

TWO VISIONS

NO. 598

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 6, 1864,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“I saw by night and behold a Man riding upon a red horse and He stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom and behind Him were there red horses, speckled and white. Then said I, O my Lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show you what these are, And the Man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the Angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth and behold, all the earth sits still and is at rest. Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of Hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You have had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry you, saying, Thus says the Lord of Hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sorely displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus says the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: My house shall be built in it, says the Lord of Hosts and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts: My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad. And the Lord shall yet comfort Zion and shall yet choose Jerusalem. Then lifted I up my eyes and saw and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. And the Lord showed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And He spoke, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to scatter them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.”

Zechariah 1:8-21.

THIS is a somewhat dark and mysterious passage. And if we should ask many a reader, “Do you understand what you are reading?” he would be compelled to reply as did the Ethiopian eunuch, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” Although there are some portions of the Word of God which are hard to be understood—by far the greater portion

of Scriptures which are at first perplexing—will open up if we will carefully peruse them and prayerfully ask the illumination of God's Holy Spirit.

We should seek to know all of God's Word which can be known. You will perceive that the Prophet Zechariah himself was not content with beholding the two visions described in this passage, but had to ask, in the ninth verse, "O my Lord, what are these?" And then, again, in the nineteenth verse, "What are these?" Nor did he cease his enquiries! In the twenty-first verse he says, "What come these to do?" If the seer of the vision asked for an interpretation, much more may you and I.

He was not idly curious, but reverently teachable—let us imitate his holy diligence in desiring to learn. Be it remembered that God's Word is never out of date. It is not like an almanac which is useful this year, but which will be mere waste paper the next. It always stands good. And the promise of God, when once fulfilled, are still valid for another fulfillment. Unlike a check, which being once paid, ceases to be of any force, the promises of God have a perpetual value in them! And if we can lay hold upon them by faith, having once drawn upon the great bank of Divine Mercy, we may go again with the same word and get as much from the liberal hand of God as we did before.

Let us come, then, with reverent attention to this passage hoping that God will instruct us in its meaning and help us to grasp its promises and win a new fulfillment. The two visions before us describe the condition of Israel in Zechariah's day. But being interpreted in their aspect towards us, they describe the Church of God as we find it just now in the world. You notice that the first vision opens with a view of the Church of God. It is described as a myrtle grove flourishing in a valley.

The Church of God is hidden, unobserved, secreted as in a valley. The careless gazer doesn't see her. She courts no honor—she comes not with observation. The Church has endured neglect and shame from the time of the Cross until now—her day of glory is to come at the manifestation of the Lord from Heaven, but at present—

***"It is no surprising thing
That we should be unknown.
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."***

When Christ came, despised and rejected of men, His Glory had not broken forth—He was like the sun in a mist. The Church is like her Head—she has a glory, but it is hidden from carnal eyes—persecutions, sins, infirmities and reproaches surround her. The time of her breaking forth in all her glory is not yet come.

She lies in the valley where none but a keen observer can discover her. You must see the towering mountains, but only a careful eye can discover this myrtle grove. Historians write the records of empires, but they take slight notice of the true Church of God. An historian who should pen the tale of English history might, now and then, come across the Church—but it would usually be the political establishment which arrogates that title and not the spiritual and separated host of the faithful in Christ Jesus—for they are not of the world, even as their Lord was not of the world.

“My kingdom is not of this world,” is still most solemnly true. Perhaps the position of these myrtles in the valley may indicate the gloom which at seasons falls upon the Church—when she is in spiritual darkness, when no present favor is shown her by her God in Providence—when her pastors weep that their flocks are scattered by persecution and her ministers lament that their testimony is neglected. They cry, “Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Then Zion is under a cloud—the myrtle grove is overshadowed and darkened.

But I think there is here the idea of tranquil *security*—the myrtle grove in the valley is still and calm, while the storm sweeps over the mountain summits. Tempests spend their force upon the craggy peaks of the Alps, but down there, where the stream flows which makes glad the city of God, the myrtles flourish by the still waters, all unshaken by the impetuous wind. How great is the inward tranquility of God’s Church! She may be hunted upon the mountains, but in peace her martyrs possess their souls. She may hide herself in the catacombs of Rome, but the memorials upon the old slabs assure us that in the catacombs men lived in hallowed peace, and died in joy!

God’s Church in the valley has a peace which the world gives not and which, therefore, it cannot take away. It is the peace of God which passes all understanding. It keeps the hearts and minds of God’s people. Is there not also in the metaphor a peaceful, perpetual *growth*? The myrtle sheds not her leaves, she is always green. And the Church, in her worst time, still has a blessed verdure of Grace about her! No, she has sometimes exhibited most verdure when her winter has been sharpest. God’s Church has prospered most when her adversities have been most severe.

The myrtle was the emblem of peace and a significant token of victory. Were not the brows of conquerors bound with myrtle and with laurel? Is not the Church of God, despite the neglect which she suffers from men and the occasional gloom which she endures through God’s Providence, still a victor? May not her saints, as they die, be laid in the grave with the myrtle wreath upon them? Is not every Christian more than a conqueror through Him that loved him? Living in peace, do not the saints fall asleep in triumph?

You can readily picture to yourselves that quiet, calm, yet somewhat somber grove of myrtles. And forget not that in the midst of these myrtles, the Glory of the myrtle grove stands—the Son of Man! Oh, it is ever the Church’s Glory that the Savior is present with her. “Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” Here is the Church’s strength! Here is her assurance of victory, the terror of her enemies, the confidence of her friends! If the Church is likened to golden candlesticks, John saw one like unto the Son of Man walking in the midst of them. And if she is a myrtle grove, then the Man upon the red horse is never absent from her, but stands in the midst!

He is the wall of fire round about the Church and the Glory in the midst of her evermore. For the comfort of God’s people, let us closely view this vision. You say, O son of man, feeble and full of unbelief, that God’s Church will become extinct, that Popery will devour her and infidelity will

eat her as does a canker. You fear that the banner of the Truth of God will be dashed to the ground and that the enemies of the Lord will win the victory. Cast away your fear! Your God appears unto you this day and in the visions of His servant Zechariah, He reassures you and speaks “good words and comfortable words unto you.”

I. Observe THE LORD JESUS ENGAGED AS THE GREAT DEFENDER OF HIS CHURCH. Behold a Man riding upon a red horse. This same Man is called an Angel of the Lord. Christ shows Himself among His people as a Man, since He is the Head of the new race of men. As Adam was the man, the representative man to the whole of fallen humanity, so Jesus stands forth the second Adam, the representative Man of twice-born and blood-bought humanity. Out of love to His people He became one flesh with them and is now most truly called, “The Man Christ Jesus.” He is not ashamed to call them Brethren.

Once professors forgot the Godhead of Jesus—we are more likely to overlook His true and real Manhood. Bone of our bone is He—flesh of our flesh. In no respects different from the rest of men, save only that no sin has ever tainted His Nature. He feels as we feel. He thinks as we think—He once suffered and died, even as other men. O Church of God, rejoice! The glorious Man who is “God over all,” is ever in your midst! He never forgets you! He never forsakes you! He abides with His people after a spiritual sort, forever! And never is this Covenant Head separated from His body the Church.

Inasmuch as He is also called an angel, this may suggest to us the doctrine that Christ is in a sense the Head of angels, as well as men. What if I were to surmise—and it were no new thought of mine, but one which many have indulged—what if I were to suggest, not as a matter of *doctrine*, but only as a subject for thought—that the same great work which redeemed us who were fallen creatures, may have established the elect angels, so that they can never fall? I know not how it is that the angels have become consolidated in perfection so that they cannot now sin, unless it is through the virtue of the Savior.

Could they have been so created? A moral agent must necessarily have the power to sin—if it had no power to sin, it would need no Law. But for God to create a creature beyond all Law, to say the least, would be unsafe—it were, in fact, to set up other *gods*—for a creature that knew no Law would be a rival to the Godhead! But so long as a creature is under Law, it may offend and so fall. How, then, came the angels in such a condition that they cannot sin? Is it not that they are now removed by a special act of Grace from under the Law and put into a condition of gracious permanence such as Law could never give them? And was this act of Grace the result of that great transaction upon Calvary?

Is this one part of the Apostle’s meaning when he says, “By Him all things consist”? Was there in the Atonement a virtue which has established the elect angels forever in perfect holiness so that they should never sin? Why is it that other creatures beside men join in the song? (Rev. 5:9, 10). “You are worthy to take the Book and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain and have redeemed US to God by Your blood, out of every

kindred and tongue and people and nation. And have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Why did the cherubic emblems stand upon the Mercy Seat and why were they made part and parcel of it, if not to show that while man bends as a sinner before that Mercy Seat and receives pardon, angels stand as sinless beings, looking down upon that Mercy Seat which is the groundwork of their eternal safety? It seems to me to magnify the greatness of the Atonement that it affected Heaven as well as earth and that throughout all the principalities and powers there would be a reason why they should bow with holy gratitude before Jesus the Lord, seeing that He has redeemed them from future falling by His precious blood.

Whether this is so or not, certainly Jesus is the true Archangel—He is the Head of principalities and powers, as well as the Head of redeemed men. He is called “the Angel of the Covenant,” as God’s messenger sent forth to fulfill God’s will in Covenant purposes to His children. Oh, this is the joy of the Church, that Jesus the Man, Jesus the Angel, is ever in her midst! He is represented as riding upon a horse. This is to show His swiftness. He flies upon the wings of the wind to defend His people.

An ordinary commander cannot be in two places at once—and while the right wing has victory under his leadership, the left may be broken. But our Savior rides swiftly as the flashes of thought along the whole ranks, cheers them all on, and secures to every warrior the ultimate victory! Riding on the horse is a symbol of His zeal. He comes with all His power and might, flying with all speed so that none of His people should perish. He shows Himself strong on behalf of them that serve Him and is jealous for them with a fervent jealousy.

But why a *red* horse? Does this describe His Atonement? Does this picture His sufferings? Is it His own blood with which the horse is covered? Or is he bespattered with the blood of his foes slain in battle? “The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name.” He comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength because He has trod the winepress of wrath and trod His foes in His fury. Does this manifest the terror, the strength, the majesty of Him whose name is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah”?

The day is coming when He will ride on His *white* horse and go forth conquering and to conquer. But today it is the red horse—for His Church still suffers—still is she stained with the blood of persecution. John says that when he saw the Son of Man, “His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace,” and so is it still with our Lord—His head is glorious in Heaven, but His feet, we that have fallen upon these evil days, glow still in the furnace! As far as earth is concerned, then, the fitting picture of Christ is the Man upon the red horse in the midst of the myrtle trees. Rejoice, O you people of God, that Jesus is in the midst of His saints with His sword girt upon His thigh!

II. I take you a step farther. For the comfort of God’s people we have not only Christ engaged, but we see THE WHOLE ANGELIC HOST READY TO DO US SERVICE. Observe that behind the Man on the red horse was a company of horses—of course these were not horses without riders, for

they are represented as speaking. The Church of God has the angels of Heaven to be her protectors. These angels are described as mounted, to represent their swiftness—"He makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire."

