much the Divine purpose as that the asked-for blessing should come to me. The Word of the Lord concerning the Believer is, "He shall call upon Me and I will answer Him." God's Providence is thus like a two-leaved gate. Our prayer, and God's act, work upon the one hinge of the eternal purpose.

Now, if a man had no confidence in prayer, he would not look to God in dark times. He would be searching everywhere else for some lower light which might be available. If the Lord's ear is too high, or He Himself is too great, or too remote for our requests to be of any avail, let us go to the *creature*. We must draw from the cistern if we cannot get at the fountain. What else remains? If an appeal to the highest and the best is absurd, does not common sense direct us to abandon it and trust in those who will hear us? I know that Scripture says, "Cursed is he that trusts in man

and makes flesh his arm.” And this makes me feel that there must be a power in trusting in God.

Brethren, we are in an evil case, if, indeed, prayer is a mere form. But we need not fall into despair for we are not in such a condition. We need not run to saints, or angels, or friends, for verily, there is a God that hears prayer. Saints in all ages have turned their eyes to the Lord, their God, and I cannot conceive of them as fools. And yet, what more foolish than to look to a God who cannot see the glance of faith, nor hear the voice of supplication, nor in any way practically sympathize with the trust of His worshippers? Beloved, we look to the Lord at all times, because He that made the eye, can certainly see—and He that made the ear, can assuredly hear—and He that has commanded us to pray, will not fail to regard us. I, for one, for this reason, solemnly declare, “Therefore will I look unto the Lord.”

Another blessing which we derive from the certainty that God hears our prayer is that our eyes are led to look to God with hope. Not only do we turn to the Lord because we have no other resort but because we look to Him with joyful expectation. The Prophet says, “Therefore will I look unto the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation.” We view our God, not as a forlorn hope, but as the sure source of salvation to us. Many things are taken from us, but hope remains forever in the box which is not that of Pandora but of Jehovah. It is one of the best of our blessings that we, “through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.” Our God is called “the God of hope.” We have hope that God will hear because He is Jehovah, the I AM. We know that He is and that He is equal to all emergencies, be they what they may. Even in death we say, “Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.”

When we cannot see any other grounds for hope, we find good anchor-hold in the promise of the Lord, so that we cry, “My soul, wait only upon God. For my expectation is from Him.” It is He that has so often wrought deliverances for His praying people—we look for His mercy as men that watch for the morning. It is no small thing to keep hope alive in the human bosom—it is the direst of calamities when it dies out. From where does the suicide plunge into the dark wave, or the crimson gash that lets out a soul? Are not those gates of grim death opened as hope flies away? From where is that listlessness, that lethargy, that want of energy, that letting things drift to ruin? It is because hope has quit the helm and the ship is drawn upon the rocks. Kill hope in a man, and you have killed the man’s best self. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity. But “a wounded spirit who can bear?”

Now, a firm conviction that God will hear prayer is a buoy to a sinking hope. He will not give all up who believes that his God will hear him. He cannot be driven to desperation while the Mercy Seat continues a source of hope and he remains in possession of his reason. You will hear him argue with himself, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God—for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.” Surely, these are two choice blessings—to be enabled to look always to God and to look towards Him evermore with hope.

But we go further. A full conviction of the certainty that God will hear our prayers helps us to wait with patience. "I will wait for the God of my salvation." He may not answer me today but He will hear me. Tomorrow may not bring me the expected deliverance but it will come. Though the vision tarry, I will wait for it. For it shall come and according to the reckoning of infinite wisdom it really will not tarry. Great is the punctuality of the living God. He never is before His time but He never is behind.

He is not only present when we need Him but we find Him, "a very present help in trouble." We find it good to wait because we have no fear of being disappointed. A full conviction that prayer shall be heard makes us sit even with Job on the dunghill and bless the Lord who has taken away what before He gave. It makes us strengthen ourselves on the bed of languishing and sing with Jacob, "I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord." It enables us with David to encourage ourselves in the Lord amid the ashes of our Ziklag. It helps us to go with Jeremiah into the low dungeon and yet to say, "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him."

It enables us to hope with Jonah, when all hopes seem gone, till we at length bear witness, "Out of the belly of Hell cried I and You heard my voice." In all difficulties and under all opposition, we shall be able to endure with patience the will of the Lord if we remain firm in the assurance that prayer is heard of the Lord. I often repeat Ralph Erskine's ditty—

***"I'm heard when answered, soon or late,
Yes, heard when I no answer get;
I'm kindly answered when refused,
And treated well when harshly used."***

It is so. No good thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly. And therefore, if an answer to prayer is withheld, it is because what we sought was not for our real good. A flat denial in form may be a full grant in essence since all our prayers are comprehended in, "Your will be done." And this is the standing corrective for all that we ask amiss. If, then, in prayer we do not have our will of God in one way, yet we shall have it in another. For we evermore, in the inmost depths of our soul, are praying, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as You will."

The Lord will either give us what we ask, or do some better thing for us. Believe in prayer with a tenacity that nothing can remove. Stand to it that He does hear you and be not staggered. Hope against hope and wait to the uttermost. Do not have a pretended and false faith in it but let the solid, solemn, immovable conviction of your inmost soul be, "My God will hear me."

If you now pass on to the verse that follows the text, you will get another series of thoughts, showing the result of an assured conviction that God hears prayer. Observe that it gives us an answer to our enemies. "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: my God will hear me." The foe has seen me fall and he has hastened to set his foot upon me. But I do not lie there in despair, surrendering myself to be destroyed by him, for "My God will hear me." How bravely can we deride derision and pour scorning upon the scorners, even when they are in their glory, when we firmly believe that the Lord hears prayer!

They reckon that we are defeated, that we have no one to plead our cause, that we shall never be heard of again and they have very ingenious ways of telling us these cruel persuasions of theirs. We answer them by declaring boldly that our heavenly Father has heard our cries and that, before long, He will make this clear even to our foes. "Then my enemy shall see it and shame shall cover her which said unto me, 'Where is the Lord your God?'"

We fight a waiting battle. Fabius saved Rome by waiting and we, also, are saved by the hope which waits upon the Lord and bides the time of the faithful promise. The saint is no Caesar, who boastfully writes, "Veni, vidi, vici." His dispatches are written with the pen of patience and here is one of them, "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait and in His Word do I hope." We are of the tribe of Gad, of whom it is written, "A troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last." Cheering is that promise—"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholds him with His hand."

Our adversaries had better not laugh till the affair is over. We have yet a weapon in reserve which we have not done with yet. That weapon is prayer. We answer their shouts of victory with this one sentence, "My God will hear me." The tables will yet be turned, the trampler shall be trampled on and captivity itself led captive. We may have to wait long before the Lord takes up the quarrel of His Covenant, but He will avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them. As for me, my heart is quiet beneath the contumely which comes of defending the Lord's Truth, for He will justify me before long.

And if He should not do so speedily, yet He will do it ultimately—yes, I am happy to wait even till after death, for I know that my Justifier lives and that, though after my skin worms devour this body, yet shall my Lord vindicate me and all others who have been faithful to His Truth. But where would be our patience under defeat? Where our answer to the adversary, if we were not sure that, beyond all doubt, God will hear prayer? We have left our case in His hands and now we are unmoved by sarcasm and ridicule, for our cause is safe in the keeping of the Eternal. Sneer still, you philosophic doubter, "My God will hear me."

Again, our confidence in a prayer-hearing God sustains us with the bright prospect of rising when we are down. What says the Prophet? "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." What if I have slipped? What if, through pressure of pain and sorrow, my spirits have sunk within me? What if I am a broken and crushed man? Yet I can pray and I do pray and my God will hear me. Therefore I shall arise again. Oh, blessed thought! The Christian may fall very low but underneath him are the everlasting arms. Since those arms are underneath, they will stay the fall and lift us up from it. We shall arise.

How high that rising who can tell? Even though we fall into the grave, blessed be God, we can fall no lower. And then comes the rising from among the dead, the rising to the Throne. It makes my spirit leap within me to think how this conviction that God hears prayer begets in us the joyful certainty that we cannot be left in the dust but we must arise and shake ourselves and put on our beautiful array. The God that has prom-

ised to hear us shall bring us again from Bashan—yes, He shall bring us up again from the depths of the sea. Our downcastings are temporary. Our uprisings are eternal. We shall return with singing and everlasting joy shall be upon our heads. Faith sets us praying and praying sets all Heaven at work to draw us out of the pit and set us on high.

A firm conviction that the Lord hears prayer gives the soul confidence that light will come to it. The Prophet says, “When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.” This delightful expectation springs out of that little word, “My God will hear me.” If I am plunged in darkness I shall still pray. And as the Lord will hear me, He will give me light. Prayer lights candles where there are none. The moaning of oppressed Israel, though they were scarcely prayers, yet ended the long darkness of their Egyptian bondage. Peter lies in the dark, bound with chains. But the Church is praying for him in Mrs. Mark’s house and suddenly a light shines in the dungeon!

An angel awakens him with a touch on the side and leads him out into the street to his own company. My God—my Light. It cannot be that a Christian should be in the dark and not have his God with him. For if his God is with him it must be light round about him. Joy and comfort must spring up in the most barren misery if we know how to pray—the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, if the feet of supplication touch it. They said that where the Tartar’s foot fell the grass was withered. But we may say that where the Believer’s knee touches all is made fruitful. God keep us in this conviction.

I say again, if this goes, all goes—if there is no more power in prayer, religion is either null and void, or a mere piece of fanaticism, or a juggle of priest craft. If God’s answering prayer is but an idle daydream, where are we? Poor lone children crying in the dark to a Father who cannot hear us? Poor children apt to be entangled in the terrible machinery of events and to be whirled round and crushed by it, since no fatherly hand will be stretched out to rescue us? Mungo Park, in the desert, was refreshed by the sight of a bit of moss because it told him that God was near.

But all this is an error according to the modern theory that God either may not, cannot, or will not interpose in answer to His children’s cry. The reign of Law is proclaimed but the Law-giver is pushed back beyond our reach. We call but He does not hear—none but old-fashioned bigots can imagine that He does. Or if perhaps He hears, it is a still greater chance that He will not answer—so they say. If prayer seems to be answered it is a mere coincidence, a happy accident which pleases the pious mind. I am sick of repeating such cruel talk. Brothers and Sisters, we know better. We are as sure of the Law that our God hears prayer—we are each one personally as sure that “my God will hear me,” as we are sure that the law of gravitation binds matter in its place.

We have a personal Providence, a personal God and a personal God listening to our prayers. And we are persuaded, therefore, that all things must work together for good and we must come out of the darkness—but even in the darkness the Lord shall be a light about us. This supports our spirits under the greatest pressure and gives us songs in the night.

All those benefits I have spoken of are the results of holding firmly to the doctrine of effectual prayer. And to us most excellent results they are.

II. And from this I pass on, secondly, to notice THE REASON FOR THE GREAT CONFIDENCE WHICH BELIEVERS EXHIBIT IN THE MATTER OF PRAYER. They speak not without reason when they say, "My God will hear me." Why do we believe thus?

We believe it first and mainly, because of the faithful Promiser. The character of the Lord God, who has promised to answer prayer, the truthfulness of the Lord Jesus, who has said, "If you shall ask anything in My name I will do it," and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit who incites the prayer—in a word, the Character of God Himself constrains us to rely upon His word without a doubt. It is declared, over and over, in the inspired Scriptures of Truth, that "He that seeks finds. And to him that knocks it shall be opened."

We have the command, "Ask and it shall be given you." We are told that, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." We are assured that, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Yes, not only are we told this, but we have it set before us in actual instances, such as Elijah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel and multitudes of others. It is a matter of Covenant with God that He will hear His children's prayers. "He shall call upon Me and I will answer him!" Is the Lord faithful? Is He true? Only let us get a reply to those two questions and the matter is settled.

Is He the same God as in former ages? Can He, will He, still keep His word as before? We have but one form of answer to these queries—He is Jehovah and He changes not. I had rather have one little promise in the corner of the Bible to support my faith than I would have all the philosophies of scientific men to sustain my opinion. The history of philosophy is in brief the history of fools. All the sets of philosophers that have yet lived have been more successful in contradicting those that came before them than in anything else. It is well when the children of Ammon and Moab stand up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir utterly to slay and destroy them. The enemies of God are good at the business of destroying each other.

Within a few years the evolutionists will be cut in pieces by some new dreamers. The reigning philosophers of the present period have in them so much of the vitality of madness that they will be a perpetual subject of contempt. And I venture to prophesy that before my head shall lie in the grave there will hardly be a notable man left who will not have washed his hands of the present theory. That which is taught today for a certainty by savants will soon have been so disproved as to be trod down as the mire in the streets.

The Lord's Truth lives and reigns but man's inventions are but for an hour. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet. But as I have lived to see marvelous changes in the dogmas of philosophy—I expect to see still more. See how they have shifted. They used to tell us that the natural depravity of our race was a myth—they scouted the idea that we were born in sin and declared with mimic sentiment that every dear babe was perfect. Now what do they tell us? Why, that if we do not inherit the original

sin of Adam, or any other foregoing man, we have upon us the hereditary results of the transgressions of the primeval oysters, or other creatures, from which we have ascended or descended. We bear in our bodies, if not in our souls, the effects of all the tricks of the monkeys whose future was entailed upon us by evolution.