You perceive also the strength of the horse mingled with its swiftness—what God bids His messengers perform, they do. Who can stay their hand! He gives them a charge and girds them with His own power. Zeal quickens every step of these burning ones. Standing with wings outstretched, they wait upon the Divine will. And when the command is given, no eagle cleaves the air so swiftly as the holy ones. They appear to be of different sorts. There are those who are commissioned for vengeance—these ride upon the red horses of God's tremendous wrath. Who knows how often and how terribly angels may have struck through the loins of kings! An angel slew Sennacherib's host. Was it not an angel that struck Herod? Has not God still upon His red horses, angels that shall speedily make an end of the Church's proudest persecutors?

Then there are those on the white horses that come to bless God's saints. Was it not such a spirit that delivered Peter from prison and cheered the heart of Paul in the stormy night? Who knows how often they strengthen the faint and comfort the broken-hearted? They are ever ascending and descending upon that ladder which Jacob saw. Some come to curse the wicked, but as many come to bless the righteous. As for the speckled or bay horses—these are the mingled circumstances in which you see both the mercy and judgment of God—angels are not strangers to these, for God employs them upon many occasions.

What part do angels take in the protection of the Church? I suppose it would be very difficult to describe precisely how they act. But that they do work for us is most certainly a Scriptural doctrine. They are represented as guarding the Lord's people. "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him." Have we not some reason to believe that angels inject comforting thoughts into our minds? When Christ was in the garden, there appeared unto Him an angel strengthening Him. May it not be that those warm thoughts which come welling up in our minds, as we think, spontaneously, have been suggested by angels?

We are prone to ascribe our temptations to the devil—how is it we do not ascribe some of our excellent comforts to the work of angels? Are those bad spirits to have the monopoly of dealing with us? Are they to be the only spiritual agents? God forbid! Doubtless, as bad ones would cast us down from the pinnacle where we stand, so these good ones would bear us up! May there not be going on in the air strange battles between the demons and the spirits of light? Is the case mentioned in Jude the only one in which an angel has contended with the devil? Are there no combats such as that described by Daniel in his tenth chapter, where Gabriel and Michael seem to be both engaged against a prince of the power of the air?

May it not be that bright angelic squadrons are holding strange fights with hosts of demons while the Word is preached, contending for and against that glorious Truth which is the power of God unto salvation? We know not what spiritual agencies are continually at work. But that they are at work is clear enough in the Word of God. Spenser was no dreamer when he sang—

***“How oft do they their silver bowers leave
To come to succor us that succor need!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies, like flying squadrons
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant.
And all for love and nothing for reward—
O why should heavenly
God to men have such regard?”***

Brethren, may not angels also operate upon the wicked? Is it not possible that the strong restraints which sometimes come upon ungodly men and the singular thoughts which make them, like Balaam, speak what they do not mean and say a good word where they would curse—is it not possible that these may be caused by the suggestions of angels? At any rate these bright spirits rejoice to minister to the heirs of salvation.

Courage! Courage! Warriors of the Cross! March on to victory, for I hear the wings of angels flying at your side! Strike, for angelic swords are drawn! Sound your clarions, for the trumpeters of God are near. Behold the mountain is full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the Church of God—more are they that are for us than all they that are against us! We are come unto an innumerable company of angels, all of whom salute us as fellow soldiers in the host of God. Here let us pause and bless the Grace which makes ten thousand times ten thousand angels the allies of the warriors of the Cross.

III. As you read on, you will perceive another ground of comfort to those of you who are alarmed for the Church of God. WE HAVE THE WHOLE OF PROVIDENCE ENGAGED UPON OUR SIDE. Thus it is written, “These are they whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro through the earth.” They gave the result of their reconnoiter—they said, “We have walked to and fro through the earth and behold, all the earth sits still and is at rest.” According to the first chapter of the book of Ezekiel, the four living creatures, whom I take to represent angels, always co-worked with the wheels.

The mysterious agency of angels is at work together and in unison with the great work of Providence. Whatever may be occurring, great or small, is certainly happening for the good of God’s Church and for the propagation of God’s Truth. How singularly does God, in political events, prepare men’s minds for the particular phase which His Church assumes! There was perfect peace over the whole world at the time when Christ was put to death. The whole world was subject to one dominion, so that the Apostle Paul and his coadjutors could preach everywhere the unsearchable riches of Christ.

I cannot go into the question this morning. But every Christian student of history knows that the circumstances of the outward world have ever been arranged by God so as to prepare the way for the advance of His great cause. How strangely Providence works to spread the Truth of God. They said of Martin Luther's writings, that they were scattered by angels. No such distributors were employed. But still they were scattered so widely that it was a perfect mystery how it was done. There was scarcely a little peddler who went about with jewels who did not somewhere in his stock keep a copy of the Word of God or Luther's Psalms.

It was said that in England, out of every three persons you met with in the road, though they might be but peasants breaking stones, there would be one of the three a Wickliffe—for Wickliffe's translation of the New Testament spread marvelously—though it was continually hunted after and burnt when discovered. You will find, if I am not mistaken, that soon God will scatter broadcast over all lands those testimonies which are most clear and most full of Christ! He will do it in such a way that our societies will have to hold up their hands in amazement and say, "We cannot tell how this was done."

God finds a market for his wares—he needs not to advertise them. God Himself, who revealed His Truth, will incline men's minds to procure the Truth. Then how singularly does God work in Providence to prepare individuals for His Truth! How many a man has come into this Tabernacle with a heart as much prepared for the particular sermon to be delivered as it possibly could be so that he has said that the preacher must have been told what his feelings were for the Word had come so pointedly home! It was nothing but God in Providence plowing the field for the seed!

How often can we see God opening the doors of nations to missionaries! It was marvelous that China should become accessible after being shut up so many years. And whatever may be said concerning our treatment of the Japanese, (and we are not among those who would vindicate or defend any tyranny on the part of the strong), yet Japan must be opened and the Gospel of God must be preached there!

For every nation that shuts her gates against the Truth of God shall find God's battering ram shake the nation to its foundations sooner than His Word shall be shut out. Courage, warriors of the Cross! Christ is with you as your Captain! Sound your trumpets and advance to battle! If Christ and His angels and the Providence of God all work with you, who can be against you?—

***"When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?
When He His people's cause defends,
Who, who shall stay His hand?"***

IV. I come now to point out to you something equally interesting and even more comfortable in this vision. We have here AN INTERCEDING SAVIOR. The twelfth verse—"Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of Hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You have had indignation these threescore and ten years?" That same Christ, who is on earth in spirit, on the red horse, is in Heaven in Person, pleading before the Throne of God.

Let me not talk coldly upon this, but carry up your hearts to Heaven. I think I see Him, the Angel of the Covenant—He pleads—He pleads for mercy. Mercy that sent Him to earth—mercy is His petition now. He pleads for present mercy. His cry is, “How long? Eighteen hundred years is it since My blood was offered and yet My kingdom has not come! Lo, nearly two thousand years have rolled away and yet Antichrist is not slain, but Satan’s seat is still upon the seven hills! How long? How long? How long?”

Observe the objects of His intercession. He pleads for Jerusalem and Judah. “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me.” With what pleading power He points to His wounds and declares Himself to be no other than that mighty One who discharged the Father’s will and bore the whole of Divine wrath! And must He not prevail? Church of God, if you can be rejected, yet He cannot be! Shall the Darling of the Father receive no answer to His cry? Does He plead for us and shall we be afraid? No! In the name of Him who lives and loves and pleads before the Eternal Throne, let us set up our banner! For God has given the victory into our hands in answer to the pleadings of His Son.

V. Nor is this all—observe that WE HAVE IN THIS VISION A GRACIOUS God—for as soon as the plea was put up, the Lord answered the Angel that talked with Him, “with good words and comfortable words.” O Zion, there are good things in store for you! Church of God, your time of travail shall soon be over and your children shall be brought forth! Your captivity shall end and the day of manifestation shall appear. Bear patiently the rod for a season and under the darkness still trust in God, for He has not forgotten you. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands. Your walls are continually before Me.”

God loves the Church with a love too deep for human imagination to understand—He loves her with all His infinite heart. Therefore be of good courage, she cannot need anything, to whom God speaks “good words and comfortable words.” What these comfortable words are the Prophet goes on to tell us—“I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.” You perceive He loves her so much that He cannot bear she should go astray to others. And when she has done so, He cannot endure that she should suffer too much or too heavily. He will not have His enemies afflict her—He is displeased with them because they increase her affliction.

When God seems most to leave His Church, yet His heart is very warm towards her. It is remarkable that whenever God uses a rod to chasten His servants, He always breaks it—as if He loathed the rod which gave His children pain. As soon as ever God struck Israel, whether by Moabite, or Midianite, Babylonian, Persian, Assyrian, Greek, or Roman—in every case He broke the rod in pieces as soon as He had used it, for He is loath to vex His people. He feels the smart far more than His people. “As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him,” and the rod cuts Him more than it cuts His Church.

Let us be of good courage! God has not forgotten us. You may belong to a part of the Church which is in great obscurity, but He has not forgotten it. You may think that the Lord has passed you by, but He has not—He that counts the stars and calls them all by name has no limit to His understanding and no measure to His knowledge! He binds up the broken in heart and heals their wounds. And He knows your case and state as much and as perfectly as if you were the only creature He had ever made, or the only saint He had ever loved!

VI. We must now consider the second vision of Zechariah, prophetic of **SUITABLE INSTRUMENTALITY**. It was dark and as the Prophet looked into the air with wonder, the Rider on the red horse melted away and the myrtle grove disappeared. The horses, too—whether bay, or red, or white—with their angelic riders, were gone. Instead of these, he saw in the sky four terrible horns. They were pushing this way and that way, dashing down the strongest and the mightiest.

And the Prophet naturally asked, “What are these?” The answer was, “These are the horns which have scattered Israel.” He saw before him a representation of those powers which had oppressed the Church of God. There were four of them, for the Church is attacked on all sides. Well might the Prophet have felt dismayed. But all of a sudden there appeared before him four carpenters. He asked, “What shall these do?” The original may as well be translated four *blacksmiths*. Perhaps the better way would be to make it four workmen. If they were carpenters, they were doubtless armed with their saws—or if blacksmiths they came with their heavy hammers. “What shall these do?”

Why, these are the men whom God has found to break those horns to pieces and scattered or frightened the powers which wield them. Brethren, God will always find men for His work. If He requires carpenters, He has only to call for them and there they are. If blacksmiths shall be better, “He creates the smith that blows the coals in the fire.” You look upon the scarcity of ministers—it is true there is a great lack of faithful servants of God. But remember, you have but to pray that He would thrust forth more laborers into His vineyard and the thing is done!

God always knows where to find men for His work. And He finds men at the right time. The Prophet did not see the carpenters first, when there was nothing to do, but first the *horns* and *then* the carpenters. Of late, there has been a great increase of infidelity—infidelity of the worst kind—that *lying* infidelity which swears that it believes the Articles of the Christian faith and wears a miter, or a priest’s frock, and believes nothing of the kind. Well, I suppose, any lie may find fitting refuge beneath the wings of the Anglican Establishment!

What solemn criminality must belong to those who utter falsehood in the name of the Holy Spirit, and, acting in the office of priests, justify the wicked for a reward! To say in God’s name what I know to be untrue is a crime which transcends in infamy all other crimes of mankind—I will not even exclude murder—if it is upon provocation. For to murder souls deliberately by teaching a lie is as great a crime as to slay a man in haste. Let

me give an instance of how our State Church sins against morality and Scripture—it is taken from last week's paper:

“One of the most shocking scenes that ever occurred in connection with the prize ring, took place in Sheffield yesterday (Sunday). A number of young men and youths, frequenters of some of the lowest brothels and beerhouses in the town, agreed to meet in the Old Park Wood and fight for a sum of money. One pair of boxers set to and fought for an hour. And then the arena was cleared for another couple, two young men named Dawes and Home. They fought for twenty minutes and Dawes received a heavy blow on the jugular. He was placed on his second's knee. Time was called, amidst much shouting and yelling. He got up and advanced to meet his antagonist but had not gone a yard before he reeled, fell and died instantly.”