This nonsense is to be received by learned societies with patience and accepted by us with reverence, while the simple statements of Holy Writ are regarded as mythical or incredible. I only mention this folly for the sake of showing that the opponents of the Word of God constantly shift their positions, like quicksand at a river's mouth. But they are equally dangerous, whatever position they occupy. In the announcement of heredity, philosophical thought has deprived itself of all power to object to the Biblical doctrine of original sin. This is of no consequence to us, who care nothing for their objections.

But it ought to be some sort of hint to them. According to modern thinkers, what is true on Monday may be false on Tuesday. And what is certain on Wednesday may be our duty to doubt on a Thursday and so on, world without end. Every change of the moon sees a change in the teaching of the new theology. A good stout hypothesis in the old times served a man for a hobbyhorse for twenty years. But nowadays their sorry jades hardly last twenty months. Said I not well that the smallest promise of God is worth more than all that ever has been taught, or ever shall be taught, by skeptical philosophers and speculative theologians?

Let God be true but every man a liar. Whatever may be the truth in science, God is true and on His promise we build our confidence. We will distrust the witness of all men and angels but we cannot, we dare not, distrust the Lord. I feel ashamed to add anything to the first overwhelming reason for faith, for that is enough and more than enough. Yet since faith is so often weak, we may place beneath it another prop. We believe in the power of prayer because of our past experience. Certain of us could not say less than, "My God will hear me," for if we did we should be traitors to the witness of our lives.

I shall not turn this into an experience-meeting but, if I did, what testimonies we could produce to answered prayer! I will not even quote a selection from the many great and special answers which I have personally received. But all the saints of God are one in their testimony upon this point. I take leave to say that praying people are as a rule as honest and truth-speaking a people as those gentlemen who deny the virtue of prayer. Well, these men, myself among them, solemnly declare that God has heard and answered our prayers. And we do not say this in moments of fanaticism when we are worked up into a delirium of devotion but we assert it soberly, as a plain matter of fact.

If we were about to die we should assert this all the more earnestly. It is true to us as before God. Upon this statement, that God has heard and answered our prayers, we are prepared to speak as positively, solemnly and deliberately, as if we thought it right to call God to witness by an oath. We are not, therefore, prepared to have our witness summarily dismissed as of no value. We claim as men the right to be believed. At any rate, we shall hold to facts which we have ourselves experienced and to

the truth which they prove. And if we are ridiculed for so doing, we shall bear it with equanimity. When the philosopher said that there was no such thing as matter, he who hurt his head against a post was convinced of the contrary.

And when another great theorist said that there was no such thing as mind, he who had been heart-broken with sorrow could not be converted to the opinion. It is hard to argue against our experience and consciousness. We are case-hardened. The Creole Proverb says, "When the mosquito tried to sting the alligator, he wasted his time." And the case is much the same when infidels deal with us. It would be needful to convince us that facts are not facts, that deliverances from trouble were not deliverances, that supplies of necessities were not supplies.

I am ready to disbelieve my eyes, for they have often deceived me. I am ready to discredit my ears, for they have misled me. But I cannot disbelieve my personal experience, especially when it does not consist of a few scattered incidents but of a chain of facts. The Lord has listened to my voice when I have cried to Him and this I know as certainly as I know that I have lived upon this earth. Therefore I believe that "my God will hear me" in the present and in the future.

Beloved, we are sure that God will hear us because we have towards God a sense of sonship. He is our Father and we know it. Hence we argue that if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children, He also will give to us what we need at His hands if we cry to Him. Concerning this I need not argue. Granted the fatherhood of God, He must hear prayer. Deny that He is your Father and I do not say that He will hear *you*.

Moreover, we believe in the power of believing prayer, because of the prevalence of our Intercessor. Jesus Christ Himself is pleading for us in the Presence of God. He has gone into Heaven on purpose that He might represent His people at the Throne of Grace and plead their cause. And we can never imagine that as our great High Priest, accepted of the Father, He pleads in vain. When we ask in His name and set His seal to our petitions, we must win our suit. We are bound to be as certain of this as of the continued life and boundless merit of our Lord. Our prayer is backed and endorsed by His adorable name and this makes it quite another thing than if it were the mere request of a sinful man. It must be heard. Jesus, when You take up my case, "my God will hear me."

Moreover, we have guidance in prayer, for the Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray. God Himself puts acceptable desires into our hearts and makes us to know what we should pray for as we ought. And surely such prayers cannot go unanswered. We pray to be helped to overcome sin. And this desire was implanted in us by the good Spirit—will it not be granted? We ask to be made holy and to be enabled to glorify God. Surely, God did not implant such desires in us to mock us by giving us aspirations which He never intended to fulfill! To make us hunger and thirst after blessings which He could not or would not give—would be to torment us before our time—and this we cannot impute to God.

The leading of the Spirit which induces us to pray is no dancing will-o'-the-wisp, uprising from the swamp of superstition conducting us to fa-

naticism. But it is a clear and sure light which has never been followed by any man without guiding him to peace and safety. Have any of you ever suffered injury by prayer? Did you ever rise from your knees a worse man for pleading with God? Did you ever go away from a company of faithful, pleading men, and feel that you were morally lowered by joining in their devotions? I am sure that you never did.

If anything has helped you to fight against sin and to bear the burdens of life, it has been this drawing near to God. Therefore, I urge you, by the holy effect of prayer, to believe it to be among the things honest and true. Such a holy thing, implanted in you by God Himself cannot be a weed which He will pluck up and fling over the garden wall in contempt. God has never taught us prayer that it might be an imposition upon our credulity and a sport for His supreme intelligence. Such a suggestion is plain blasphemy and we mention it with abhorrence. That blessed exercise in which I have a hallowing and elevating fellowship with the Eternal cannot be a failure. Assuredly—"My God will hear me."

III. I close with a third head. Let us now CONSIDER THE EXERCISE OF THIS CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER. I have shown you the results of this confidence and some few of the reasons for it. Now let us see where the exercise of this confidence leads us. What are we doing when we carry this assurance into action?

Our confidence that the Lord hears prayer is seen in our looking to Him first and foremost at all times. For our eternal salvation we look to God alone, accepting that Divine system in which, by water and by blood, we are saved from sin, through faith. Our confidence does not lie in our own resolves, or moral virtue, or spiritual attainments, but in Him to whom we cry in prayer, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe." We are glad of the aid of friends in smaller concerns. But even there our first resort is to our God in Heaven, for we each one feel this to be his chief defense—"My God will hear me."

This leads us also to make sure that God is ours. We live by appropriating our God to ourselves. We may, without terror, see our property lessen and our friends desert us and our dearest relatives pass away. But it would be horror, indeed, if we lost our God and could no longer say, "My God." Others may choose what they please as the object of their heart's chief choice but we will pay no homage of the soul to any but Jehovah. "this God is our God forever and ever." As another man's God I cannot rest in Him but as, "My God," I am assured that He will hear me. Thus, we are driven, by our confidence in prayer to grapple Him to our soul with hooks of steel. To say, "My God" is our Heaven below.

This also impels us really to pray. Since God will hear us, we will pray to Him and we do. Alas, we have many sins in reference to prayer. Our slackness in prayer and our unbelief as to prayer are crimes for which we ought to cover our faces with shame. But when we walk with God aright, when we keep His Commandments and abide in His love, then He gives us life, joy and power in prayer and then we become conscious of success at the Throne. That power being bestowed upon us, we come to pray as naturally as a child cries. We ought to have set times for private prayer. It

is most healthful that we should. But I question whether our best prayers are not those which are quite irrespective of time and season.

When a man does not pray because it is seven o'clock in the morning but because he has a pressing need—when he does not pray because it is time to go to bed but because he feels drawn to speak with God, then he prays, indeed. When a man has a constant confidence in the prevalence of prayer he slips away from a trying business to seek guidance and support. The confident pleader, when he walks the street groaning in spirit, makes known his desire to the Most High. Perhaps Cheapside has been a Bethel to some of you and your shop has been a temple. The most living prayer bursts naturally from the swollen heart and does not come because of time.

I have heard of a minister who put in the margin of his manuscript sermons, “Cry here.” And in another place, “Here lift up your eyes.” It must be very dreadful preaching when the emotion is made to order. And the same is true of praying. The fear is that you should not really pray when the clock says, “Now pray.” I do not think we can always keep the watch of the soul in exact time with the clock on the mantelpiece. Therefore I think that the most living prayer is that which comes by the movement of the Spirit of God just at that time when it is most of all required.

“Let us pray” is, however, a voice which is never unseasonable. When would it be unfit for such an exhortation to be given? When would it not be profitable to pray? The Lord is always willing. Therefore let us be always praying in one form or another. Let us pray no matter what may be the trial, no matter what the joy, no matter what the company. Pray without ceasing, because it is always true—“My God will hear me.”

You know how it was said of a holy man as he walked the streets, “There goes the man that can have anything of God that he pleases to ask.” This is the secret of a great life. Fail here and you fail everywhere. Prosper on the mount with your uplifted hands and Amalek in the valley is of no consequence. But how can we have this power if we have not the unquestioning confidence that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us? Brethren, to be strong and happy think about these words—“My God will hear me,” till you can say them with your whole soul.

As for you, poor Souls, who cannot say, “My God,” shall I tell you that you may not pray? Far from it. If you have a desire to pray, encourage that desire. But mind that it is prayer and not a mere form. Let your heart go up to Him who says to you, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found.” Instead of telling you not to pray, I would direct you how to pray. You have need, first, to have a God to pray to, for till then you cannot say, “My God will hear me.”

God can only be yours in the saving sense by Christ's being yours. Jesus says, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” God becomes our God by faith which appropriates Him as He is revealed in His Son Jesus Christ. Look to Jesus, for He is the Mercy Seat and so the way to God in prayer. The Gospel that we have preached to you is not, “Pray,” but, “Believe.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

Then, being saved, you will be able to pray with assurance of prevailing. Come to God by the blood of Jesus and so shall a sinner's prayer be

heard. Prayer is the vital breath of every saved man even as faith is the life-blood of his soul. At this moment come to God by Jesus Christ. You are a sinner condemned by sin—Christ came into the world to save sinners—accept the Savior—trust your soul with Him and ask that, for His sake, you may have the free gift of eternal life. You are an empty, poor, naked and miserable sinner—take the Lord Jesus, in all His fullness and blessedness, to be yours forever and then the great God will bow His ear to you, even to you and you, too, shall be numbered with those who have power with God.

Here on this spot I charge you cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Let that request be silently offered, even though you dare not lift your eye to Heaven. Come, Brethren, let us all offer it and then there shall come to each of us a justification far sweeter and larger than if we should stand aloof from sinners and say, “God, I thank You, that I am not as other men.” O my Lord, hear this, my prayer, that those who hear or read this sermon may be able to say, even as Your unworthy servant most boldly says, “My God will hear me.” Grant it, I pray You, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—Forgive once again the intrusion of personal matters. If I do not insert a short notice as to my health, many friends are lovingly anxious and much correspondence is brought upon me. Let me, therefore, say briefly, “All is well.” My only ailment is in the injured knee and this improves daily. It is very slow work but yet very encouraging. I can now walk a few yards.

I hoped to be in my pulpit on February 17th but I resolved also to let the healing of the knee be my guide. For it would almost break my heart if I were to reach home lame and be near my Tabernacle and in the cold and yet unable to get to my pulpit. Pressed by many anxious friends, both here and at home, I think I am only acting reasonably when I postpone my coming home for one more week. I hope to preach at the Tabernacle on February 24th, if the Lord wills.

I deeply feel the great kindness of my Brethren at the Tabernacle and elsewhere, who have been fearful that I might bring on mischief to myself by beginning too soon. There is common sense, also, in their advice. I have balanced this, as in the sight of God, with my own ardent desire to use every moment for the Lord. And in the end, asking Divine guidance, I have given the verdict as above.

May some up to now unreceived blessing come upon my Hearers and Readers through the sermons which are preached upon my return!

Yours, in Christian love,

C. H. SPURGEON.

MENTONE, January 31, 1889

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WOE AND WEAL

NO. 3239

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1911.

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

***“I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me, He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness.”
Micah 7:9.***

Those who expect to find the road to Heaven smooth and unobstructed will discover little in the experience of the ancient saints to support the expectation. The Lord’s people have, in all ages, been tried people. Cowper well says—

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

Though, perhaps, to the youthful mind this may sound rather harsh, yet there is a large amount of comfort in it to the more advanced saint, for he says to himself, “Then my difficulties, my distresses, my tribulations, are no new thing. I am in the footsteps of the flock. I can see that I am traveling in the good old way that leads to God—

***‘The way the holy Prophets went,
The road that leads from banishment.’***

Did I meet with no chastisement, I might fear that I was not a child of God, but inasmuch as I am made to smart under the rod, I may hopefully infer from it, if I feel the Spirit of Adoption within, that my Father has not forgotten me.”

All sorts of trials have beset the saints of God. Rough winds have blown upon them from all points of the compass and they have had bad weather in all seasons of the year. They have been plagued from within and assailed from without. The arrows of temptation have come upwards from the Pit and often the blows of the rod have come downward from the Throne. There is no form of sorrow, I suppose, which has not been experienced by the chosen of the Lord, though, blessed be His name, the Lord has delivered them out of it all!

Micah appears to have been troubled by a combination of difficulties and afflictions. He was grieved at the low estate of the Church—a combination which ought to affect some of us a great deal more than it does. Alas, there are some who will always be contented enough if their own house shall flourish, though God’s House should be utterly ruined! Micah loved the Church of God—and the low estate of it cut him to the quick. Moreover, the generation among whom he lived added to his grief. “The best of them,” he said, “is as a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge.” Doubtless he sympathized with the cry of David when he said, “Woe is me, that I sojourn Mesech, that I dwell in the tents

of Kedar!" Ill company vexed his soul as the Sodomites vexed the soul of the righteous Lot. And it appears, from reading the Chapter though, that he also had a personal difficulty—probably in the matter of slander. He speaks of "her that is my enemy." You may notice how he dwells upon it—upon himself being persecuted and maligned—but he implies his belief that God would arise and plead his righteous cause. Slander is no uncommon injury for the children of God to bear. That which false tongues glibly utter, ungenerous minds easily credit—and a pure conscience is exquisitely sensitive. The birds will pluck at the ripe fruits, whatever they may do with the sour ones. The longest trees cast the longest shadows and those who stand the highest are often said by men of the world to be the most base. God was slandered in Paradise—why should we expect to escape being slandered in the midst of this world of sinners?

It seems that in the midst of all this affliction which had befallen Micah—affliction far heavier than any words of mine can describe—the Prophet was led into meditation! And in this meditation he penned the words of our text, in which we may discern, first, what *the Prophet felt*. He Says, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." Secondly, *what he believed*—"until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me." And, thirdly, *what he expected*—"He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness."

I. While tracing out WHAT THE PROPHET FELT, if we happen to be feeling the same, it may comfort us to hear the voice of a fellow pilgrim passing through the Valley of Death-Shade.

Doubtless *he felt the smart of the rod*. The tone of his utterance shows this. He speaks like a man who could not be callous, for his had been touched in his inmost soul. I think God intends that His people should feel the rod. If we had manifold temptations, but were never depressed in spirit by them, I question whether they would answer any good design. The "necessity" is not only for the trial, but for the "heaviness" which results from the trial, for you remember that the Apostle says, "If necessary, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations." There is a "necessity" that the rod should make the child smart. To play the Stoic under trouble is a very different thing from playing the Christian. In fact, it is the very opposite of it! Our great Savior did not stand at the grave of Lazarus and say coldly, "It is well," without any show of emotion—but "Jesus wept." So we are permitted, no, *expected*, to weep when God chastens us. Do not ask, dear Friends, that your nerves may become steel and you have sinews of iron. This would be no excellence—it is rather an excellence to be sensitive under the hand of God! I see not how, excepting by the blueness of the wound, the hurt can be made better. It is when the trouble really stings that it blesses—when the flail falls heavily upon the wheat that it separates the chaff from the pure grain! Expect not to play the bravado with God! Expect, rather, to have to humble yourself before Him and out of the depths to cry out, as others have done, unto the Most High! It is clear, from the language he uses, that the Prophet felt the smart of the rod.

It is equally clear that *he readily perceived that the rod was held in the hand of God*. Not all Christians can see this, especially in the case of slander. We generally exhaust our thoughts upon the second cause and vent our indignation upon the framer of mischief. We are angry with the person who has caused us our loss, or put us to shame, instead of knowing that God uses even the wicked to chastise His people! Beat a small dog and it will try to bite the stick—if it were a reasoning creature, it would try to bite you! Sometimes you and I are doggish and we snap at the instrument that makes us smart. We are irritated with the missile which has smitten us to our grief. Oh, that we would but look up and see that there is a hand—an unseen hand that wields the agencies of Providence—and realize that not a stroke comes upon the Christian but is given by his heavenly Father's will! Would to God we were not so accustomed to generally stop at second causes! I am afraid that this is a part of the philosophy of the age. When the world was very ignorant, men used to pray for rain and thank God for it when it came—they believed that thunder was the voice of God and lightning was the glittering of His spear! Now we have grown so wise that we attribute all startling visitations to natural causes. We will scarcely pray to have cholera or plague removed, or ask for anything desirable as the bountiful gift of Heaven. The philosophy that puts God farther off from us than He used to be, would be better unlearned and a truer philosophy known.

At any rate, as far as personal sorrows are concerned, it would be a very sharp and trying experience to me to think that I have an affliction which God never sent me—that the bitter cup was never filled by His hands, that my trials were never measured out by Him, nor sent to me by His arrangement of their weight and quantity. Oh, that were bitterness indeed! But, on the contrary, the Prophet sees the hand of God in all his trials! And I pray that you and I may do the same. May we see that our heavenly Father fills the cup with loving tenderness and holds it out, and says, "Drink, My child. Bitter as it is, it is a love-potion which is meant to do you permanent good." The discerning of the hand of God is a sweet lesson in the school of experience.

As he felt the smart and traced that smart to the hand of God, *the Prophet discerned that he had sinned*. "Because I have sinned," he said. We do not always see that quite as clearly in health as we do in sickness. A night or two of weary tossing upon our bed will do more for us as to heart work and as to the depravity of our nature than a hundred sermons! To be despised and misrepresented, to have to creep into a corner away from one's best friends because they are alienated from you, or to have to go to the grave with one after another of the dearest objects of one's affection—these are sermons under which we cannot sleep and sermons, the responsibility of which we cannot shift to another. God's children, if they are as they should be, are greatly profited and benefited in the discovery of sin by the affliction which God sends them. I had never known the loathsomeness there was in my heart if the spade of tribulation had not turned over the green sods of my profession and made me

see therein holes and places where loathsome things did creep and crawl within. Do not shun the furnace, dear Friends! You certainly need *not* pray for it—you will have enough of it without praying for it—but if God sends it, do not be afraid of it. There is no more enriching place in the world to go to than to the Egypt of bondage, for you shall come up out of it with Jewels of silver and of gold. I am of Rutherford's mind when he said that "Of all the wine in God's cellar, birch wine may be the most bitter, but it is the best." And so it is. You shall never see the stars shine with such splendor as at the North Pole where the sharp frosts and the long winter have taken away the light of the natural day. All the Arctic voyagers tell us that there seems to be an excessive sparkle about the stars there—as it is in the winter of trouble! We then see the sparkling of the Grace of God as a contrast to the evil which we discover in our own hearts.

Another thing the Prophet felt was *the trouble he then experienced from God dealing with his sin*. We must always discriminate between things that differ. God never *punishes* His people for sin in the sense of a loyal and vindictive infliction. That would be unjust, for Christ, their Substitute, was once and for all punished in their place. They owe no debts to Divine Justice, for all their debts were paid by Christ to the utmost farthing. But now they are placed under a different government. They are not summoned before a judge, but they are put under *parental care*—and like as a father chastens every child who he loves, so our heavenly Father chastens us. Again, I say not with a *legislative punishment* for sin, but with a *father's chastisement* for our offenses.

Antinomians have gone the length of saying that there is no such thing as chastisement for sin. Very likely not, as far as they are concerned. I do not suppose that they were ever worth chastening, or that God ever took the trouble to chastise them. But He does chastise His own children and I think they who know their adoption will not be long before they get a very clear realization of it in the tingling of their flesh under the rod of the Covenant. Why, of all the blessings of the Covenant, the sharpest, but one of the best, is the rod. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept Your Word," said David—and that testimony of David's is the testimony of all the saints! They will all tell you that they have to bless the hand of a chastening God quite as much as they have to bless the lips of a caressing God when He kisses them with the kisses of His mouth. No, the children of God cannot sin without smarting for it, even as God said to the children of Israel, "You, only, have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." If some boys were breaking windows in the street, tonight, and you went by, you might let them all alone save and except your own boy if you saw him there! And most likely you would make him smart for it. And when God goes through the world, as this is not the Day of Judgment, He winks at the sins of many sinners, but if He sees His people transgressing, He will not wink at them! I have often felt very glad when I have seen some of God's people come down in the world to poverty. I have not rejoiced at their misfortunes, but I have been glad of

the gracious discipline it indicated. I have sometimes said of such-and-such a man, "If that man prospers, acting as he does in business, I shall know that he is not a child of God. If he is a child of God, he cannot do as other men do without making a terrible misadventure of it before long." If you only want gain in this world do not be a Christian, nor pretend to be one! You cannot expect God and mammon to agree together. If you are a Christian, God will watch you more narrowly than others. If you are a king's counsel, a little thing will be treason in you which would not have been treason in an ordinary subject. God expects great things where He gives great things—and if He honors us so much as to tell us the secret of His Covenant, He expects us to walk with the greatest possible circumspection. So, Christian, whenever you are in trouble, though it may not be distinctly the result of sin, yet you may well enquire whether it is so or not. Say with Job, "Show me why You contend with me." At the bottom of our sorrow there is generally a sin—at the roots of our grief we shall find our guilt.

Observe one more point. *The Prophet felt that since he could connect his suffering with his sins, he could bear it.* "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." 'Twas a grand point in Aaron when he "held his peace." In that case, "silence" was golden," indeed! And when we distinctly see our trouble coming upon us and springing out of our wrong-doing, what can we say, what can we do but put our hand upon our mouth and humbly bow before God? I am persuaded, dear Friends, that we often make more trouble for ourselves by holding an argument with God about our trouble. When your child is stubborn, as long as he holds out and fights it out with you, you will not put away the rod. But when, with broken heart and weeping eyes, he confesses that you have done right and that he has been wrong, then your heart moves towards him and yearns with compassion! It is so with our God, so let us cast ourselves into His hands. It is a sweet thing to be able to say, "Well, Lord, do as You will with me." It is not easy to say it when the pain is acute, or when the inward grief is very heavy—but it is a sweet relief to let the knife, as it were, into the gathering—it gives us ease to say, "Not as I will, but as You will." You are not far from liberty when you are content to sit there in the dungeon till He wills to let you out! When you can say in your spirit, "Strike, Lord, if You will—only sanctify the rod to me! But go on striking if You so will—I will not say a single word against all that You do. 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.'" Have you ever read Brooks' *Mute Christian Under a Smarting Rod*? If you have not, you might do so with great profit, if you can get a copy of it. But better than reading that will be to go out, yourselves, and be "mute Christians under a smarting rod."

If some of you do not know anything about this infliction, now, you will one day. You need not wish that the day may be very soon. But when it comes, remember what has been said to you, tonight, and "bear the indignation of the Lord" as the Prophet Micah did.

II. Let us enquire, briefly, in the second place, WHAT DID THE PROPHET BELIEVE?

He believed that he had an Advocate above. Though he would not plead for himself, yet he says, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord...until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me." Every Believer has at least two Advocates in Heaven. His Father, Himself, is his Advocate. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." Have you never felt your own heart plead for your child when you have said to him, "Now you are under my displeasure—go away, I do not want to see you again—go to your bedroom and stay there"? And if you have heard him moaning there, and sighing and crying, oh, your heart has ached to be with him! You have said to yourself, "Have I been too severe?" And though you may have come to the conclusion that you were not, but that it was necessary for his good, still your child does not need to plead for himself, for your heart pleads for him! "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." Oh, the tenderness of God's heart, even when you feel the roughness of God's hand! Oh to believe, Christian, that God is, as it were, doing despite to Himself when He smites you—that although His wisdom and His highest love appoint it—this tenderness of love would gladly let you go unchastened unless the knowledge and prudence of recognized love dictate that it was for your welfare that you should feel the smart! You have an Advocate in your Father, Himself, and then you have another Advocate whose office it is to plead for you—your blessed Lord Jesus! Could you want a better? In all your afflictions He is afflicted. He can sympathize with every pang that torments you, with every doubt that oppresses you—

***"He takes you through no darker rooms
Than He went through before."***

And at the Everlasting Throne, when you are being sifted like wheat, He is praying that your faith fail not, and so the rod passes away. And full often, what is worse than the rod, the axe, too, because the Intercessor pleads for us! Yes, we have an Advocate above to plead our cause!

And do you notice that *the Prophet puts with the pleading above, activity on earth?* He looks at his present trouble, which seems in his case to have been slander, and he says that the Lord, Himself, would execute judgment for him. When David took his sword in his hand and declared that not a single man of the house of Nabal would be alive by morning light, how furious was the son of Jesse as he marched at the head of his clan! And what a blessing it was when Abigail, the wise woman, knelt before him and stopped him, and said, "My lord fights the battles of the Lord." David stopped and thought to himself that when he became a king, it would be no small consideration to be able to feel that he had not shed blood in haste—so he put up his sword and went his way. There was no need for David to slay Nabal, for ten days afterwards the Lord struck him and he died. Why, oh why, should we be in such a great hurry to fight our own battles?

Brothers and Sisters, if anybody should speak hard words of us, we are up in arms at once. “Oh,” says one, “I will have this wrong righted! My character is too precious to be lost in that way.” “Yes,” says another, “I will see the thing through! I will have the law after such-and-such people.” Well, now, be still, or go and fight the Lord’s battles, or let God fight for you! What is your name or your character, after all? Who will be any the better for your caring about such an insignificant creature as you are? Why, when you are dead and gone, the world will not miss you! It is amazing what great beings we are in our own esteem—and yet what little beings we really are, after all! When Mr. Whitelock was much troubled about the peril of England, his servant said to him, “Mr. Whitelock, did England get on pretty well before you were born?” “Oh, yes, John! Very well indeed.” “And do you think it will get on all right when you are dead?” “Yes, I think it will, John.” “Very well, then. If I were you, Sir, I’d leave it to God without troubling yourself about it.” The fact is, the longer I live, the more I feel that the very things which I fret about are the things that go wrong! But the other matters that I can just put on the shelf and leave with God always go right! A line in one of our hymns says—

“’Tis mine to obey; ’tis His to provide.”