A few graphic lines from The Sheffield Daily Telegraph will describe the burial of this unhappy youth—“The remains of Dawes (who was killed in a prize fight on Sunday morning), were interred yesterday afternoon at the general cemetery. A heterogeneous multitude—old and young of both sexes from the squalling cherub in arms, to the decrepit hag—thronged the sacred edifice. Still more numerous, ill-mannered and ill-conditioned was the throng who clustered around the grave—pig-headed and bull-necked young fellows, mostly under twenty years of age who must have been the representatives of the ‘P.R.’ in Sheffield. The Service for the Dead was performed by the Rev. G. Sandford and at its conclusion the rabble departed.”

Did this clergyman give God hearty thanks that it had pleased Him to deliver this brother out of the miseries of this sinful world? Did he pray the Father to raise the bystanders from their death in sin unto the life of righteousness, that when they shall depart this life, they may rest in Him, “as our hope is this, our Brother, does”? I am called uncharitable for denouncing this infamy. I beg to offer apologies. I have said I cannot understand how Evangelical clergymen can bring their conscience to perform such enormities. I apologize—I apologize altogether. I will not say again, “I wonder how they can bring their consciences to it”—for when men act thus, I believe they have no consciences at all!

Thus far I apologize, but no further. Conscience must be seared utterly, if not extinct, when the man can stand there, dressed in the habit of a priest of God and say over a sinner who has died in the very act of sin, that he buries him in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life! Let these men find a trade where truthfulness is not essential to success. But for them to stand as teachers and claim to be successors of the Apostles is an evil which might stir the very stones of the street to cry out against them!

But for the putting down of these giant evils, God will find men at the right time and as this evil seems to have mounted to the very highest pitch, He will find somewhere a hand to scatter this horn. Observe, again, He finds enough men. He did not find three carpenters, but four. There were four horns and there must be four smiths and each smith must take his proper place. And then He finds the right men—not four gentlemen

with pens to write—not four architects to draw plans, but four mechanics to do rough work! He who wants to open an oyster, must not use a razor—there needs less of daintiness and more of force. For some works Providence does not find gentlemen to cut off the horns, but carpenters.

The work needs a man who, when he has his work to do, puts his whole strength into it and beats away with his hammer, or cuts through the wood that lays before him with might and main. Rest assured, you who tremble for the ark of God, that when the horns grow troublesome, the carpenters will be found. You need not fret concerning the weakness of the Church of God at any moment! There may be growing up in the chimney corner the man who will shake the nations! Chrysostoms may come forth from our Ragged Schools and Augustines from the thickest darkness of London's poverty!

The Lord knows where to find His servants—they may be in the Universities of Cambridge or Oxford, or possibly in the peasant's hut. He has but to hold up His finger and as Luther and Melancthon and Calvin and Zwingli and Bucer and Farrell and multitudes of the same kind were found—and as in modern times on the continent, Haldane was the means of calling forth Malan and Gausson and Vinet and D'Aubigne and the whole company of the Monods and multitudes of faithful servants to bring back the Helvetian and Gallic Churches to their allegiance—so, let God but find one man at first to bear the brunt and they come! They come, an exceeding great army!

Be it ours to deliver the Word and leave the results with God. And His army, though it may now be hidden, shall stand forth ready for the battle. God has in ambush a multitude of mighty men and at His word they shall be ready for the battle—for the battle is the Lord's—and He shall deliver the enemy into our hands. These two visions seem to me to be full of comfort to the true Church of God. Let us abide then, dear Friends, faithful to Christ, faithful to His Word and who knows what may come?

But if we are God's enemies, let us fear and tremble, for the angels on the black horses shall be our destruction. And as God is strong to defend His people, so is He strong and swift to slay His enemies. Beware, you who forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you. Fly to Jesus, trust Him and live!

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

THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE NO. 604

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 11, 1864,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I lifted up my eyes again and looked and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said, Where are you going? And he said to me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is the length. And there was the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him, who said to him, ‘Run, speak to this young man, saying, ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. For I,’ says the Lord, ‘will be a wall of fire around her and I will be the glory in her midst.’”
Zechariah 2:1-5.

IT is evident that this vision and prophecy graciously reveal the future history of Jerusalem. You may spiritualize, if you will, and say that Jerusalem signifies the Church—but I pray you not forget the literal meaning of such words as these in the twelfth verse—“The Lord shall take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem.” Jerusalem is spoken of and Jerusalem is meant. A man with a measuring line is about to measure the length and breadth of the city. He appears to be interrupted in his work by another angel who foretells that so greatly shall Jerusalem extend that she will be as a town without walls, for the number of men and livestock that shall be in it.

This prophecy has not as yet been fulfilled—it may have had some partial fulfillment in those times of peace before the coming of the Savior, but even then Jerusalem was surrounded by a triple wall. And though it is true that there was a large suburban population, yet the city was not then, “as towns without walls,” nor was the Glory of God in the midst of her in any eminent degree. I believe this passage refers to a happy and glorious future yet to come when the city of Jerusalem shall have no walls, except the protection of the Lord, but shall be extended far and wide.

The Jewish people and their royal city shall remain the center of the manifestations of Divine Glory, just as the city of London still remains the center of the metropolis. But the nations of the earth shall be joined unto the Lord so that while Jerusalem remains the city of the Great King, the faithful among the people of all nations shall be, as it were, a suburban population to the chosen city and the kingdom of Messiah shall extend far and wide. Jerusalem will be rebuilt in more than her former splendor. The Jews will be restored to their own land. And Messiah will reign as a prince of the house of David.

We cannot understand many portions of Scripture except upon this belief. If it is so, it appears according to this prophecy that God shall be the

protection of this great city and the glory in the midst of her. All her sons shall be gathered from their distant wandering places. And where they have associated themselves with Antichrist, they shall hear the voice which says, "Deliver yourself, O Zion, that dwell with the daughter of Babylon." Christ Himself shall fulfill His promise, "Lo, I come." The nations shall be judged. God shall shake His hands over all lands and give them as a spoil to His people. Zion shall sing and rejoice—her Lord and King shall dwell in the midst of her—many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah and He, from shore to shore, shall reign while all flesh is silent before Him because He is raised up out of His holy habitation.

I am not given to prophesying and I fear that the fixing of dates and periods has been exceedingly injurious to the whole system of pre-millennial teaching. But I think I clearly see in Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ will come—so far I go and take my stand—that He will come personally to *reign upon this earth*. At His coming it appears clear to me that He will gather together the Jewish people. Jerusalem shall become the metropolis of the new empire which shall then extend from pole to pole, from the river even to the ends of the earth. If this is a correct interpretation of prophecy, you may read the whole of this chapter through and understand it—you have the key to every sentence! Without such a belief I see not how to interpret the Prophet's meaning.

Dear Friends, we may sometimes refresh our minds with a prospect of the kingdom which is soon to cover all lands and make the sun and moon ashamed by its superior glory! We are *not* to indulge in prophecies as some do, making them their spiritual food, their meat and drink. But still we may take them as choice morsels and special delicacies set upon the table. They are condiments which may often give a sweeter taste, or, if you will, a greater pungency and savor to other doctrines. Prophetic views light up the crown of Jesus with a superior splendor.

They make His Manhood appear illustrious as we see Him still in connection with the earth—to have a kingdom here as well as there—to sit upon a throne here as well as in yonder skies! To subdue His adversaries even upon this Aceldama, as in the realm of spirits! To make even this poor earth upon which the trail of the serpent is so manifest a place where the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. If our view of prophecy is the correct one, it seems to be in perfect harmony with all the doctrines of the Gospel.

God certainly did elect His people the Jews. He made a Covenant with His servant Abraham and although you will remind *us* that this was only a *temporal* covenant, I would remind *you* that it was the *type* of the *spiritual* one and it would be an unhappy reflection for us if the typical Covenant should prove to be only temporary as well as temporal! If that came to an end and if God cast away, in any sense, the people whom He did foreknow, it might foretell to us the ill foreboding that perhaps He might cast away His *spiritual* seed also—and that those who were chosen as the spiritual seed of Abraham might yet be cut off from the olive into which they had been grafted. If the natural branches are cast away *forever*, why not the grafted branches, too?

But here is our joy—the God who swore unto His servant Abraham that to him and to his seed would He give the land forever has not gone back

from His word—they shall possess the land. Their feet shall joyously tread its fruitful acres yet again. They shall sit, every man, under his own vine and under his own fig tree and none shall make them afraid. And so the spiritual seed to whom the spiritual heritage is given as by a Covenant of Salt shall also possess their heritage forever and of their rightful portion no robber shall despoil them.

Now, I think it cannot be said that I have avoided the immediate meaning of the passage before us and that I have selected the vision as a text merely to accommodate it to my own purpose. You have now before you the intention and mind of the Spirit of God, so far as I am able to perceive it. And having spoken thus far upon it, I now feel at liberty to interpret the vision in what is commonly called a more spiritual sense, begging you, however, not to think that I make the spiritual sense override the sense I have already given, for the mind of the Spirit in the passage is ever to be respected far beyond any human accommodation.

And though the accommodation may seem to be less historical and more suitable for Sunday food to the people of God, yet remember God's sense stands first and our sense is only to be regarded and respected as it stands in harmony with other portions of Holy Writ. My heart is so taken up with the present state of my Church and congregation that I feel moved to use my text in its application to *us* and I think it may well bear such an application. May God teach it and bless it to us!

First, dear Friends, I want you to lift up your eyes with Zechariah and see the man with the measuring line. Secondly open your ears with Zechariah and hear the voice of the prophesying angel. And then, thirdly, I want you to go your ways and publish abroad the commands of this angel.

I. First, then, LET US SEE THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE IN HIS HAND. All Zechariah's visions are remarkably simple. They are not like Isaiah's when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. Nor or they like Ezekiel's when he beheld living creatures with four faces and wheels full of eyes. Zechariah had not imagination enough to be capable of beholding with due appreciation visions so complicated and mysterious. He was not the proper instrument of God for the Revelation of these more mysterious matters. But the Lord had a place for him and a vision for him, too.

How sweet to be a servant of God in any position! He sees simply a man, an ordinary architect, going forth with a measuring line to measure the city of Jerusalem—a very simple sight—and without any stretch of the imagination you can all picture the man with his line. If this man in the text is to be viewed as an angel, commissioned by God to take measurements of that city, he would be sure to do it accurately and his measurements would be instructive, could he reveal them to us. Since they are hidden from our eyes, let it be enough for us to perceive that the city *has* measurements—has a settled length and breadth—and that the measurements can be taken and that we have Divine authority for asserting that they *have* been taken.

This leads us to contemplate the doctrine of predestinating love, with its line of Divine Grace, and its plans of wisdom. God's city of Jerusalem is not to be built haphazardly. The line marks out and measures how long

the wall shall be and where the corner shall be placed. And how far the other wall shall be carried and where it shall come to an end. The towers are counted, the bulwarks are considered. Every single item and particular of the sacred architecture of the Church of God is written down in the decree of the Most High. Every man has his plan and shall not the Most High God?