While we are trying to provide, we neglect to obey—and so the obeying and the providing both go awry! If it is a battle of your own, leave it alone! In everything else, if you want a thing done, do it yourself! But in the matter of your own character, if you need it defended, leave it alone! God will take care of it and the less you stir in that matter, the better will it be for you—and the more for God’s Glory!

What a sweet thing it is, then, to believe that you have One to plead for you above—and that the same Lord will vindicate your cause below! How blessed it is for you to live with the consciousness that you have left everything in His hands, casting your burden upon the Lord—and making it your only burden to pray to Him and *serve* Him all the days of your life!

III. Now, lastly, WHAT WAS IT THAT THE PROPHET EXPECTED?

He said, “He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness.” Believer, will you also expect this—*that God will bring you forth to the light?* “Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart.” But if you are not of good courage, your heart will be weak. If Satan can persuade you that the night will never give place to the morning, then he can make an easy prey of you. But if you can say with Micah, “He will bring me forth to the light.” If you can still feel persuaded that God never did cast one of His chosen ones down without intending to lift him up again, that He never kills without making alive and never wounds without intending to heal. Why, then, your worst and multiplied afflictions can be borne with holy cheerfulness and confidence! “He will bring me forth to the light.” Oh, what a mercy it is to come forth to the light after you have been in the dark! How sweet the light is then! I have heard people, who have been very sick, say that after they have recovered, life has been a perfect joy to them. I know one who very seldom has a day

free from pain—and when she does have such a day, it is a day, indeed! You can see by the very sparkling of her eyes how good a thing it is to live! It is almost worthwhile to suffer pain to have the joy of being delivered from it! And so, when a child of God has been tried, tempted, afflicted—and he once gets out of it—what joy and peace he has! If you are baptized in trouble, when you lift your head, again, you shall come out all the fairer and the brighter for the washing—and thank each billow that breaks over you for the good it has brought you as you come forth to the light. Then you shall be able to sing—

**“For yet I know I shall Him praise
Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
Yes, my own God is He.”**

“He has succored me, before, so I can say to Him, ‘Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.’ If I cannot get the light of Your face, the very shadow of Your wings shall make me glad, for I shall feel that I am safe even under their shadow! O God, you will bring forth Your people to the light and they shall triumph in Your exalted right arm, O my delivering God!”

Then the Prophet added, *“and I shall behold His righteousness.”* One might have half-forgiven him if he had said, after being slandered, “I shall behold my own righteousness—men shall see it, too, and they shall honor me the more because they treated me so unjustly for a time.” Oh, no, it is not so written! But, “I shall behold *His righteousness.*” To see the righteousness of God in having tried us. To clearly discern His wisdom, His goodness, His truth, His faithfulness in having afflicted us—and more and more to see how suited to our case is the fullness of righteousness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus—this is the Divine result from all our troubles! So may it be with us till the last wave of trouble breaks over us and we enter into everlasting rest!

Dear Friends, I commend the text to you. May you live in the spirit of it, and may the Lord help you to glorify Him even as the Prophet Micah did!

Alas I know that there are some here who have their troubles and they have no God to go to. How I pity you! The snow that falls tonight makes it very cheerless for you who have to be out in it—and the thaw makes the snow press through your boots till your very bones and marrow seem chilled. Thank God we can get the curtains drawn and sit around the fire—and even if the blast blows outside, it is all warm within. But what must it be to have no home to go to? What must it be to be a houseless wanderer on such a night as this? What must it be to pass by houses all alight and cheerful, and to say, “There is no ‘home, sweet home’ for me—I am an outcast and must tread these snowy streets all night”? I hope there is no such creature in London who will have to do so. One could pity such a poor wretch indeed! But think, my dear Friends, what it must be for your soul to have no home at the last—when the storm of wrath shall fall, to have nothing to comfort you—to be driven from God’s Presence! To have no Father in Heaven. To find no warmth of love in the Divine heart. To see the happiness of angels and the joy of glorified spi-

rits—perhaps to see your own children in Heaven and to be, yourselves, shut out! Dear ones whom you loved on earth, divided from you by a great gulf forever! Happily, the Day of Grace is not yet over! The Day of Mercy is not yet past! The long eternal night has not yet set in! Hurry, Sinner! There is a home for you if you have Grace to knock at this door! The door is Mercy! To knock is Prayer! To step across the threshold is Faith! Trust the Lord Jesus and you need not fear, though all your life you should be tried. You need not fear the accumulated terrors of the latter days, whatever they may be, nor fear the dread trumpet of Judgment, nor the last tremendous day! Fly to Jesus! Fly to Jesus! Fly to Jesus now! May His Spirit draw you this night! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MICAH 7.**

The Prophet begins in a sorrowful strain and there is much that is sad in the chapter, yet there is also much of holy confidence in God.

Verse 1. *Woe is me! For I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit.* It is a terrible thing for a good man to find good men growing very scarce and to see wicked men becoming more wicked than ever. It makes him feel his loneliness very keenly—and joy seems to be banished from his heart.

2. *The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt, every man, his brother with a net.* Those were sad times in which Micah lived. And yet, under some aspects, one might be willing and even glad to live in such times, for if ever one could be useful to one's fellows, surely it would be then! God had need of a voice like that of the Prophet Micah in the days when His worship was forsaken and the true faith had almost died out among men! Unless God had left a Micah here and there, the land would have been as Sodom and have been made like unto Gomorrah. So the more unpleasant the age was to the good man, the more necessary and profitable was he to that age!

3. *That they may earnestly do evil with both hands.* I wish the professed followers of Christ did good with both hands, that is, with every faculty, with every capacity, in every way and at every opportunity, just as wicked men “earnestly do evil with both hands.”

3. *The prince asks, and the judge asks for a reward; and the great man, he utters his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.* Honesty seemed to have died out of the nation! The highest people in the land, who ought to have been beyond the power of bribery, sold the administration of justice to the highest bidder. Ah, those were evil times, indeed!

4. *The best of them is as a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of your watchmen and your visitation comes; now shall be their perplexity.* Sin brings sorrow in its train and, as nations will have no future as nations, God deals with national sin here upon earth

and visits it with national punishment! Now that sin had become so rampant in Israel, it would be the time of their perplexity—and when sins, like chickens, come home to roost, then will be the time of the sinner's perplexity. He lets his sins fly abroad and thinks that like the wandering birds of the air, they will soon be gone and he shall never see them again—but they will all come home to him and he shall be made to bitterly rue the day in which he thought that he could make a profit by transgressing the righteous Law of the Lord!

5. *Trust you not in a friend. Put you not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of your mouth from her that lies in your bosom.* So saturated with dishonesty had the nation become that the evil had penetrated even into domestic life, so that where all should have been in a state of mutual happy confidence, the Prophet felt bound to tell them that such confidence could not exist between those who appeared to be friends, or even between husbands and wives!

6. *For the son dishonors the father, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.* And this is still true in a measure, for without the fear of God, you will find that even the nearest and dearest relationships will not keep the unconverted from being the enemies of the godly. In that respect, a gracious man cannot trust her that lies in his bosom, if she is not a true child of God. Now mark the grandeur of faith. Set this white spot right in the middle of the black darkness of which we have been reading—

7. *Therefore I will look unto the LORD*—There was nowhere else for the Prophet to look! According to what he tells us, all men had become false! “Therefore,” he says, “I will look unto Jehovah.”

7, 8. *I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.* [See Sermon #2069, Volume 35—MY OWN PERSONAL HOLD-FAST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.* And this is all the light that God's people need! Even if it is the darkness of a black Egyptian night into which our spirit has fallen, yet if God shall but appear to us, there shall soon be light for us! Dr. Watts truly sang—

***“In darkest shades, if He appears,
My dawning is begun!
He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And He my rising sun.”***

9. *I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness.* Listen to this testimony of the Prophet, tried child of God! Even when in your own household you find enemies, put your trust in God, for He will yet appear to deliver you. Let this be your joy! Sit still in humble patience and “bear the indignation of the Lord,” for even though trouble is laid upon you, it is not so heavy as it might have been—and it is not so severe as it would have been if the Lord had dealt with you in strict justice! Therefore in patience possess your soul and wait quietly before your God.

Be not without hope. Expect that He will plead your cause and that He will execute judgment for you. Watch for His light, which will most surely come, and in which you shall behold not your own righteousness, but His!

10. *Then she that is my enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD your God? My eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.* This verse relates to the nation which, at that time, was oppressing Israel. She would have her turn of suffering, for she would be crushed beneath Jehovah's foot as the mire is trodden in the streets!

11, 12. *In the day that your walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day, also, He shall come even to you from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.* This is what was to befall those who had sinned against God and oppressed His people—He would let loose the oppressors upon them and they would find foes in every quarter.

13. *Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.* That is an amazing expression, "the fruit of their doings." All doings bear fruit of one kind or another, and sinful doings bear bitter and deadly fruit! Woe to the man who is made to eat the fruit of his own doings! That which men eat on earth they may have to digest in Hell—and there shall they lie forever digesting the terrible morsels which they ate with so much gusto here below!

14. *Feed Your people with Your rod, the flock of Your heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.* Sometimes there are pastures in the very center of woods—and God's people in Micah's day were like a little flock of sheep hidden away from their enemies in the midst of a wood, but God will bring them out, by-and-by, to far larger liberty. They shall yet have Bashan and Gilead to be their pasture, "as in the days of old." And so the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a great nation—and they that were hidden away because of their many enemies, shall have such liberty that they shall worship and praise the Lord their God everywhere!

15-17. *According to the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt will issue unto him marvelous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf: They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of you.* The day will come when there shall be such a fear of the people of God upon those who formerly persecuted them that they shall tremble before the Lord and be afraid of the very people whom once they derided and oppressed!

18. *Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.* He never delights in anger, espe-

cially in anger against His own people. That is but temporary anger and is, after all, only another form of love—for the parental anger which hates sin in a dear child is but love on fire! May God never permit us to sin without being thus angry with us! We might almost beseech Him never to tolerate sin in us, but to smite us with the rod rather than allow us to be happy in the midst of evil. Perhaps the worst of horrors is peace in the midst of iniquity—happiness while sin is yet all round about us.

19. *He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us, He will subdue our iniquities;* [See Sermon #1577, Volume 27—SIN SUBDUED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *and You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.* We read about their sins in the earlier part of the chapter—and what a horrible catalog of evils it was! Yet here we read, “Who is a God like unto You, that pardons inquiry?” Even those mountainous sins of which the Prophet writes, the Lord will tear up by their roots and cast them into the depths of the sea!

20. *You will perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.* There is our comfort! Our God is the Covenant-keeping God who will perform every promise that He has made. Even “if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” Blessed be His holy name!

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

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***“He delights in mercy.”
Micah 7:18.***

Sons of men, rejoice that such a God has revealed Himself to you! This should cause a universal Hallelujah, the whole world over, as soon as ever it is heard! “He delights in mercy.” Clap your hands and rejoice before Him! Yes, exceedingly rejoice! The heathen did not find this out. Although they had many gods, differing one from another in character, none of them were ever gods of mercy! They were usually fierce demons—some of them only rejoicing in the exaction of human blood. Go this very day to Hindustan and see what gods man makes unto himself—gods more beastly, more cruel, more devilish than himself! Such is not the living and true God! Far from taking pleasure in the sufferings of creatures, He tells us plainly that He delights in mercy. It is not enough that He is merciful, but He *delights* in this high prerogative! While we may well suppose that every attribute of God gives Him pleasure in the exercise, *mercy* is supremely singled out as being especially His favorite! Mercy is the last attribute openly manifested—He exercised His power in making men before they sinned or needed mercy—and He displayed His wisdom in balancing the clouds and piling the hills before He needed to show mercy, for sin as yet had not come into the world. If I may say so, mercy is God’s Benjamin and He delights most of all in it. It is the son of His right hand, though, alas, in bringing it forth, it might well have been called the son of sorrow, too, for mercy came into this world through the sorrows of the Only-Begotten Son of God! He delights in mercy, just as some men delight in trade, some in the arts, some in professions—and each man, according to his delight, becomes proficient in pursuing a work for the very love thereof. So God is proficient in mercy. He addicts Himself to it. He is most Godlike, most happy if such a thing may be said of Him! When He is stretching out His right hand with His golden scepter in it, and saying to the guilty, “Come to Me. Touch this scepter and you shall live!” He delights in mercy!

Now, surely it would suffice were I to sound this trumpet again and again with its celestial monotone. If you heard nothing but the same unvarying notes and did but remember them, believe them and come to God in consequence of them—there would be enough of a sermon in the text without further exposition or comment. “He delights in mercy.” Nevertheless, as you are willing to listen, it will not be grievous to me to

speak on such a lovely theme. Let me, therefore, *mention some facts which prove it, answer some objections that are raised against it and warn you against some perversions of it and then endeavor to push home the great lessons which spring from it.*

I. FACTS WHICH PROVE THAT GOD DELIGHTS IN MERCY.

This is clear from the first dawn of promise. When our first parents sinned, He might, if He had pleased, without straining the words which He had spoken, have destroyed them both and so at once have put an end to the race of rebels. He had said, "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." If He had chosen to give to that a literal as well as a spiritual meaning, He might surely have put on the black cap and condemned our parents to perish on the spot! But why did He permit them to live and to become the parents of an innumerable race? Why, from that single pair, has He allowed the millions of the race to spring? Because every man that is born becomes a sinner and in everyone of these millions there is space for God's mercy—these all furnish so many platforms, I might say, on which God might display His mercy—so many millions of black foils against which God shall put the sparkling sapphire of His mercy that its brightness may be more clearly seen! Surely, it is only because He delights in mercy that He spares this earth to swarm with sinners and to be covered over with multitudes of transgressors!