He is esteemed to be a simpleton who begins to erect a building with no sort of idea how it will look at the end! Who, but a fool waits till the top stone is brought out before he conceives in his mind any sort of idea of what the building will be like? You would never employ a person without foresight as an architect. And if a man were foolish enough to do this with his own building, all who heard of it would make it the theme of laughter.

It cannot be supposed, therefore, to be so with God! Your belief in His wisdom supposes that He has a plan, no, necessitates that there should be a design in the Divine mind! Moreover, you cannot separate the thought of Omniscience from God. If God is Omniscient, He knows the end from the beginning. He sees in its appointed place not merely the cornerstone which He has laid in fair colors—in the blood of His dear Son—but He beholds in their ordained position each of the chosen stones taken out of the quarry of nature and polished by His Grace! He sees the whole from corner to cornice, from base to roof, from foundation to pinnacle.

He has in His mind a clear knowledge of every stone which shall be laid in its prepared space and how vast the edifice shall be and when the top stone shall be brought forth with shouts of, “Grace! Grace unto it!” Deny the decree of election and what do you see? You see the work of Grace without God’s superintendence in it. What would creation be if God had not been absolutely present there? Can we conceive of a single creature formed without the creating purpose of God? Is there a fish in the sea, or a fowl in the air which was left to chance for its creation? No! In every bone, joint and muscle, sinew, gland and blood vessel you mark the Presence of God working everything according to the design of infinite Wisdom.

Shall God be present in creation, ruling over all and not in Grace? Shall Grace be left in a state of chaos while creation is ordered by the Most High? Look at Providence! Who knows not that not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Every dark and bending line meets in the center of your love. It is our joy to believe that the measuring line is used in our trials and our troubles. If He ordained the number ten, who can make it eleven? If He filled the cup but half-full, even Satanic agency cannot fill it to the brim. God weighs the mountains of our griefs in scales and the hills of our tribulation in balances.

And shall there be a God in Providence and not in Grace? What? Shall He ride in the chariot of the clouds and put a bit into the mouth of the tempest and rein in the wild steeds of the storm and yet shall He leave the greater work of His Grace—His third dominion, the grandest and the best—to the will of man, to the fickle choice of the creature? Shall He make the glorious salvation of Jesus an unsettled thing to be kicked about as a football by the free agency of man? Shall Divinity stand as lacquer to the creature’s changeful choice? Never! He will have mercy on

whom He will have mercy! He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion!

And at the last it shall be seen that in every chosen vessel of mercy Jehovah did as He willed with His own. And in every separate instance of salvation and in every part and portion of the work of Grace the Lord reigned as King forever and did as He willed and glorified His own name. I see a man with a measuring line and I rejoice to see him and thank God that it is written, "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are His." It is just possible that the man in the text was nothing but a man. At any rate, we may often see apparitions of men with measuring lines. And while I have an intense reverence to the angel with the measuring line, I must confess an entire dislike to the man with the measuring line.

How often, Brethren, have we seen men with the measuring line endeavoring to estimate the length and breadth of God's true Church? Some of them take a very long line and they begin to calculate how many Protestants, Roman Catholics, and members of the Greek Church there may be throughout the world. Then they write down all these millions as being Christians! Now, we beg to differ from the estimate—how we wish we could agree with it!

Glad enough should we be to hope that these were all true members of the Church of God! But when we remember the errors with which one section of the Church is polluted almost beyond hope. When we remark the absence of all spirituality in others. When we see how the mass of nominal Christians are living without God and without Christ. When we reflect upon the many criminals, harlots and open sinners who would, according to this rule, be called Christians, we beg to remind the man with the measuring line, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel"! And although they may all lie upon the threshing floor, "What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord." The field is the world, but among the wheat many tares are growing—multitudes are gathered here, not in the valley of decision, but in the plains of outward profession—and a separating day must come!

If we were to measure in this way, we should certainly be deluded—we should find Christians whom we could not trust! Christians who did not know their creed! Christians who did not rejoice in the name of Christ—Christians without faith, without hope and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel! Christians merely in name cannot be Christians, for, "Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Again, I very frequently see another man with a measuring line. He is of a very sad countenance and looks out upon the universe through blue spectacles. He will never fall into the error of the first man but delights in the opposite extreme. "Oh," he says, as he wrings his hands in a kind of delicious misery, "the people of God are a handful, a remnant, a child might write them." He likes right well that hymn—

***"Dear Shepherd, of Your chosen few,
Your former mercies here renew."***

He wishes his minister to preach from, "Fear not, little flock." Or this one, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leads unto life and few there are that find it." Sometimes Despondency takes the shape of a man's fearing that he himself shall not enter—now there is something humble about that and therefore it is bearable—but in frequent instances, Despondency is married to Pride and then it is not despondency about themselves, but about all the rest of the human family. They are doubtless *the* men and "wisdom will die with them."

They hear of backsliders and they conclude that all professors will backslide. They have read a story of some famous minister who stained his character and they believe that all ministers are mere pretenders. They hear of Mr. Liberal, who was noted for his generosity and for his zeal in the cause of Christ and yet he turned out to be generous with other men's money and to be thought little better than a thief. And Despondency shakes her head and says, "I told you so—all men are liars." "Lord! Are there few who shall be saved?" is the constant question of Despondency.

And every day she lives, she keeps making the measuring line a little shorter till perhaps the day will come when Despondency shall prophesy the destruction of the Christian faith, the return of the Papacy and the outpouring of the vials and say, "The faithful fail from among men, Zion is under a cloud." A day of clouds and of thick darkness, is the only description of the present age which this spirit allows to be correct. Perhaps Despondency herself may die in the dark, believing that she is not included in the line of the Covenant of Grace.

Well, now, I must confess I am thankful that God has not set our desponding brother to measure His Zion! I am grateful that He is pleased to keep that in His own hands, or it might be woe forever to many of the brightest of the Lord's people. Certain men occasionally come across my path who carry a measuring line which was originally made either by one called Mr. False Experience or Mr. Proud Experience. These Brethren will not believe any to be Christians who have not experienced *precisely* the same emotions, doubts, fears, trembling, horrors, terrors, ecstasies, delights or raptures which they themselves have felt!

They get hold of every Christian professor and they do with him as Procrustes did with men in his day—they take him into their bedchamber and there is their bed of experience—the exact length that it should be. If the Brother to be judged is not long enough to reach from head to foot, then they have a rack ready for him and they will pull his limbs a little. Or, if he should happen to be rather longer than themselves, then their pride is more aggrieved, still, and it is likely enough that a sharp two-edged sword of censure will take off his head so as to accommodate him to the length of the couch.

Perhaps you know certain professors of this kind and if you live in their midst the only path of wisdom will be to hold your peace. They are supposed to have received information by special revelation from on high that their particular rut and that rut alone, leads to the land where sorrow is unknown. See them put on their spectacles and sit as a sort of jury to investigate a candidate for Church membership. This poor young man only professes to have been converted some three months. If they entertain his

case at all it is with the decided determination ultimately to reject him. Thus they begin with him, "Have you ever experienced such-and-such law-work in your soul? Were you ever led to curse God and to feel the awful corruptions of your nature, tempting you to blaspheme the Holy Spirit?"

The poor young man can only say he knows himself to be a sinner lost by nature and saved by Grace through faith in Christ. They shake their heads and tell him it is a mere *natural, notional* faith. As he has not known the law-work which they have known, he is of no good whatever. They pretend to hope for him but they mean all the while that they do not believe in him an atom.

Another class of emotional religionists steer by another star. They question the enquirer from another catechism, "Have you been carried up to the third Heaven, like Paul? Can you say, 'Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knows' "? Such Brethren sometimes will put such questions as this—"Do you feel any pleasure whatever when you are with your friends? Can you take a walk in the fields and find enjoyment in the singing of birds and in the foliage of the trees?" And if you answer, "Yes, thank God, I can," ah, they are sickened at you! You are not spiritually-minded, if you can look at works of art and admire them. If you can view the works of God in creation and feel any pleasure they are astonished at you and think you carnal!

As for themselves, they have attained to such a superfine degree of spirituality that they have purified all the common sins out of themselves as well as the "sense." Dr. Watts says—

***"May purge ourselves from sense and sin,
As Christ the Lord is pure."***

He meant by "sense" *feeling*, mere *carnal* feeling. But I am afraid that some have really purged themselves from sense in the ordinary acceptance of the term and might very well claim that their spirituality was not at all akin to worldly wisdom, for it is remarkably akin to absurdity and cant. Now, I thank God that the measuring line is not in the hands of the experimentalists and bless my Master that it is written, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." And, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the Brethren."

I have also seen the measuring line in the hands of others—Doctrinalists. Yes. And their line has five marks which were originally made by John Calvin. And if your opinions do not square exactly to the standard, you are cut off from all part and lot in the blessings of vital godliness. Zion is certainly built according to the arrangement of the five points and therefore if any Brother or Sister does not comprehend and receive them all, he is not a *weak* Believer, but according to the measuring line of our rigid friends, he is not a Believer *at all!*

You know, Brethren, that there is no soul living who holds more firmly to the Doctrines of Grace than I do and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer, I wish to be called nothing but a Christian. But if you ask me do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them and rejoice to avow it. But, my dear Friends, far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none within her walls but Calvinistic Christians—or that there

are none saved who do not hold our views. Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him, that while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man himself I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan.

And if there were wanted two Apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitfield and John Wesley. The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness and communion with God. He lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians and was one of whom the world was not worthy. I believe there are multitudes of men who cannot see these Truths of God, or, at least cannot see them in the way in which we put them, who nevertheless have received Christ into their hearts and are as dear to the heart of the God of Grace as the soundest Calvinist out of Heaven.

I thank God we do not believe in the measuring line of any form of bigotry. I remember meeting with one who knew, yes, he *knew* how many children of God there were in the parish where he lived—there were exactly five. I was curious to know their names, and much to my amusement he began by saying, “There is myself.” I stopped him at this point, with the query whether he was quite sure about the first one. Since then, his character has gone I know not where, but certainly he will get on better without it than with it! Yet he was the first on his own list and a few others of his own black sort made up the five.

There were in the other places of worship to which he did *not* go, men whose characters for integrity and uprightness, yes, and for spirituality and prayerfulness, would have been degraded by being put into comparison with him. And yet he, he was set as judge in Israel and was to know exactly how many people of God were in the village! Oh, I bless God that we have learned to have very little respect for the vision of the man with the measuring line! When we see an angel with it, if such is the intention of the vision, we are glad enough. “The Lord knows them that are His.” But when we see a man with it, we tell him that he must give us a warrant from God and show us how he is to know the elect by any other method than that laid down in Scripture—“By their fruits you shall know them”!

Notice that this vision soon departed. The Prophet does not seem to have dwelt long upon it. Almost as soon as it appeared it disappeared. Perhaps it is not a good thing for the people of God at any time to be much engaged in numbering the people. It is a question what was the particular sin of David in numbering the people. I will not enter into it just now, but I do fear that it is hard for us to number the people at any time without committing a sin—either the greatness of their number may lift us up and inflate us with pride or the littleness of their number may make us despond and doubt the strength of God.

The vision of the man with the measuring line is only to be looked upon for a moment and then it may depart. We therefore ask you to close your eyes to that and open your ears to the voice of that Covenant angel, who, interrupting the man, began to tell Zechariah good things concerning times to come.

II. From my text it appears, dear Friends, THAT WE ARE TO LOOK FOR A GREAT EXTENSION OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. I hope we are to look for it now. Jerusalem shall be inhabited “as towns without walls.” There are those in this place who remember when, if you crossed Blackfriars Bridge, you scarcely saw a house—as soon as you had crossed the bridge from London you were in the country at once. They still survive among us to see how this great city has not only swollen to this district, but has gone right on for miles and threatens to absorb mile after mile of the country.

Such an extension we are to expect in Christ’s Church. It began with twelve Apostles. It was soon swollen to some four hundred Brethren. It was increased by three thousand more at the day of Pentecost. There were added afterwards to the Church daily of such as should be saved. The Gospel was preached throughout all regions. The children of God were found in Athens and Corinth, in Derbe and Lystra—from all parts of the earth the elect were gathered in. The kingdom extended. The Gospel was preached in Spain as well as Italy. It passed on to Gaul, it came to Great Britain. In these after days it still continues to spread.

A new world has been discovered, the religion of Jesus has been carried there. The emigrants who are peopling great islands of the southern seas bear with them the religion of Jesus Christ. Everywhere the kingdom grows. There is, as it were, a little core and center of Believers from among the Jewish people—but all around these there spreads a vast multitude of whom I might almost say that no man can number them. In our portion of Christ’s Church it has been upon a small scale the same. Beginning with but a handful of men, God has been pleased to add hundred after hundred till He has extended our number to a great host.

But I do trust that what it is now is only the nucleus around which there is to be built a yet mightier Church. I would to God that now He might open the windows of Heaven and pour us out a blessing and so multiply us that the present thousands of this Church might be altogether lost in the numbers yet added. Truly, I would not ask it for this Church alone, but that other Churches all around may derive health from our prosperity—that God may raise up out of our loins Churches which shall be our sons and daughters—which shall again beget spiritual children, so that the kingdom of Christ may come and His name be exalted in the land! We are to look for an extension.

I want to encourage our elders and deacons and all our Brothers and Sisters to be looking for it. We have prayed for God’s blessing—if ever a people prayed, we have. There has been an earnestness, I am sure, about the most of the Brethren here which cannot be without its reward. We have pleaded the name of Jesus even unto tears and God does not answer prayer if He does not send us a blessing! We have used His Son’s name. We have pleaded His own promise. We have asked in faith, nothing doubting—and the blessing *must* come! Let us look for it and as sure as ever effect follows cause, so surely must we receive an extension of this Church!

It appears from the vision that the supply for all the number shall be as great as is required. “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and livestock in it.” The livestock are the provisions for the population. What is to be done with so large a Church? How

are the converts to be seen after? How are the members to be fed with spiritual food? "As your day, so shall your strength be." Whatever provision the Church shall want, God will give it. Jehovah-Jireh is His name! This city of London has not overgrown its supplies—while we may be astonished at the population, we may be equally astonished at the provision.

It shall be so in the kingdom of Grace. God will raise up in the midst of any growing Church the proper men to look after the converts and see to their spiritual health. We have no need to be under any alarm in this respect—"All needful Grace will God bestow." Other friends are afraid that if there is so large an extension of the Church there will be many added to it who are not Believers and that consequently the Church may be increased, but not really strengthened. That too, is supplied in the text. "I, says the Lord, will be a wall of fire round her," both to keep out her enemies and to protect her from the incoming of false friends.

It is the Church's duty to see to it that she admits not unworthy persons knowingly, but her best guard is the Presence of God. It is written, "Of the rest no man dared join himself unto them." You remember the death of Ananias and Sapphira? It came in opportunely, just at the time when the Church was rapidly increased. That solemn judgment set a wall of fire round about the Church so that ungodly persons dared not hypocritically come to be united with them. And so will God do to His Church now.

The traveler, when he wishes to keep out the wild beasts, makes a ring of fire and then the lion is shut out. And God makes a ring of fire round His Church and the enemy is kept at a distance. China is said to be protected by a wall of stone. Old England is shielded by her wooden walls. But the Church of God has a better wall, still, for she has the Divine wall of fire! Her enemies cannot break through this to destroy the meanest of her citizens and her false friends shall say to themselves, "Who among us can dwell with the eternal burnings?" And so they shall keep back from a Church which is visibly sheltered and protected by the Presence of the Most High.

Observe, dear Friends, while the Church is thus supplied and thus protected, she does not lack for glory. Her glory, however, does not lie in her numbers, nor in the provision made for them, but in the Presence of God. "I will be the glory in her midst." Let us never cease to pray for this. Let the Church distinctly recognize that the Holy Spirit is in the midst of the Church now. When we sing—"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove," we mean rightly enough. But the words must not be understood to mean that the Spirit of God is not here—for He is in the midst of His Church always and He dwells among His people as the Shekinah in the temple! And your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit—God dwells in you!

Our prayer must be, "You that dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! Stir up Your strength and come and save us." The glory of a Church does not lie in the architecture of the place where she meets, nor in the eloquence of her minister, nor in the greatness of her number, nor the abundance of her wealth, nor the profundity of her learning. It lies in her God. "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered." O God, when You went forth before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness, the earth shook! The heavens also dropped at the Presence of God—even Sinai

itself was moved at the Presence of God, the God of Israel. Here, then, lies the Church's best hope! Let her make this the grand object of her prayer—that the Lord may be the glory in her midst!

To close up this point let us observe that doubtless at such seasons, Divine love shall be very sweetly enjoyed among all the members. For the eighth verse says—though I do not intend to push our investigations further than the text—“He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” We never know so much of our nearness and dearness to God as when we, in common with the rest of God's people, are visited with the joy of His Presence. How differently things look in the sunshine from the way in which they appear without it! Ride along this land of ours when the rain is pouring down, or the mists have gathered and what a dull, dreary wilderness it seems.

And these London streets! What a settlement for convicts they appear in the midst of our thick fogs! But let the sun shine forth as it did this morning! Let the mists be scattered, and then even the leafless trees have a golden light upon them and all nature rejoices and the meanest and poorest landscape becomes, after its sort, sublime! So when our hearts are dull and heavy and the Church of God is in the same state, how poor everything appears! But when the Lord shines forth and the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings, then the Doctrines of Grace, how precious! Then the ministry of the Gospel, how effectual! Then the means of Grace, how dear! The people of God, how estimable! The things of God, how delightful!

O that we may have this! We have a right to expect it! We do not *deserve* it, but God has promised it! Let us give Him no rest till we have it! Stop your measuring, O Despondency! Stop your measuring, O Bigotry! Stop your censures, you who cut off the people of God and hearken while the angel prophesies that the kingdom of Christ shall grow and increase, till, like a city without walls, Jerusalem shall have for her glory the Presence of the Lord—and for her boundary nothing but the will of the Most High!

III. I close with a few words on the third point and but a few. Where is this increase to come from, this great increase? It is to come from two sources indicated in the sixth and seventh verses. MULTITUDES ARE TO COME OUT OF THE WORLD. “Up, up! Flee from the land of the north, says the Lord, for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the Heaven, says the Lord.” God's chosen people are scattered here and there. There are many of them in this assembly of whom we know nothing—but God knows them. The preaching of the Gospel is a message to you to come forth!

That message is this: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” It comes to every soul among you with this commanding, but most consoling word, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” My Hearers, you know what believing means. It is simply trusting upon what Christ has done for sinners. “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” If you now trust Him, your many sins shall be forgiven you! You are a child of God and an heir of Heaven if you but trust Him!

Like prodigals you may have spent all your substance—spiritual hunger may have seized upon you—you would gladly fill your belly with the

vain pleasures of the world, but you cannot. The Holy Spirit whispers in your heart, "Arise and go to your Father." Obey that heavenly whisper and though you are as yet a great way off, yet your Father sees you! He runs to meet you as you are! He falls upon your neck and kisses you, just as you are, undeserving and sinful. He cries to His servants, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." Will you trust that Father's love? Will you confide in it as it is set forth in the bleeding sacrifice of the Lord Jesus?

It is from you, O unconverted men and women, that we expect the greatest increase through the Spirit's power. We are looking for it and praying for it. I hope that the people of God this morning will be looking after you and when this sermon is done I hope they will speak with you, or if they cannot do so, at least pray for you. "Up, up, come forth"—twice the shout is given—as if you were slumberers and needed to be awakened. "Up, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters." Here there are two "ups," as if you should be called with vehemence, with earnestness, with pleading—"Come forth!" The year is almost over—I pray God that a new year may not be begun by you in sin, but may God begin with you at the fall of the year and bring you now to know His power to save.

There is another class from which the Church is to get this increase, indicated in the next verse, "Deliver yourself O Zion, that dwell with the daughter of Babylon." There is a large number of this second class in this congregation. There are a number of you who believe in Christ but you dwell with the daughter of Babylon. If a census were taken of Christians according to the Church roll—and I do not know that it could be taken better by mortal man—then you must be put down as being of the world. When the Lord's Supper is spread and the Savior says, "Do this in remembrance of Me," you go away, or stay in the galleries.

You practically say to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, I will not do this in remembrance of You. I feel myself justified in disobeying Your command. I believe I have a valid reason for not doing what Your loving lips request me to do." I do not know if I put it in that shape that you will quite agree with your own assertion, because how can a man really have a justifiable reason for not doing what the Lord Jesus Christ expressly tells him to do? That word "separation" needs to ring in the ears of Christians, "Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord and touch not the unclean thing."

Though this is to be done practically by your actions, yet first and foremost it should be done by a distinct avowal of your Lord Jesus Christ and that avowal should be by Baptism and union with the Church. May God bless these remarks both to saints and sinners, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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

THE LORD'S CARE OF HIS PEOPLE

NO. 452

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.”
Zechariah 2:8.*

GOD'S love to His ancient people is the theme of many a Psalm and deserves to be rehearsed in the ears of every generation. Abraham was by nature as a rough unhewn stone, but the Lord who chose him in the quarry, having hewn him from the rock, made him a polished pillar, a monument of Divine faithfulness. The Lord set His love upon him while he was a Syrian ready to perish. He brought him out of the land of his nativity and called him from his father's house.

Having made a Covenant with the solitary man, He multiplied his seed until they became as plentiful as the stars of Heaven. The kindness which God showed towards Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He retained towards His chosen people, who sprang of their loins. Even when to all appearance He had deserted them, His face was towards them for good. If He sent a famine and broke the staff of life, He provided seven years of plenty in Egypt, that the storehouses of Pharaoh might be full for their sakes.

If the Egyptians heavily oppressed them, then all the powers of nature were put out of their accustomed pathway to emancipate them from the house of bondage. When He had brought them out into the howling wilderness, His path dropped fatness, the heavens rained forth bread, and the rocks flowed with rivers. He made men to eat angels' food. He carried them as on eagles' wings. He could truly say, “I shod you with badgers' skin and I girded you about with fine linen.”

He made His Jeshurun to ride upon the high places of the earth and fed His Israel with royal dainties, “butter of kine and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs and rams of the breed of Bashan and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat.” Wherever they went, their foes fled before them—Amalek was put to confusion before the people of the Lord. Sihon, king of the Amorites and Og, king of Bashan, felt the terror of their arm. Even the false prophet, as he looked from the mountain's brow upon them, could only say, “Happy are you, O Israel: who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help and who is the sword of your excellency? Your enemies shall be found liars unto you. And you shall tread upon their high places.”