That He delights in mercy is clear from the fact that *oftentimes after His anger has grown hot, He has spared the offender when he has repented.* God determined to destroy the race of Israel in the wilderness. "Let Me alone that I may destroy them." But the prayer of Moses touched the tender part of God, namely, His mercy—and He said that He would spare the people for His Covenant and for His Prophet's sake. Even Ahab, that most cruel of kings, when he had been threatened, humbled himself and God said to Elijah, "Go and say unto Ahab, Because he has humbled himself, this thing shall not be in his day." And that great city of Nineveh, which had been given up to all manner of evil, God had said to Jonah, "Go and cry, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" But when they put themselves in sackcloth and repented at the Prophet's warning, the Lord would not destroy the city, but spared the multitude for a season. Oh, I tell you, the tears and cries of men move the heart of the Most High! Not a prayer that ever comes from the most guilty breast, if it is but sincere, fails to enter into the ear of the God of Mercy! The tears of penitents force their way into His soul. He has a bottle for those precious drops! He has a ready record for all their groans and sighs. He has proved this in innumerable cases. He has drawn the sword from its scabbard and put it back again when the man has repented. He has lifted the axe, yet laid it down again when the farmer has pleaded and said, "Let it alone this year, also." His sparing, even when His anger has grown hot, proves that He delights in mercy!

Brothers and Sisters, I appeal to all of you in this present assembly! *The fact that we are here tonight after all the provocations which we have given to God proves that He delights in mercy!* Ah, I need not begin with

the worst, the openly worst. Let me mention some of you who have been trained from your childhood in the paths of piety and yet you forgot God. You lived without Him—prayer was neglected, His day was a weariness—to go up to His house was a toil. And yet you have been spared though you were useless and unprofitable servants! He might have chased you out of the house and given you your portion among the tormenters, but He has borne with your ill manners and spared you to this hour! Ah, but there are some who have gone farther. They have broken His Laws! They have trampled on His statutes. Some have cursed His name—some here have done it! They have dared to imprecate damnation on themselves and have done it often. They have spoken against God, perhaps with impious and infidel lips. They have done worse than that—if worse can be! They have persecuted God’s children and that is to touch the apple of His eye, and to hurt Him in the most tender place! We seemed, some of us, in the days of our sin, as if we would ride steeplechase to perdition—as if nothing could stop the insanity of our suicidal resolve! We would sin even if sin were bitter to us. We would pursue our ruin at all risks and hazards and yet He cried, “How can I give you up?” He turned to plead with us! A mother’s voice pleaded—from the grave she pleaded! The fever came and preached to us on the sickbed and we heard it. The cholera came and preached—we heard its voice in the street—we saw its power in the frequent funerals that passed along through the city. The preacher came and spoke as best he could and besought you, as a brother, that you would turn—that you would not perish, but would turn to God! And all theses entreaties—these stretching out of the hand, this wooing and these tears which God has used upon you have all been in vain to now—and you have sinned and revolted yet more and more! Does He not delight in mercy to continue still to invite, still to mourn and not to cut it short by destroying you altogether?

And the very best proof that God delights in mercy, I think, is to be found in *the great number of persons who are saved*. I say the great number of those who are saved, for he who says they are but few, contorts some passages of God’s Word and understands it not as a whole. Look yonder, if your eyes can see as mine can, by faith—you can no more count the spirits that rejoice before the Throne of God than you can count the stars in the sky, or the sand upon the seashore! Their music yonder is like great thunders, or like the mighty waves of the sea, for they are ten thousand times ten thousand, a company that no man can number, all having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of Jesus, all saved by the mercy of our God! And here below, how many there are of us who are making our way to the Celestial City, led by the precious Christ who is our Captain—and in all of our cases the mercy of God is seen!

Nor is the mercy of God to be discovered only in the numbers, but it is seen also *in the character of those who are saved*, for God does not select the most virtuous, the most chaste, the most honest, the most talented.

He often takes—to make them monuments of His mercy—the vilest, the most abased and blasphemous! He lays hold upon the polluted publican instead of the proud Pharisee. He singles out the wandering prodigal before many who thought themselves far better! He lifts the poor off the dunghill and sets him among princes! Glory be to the Infinite Majesty of Eternal Grace that has snatched brands out of the burning, who has lifted men from the very gates of Hell and passed them through the gates of Heaven! The guilt of one soul might sink a world—the accumulated guilt of all the millions whom Christ redeemed will stand forever as a proof that God delights in mercy!

Reflect a moment upon the *conduct of those saved after they have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, for albeit they are renewed, yet they are not perfect. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we ought to be ashamed to have to confess it tonight! Blushes should scarlet our cheeks, that we have been ungrateful, unbelieving, unfaithful! We have sinned against the gracious Father who has taken us into His family! We have sinned against the love of God, against the blood of Christ, against the sweet comforts of the Holy Spirit—and yet no child of His was ever cast away—no Believer in Christ was ever disowned of God! The mercy which once flowed to them, flows on forever, never pausing for an instant—because He delights in mercy!

But think, and here is the main point, think with regard to these guilty ones who have been saved, *at what an expense it was all done*. He spared not His own Son! A son is most dear to a father, yet God so loved mercy that He gave the Only-Begotten to the smart and to the death-pang—to the Cross and the sepulcher—that Mercy might ride on the milk-white steed, a queen among the sons of men! Behold the Savior bleeding! I pray you let me portray Him to you with hands and feet pierced with nails. Mark His sufferings! View His agonies and let me tell you that this was all for the sons of men—that the mercy of the Everlasting Father, without bound and limit—might come to those who seek His face through Jesus Christ! Further proof, surely, is not needed. This is proof, overwhelming proof, that should confound despair, proof that should make unbelief impossible! He who gave His son to die *must* be a God that delights in mercy!

II. SOME OBJECTIONS ARE OFTEN RAISED, which I shall very briefly meet.

“If He delights in mercy,” says one, “why are some men lost?” Surely, Sir, God does not so delight in mercy as to tarnish His justice! If He did, there would be a slur upon His mercy, for sometimes it is not mercy to the many to forgive the few. It were no mercy for London to set free all the burglars and murderers. It were no mercy to England if every man who had committed murder were allowed to go red-handed without punishment! Punishment for the guilty is required even by mercy, itself. Remember, of all the lost, there is not one but has simply and barely the due reward of his sins. And if that had been roughly and evenly given to him, he would have known no reprieve that allowed him to live here, after

his *first* offense! To full many of them, certainly to all of you, if finally lost, you will have had mercy presented to you. You have had Christ preached to you! You have been bid to come to Him! You have been assured, on God's own authority, that if you trust Jesus, you shall be saved! Then if you do it not, lay not your ruin at the door of God's mercy, but at the door of your own folly! If a man dies of fever because he will not take his medicine, who but he is at fault? If a man leaps over a precipice willfully, let him blame no one if he dashes himself to pieces! On the head of every lost one, his own condemnation lies, as yours will unless you turn to God and repent!

"Ah," says another, "*but God is not always merciful*, look at His severity sometimes—Korah, Dathan and Abiram are swallowed up—Sodom is destroyed by fire from Heaven." Yes, Sir, and even Mercy saw this done without a tear in her eyes. What? Should Sodom go unpunished? Shall the bestial vice of which Sodom was guilty never be checked? Why, if this should spread among the sons of men, it would bring in its infernal train ten thousand times more damage than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah! The sin itself is infinitely worse than the fire which burned it up! There is mercy in the physician if he sees poison in the hand when he cuts it out and cauterizes the wound. And this is what God did with Sodom. He did, as it were, cut out the plague-spot and cauterize it, lest that filthy sin should spread over all mankind! As for Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, their death was the life of others—they were pestilent traitors against the dominion of God and unless they had died, others would have revolted and have perished, too. Many of those things which we call severe judgments are only mercies in disguise. The great fire of London—how the preachers preached about that! I suppose there are hundreds of sermons extant to prove that the great fire of London was a punishment upon London for its gluttony and covetousness! Why, what greater blessing ever befell the city than that fire, burning up as it did all those fever and pest dens where all kinds of malaria and disease constantly lay festering? Nothing could have been better! The deaths of some in the *plague before the fire* had called attention to the evil—and then the fire came and swept the evil away! I do not doubt that even cholera in our own times has been simply God's great sanitary commissioner, sent to London to warn us to cleanse this and sweep away that, that so, on the whole, life may last longer and mercy may prevail. Judge not God, then, by your feeble sense! Wait awhile till you see His judgments in the long run and then you shall discern how they are always seasoned with mercy and love holds the sword!

Should anyone say, with blank surprise, "If God delights in mercy, *why is there such a thing as the unpardonable sin?*" I think I would reply, with a burst of gratitude, "Is it not a great mercy that there is only *one sin* that is unpardonable?" There might have been a catalog of crimes for which forgiveness was impossible! There is but one—that one is only unpardonable because the person who commits it has so seared his con-

science that he never asks for pardon. Any of you, man or woman, that sincerely asks for mercy, shall have it, whatever sin you may have committed! But that one sin strikes a cold chill about the heart and, henceforth, the man never desires mercy, but perishes an impenitent and a careless sinner!

Should another say, "How is God merciful, *when I feel in my own self that He cannot have mercy upon me?*" I should reply, Your feelings are not to be trusted! Whatever despair may whisper, or doubts may suggest, one text of Scripture is worth 50 fears and doubts, or fifty thousand of either. You may be a black sinner, but He delights to wash you. You may have offended Him, year after year, and done despite to His Grace, but His arm is still not shortened that He cannot save. I care not how far you may have gone, I am sure He can come after you. Lost sheep, bleating on the mountains, the Shepherd can hear you and the Shepherd can reach you! You may fall into a pit but it shall not be so deep that He cannot bring you out! While life remains there is hope! Sin as you may have sinned, there is abundance of pardon with a gracious God. Oh, put not your thought so in opposition to the declaration of Heaven, but believe tonight that God is able and willing to forgive you—and come with a penitent prayer and find forgiveness now! All objections to the delight of God in mercy are but illusions of your brain—or delusions of your heart.

III. THERE IS PERIL OF MISUSING THIS MERCY OF GOD, lest instead of leading us to repentance, it should plunge us deeper into sin. *Though God delights in mercy, sin is no trifle in His estimation.* Sin is an enormous evil, an evil so great that it never could have been prevented from destroying us all except by God, Himself, coming into this world, taking upon Himself our Nature and suffering to the very death in our place! Calvary tells us that sin is not a thing to be laughed at. It cost our Savior unutterable groans and griefs that can never be measured to deliver us from our guilt! And if the sinner comes not to Christ, it shall cost him endless tears! It shall cost him everlasting misery! His sins shall sink him to Hell forever! Oh, trifle not with sin because God is merciful! This is a cruel, brutal thing to do—to sin because Grace abounds. If you do so, you shall find that there is no Grace for you!

Say not that because God is merciful *a prayer or two on your dying bed will suffice.* How do you know you may ever have a dying bed? Men fall dead in the streets! There was one who always said, "I shall set it all right at last. I shall say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and it will be all right." Returning home drunk one night, he spurred his horse over the parapet of a bridge into a deep river—and the last words he was heard to say was a sentence too blasphemous for me to repeat. And why may not you die so? You cannot tell. Put no trust in deathbed repentances—they are, of all things, the most deceitful! Every thief repents when he comes to the prison—and every murderer will leave a word of repentance on his pathway to the gallows! It is a sign of the heart being set right to cry and groan when you are coming near to your punishment. God is merciful to these who seek Him early, but procrastinators will find that He is just.

“Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, lest He swear in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest.”

Though God is merciful *you are not, therefore, at liberty to despise the Lord Jesus and His salvation*, for all His mercy flows to us through the silver pipe of Jesus Christ the Mediator. I speak advisedly—there is no mercy in Heaven or earth in the shape of *saving mercy* except through Jesus Christ! Unless you come to the Cross for it, you shall not have it. God has nailed up every other door but this. This one, alone, is left open—the door sprinkled with blood on the lintel and the two side posts, and on which is written, “Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall never perish, but have everlasting life.” There is an alternative. It is, “He that believes *not*, shall be condemned.” What? If he does this and that, or if he humbles himself, if he is virtuous? Yes, yes, God makes no exception! The sentence comes to kings and queens and emperors, as well as to crossing sweepers, paupers, or even to convicts, “He that believes *not* shall be condemned.” They shall take which they will. If they will have Christ and God’s mercy, so be it—God’s Grace has compelled them to take that. But if they will not have Christ, there is no mercy—no, not a drop of mercy—but wrath, righteous wrath against those that despise the Son of God!