In due time He brought this people into the best spot of land which the earth knew—a country which indolence and tyranny have rendered barren, but which anciently overflowed with superabundant fertility. He brought them to a land of hills and valleys, of springs and rivers—a land out of whose heart they might take iron and copper and treasures in abundance. He established them in a land which flowed with milk and honey, so fertile that even its spontaneous productions, as exemplified in the grapes of Eshcol, rivaled the products of the choicest husbandry.

Having brought them into this goodly heritage, He drove out the former inhabitants that He might plant His people and make them dwell in safety alone. How gracious He was to them in the days of Joshua and in the years which followed! When He mapped out their lots according to their tribes, He rejoiced to dwell in the midst of them. He had His tabernacle in Shiloh and His dwelling place in Zion. He showed not Himself unto other people but only unto this nation upon which His heart was set. He chastened them but He raised up judges for their deliverance.

At last He gave them a king in His anger and took him away in His wrath. But He sent unto them David—a man after His own heart, before whom their enemies were rooted out and the nobles among their persecutors were made like Zebah and Zalmunna who fell by the hand of Gideon. Greatly He blessed the nation under David and his immediate successors! Everything in the neighboring countries was ordered only to bring peace and prosperity to the chosen land—Your land, O God, which You have overshadowed with Your wings.

Oftentimes they provoked Him but His anger waxed not hot against them. When He lifted up His rod, His strokes were few and He repented of the evil which He did unto them. At last, when they became incorrigible in their sins and made their brows like flint and their hearts like adamant, for a season He gave them up to captivity. They were taken to Assyria, they were carried away to the rivers of Babylon. The days of their banishment were many and they wept in the bitterness of their soul. Still, even in their captivity He loved them.

When they had forgotten *Him*, He had not forgotten *them* and in due time He brought them up again out of the house of their bondage, once more to set them in their land. It was about this time when He would give to His people a fresh deliverance, as memorable as the coming out of Egypt, that Zechariah testified, “he that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” As much as to say, “I smite you, but I hate the nation that oppresses you. I take the axe to cut down your stubborn pride but lo, I will break the axe to shivers. I send against you the executioners of My anger but I will surely punish them, also, for the evil which they have done. He that touches you—even though *I* am the great first cause of the terrible onslaught upon you—‘he that touches you, touches the apple of My eye,’ and I will be avenged on him in the day of My wrath.”

Thus introduced, the text seems to teach us three lessons, upon which we shall speak briefly and God grant it may be to your edification. It tells us, first of all, *God's esteem of His people*. Secondly, *danger much surrounds persecutors*. And, thirdly, *the safety of the Church of God*. For it may be well to remind you that the Jewish nation was a type of the Church of Christ.

I. First, then, our text teaches us GOD'S ESTEEM OF HIS PEOPLE. He esteems them as much as men value their eyesight and is as careful to protect them from injury, as men are to protect the apple of their eye. The pupil of the eye is the most tender part of the most tender organ and very fitly sets forth the inexpressible tenderness of God's love. As Calvin remarks, "There is nothing more delicate or more tender than the eye in the body of a man. For were one to bite my finger or prick my arm or my legs, or even severely to wound me, I should feel no such pain as by having the pupil of my eye injured."

Behold, then, Beloved, a mystery of loving kindness and affection. The Lord sits upon the circle of the earth and the inhabitants there are as grasshoppers, the nations are as a drop in a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance—how marvelous that He has thoughts of everlasting love towards such worthless things! As we said this morning, it is wonderful that God should even notice such insignificant creatures as men, that He, in His infiniteness should be able even to discover such delight in this drop of matter which we call the world.

But that wonder is totally eclipsed by another, namely, that God should love such utterly worthless, as well as insignificant creatures. Oh, Great One, when You did give Your heart, were there not some creatures worthy of it? No! There could be none, for even Gabriel himself was not fit to match the eternal God. The cherubim and seraphim, the presence angels that stand before God as His holy servitors forever, what were they? They were not pure in His sight and He charged His angels with folly. The noble created intelligences are so far inferior to our God, that only by wondrous condescension could He *love* them.

O God, how is it that You could have chosen the debased, depraved, rebellious, hard-hearted creature called man? Why did You look upon such an one and bring him into Your favor? What is man, that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him? This enquiry we cannot answer and therefore, no more curious to solve this mystery, we will weave it into our everlasting song, and we will sing of Your Sovereign Grace before Your throne forever. 'Twas of Your Divine Grace, of Your own will and good pleasure, that You have lifted us up from the dunghill and made us to sit among princes.

It is not for us to know why the Lord has His people so highly in estimation, for we cannot search to the bottom of this Divine mystery. But, Brethren, God's love, which at first came to [See No. 447 Metropolitan Tab-

ernacle Pulpit] us freely, has so ennobled us in Christ, that God's present esteem of us in Jesus is not without reason and justification. Love without cause has now imparted and imputed such loveliness to its objects, that in Christ they are fitting subjects for love's embrace.

Know you not that the saints are the *masterpieces of His workmanship*? God has shown His wisdom in balancing the clouds and guiding the stars in their orbits. Infinite wisdom is discoverable in every flower and in every living thing. But the wisdom and the skill of God are far more clearly to be seen in the Believer than in any other work of the Divine hand. Man, born the first time, was fearfully and wonderfully made, but newly-created and regenerated, he is far more full of marvels than he was before.

Therefore, because of the Divine skill which has been shown in our re-creation, well may we be the objects of Divine care. When Bernard Palissy had, after long struggles, invented that valuable ware which still remains unmatched, we can suppose that, if a person had entered his room and broken those invaluable dishes, which were worth their weight in gold, he would have said, "I had sooner that you had burnt my house, or that you had maimed my person, than break these things which have cost me so much thought, so many trials in the furnace and so much daily watching and nightly care."

When the poor man had pulled up the very floor of his room, to heat the furnace for the last time, before he saw the precious stuff come from the crucible, his work must have been dear to him. And when we think that God, our God, has made His people the objects of His eternal thoughts, the trophies of His noble skill, vessels of honor fit even for the Master's use, it is but little wonder that He should guard them with a jealous care, even as men do the apple of their eye.

Moreover, all the people of God are the object of *the dearest purchase* that was ever known, since they were redeemed not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Stand at the foot of Calvary and let the groans of Christ pierce your heart. Behold His head crowned with thorns. Look at His hands and His feet streaming like fountains of blood. Think for a moment of the awful anguish which His spirit suffered, of the unknown pangs He bore when He redeemed our souls unto God. And you will readily conclude that love so amazing, which could pay a price so stupendous, would not easily loose its hold of that which it has thus purchased unto itself.

We think little of ourselves, when we value ourselves at anything less than the price which Jesus paid. We dishonor the Lord which bought us, if we think ourselves only fit to live unto the flesh, and to this poor temporary world. When, indeed, we are fitted for a heavenly world and for most Divine purposes, seeing that Christ, the Son of the Highest, shed His very heart's blood to redeem us from our sins. Well, I say, may He value highly, those whom He has so dearly bought!

Furthermore, let us remember that to God the Father, the saints are Christ's *most tender memorial*, monuments of Christ's passion and conflict, the engraved tablets of His death. What is there in Heaven which is the record of the Redeemer's achievement? Yonder spirits before the Truth of God are the monuments of the battle and the victory. What is there to bear witness on earth to what the Lord has accomplished? We who have by faith believed, are now the living triumphs of His conquest. If you and I had erected a lasting and valuable memorial to some beloved child, we should think it a grievous insult and a serious injury if an adversary should wantonly and wickedly defile it.

And so the Lord looks upon His own people as standing mementoes and He counts it no small sin, no mean offense, for any of His adversaries, be they ever so great, to touch His anointed and do harm to His chosen. As obelisks, arches, columns and pillars are raised in commemoration of heroes and their glories, even so are the saints the sublime memorials of Jesus. Precious are they for this cause, to the heart of Him who delights in the honors of His only begotten Son. The hosts of Heaven shall jealously guard these living stones of memorial.

Yet more—remember that Christ's people are *God's own children* and you know how even *we*, although we are evil, could not stand still to see our children ill-treated. I have heard a man say sometimes, "You may strike me and I will not return the blow. You may even spit in my face and I will put up with the insult. But if you touch my children my blood is in my face, I cannot endure it." Ask a woman what it is that brings her mettle up the most—is it not if she sees her little ones ill-treated, or hears a word of false accusation spoken concerning them?

The God of Heaven and earth will not have the princes of the blood royal ill-used. They who are descended from His loins and are thus the nobles and the peers of the court of Heaven, are not to be trod under the foot of man. God will avenge their quarrel at last. Surely as the world shall look on Christ, whom they have pierced, and mourn, so shall they look on the injured and persecuted Church and mourn because they despised the excellent of the earth and threw God's jewels into the mire. They are His children, I say. And therefore He loves them.

Look around even to the brute creatures. When we would describe the creature most terrible, we speak of the bear robbed of her whelps. If you would describe the strong lion when he lashes his sides with fury, is it not when his cubs have been taken away? Then he rushes to the attack, fearless of the spear, and of the hunter, meditating terribly how he may destroy the murderer of the young lion. So shall it be with the Lord God Omnipotent. His fury shall be kindled against the enemy and He shall tear him in pieces if he touches any of the house of Judah, or of the seed of the Son of David. The King who is in the midst of them is mighty and He is strong who is their deliverer.

Yet, again, no doubt there is a special reason why God is thus jealous over His people, since he who touches them, does to a certain degree, touch *the Person of Christ*—the Father's First-Born. Are they not members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones? The cry of Christ from Heaven, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" clearly shows that Christ looks upon the persecution of humble men and women as an insult to Himself. Should any wound your hand and then say, "I have not injured *you*." You would reply, "But it is *my* hand and it is so much a part of myself that I cannot separate myself from the injury."

So is it with Christ. The poorest, mean, most illiterate Christian, is in the close union with the glorious Head of the body and it will be at the foeman's eternal hazard if he touch him, since he is part of Christ's mystical body. If you hurt His people willfully, the Son of man will say, "Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these, My Brethren, you have done it unto Me," and the recompense shall follow.

Do you not know that the children of God have a relation towards God the Father, in respect of their being *partakers of His character and dignity*? The saints are God's ambassadors. Among all nations an insult offered to an ambassador is an offense which cannot be readily wiped out. God's ambassadors to the sons of men are His chosen people. They are Christ's representatives on earth, so far as they live up to their profession. They who are the people of God are the Christs of this generation—anoointed of the Lord and sent forth to tell of His love. Their life, if it is as it should be, is the picture of virtue and an example to mankind.

Now the world's hatred to these men is but a part of their hatred to the Most High. They see His image in His servants and wantonly insult it, or contemptuously disregard it. When men oppose the people of God, it is because of their holiness. If it could be clearly proved that the world's opposition to the Church was on account of the Church's inconsistency, then it might be pardonable, or even virtuous. But we believe the real reason of the world's enmity is the Church's holiness. Were she not God-like and Divine, she would not be attacked. If she were not clear as the sun, fair as the moon, she would not be terrible as an army with banners, nor would the foe go forth in battle to meet her.

Well, then, because holiness is insulted in a persecuted saint, because righteousness is itself debased and defamed when the righteous man is slandered and dishonored—the battle is not ours but the Lord's—and He will surely deliver His chosen. Because God espouses the quarrel of the virtuous, and takes up the gauntlet for the weak who desire to serve Him, therefore be careful, you sons of Ham, you children of the persecutor, be careful, for when He fits His arrows to the bow and draws His sword out of the scabbard, it shall go ill with you, for He remembers His people and He will avenge His own elect.

II. The second point is THE DANGER OF PERSECUTORS—"He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye." If a man should seek to thrust his finger into our eye with the purpose of destroying our sight, I think we should not deliberate long as to the way in which to treat him. We should take good care that at all risks to our antagonist we defended a thing so precious.

Now, when any molest the people of God, they may be certain of this, that God will surely visit them. Therefore let persecutors take heed how they meddle with God's eyes. According to the learned Blayney, our text may be read, "Whosoever touches you, touches the apple of his own eye." In this sense we understand the passage as declaring that God shall cause the enemies of His Church to work their own ruin. They shall pull out their eyes by their own fingers.

The visitation of God will surely blast and wither those persecutors who go on in sin. At times it curses in the form of temporal death—more often, however, in the form of spiritual hardness of heart. I am not one of those who look upon everything that happens in this world as being a judgment from God. If a boat goes down to the bottom of the sea on a Sunday, I do not look upon that as judgment on those who are in it, any more than if it had gone to the bottom on a Monday. And though many good people get frightened when they hear one affirm this doctrine, yet I cannot help their fear, but like my Master, I must tell them that they who perish so are not sinners above all the sinners that are in Jerusalem.

I looked the other day at "Fox's Book of Martyrs," and I saw there an illustration of that deeply-rooted mistake of Christian people, concerning God's always punishing men's sins in this life. Fox draws a picture of a Popish priest who is insulting the faith, speaking lightly of the blood of Jesus and exalting the Virgin Mary and he drops down dead in the pulpit. Fox holds him up as a picture of a great sinner who dropped down dead for speaking lightly of Jesus, and the good man affirms the wicked priest's death to be a judgment from Heaven.

Well, perhaps Fox is correct, but still I do not see the connection between his dropping down dead and the language he employed, for many a preacher who has been *exalting* Christ has fallen down dead in the pulpit. And happy was it for such a man that he was engaged in minding his charge at the time. The fact is, Providence smites good men and bad men, too. And when the storm rages, and the hurricane howls through the forest, not only are the brambles and briars shaken and uprooted, but goodly oaks crack and break, too. We are not to look for God's judgments, except in special cases, in this life. His judgment is in the world to come.

Yet there have been some special cases. Look at Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the greatest persecutors that the Israel nation ever had—his death was so awful that I should disgust you if I described it. Remember, too, Herod the Great. "The disease of which Herod the Great died and the mis-

ery which he suffered under it, plainly showed that the hand of God was then in a signal manner upon him. For not long after the murders at Bethlehem, his distemper," as Josephus informs us, "daily increased in an unheard-of manner. He had a lingering and wasting fever and grievous ulcers in his entrails and heart, a violent colic and insatiable appetite.

"He had a venomous swelling in his feet, convulsions in his nerves, a perpetual asthma and offensive breath. He acquired rottenness in his joints and other members, accompanied with prodigious itching, crawling worms and intolerable smell—so that he was a perfect hospital of incurable distempers." The Roman emperor, Julian, a determined enemy of Christianity, was mortally wounded in a war with the Persians. In this condition, we are told, he filled his hand with blood and casting it into the air, said, "O Galilean! You have conquered."

History affords you many such cases. God has seemed to say to His Providence, as David said to Solomon concerning Joab, "Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace." I read the other day a list, I should think, of a hundred of the mighty persecutors—Roman and Grecian and so forth—all of whom came to a most shocking and untimely end. In the face of so many facts, one did feel it fair to draw the inference that, "Bloody and ungodly men shall not live out half their days."

There is a story told of the days of the Cavaliers, when they used to hunt up the Puritans for meeting in the woods, in the fields, or on secluded banks, to worship God. One old man, who was parish constable, was asked to be an informer and hunt up a certain meeting in his parish in Northamptonshire but the old man said "No," he'd have nothing to do with it—not that he liked those people, for he hated them. "But," he said, "I should not advise any of you to meddle with any of these people. In the good old days, when Sir Harry was alive, he hunted them and took eight troopers with him to harass the Puritans all round this region.

"And," he said, "the old man is dead, six of the soldiers are dead. Some of them were hanged and some of them broke their necks. And I myself fell off my horse and broke my collarbone in the act of persecuting them. For my part, I have had warnings enough, and I will never meddle with them again." And I have no doubt that history could tell hundreds of tales of that kind, where God has seemed, at last, to leave off His general rule of long-suffering and of patience and to give to His foes a blow then and there, for their hectoring and intolerable hunting of His children and harassing them out of the land.

Far oftener, however, the penalty has come in spiritual things. He has left them to wax worse and worse, till they have become so hardened in sin that they "breathed out threats against the saints," and licked up the blood of God's children as dogs licked up the blood of Naboth. No sermon has had power to move them. No Truth of God could awaken Them. No warnings of Providence could alarm them. No wooing invitations could win

their hearts. They have gone down, down, down a steep descent with their feet slipping in gore—in the red crimson mire, crimson with blood of saints—and in Hell they have lifted up their eyes in torment.

“I’d like,” said one old Romanist in the days of Luther, “I’d like to ride up to my horse’s bridle in the blood of Lutherans.” And he had his wish before long in another way, for in a dreadful bursting of blood-vessels in his own body, he laid weltering in his gore. Not up to his horse’s bridle but covered to his very soul with a suffocation of blood. God has done this, spiritually, to other men. They wanted to slay other men’s souls and the blood, as it were, of their own souls has drowned them. They would let off the light, and God has left them in darkness. They would throw away the salt and God has given them up to rot and to become putrid. They slew God’s ambassadors and God has proclaimed eternal war against them—a war which rages now and will rage in the world to come.

I do not know whether I happen to have any person here who might be called a persecutor. We do not have much persecution to suffer now-a-days—at least, it does not come to much. I know that many servants lose their places, many wives are ill-treated by their husbands—now and then some poor husbands by their wives. And I know that children have been made wretched by their parents. Ah, but when you put these things side by side with Smithfield and the old Lollard’s Tower, they come to nothing.

Yet I know that there are many men who only want power and they would be as violent against God’s people as ever the tyrants were in the olden times. Very well, then, as you cannot do what you would do, since you do what you can, God shall visit that, also, upon your head and you shall find that the jest and the sneer and the jibe and the slander and the cruel mocking, shall by no means lack their reward.

But I will not dwell upon a point which we care so little to mention. Let us turn, rather, to the last point, upon which I speak with brevity.

III. THE SAFETY OF THE CHURCH. “The Church is in danger! The Church is in danger!” Do you believe that, dear Friends? No, it depends upon whose Church it is. But if it is God’s Church, all the croakers in the world cannot alarm us, for we believe that God’s Church is safe enough, despite everything that may be said. “Oh but the Church is in danger from Romanism!” Nonsense! God can keep that in bounds. The dragon would have drowned the woman with the floods of his mouth centuries ago, if the Lord had not secured her from harm forever.

The gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church, much less, then, shall the hates of Rome prevail. It is not the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ that is in danger. Perhaps the fat benefices may be. I will not say anything about that. I do not know of any particular promise upon which unscriptural officers and worldly dignitaries can rely, but the Church of God has special security guaranteed by Covenant, by promise and by oath. God is her pledged Preserver, for there is a promise—“I the Lord do

keep her. I will water her every moment: lest any hurt her, I will keep her, night and day.”

The Church is not in danger, and why? Well, first, the very frame of nature was made to protect her. We take up a chestnut or other seed and we find outside a prickly envelope—then there comes a hard shell, then inside a soft one, and then a film, and then another film and at last, somewhere in the center, you get the life-germ. And all the rest was made to exist for a time and to rot and to decay, in order to preserve the life-germ from hurt and to furnish food for it when it began to spring up.

Now, I look upon this great vaulted roof of Heaven and the whole earth as being but the surrounding envelope in which God has wrapped up the living seed of His Church. You will have to break the whole constitution of earth before you will be able to surprise with destruction those whom God has surrounded by munitions of such stupendous strength. Speaking after a mystical sort, the mountains are round about Jerusalem. The solid rocks of the earth are like arms beneath her. The very stars are her watchers and the firmament and the Heaven of heavens are the gates that shut out her raging foes.

When the Lord made the heavens and the earth, what was the drift of the whole thing? For what was the earth preparing in the old geological past? Preparing, you tell me, for man. But why, and why was man made? God made the whole race of man, but in respect of that chosen life within the race, those elect men and women who are as the substance which is in the oak when it loses its leaves, the holy seed which is the substance of the race and of all time.

And when man came into the earth and did multiply and God divided the nations and scattered them to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, He divided the whole, looking to His people. He saw at one glance how it would be best for this empire to stand, or that monarchy to fall—how it would be more advantageous for that dynasty to exist through a whole stream of kings, or for that monarch to be cut off in his prime, before his son should be born who should take the scepter from the dying hand.

I say that the whole machinery of nature, the whole work of God which He has made, is intended to be the shell in which the Lord preserves His people, and there must come, indeed—“The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds,” and a total unloosing of the pillars of earth and Heaven, before you can perish, O you Children of God!

But again, not only does nature, but Providence, too, works for the protection of God's people. “All things work together for good to them that love God.” Stupendous agencies are abroad. The wheels are so high that they are dreadful, but the wheels are full of eyes, and they only turn in such a way as shall preserve the Church of the living God. When we shall see the end from the beginning, we shall be amazed as to how it was that

everything turned upon the axle of the Church—how the greatest wheel turned on its pole to bring out the elect, to fetch up out of their spiritual darkness the generation who were afterwards to be enlightened—how the biggest wave that followed the keel of the Church's ship was ordained to wash it onward.

And how the very wave which seemed to roll the other way, did but in some mystic manner still waft her onward to her desired haven. How storms and tempests, plagues and conflagrations, wars and bloodsheds, all co-worked to bring out the people of God, that the Lord's name might be glorified in them. Like some huge steam vessel, Providence bears on the Church and you must reverse those wheels which lash the sea of events to foam, before you can detain the Church from her haven.

Yet further, not to detain you longer, the Church is constantly preserved, we know, by the ministry of angels. Unseen by us, the angels of God keep watch and ward around us. They bear up the Church's foot lest she dash it against a stone. They cover her head in the day of battle lest the fiery shafts should penetrate her helmet. By night and by day the watchers of God keep constant guard over the blood-royal of Heaven. Let us not be deceived in this matter, thinking that we have to deal here with a fancy or a myth.

Angels have more to do with this world than we dream. They are more potent influences for the saints' good than ever we have known, for they are the ten thousand chariots of God, the ten thousand times ten thousand saints of the Most High who stand in their battle array this day. If your eyes are opened, you will be able to say with the Prophet—"More are they that are with us than they that are with them." Reckon the angels as your friends—put them not down as though they were weak and feeble—believe them to be strong and then you shall not doubt but that the Church shall be preserved as the apple of God's eye.

Then, last of all, God preserves His Church by the overruling of His Grace. By a sort of holy alchemy He fetches gold out of dross, medicine out of poison, success out of disaster. From seeming evil, He produces good, and better still, and better still, in infinite progression, so that the evil doings of the Church's enemies turn out for her good in the end and their worst projects are in the wisdom of God but designs for her advancement. Let us rest in this, then, quite confident that by all means and by any means the Church shall always be safe. She rocks today—a big wave seems to strain her timbers—but He who built her is on board. The eternal hand grasps the helm and the Mighty One, with unruffled brow, looks at the storm and bids the ship cut through the foam.