Nor must you think that *the Doctrine of God’s Free Mercy at all comes into conflict with the Doctrine of God’s Electing Love*. No, rather, by His election it is seen that God delights in mercy—thinking mercy, planning mercy before men needed mercy, in the Eternal Covenant—determining the persons upon whom mercy should come—selecting them, not because of any good in themselves, but entirely out of His own good pleasure, and thus proving His mercy! If God had sent into the world a Gospel full of conditions and of human doings, it would have been no Gospel to anybody, for no man could fulfill the conditions except by Divine Grace. But He has sent an unconditional Gospel! He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion upon whom He will have compassion—and in this great Free-Grace Gospel, the mercy of God is magnified to the fullest.

IV. WHAT IS THE LESSON FROM ALL THIS? *If God is so merciful let His ministers preach of His mercy.*

If God delights in mercy and not in sacrifice, do not let His ministers be dressing themselves up and performing genuflections, bowing to the east, winking with their eyes, making signs with their fingers, offering incense and I know not what besides! God is not a child to be amused with toys that are beneath the notice of babies. God delights in mercy. Let the pulpit, therefore, ring with mercy! Let the preacher be continually telling of mercy through the blood of Jesus! Mercy through faith in His name! Mercy for crimes of deepest dye, mercy that comes to us through the atoning Savior! This ought to be our daily message when we preach. We ought to remember that God delights in mercy. As God’s ambassadors let

us proclaim most freely that which He has the most pleasure in, His mercy—His mercy—oh, His mercy, it endures forever!

Christian people, here is a noble example for you. If God delights in mercy, and you are His children, *be like He is—let mercy be your delight!* Be merciful to the poor. Be merciful to the ignorant. Be merciful to the guilty. Never be the man to cast the first stone at the fallen woman, for your Master did not condemn her. Never be the man to pass by the naked and the poverty-stricken. Your Lord's eyes were quick to detect the leper. Mercy well becomes the heir of the God of Mercy! And if you are not merciful, how can you expect to obtain mercy, or think to be numbered among the children of the Great Merciful One? To all of you I would say—take care, as you expect the mercy of God, to deal it out to others. Never say, "I won't forgive," for you seal your own condemnation when you do! And if you forgive not your brother his trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you. You have chosen your own destruction when you shut the door against your child, or against your neighbor and say, "I will treasure up that enmity as long as I live." I tell you, Sirs, your offerings at God's altar are an abomination to Him until you have forgiven all of your fellows their trespasses! Your prayers cannot come up before God—they are most effectually hindered. How can you pray when one of the petitions which God puts into your mouth is this—"Forgive us our debts as we forgive them that are indebted unto us"? How can you, with one hand on your brother's throat, lift your other hand and say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"? Go your way, tonight, and if possible, before you close your eyes in sleep make your peace with any whom you have offended or who have offended you! As God delights in mercy, let the children of God likewise delight in mercy!

Still, the great lesson I want to bring out is this—*if God delights in mercy, then why should those who have offended Him be afraid to seek Him?* He will hear your prayers be they ever so feeble or broken! He is ready to forgive you, however grossly you may have offended. Think of that! If He is so kind, why do you stay away from Him?

Oh, come to Him, come now! 'Tis all mercy today. You are not bidden to come to a judge, nor to advance to the bar where the sentence shall go against you—'tis a sweeter note you hear—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Oh, I wish I could lead you to the Lord! It is not in my power. His Spirit, alone, can do it, but ah, do come, and welcome! There is not a hard word in the whole of the Bible for a coming sinner! There is nothing to keep back a soul that desires to be at peace with God. God's House is open! God's heart is open! God's table is spread! God waits to be gracious—no, He comes to meet the sinner that comes to Him! Are you willing to have Him and to have His mercy? If so, you may have it! Come, then—come and welcome, Sinner, come!—

***"Lord You have won, at length I yield!
My heart, by mighty Grace compelled***

***Surrenders all to Thee!
Against Your terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against Your love?
Love conquers even me!
If You had bid Your thunders roll,
And lighting's flash to blast my soul,
I still had stubborn been—
But mercy has my heart subdued,
A bleeding Savior I have viewed,
And now I hate my sin.***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 136; EPHESIANS 1**

Let us make this occasion a time of praise and thanksgiving! Let our hearts dance at the name of our God! Let our lips give expression thereto in joyful music!

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.* That is the beginning of our praise—the essential goodness of God from which all the streams of mercy flow. Oh, deep abyss of Infinite Love!

2, 3. *O give thanks unto the God of gods: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for His mercy endures forever.* His greatness, which is beyond that of all potentates on earth or principalities in Heaven—this, also, is to be our joyous theme song! His greatness and His goodness together make us magnify His name.

4. *To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.* Nothing is absolutely wonderful except God—all other things are dwarfed and diminished in wondrousness as compared with Him. The Seven Wonders of the World are trifles compared with the seven-million wonders of God!

5. *To Him that by wisdom made the heavens: for His mercy endures forever.* They boasted of the Colossus that strode across the sea, but what shall we say to the heavens that span not only the earth but all the universe? And in those heavens there is mercy to be seen as well as wisdom—the adaptation of the physical world to the circumstances of man—so that there is a relation between the weight of every dewdrop and the structure of the human body!

6-9. *To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for His mercy endures forever. To Him that made great light, for His mercy endures forever. The sun to rule by day: for His mercy endures forever. The moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy endures forever.* See how these ancient godly ones loved to dwell upon a thing! When the note was “light” they did not just sing it through and have done with it, but there were many repetitions in their music. But the music of today is “rattle through it as fast as you can, and quickly have done with it.” Our forefathers liked to linger a bit on these sweet praises of God. So did the Hebrews. “Great lights!” Yes, but there must be the sun and the moon and the

stars. They could never have enough of it—they rolled these sweet morsels under their tongue and then out upon their lips as they praised God!

10. *To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever.* Yet it was an awful judgment and it needs a reverent, lowly, saintly spirit to sing over even the judgments of God. Had certain theologians of the present time been present at the Red Sea, they would have cried in sentimental sympathy over the Egyptians! But instead of that, Miriam took a timbrel and said, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” The fates of sinful men are of small moment as compared with the Glory of God! Jehovah fills all things and when the heart is fully taken up with the Glory of God, it learns to sing even this stern refrain—“To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever.”

11-15. *And brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever.* See how they prolonged the strain—and what blessed exercise this is, to take mercies to pieces and examine all the details—and have a fresh verse for each particular of God’s goodness to us! Glory be unto His blessed name forever and ever!

16. *To Him which led His people through the wilderness; for His mercy endures forever.* Therefore He will lead you through the wilderness and bring you through great droughts—and your manna shall drop from Heaven, and your waters flow from the Rock. Sing, then, to His name, you that are in the wilderness!

17. *To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever.* That is a terrible and tragic matter, that smiting of kings. Yes, but these singers did not groan over it! There are no less than four notes over this.

18-23. *And slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever: and gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even an heritage unto Israel, His servant: for His mercy endures forever. Who remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endures forever.* The note descends a little from the martial strain of trumpet, from smitten kings and the drowned chivalry of Egypt. But though it sinks, how it sweetens! What a soft, clear sound there is about it.

24-26. *And has redeemed us from our enemies: for His mercy endures forever. Who gives food to all flesh: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of Heaven: for His mercy endures forever.* Glorious Redemption! That is always the choicest note of all. Ring that silver bell again! This is the Christian’s true promised land of great spiritual blessings. May we have faith enough to enter into the full possession of it. It is a very wonderful chapter!

Ephesians 1:1-2. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* That is a sort of crossing of the Jordan to go into the land and get Grace and peace. Grace changes us, peace quiets us, and then we are over Jordan.

3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* They are all yours! He has not blessed you with a part of the blessings, but with all of them! They are all yours. Have you the courage and the faith to take possession of them? That is the point. If you have Grace and peace you are in the land. Now let your foot rest first on one blessing and then on another and appropriate them all to yourself.

4. *According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.* What an inheritance! To be made holy! Oh, that we might be perfected as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect, sanctified through and through! We are elected to this end—it is the very objective of the Divine choice that we may be without blame before Him in love.

5-6. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. To the praise of the Glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.* See how Paul goes on taking one city after another of this heavenly Canaan? It was election. Now it is adoption. Now it is acceptance in the Beloved. He is a good Joshua for us if we will but really and truly follow Him and take possession of the promised land.

7-10. *In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace; wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of time He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.* Oh, what a wonderful gathering that will be when all the things in Christ shall be gathered together! No division among the people of God! When the whole redeemed inheritance shall be one and we shall as one body possess it forever. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.” Got it! God has given it to us! We have a right to it—we are the heirs of it in Christ!

11. *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will.* He not only wills it, but He works it! When He wills to give His people a broad inheritance—of that large inheritance they shall certainly have for He “works all things after the counsel of His own will.”

12-14. *That we should be to the praise of His Glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you*

were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His Glory. You have got the Holy Spirit. He is God's seal upon you that you are, indeed, saved men and women! In getting that, you have already received the earnest, that is, a part of the inheritance never to be taken back. A pledge has to be restored, but an earnest is kept forever! The Spirit of God is ours and in having Him we have all things!

15, 16. *Therefore I, also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.* Having got so much, you might get a great deal more.

17, 18. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the Glory of His inheritance in the saints.* That is a wonderful passage! We are not only to know our inheritance in God, but God's inheritance in us! Wonderful thing, and yet it is so! The Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. Joshua gave each one of the people his own portion, but all the people were God's portion! And today God delights in His people. He finds a solace in those whom He chose, in those whom He redeemed by blood, in those whom He brought near into daily fellowship with Himself!

19-23. *And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.*

—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.**

SIN SUBDUED

NO. 1577

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

***“He will subdue our iniquities.”
Micah 7:19.***

BUT lately I tuned my harp to the music of forgiven sin and we sang of pardon bought with blood, finding our key-note in the words of David—“Who forgives all your iniquities.” It was a sweet subject to all our hearts, for we all have a portion in it, seeing we are all sinful and have need to be forgiven—therefore did our souls dance to the high sounding cymbals as we rejoiced in the complete pardon which our gracious God has given to all who believe in Jesus. But, Beloved, the pardon of sin is not enough for us—we have another equally urgent need. If the Lord would forgive us all our sins we could not be happy with that alone. “Who forgives all your iniquities” is not perfect music till we add to it the next note, “who heals all your diseases.”

We feel that we have within us a tendency to sin and that tendency is our misery. From this tendency we must be emancipated, or we are no more free than the captive who has had the manacles removed from one wrist but feels the iron eating into the other arm! We wish to be delivered from every propensity to sin—yes, to be rescued altogether from its power. God has now given us a new life and this will never be easy till the last link of the chain of sin is utterly removed. Since our new birth there remains no rest for us short of being perfectly like our God in righteousness and true holiness. The heavenly Seed within us must and will grow—and as it increases in the soul, it will expel the power of evil, for it cannot endure the least particle of it.

We may now be called “the Irreconcilables,” for we can never be at peace with evil. We cannot tolerate sin. The thought of it pains us and when we fall into a sinful act we are cut to the quick. We thirst to be pure! We pant to be holy and we shall never be satisfied until we are perfectly so. We, dear Friends, who have been awakened by the Holy Spirit, find that we are by nature under the power of sin. It will not be an easy thing for us to escape from the terrible tyranny of sin—not without the putting forth of great power can the iron yoke be broken. What little experience we have had in the Divine Life leads us to see that there is an immense difficulty before us, making our upward progress one of conflict and labor. A dreadful power has our nature in subjection and that power cannot easily be overcome.

Ever since the Fall sin has taken possession of us. This flesh of ours lusts to evil—the propensities of our nature which are not, in themselves, sinful, are made by our depraved hearts to be the occasions of concupiscence and transgression. We cannot eat, or drink, or talk, or sleep but what there is a tendency to sin in each of these conditions. Out of the

simplest movements of our being, evil can arise. Actions which are incidental to the very fact that we are men—actions which are neither morally good nor morally evil become, nevertheless, the nests in which sin lays its eggs and hatches them so that every propensity of ours, even that which is, in itself, natural and fitting, readily becomes polluted and depraved through the indwelling of sin in our nature.

Sin poisons the wellhead! Sin is in our brain—we *think* wrongly. Sin is in our heart—we love that which is evil. Sin bribes the judgment, intoxicates the will and perverts the memory! We recollect a bad word when we forget a holy sentence. Like a sea which comes up and floods a continent, penetrating every valley, deluging every plain and invading every mountain, so has sin penetrated our entire nature! How shall this flood be stopped? This enemy so universally dominant, so strongly entrenched—how shall it be dislodged? It has to be driven out somehow, every particle of it, and we shall never rest until it is. But by whom shall iniquity be subdued? How satisfactory the assurance of our text, “He will subdue our iniquities”!

We find that our inward enemies are assisted by allies from without. The world which lies in the Wicked One is always ready to assist his dominion within us. We cannot walk down a street but we hear language which pollutes us. We can scarcely transact business in our own counting houses without being tempted. If we stay at home there is temptation there and if we go abroad it is the same. The most retired are not free from sin, no, their very retirement may only be a sinful selfishness which shirks imperative duty. We cannot do good to others without running some risk, ourselves, and if we cease from godly endeavors because we would not jeopardize our own spiritual comfort, we are already taken in the snare!

We cannot mix in politics in any degree, with the purest desire for our country’s welfare, without breathing tainted air. We cannot try to curb the social evil but we feel that we are on treacherous ground—yet we may not flinch from duty because of its perils. We shrink like the sensitive plant that is touched by the finger—we fold and furl up all the feelings of our being because of the sin which touches us when we mingle with men. We often close up all the gates and windows of the soul because we are conscious that the enemies without are calling to the enemies within and saying, “We will conquer you yet!”

Moreover, that mysterious spirit, the devil, is always ready to excite our flesh and to urge on the world. I have heard that some people doubt his existence. Very likely they are so friendly with him that they would not like to betray him and so they deny that he hides in their hearts. But those who are his enemies do not try to conceal him, but acknowledge with sad humiliation of heart that they are very conscious of his power. A wind from him will come sweeping through our spirit in the calmest hour of devotion and in a minute we are disturbed and distracted! We have had our thoughts all going up towards Heaven and in a moment it has seemed as if they were all sucked down into the bottomless Pit, merely because

that evil spirit has spread his dragon wing mysteriously over us and created a horrible downdraft which our poor brain could not at once resist.

We have to fight, then, not only with sin, but with the flesh, which, like a Gibeonite, has become a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the devil—we have to fight with the world which “lies in the Wicked One,” steeped up to the throat in sin. And we have to fight with Satan, himself. “We wrestle not with flesh and blood,” or else we would gird on the sword and go in for knocks and blows and cuts and thrusts and have the battle out! No, but we wrestle with “principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places.” And what is to become of such poor, frail, feeble, weak creatures as we are? Who can subdue these great and mighty kings? With so many in league against us, what can we do? What is to become of us?

My text is the answer to that question—“He will subdue our iniquities.” That same blessed God who has pardoned our sins will conquer them! They may fight against us, but He will be more than a match for them. Their fighting will end in their destruction. Omnipotence has marched into our hearts to trample down the power of sin. Eternal faithfulness has called in invincible strength and Divine Majesty to do battle against the serried hosts of darkness and we shall overcome! “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I am going to speak briefly upon seven points, if time shall hold out for me to do so, and each of these seven points will show phases of the energy of evil which God will subdue.

I. One of the first powers of evil which a man perceives when the heavenly life begins to breathe within him is THE FASCINATING POWER OF SIN. When Divine Grace in the soul is only like a little spark and has not come to its brightness, yet the man discovers with alarm that he is held under the *enchantment* of evil. I do not know any other word which quite gives my idea except that one. Satan casts a spell over men. They come and hear the Gospel and they are impressed by it—they see the reasonableness of the endeavor to escape from sin. They perceive the beauty of holiness and see that the way of God’s salvation is a very glorious one, namely, by faith in Jesus Christ, and they begin to yield.

But yet they neither flee from their sins nor lay hold on the salvation of Christ—they remain as persons besotted who act contrary to reason. In some cases one sin, in some cases another, seems to fascinate men like the eyes of the fabled basilisk. As certain snakes paralyze their victims by fixing their eyes upon them, so do certain sins paralyze those who are under their influence so that none can awaken them to escape. Sin makes men mad! Against their reason, against their best interests, they follow after that which they know will destroy them! They are slaves, though they wear no fetters of iron! They are captives, though no walls enclose them. The magic arts of evil have taken them in a net and wrapped them about with invisible bonds from which they cannot escape!

In many cases Satan exercises over men a kind of soporific power. He puts them to sleep. I do not know whether there is anything in mesmerism or not, but I know that there is a devilish sleep-creating charm which

Satan casts over men. They are no sooner a little awakened, startled and persuaded to escape for their lives, than suddenly they fold their arms, again, and crave a little more sleep. They are nodding over a prospect which, a few hours ago, made their hair almost stand on end! They go back to do the deed which they dreaded and which they know to be evil and destructive. They forget the Savior whose charms began to influence them and renew their covenant with Satan from whom they had almost escaped.

In the matters of the soul you have not merely to get men awake, but to *keep* them awake. Over the Arctic traveler there comes a tendency to sleep in the cold—a tendency which he cannot resist. He may be awakened by his friends and shaken out of his torpor but, by-and-by, he is anxious to sleep again. They march him on between two, perhaps, and try to keep him awake, but still he cries, “Let me sleep!” He begs to be allowed to lie down and slumber. Such is the power of Satan over some of you who are present here—you wish that we would let you be quiet and go on in your sins without worrying you with our warnings. I have shaken you, sometimes—at least I have tried to do so—but then, after all, you have gone to sleep and you are still asleep, nodding with Hell beneath you and with the wrath of God abiding on you!

It seems as if you cannot be decided—you cannot be resolute—you cannot run away from sin but are held by mysterious bonds! You are held, worst of all, by a dreadful indifference which makes you slumber yourselves into Hell. Do you think one ungodly man, in his senses, would remain what he is and where he is while there is a hope of being renewed if it were not for some strange enchantment which is exercised upon him by sin? What art of wizard can equal the magic of sin? What other witchery can cast men into such insensibility? If I were to cry, “Fire! Fire!” in this place tonight, the most of you would rush to the first door or window, but yet when we tell you of what is infinitely worse—namely, of the wrath to come and the anger of Almighty God—you are in no great alarm, no, you sit at your ease and hear all about it.

The story of your future destiny is heard and heard till men think no more of it than of an old wives’ fable and still sleep on in their sin. I have known this witchery to enthrall men who have been somewhat awakened. By the month and by the year together they have been awakened and have been apparently very earnest. But, after all, sin has charmed them with its siren song and they have returned like the dog to its vomit, or the sow which was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Now, I am rejoiced to think that, if there is any life in you, if the Lord enables you to look to Jesus Christ, His Son, for salvation, He will subdue your iniquities.

Man, He will help you to escape from the magician’s wand! Sin shall no longer delude and ensnare you! He will so set eternal things before you by the power of the Divine Spirit that you will not dare to sleep any longer! He will so convince you of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come that He will slay the enchanter, break his spell and free you from his black arts. May the Lord set every fascinated one free at this good hour. May He pronounce the Word of God which will unbind the enchanter’s

charm and we shall then have one fulfillment of the text, "He shall subdue our iniquities."

II. A second form of the force of sin in most men is ITS DEPRESSING POWER. When men are really awake and no longer under the witchery of sin, then Satan, their flesh and the sin that dwells in them, conspire to make them think that there is no hope of salvation for them. The Evil One mutters, "It is no use your trying to be saved. You do not stand the smallest chance." Jeeringly the Tempter cries, "Look at your sins! Look at your sins!" Satan, who before did not want us to look at sin, becomes, all of a sudden, eager that we should take to self-examination and confession! He who is the Father of Lies sometimes finds truth answers his purpose so well that he uses it with terrible effect! But even then he uses it to support a lie.

He suggests to the heart the thought, "If you had not sinned so much you might have been forgiven, but you have piled on the last ounce that has broken the back of Mercy—you will never be saved." Then comes the second suggestion, "You know you have tried already. You kept yourself pretty steady for a time, but it all broke down. There is not the slightest use in venturing, again, upon this hopeless business. Depend upon it, there is a Divine decree against you—you are one of the reprobate! There is no hope for you at all. Don't you see how false you are? You never make a resolve but you break it! You made an awful failure of it last time and you will again." Then there comes up, again, in the soul the depressing thought, "Perhaps it is not true, after all, that there is any mercy for sinners. It is very possible that there is no such power in the blood of Jesus as the preacher wants you to think."

Once get a man upon the rails of doubt and you can draw him on as far as you please. It is interesting to see a man go on doubting in the style I once followed. I doubted everything till at last I doubted my own existence! Now I have at least a little bump of common sense and I laughed outright at myself when I got as far as *that*—and the ridiculousness of the situation brought me back again to believe. To run right on to a *reductio ad absurdum* and prove the absurdity of your own unbelief is a very useful method of bringing a doubting spirit to a measure of belief. Yes, I know that this is the way of sin. It depresses the man. "I want to, but cannot believe," he says. "I would have a hope, but I cannot believe that my name is among God's elect ones. I cannot think that the blood of the Atonement was shed for me" and so on.

What is to be done when you feel this and wish to conquer it? What is to be done but to fly to a promise like this in the text, "He will subdue our iniquities"? Yes, this despondency of yours, the Lord Jesus will subdue! Believe that He is able to cut off Giant Despair's head and dismantle his castle and set his prisoners free! Some have almost gone to the knife and to the halter in their despair and yet the Lord Jesus Christ has restored them to joy. Many a despairing soul have we had to deal with and we have seen the Lord vanquish its misery and chase away its sorrow! Satan did his best to keep the soul from the joy which it might have had then and there—to keep it from the feast which was spread for it, from the blessing

which God had prepared for it—but he could not prevail, for the hour of hope had struck.

O, cast-down one, be comforted! The Lord will subdue your iniquities in this respect. If you will but look to Jesus Christ He will say to you, “Be of good comfort.” He will tell you that your sins are forgiven and breathe hope into your soul. This is a second blessed way in which God subdues our iniquities—by casting out their depressing power. This He does by showing what a glorious Savior Christ is—how He is Divine and, therefore, equal to any emergency—how His Atonement is of a value that never can be limited. He shows how He is “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.”

This He does by applying the precious promises to the soul, by His own Holy Spirit, who leads men to believe in God despite their despair, hoping against hope! And thus the snare is broken and their iniquities are subdued. O glorious victory of all-conquering Love, sin’s iron yoke of dark dependency is broken and the captives lead their captivity captive. Hallelujah!

III. But now, thirdly, the Lord has power to subdue sin in another form of its force, namely, ITS DOMINEERING POWER. What a domineering thing sin is over men. Any one sin will lord it frightfully over a man. I know a man in his senses—at any rate, he has never been in Bedlam—in business he is as sharp and smart a man as can be and yet he drinks himself into foolishness, into madness and even into delirium tremens! He has done this several times and acknowledges to the madness and wickedness of the deed—and yet he will repeat his insane and suicidal course! He has drunk away all his estate—from a man of property he has descended to become a very inefficient worker. He has drunk away all his wife earns, for he does not earn much, himself, now, and he is mean enough to let the poor woman kill herself to provide him with food.

He drank a horse and cart a fortnight ago. He went out of the house upon a business errand for his wife, pulled up at a drink-shop, drank till his money was gone and so he sold the means by which his wife has kept him out of the workhouse! I dare say he is here—let this message pierce his heart—he knows that it is time. He never went home again till the last ear of that horse had been drunk. And yet he would not like anybody to say that he is a fool, though I beg leave to have my doubts. His sin domineers over him. Only let drink come to him and say, “Go and do a mad thing,” and he does it at once! Expense, pain, disgrace, disease, poverty and an early death—all these are demanded by the drink demon and his victims cheerfully pay the tax!

Why, now, if I were persuaded that it was the duty of any one of you to go and spend every penny that you have and starve your own children in order to support a child at the Orphanage, you would laugh at me, I dare say. I should be a very long while before I could persuade you to do such a thing as that. I am sure I should not wish you to do so, but even if it were right, I could not get you to do it. Yet things far more preposterous are done greedily at the bidding of drink. This devil of drunkenness comes to a man and he says, “Come along with me. Leave your fireside and your

wife and little ones and associate with the lowest of the low. Come and spend everything you have upon stuff that will muddle your head, harden your heart and destroy your character. Sell your household furniture and drink till all your comrades call you a jolly good fellow. Pawn your children's shoes, so that the little ones cannot even go to Sunday school."

The man goes along as meekly as a lamb. And he has done that scores of times. He knows what a fool he is and yet he will do it again if he gets a chance. Oh, the domineering power of sin! It is not the one sin of drunkenness, only, for there are other men who are domineered by their lusts. It is a delicate question to talk about, but I dare say there are some here who are slaves to the vilest of lusts and it becomes me to be plain with them and assure them that persons living in fornication or adultery cannot inherit the kingdom of God! Then there is anger which carries men away as with a flood—they cannot restrain themselves—the least thing sets them off boiling with passion. They say they cannot get the mastery in this respect and it is perfectly true—but there is a stronger power than ours which can be brought in, by which the victory *can* be won.

Sin in some form or other has bound us hand and foot and made us slaves. Do you wish to be free? Do you wish to be delivered from the tyranny of sin? Then I do not advise you to do anything in your own strength in the hope that you can accomplish deliverance—but cry to Christ at once, whose precious blood can blot out the past and change you for the future. Give yourself up to Him and be made a new man in Christ Jesus. Oh, you did try to mend, you say. One of our kings used, by way of swearing, to say, "God mend me"! That was his regular expletive till somebody said that he had tried that oath long enough. He thought that God could more easily make a new one than mend him! That is just the truth about you. There is no mending you! You need to be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. It will be, by far, the easier work of the two, though in itself it will be impossible to *you*. The Lord can do it! He can make you such a new man, woman, that you will not know yourself the next time you meet yourself—you will be so entirely new that you will begin to fight against your former self as your worst enemy.

Oh for an earnest cry at this good hour, "Lord, save me! I am sinking in the depths of my sin! Jesus, stretch out Your hand as You did to sinking Peter. Save me, or I perish!" Jesus will lift His royal hand and cause both winds and waves to lie still before Him, for it is written, "He will subdue our iniquities." The domineering power of sin is readily broken when Jesus enters the heart, but never till then. We refuse to obey our lusts when we bow our necks to the pure and holy Savior. What a change He works! Speak, you who best can tell, you who have felt it! Ah, Lord, we bless You that it is even so—"You will subdue our iniquities."

IV. Now, fourthly (for I must be brief on each point), there is another power about sin, namely, ITS CLAMORING POWER. I do not know any word, just now, which so nearly expresses what I mean. Some of us know that we are forgiven and we know that the domineering power of sin is broken in us and our old sins have been long washed away by the blood of Christ so that God does not know anything about them. You say that is a

strange expression. It is no stranger than the Scriptures warrant, for the Lord says of our sins that He will remember them no more forever—and I believe that He means what He says.

But as for my transgressions, *I* remember them when God does not—and they come up before me and they howl at me. “*You* are saved?” asks one of my sins—“*You?*” “Remember what you did while yet a youth?” Sometimes thousand of them at once make an awful din and howl out, “Guilty! Guilty! Guilty and doomed to die!” Then one or two bigger sins than the rest take the lead, howling with a deep bass, “Condemnation! Condemnation! Condemnation!” I have tried to argue with these memories of sins. When the dogs have barked in that fashion I have tried to put them down. Conscience has come out with his big whip and he has whipped them till they howled more than ever. Conscience has said, “Why, even now that you are a Christian you are not what you ought to be. You still fall short of your own standard. You condemn yourself while you are preaching. You know you do.” Then all the dogs have howled again, as if they were only now beginning their horrid music.

You have never heard, perhaps, a whole kennel full of sins all howling at once, but it is a most awful noise at night. If you listen to the voice of these clamorous dogs, you will wish that you had never been born or could cease to exist. No voice that I know of, short of the one in the text, can make them lie still. But the Lord Jesus can subdue our iniquities and when He steps into the middle of these dogs they lie cowed at His feet! As He speaks with gracious words of pardon, the Hell-hounds vanish and, instead of their baying, you hear the sweet voice out of Heaven—“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

Did you ever experience this delightful change? It is something like the case of a newcomer at a court of law who one day went with a magistrate and sat on the bench. A prisoner was brought up and evidence was given and the counsel against the prisoner spoke. And this person said to his friend, the magistrate, “You may as well end it, the man is clearly guilty. Wind the case up and let’s go to dinner.” But the magistrate said, “You must listen and hear the advocate on the other side and the case will look very different.” When he listened to the advocate on the other side, he began to whisper, “I have my doubts about that, now.” As he listened further, he said, I am glad you did not condemn that man. What a mistake I made—he is as innocent as a new-born babe. That advocate has done his work wonderfully.” The prisoner was acquitted.

It is so with us. When our sins plead against us, we readily allow that we are hopelessly ruined. But, oh, when our blessed Advocate takes up His brief! When The Wonderful, The Counselor urges His plea and pleads that our sins were laid on Him—what a change comes over the face of things! The sin is admitted and then covered; lack of righteousness is acknowledged and then supplied; condemnation is recognized as just and then seen to be, with equal justice, put away forever! Picture yourself in court. There are the bills and they are put in evidence against you. “Do you owe those bills?” “Yes.” “Have you anything to say why you should not be treated as a defaulting debtor?” “No.” But when the man is able to re-

ply, "Yes, the charges are all paid," that settles the matter! And so when the Believer can say, "Lord Jesus Christ, You have paid all my debts for me." And when Christ shows His wounds and says, "I have put them all away, for I bore them in My own body on the Cross"—oh, then the case is ended and the clamor of our iniquities is subdued and so the text is again true—"He will subdue our iniquities."

V. But I shall have my time gone, otherwise I wanted to say that this text is true as to THE DEFILING POWER OF SIN. Do you know, Brothers and Sisters, that after we are quite forgiven and after the domineering power of sin has gone, yet the *defiling* power of sin is a great affliction to us? Our experience is embittered by the corruption of sins long ago dead which send forth a dreadful rottenness and make our thoughts a terror to us. Some of you were converted late in life and you have very much, I am sure, to trouble you in the influence of evil upon your memory. Perhaps this very night while I am speaking there has come up into your mind—though you cannot bear to think of it—some wretched scene in which you played a guilty part.

Even the holiest words, when you are in prayer, will sometimes suggest to you a loose song that you used to sing and a casual expression which has no special meaning to others will awaken a thousand vile memories in you! This is what I mean by the defiling energy of sin—it is a great plague to many Believers, especially to those converted after years of gross sin. In addition to that, many of you may have experienced the defiling power of sin in another form—when Satan has suggested blasphemous thoughts and abominable ideas to you. You cannot bear them! You are ready to fly to the ends of the earth to escape the venom of these hornets, but still they buzz around you and will not be quiet. You could almost tear your heart out of your body if you could thereby expel these vile suggestions, but they will not go. They descend in perfect floods—they are mud showers, or worse than that—*fire* showers. And they fall upon your poor brain and there is no getting out of the diabolical tempest.

Ah, I remember when words I never heard from human tongues rushed through my ears filling my heart with blasphemies which I never thought of—profane suggestions which made me tremble like a leaf as they poured through my poor brain! I could have died sooner than they should be there and yet they were rushing through my mind and bearing all before them. Many of God's people are tried in that way. What is to be done? If old memories and satanic suggestions come upon you to defile you, what is to be done but to fly to this text—"He will subdue our iniquities"? Let us plead this in prayer. Lord, conquer my memory and wash it from the filth which clings to it! Put away its pollution from me, Lord. Chain up the devil and rebuke his suggestions. Let Your poor child have space for breath and time to sing and opportunity to pray! Save me, I beseech You, from the infernal suggestions which now torment me!

Some of you know nothing about this and I hope you will abide in happy ignorance of it. But those of you who *do* know it will perceive what I am talking about and you will triumph in this priceless promise, "He will subdue our iniquities." Look to Jesus Christ for power over infernal sug-

gestions and over evil memories and He will give you that mastery—and it may be you shall never again be tried in that way as long as you live—for frequently the Lord gives such sudden and decisive deliverance that between that one battle and Heaven, the Christian pilgrim pursues his way and never meets Apollyon again!

VI. We have now reached the sixth point. The Lord our God will subdue sin in ITS HAMPERING POWER. I am speaking, of course, to Christians in these latter points. There is a hampering power about sin. I will just hint at some instances of it. Many Believers might do a great deal of service for Christ and His Church, but they are hampered by shame. They are ashamed, afraid, alarmed where there is nothing to be troubled about. They indulge a foolish distrust of God. Their fear may once have been modesty, but it has grown rank till it is not, now, the kind of modesty which is wholesome. They might serve God, but they are ashamed to make the attempt—ought they not to be ashamed of such cowardice?

Some, again, are hindered in their joy and their peace by unbelief. They are always doubting, inventing fears, planning suspicions, compiling complaints. This comes of evil and leads to no good. It is a dreadful thing to be hampered from doing good and hampered from glorifying God by an inveterate tendency to unbelief. Others are hampered by frivolity. Many of us have merry spirits, but some are all levity. They were cradled in a bubble and made to ride upon thistle down. It is a pity when a man has no solidity of character and runs to froth, for this sin dwarfs his manhood and dries up his vigor. Oh that the Lord would subdue this form of iniquity!

Some I know, too, are very unstable—they are never the same thing two days together. They might have borne fruit if they had kept where they were, but they have been transplanted every week and so have never taken root. They have undertaken a dozen works, but they have done nothing. Unstable as water, they shall not excel. Some, again, are hampered by pride. There is no use in denying it—the natural tendency of many persons is to a silly pride. When they were children they could not have a new coat but they gloried in it—and since then they cannot have two pence more than their neighbors but they become almost unbearable!

I know some who I hope are Christians, but they have a dreadful tendency to swell—they will grow before your very eyes if anyone will but favor the process. They have always looked upon the many—the multitude—as being far inferior to them because their grandfather's grandfather was either a knight, or a baronet, or a foreigner of unknown degree! They feel that they are superior sort of people. This is a great drawback to godly workers, especially when it makes them feel that they could not go among poor people. Those who do go visit the sick poor are often quite unable to reach their hearts because of their stiffness of manner.

Some professors are slothful. They have a torpid liver and are always afraid of doing too much. They are a lethargic, Dutch-built, broad-wheeled wagon sort of Christians and all their movements are slow in the work of the Lord. They do not move at all by express. Indeed, they are distressed by zeal and disgusted by enthusiasm! May the Lord subdue these iniqui-

ties for us! Others are hampered by a quick temper. They cannot take things calmly—they snap and snarl and scarcely know why. They boil over so soon—they are very sorry for it, directly, but that does not cure the scalds. Some must be forever fighting, for peace is stagnation to their burning spirits.

I have given a long list of these hampering sins. What is to be done with them? “Well,” says one, “I do not think we can do *anything*, Sir—these are our *besetting* sins.” Now, do not make any mistake about it, if there is *any* sin that gets the mastery over you, you will be lost! You are bound to conquer *every* sin—remember that. You may call it a besetting sin or not, but it must be either overcome by you or it will be your ruin. A man may plead that a certain fault is his besetting sin but I am not so sure of it. A sin that you willfully indulge—is that a besetting sin? Certainly not! If I had to cross Clapham Common tonight and three stout fellows beset me to take away whatever I had, I would do my little best in self-defense. That is what I call besetting a man!

A besetting sin is a sin that sometimes surprises a man and then he ought to fight and drive the besetting sin away! If I were to walk over the common every night, arm-in-arm with a fellow who picked my pocket, I should not say that the man “beset” me. No, he and I are friends, evidently, and the robbery is only a little dodge of our own. If you go willfully into sin, or tolerate it, and say you cannot help it—well, you *have* to help it or you will be lost! One thing is certain—either you must conquer sin or sin will conquer you—and to be conquered by sin is everlasting death!

Well, what is to be done? Fall back upon this gracious promise—“He will subdue our iniquities.” They have to be subdued! Jesus will do the deed and in His name we will overcome. If we are slothful, we will, in God’s strength, do 10 times as much as we should have done had we been naturally of an active turn. If we are angry we will school ourselves till we become meek. Some of the most angry men that I have ever known have come to be the meekest of men. Remember Moses, how he slew the Egyptian in his heat, and yet the man, Moses, became very meek by the Grace of God! You must overcome your sin, my dear Hearer, be that sin what it may. Whatever else you forget of this evening’s sermon I want to leave that in your heart—you *must* overcome sin!

By the blood of the Lamb it is to be done. By the power of Divine Grace it must be accomplished. Up! Slay this Agag that you thought to spare! Hew him in pieces before the Lord, or else the Lord will hew *you* in pieces one of these days. God give you Grace to get the victory.

VII. Now, the last and seventh point—God will deliver you from THE INDWELLING POWER OF SIN. Sin nestles in our nature. Its lair is in the jungle of our heart and if we are Believers in Jesus Christ we must hunt it out. The first thing the Lord does with this indwelling sin is to neutralize it. He puts in His indwelling Spirit to subdue it and overcome it. Next, He begins to drive it out. He said of the Canaanites, “By little and by little I will surely drive them out.” Thanks be to God, He has driven out certain of our sins already! I know that I speak to some who are not tempted, now,

to vices that once ruled them with a rod of iron. You have conquered the grosser shapes of sin.

Brother, Sister, the day will come when there will not be one Canaanite left in the land—when, if you should search through and through there will be no tendency to sin, no wandering of heart, no error of judgment, no failure of righteousness, no inclination to transgression! You will be as perfect as your Covenant Head, Jesus Christ. Where will you be, then? Not here, I think! I notice that God always puts His jewels into fit settings and the proper setting for a perfect man is the perfect joy of Heaven! In a pure region the pure heart shall dwell! And you, Believer, shall go on towards that sacred height, till, one of these days, your Lord will say, “Dear Child, you have fought long enough with corruption and sin, come up here; the conflict is all over now.” You will look back, when you get up to Heaven, and you will say to yourself, perhaps—if you can have any such regrets—“I wish I had conquered those sins earlier, fought against them more earnestly, watched against them more vigilantly. Oh, that I had honored and glorified my Lord more!”

However, forgetting all about regrets, what a song we will raise when we find ourselves quite free from the power of sin! What a song! O, you bad-tempered Brother, when that anger is all gone and you will never be angry again, will you not sing? Ah you, Brother, a little inclined to laziness—when you find that you can serve God night and day, will you not sing? And some of us who are inclined to despondency—when our gloom is all gone and life becomes everlasting joy and sunshine, will we not sing? Yes, I was going to say—

***“Then, loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace.”***

I did utter that resolution once in the pulpit and when I came down the stairs an aged woman said to me, “You made a mistake in your sermon tonight.” “Dear soul,” I said, “I dare say I made a dozen.” “Ah,” she said, “but you made one great one. You said that you owed more to God’s Grace than anybody and, therefore, you would sing the loudest. But,” she said, “you won’t, for I shall.”

I find all my fellow Christians, both men and women, are resolved that they will sing the loudest to the praise of Divine Grace! This shall be Heaven’s only contest! There shall be a grand contention among the birds of Paradise which shall sing most sweetly of Free Grace and dying love. What a Heaven there will be and what music there will be in Heaven when our iniquities are subdued! How will the Lord look down with joy upon us all when He shall see us all made like His Son—perfect, faultless, glorious! Then we will sing, “He has subdued our iniquities. Oh, come let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously and all our iniquities has He cast into the sea.”

Anticipate that joy and begin to sing tonight—and let this be the matter of your song—“Thanks be unto God which gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.” May that victory be yours and mine. Amen.