She has not turned as yet, though rocks and quicksand threatened to be in her path. Straight as a line, "as an arrow from a bow drawn by an archer strong," she sped on her splendid flight, and on she shall go though a thousand hells boiled over to stay her Heaven-ordained mission.

Yonder mighty billow, that seems ready to swallow her up and give her an eternal grave, shall break before her bow. And if she is for a moment buried in the spray, she shall either come up white from the washing, or she shall leap over it, ascending up to Heaven upon its crest.

And if she goes down again, as though she would descend into the depths of the sea—the depths of defeat and dismay—it shall be but to bring up some sinner from the depth and save a soul that otherwise might have been lost. Oh, blessed be God, the Church is never insecure, no, nor yet one of her children—

***“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever.
I know that safe with Him remains,
Protected by His power,
What I’ve committed to His hand,
Till the decisive hour.”***

The apple of God's eye shall not be touched. We shall never see a blinded deity, and until then we shall never hear that the people of God have perished and that the Church of Christ has been destroyed by her enemies. Courage, then, soldiers of Christ, courage! Turn not back through shame or fear. Another rush, another advance upon the foe, for you cannot be wounded, you are invulnerable. You cannot be defeated, you are invincible. God is in you and you must be almighty. He that touches you, touches the apple of His eye. Therefore dare, run risks, and venture for God, for you are always safe when you are venturing for Him.

Our final question is, “Am I thus dear to God?” I would like you, now that I send you away, to ask yourselves that question. You, dear Friends up yonder, and you in this mighty tier, and you below, ask yourselves—“Am I thus dear to God?” Let each man and woman ask that question. How can I answer it? Is Christ dear to me? Then I am dear to God. Is Christ dear to me tonight? Do I rest on Him? If I do, I am saved. And if I do not, why should I not now? If I never have believed on Him, why should I not now?

If I trust Him, He will save me. Lord, I trust You. Can you say that from your heart? Then the Spirit of God has helped you to say it and if tonight, poor Soul, whoever you may be, you will repose simply and wholly upon the merit of Jesus' blood and the power of His intercession in Heaven, you are saved. Go your way, your sins are forgiven. You are accepted in the Beloved, if you have trusted Christ. God help you to rely on Jesus now, and to His name be praise forever and ever! Amen.

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

ZECHARIAH'S VISION OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST NO. 611

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 22, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke you Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log plucked from the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and was standing before the Angel. Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And to him He said, Behold, I have removed your iniquity from you and I will clothe you with rich robes. And I said, Let them put a clean turban upon his head. So they put a clean turban upon his head and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by.”
Zechariah 3:1-5.***

THE original intention of this vision was to foretell the revival of the Jewish state after its long depression through the Babylonian captivity. Joshua, the high priest, with his tattered garments, must be looked upon as the type of the Jewish people in their deep distress. He was ministering before the Lord in worn and filthy garments, to show at once the sin of Israel and the poverty into which they had fallen. They were so poor that the service of God could not be conducted in suitable apparel, but the high priest himself appeared before the altar in robes unfit for his sacred work.

The set time to favor Zion is according to the visions most near at hand. And Satan, the old adversary of the chosen race, bestirs himself to resist them and turn away the favor of God from them. But that same Angel of the Covenant who led the people through the wilderness and carried them all the days of old, stands before the Throne as their Advocate and at His request Jehovah rebukes Satan and begins to bless the people. Joshua, their representative, receives a change of clothes, in testimony that the people's sin is forgiven and that God accepts their worship.

The vision then sweeps on to the day of the Lord Jesus and the heart of the Prophet Zechariah is cheered by a sight of the whole land restored to its former peace and happiness under the reign of the glorious One who is called, “My servant, THE BRANCH.” While we have been interpreting the other visions of Zechariah, we have tried to derive present comfort and profit from them. We will endeavor to do so on this occasion. We may very properly take Joshua as a type of all the people of God as they stand in their sense of sin and natural faultiness, subject to the accusations of Satan, but delivered by their ever gracious Lord.

And the change of clothing as setting forth the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of the Savior's righteousness, which is the joy of all Believers. Let us take each particular separately and may God the Holy Spirit shed a sacred light upon the vision and may we see in it more than Zechariah himself discovered! May we see Jehovah Jesus in all the glory of His love, manifesting Himself to His chosen as He does not unto the world.

I. To begin, then, where the vision begins—with THE BELIEVER HIMSELF REPRESENTED BY JOSHUA. The Believer himself is described as a priest standing before the Angel of the Lord. Let us mark this. He is a priest. Who are the priests? Certain sons of Korah, who take too much upon them, say, "We are the priests, we are the legitimate descendants of the Apostles and a mysterious power distills from our priestly hands." We reply to them, it is impossible that you should be descendants of the Apostles and yet claim to possess priestly power, for the Apostles never claimed any peculiar priesthood for themselves above other Believers.

They spoke of their Brethren, the Christians of their age, as being on a par with themselves in the matter of priesthood. "You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). If, then, these pretenders to priesthood are priests in any special sense, they certainly are not descendants of the Apostles—for the Apostles claimed no priority of priesthood beyond the rest of their brethren, but said of all the saints, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood."

The fact is they are neither one nor the other—they are not descendants of the Apostles, for they preach not the Apostles' Gospel and know not their Spirit! Nor have they any priestly office, unless it is that the old Babylonian harlot accepts them as her foster children and gives them a name and a place among those who partake in her abominations. Who are the priests? Why, every humble man and woman that knows the power of Jesus Christ in his own soul to purge and cleanse him from dead works is appointed to serve as a priest unto God! I say *every* humble man and every humble woman, too, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female—we are all one in Him.

We offer prayers to God knowing that they ascend to Heaven like sweet odors before the Throne! We offer praise, believing that "whoever offers praise, glorifies God." "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Jesus has made us priests and kings unto God and even here upon earth we exercise the priesthood of consecrated living and hallowed service and hope to exercise it till the Lord shall come. When I see, then, Joshua the high priest, I do but see a picture of each and every child of God who has been made near by the blood of Christ and has been taught to minister in holy things and enter into that which is within the veil.

But observe where this high priest is—he is said to be "standing before the Angel of the Lord," that is, *standing* to minister. This should be the perpetual position of every true Believer. I have no business on the bed of sloth. I have no right to be wandering abroad after private business. I can

claim no time which I may set apart to my own follies, or to my own aggrandizement. My true position as a Christian is to be always ministering to God—always standing before His altar.

Do I hear you ask how this can be—with your farms and with your merchandise? Know you not, Brethren, that whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, you may do it all to the glory of God? Understand you not that every place is now God's temple and that everywhere is God's altar and that you can as truly serve Him in your daily callings as in the assemblies of the place of worship? You know not the true position of a Christian if you fancy that you are only priests on the Lord's Day and only to minister before God when you stand in the congregation of the faithful. You are appointed priests like your Lord—forever—and you are forever to be offering the sacrifice!

By day and by night should your hearts be going up to Him. You should fall asleep with your Master's name upon your tongue and when you awake you should say with the Psalmist, "I am still with You." Happy Joshua! Notwithstanding the filthiness of his garments, he is to be commended because he keeps in the position to which he is called and like the servant whose ear was bored, he does not leave his master's house. Come, you that profess to be God's people—if you have been negligent in the duties of your high calling, and if your hearts at this moment are going after vanity—pray God the Holy Spirit to put you into a proper state to perform the functions of your holy office! And now in the courts of the Lord's House, stand like Joshua, with your hearts prepared by the Lord of Hosts to minister before the Lord.

Yet, notice *where* it is that Joshua stands to minister. It is before the Angel of Jehovah. You and I can never stand to minister before Moses, the mediator under the Law—much less before Jehovah Himself. For our God is a consuming fire. It is only through a Mediator that we poor, defiled ones can ever become priests unto God. Perhaps some of God's people here may have forgotten this. You have been searching yourselves and trying your hearts as in the sight of God's Law and you feel very deeply that you are far behind what the glory of the God in the Law would ask of you. Therefore you begin foolishly to mistrust your Father's love and to think that your service before Him will not be heeded.

Beloved, it is ill serving God in the light of the Law—but oh, how blessed is it to stand and minister before Christ and in Christ! Then, if I can bring Him nothing but my tears He will put them in His bottle, for He once wept. If I can bring Him nothing but my groans and sighs He will accept these as an acceptable sacrifice, for He once was broken in heart and sighed heavily in spirit. Gracious God, I bless You that I have not to present my sacrifice directly to Yourself, else you would consume my sacrifice and me with the flames of Your wrath! But I present what I have before Your Messenger, the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus! And through Him my prayers find acceptance wrapped up in His prayers!

My praises become sweet as they are bound up with bundles of myrrh and aloes and cassia from Christ's own garden. Then I myself, standing in Him, am accepted in the Beloved. And all my poor, defiled, polluted

works, though in themselves only objects of Divine abhorrence, are so accepted and received, that God smells a sweet savor. He is content and I am blessed. See, then, the position of the Christian as a priest—he is to stand before the Angel of the Lord. Now read the next word in the light of your own experience—“Clothed,” it is said, “with filthy garments.” Did you ever feel this when you have come to serve God?

Perhaps it is at evening prayer—there has been something amiss in the family during the day and you know it—perhaps, as the head of the household you have to conduct prayer and you feel, “O God, I cannot pray, I cannot pray as I would! I am Your priest in this house, I know, but how can I minister before You, for I have filthy garments on?” Possibly your business kept you up very late last night. Things are not going on as well as you wish in matters of trade and you have come here distracted. And while sitting in the pew listening to God’s people as they praise the Lord, you have thought, “Ah, I have my filthy garments on. I cannot pray to Him. I cannot praise Him as I would.”

I know what it is to come and preach to you sometimes and to feel such an overwhelming sense of my own unworthiness, that, were it not, “Woe unto me if I do not preach the Gospel,” I would not come on this platform again, for it is hard to feel that your garments are defiled while endeavoring to be God’s mouth to men. Perhaps this afternoon, when you are going into your Sunday school class, you will feel much warmth of heart towards God. You will confess that you are not your own, but bought with a price. You will desire to live unto Him and honor Him.

But, oh, that dread impediment of conscious guilt—it will make you cry out—“How can I stand before Him who charged His angels with folly and declares that the heavens are not pure in His sight? How can I hope to have a blessing on anything that I do when I feel a heart of unbelief departing from the living God? How can I give a blessing to His saints when I want a blessing myself? How shall I break the bread of Christ with unholy fingers and pour out the wine into His cup with a sinful hand?”

But stop, Christian! Do not think of renouncing your priesthood! Do not let a sense of unfitness keep you from your service! Stand where you are—for remember, you are standing in the only place where pollution can be washed away—you are standing before the Angel of the Covenant! It is before Christ that sin is to be confessed. Confess it anywhere else, your sorrow is not repentance, but remorse.

“What is remorse?” says one. Remorse is repentance made out of sight of Jesus! True repentance is sorrow of sin in the Presence of Christ. Foul and filthy as you are, there is but one Voice which can speak you clean. Go not away from that Voice. There is but one Hand which can touch you and make you pure—stand where that Hand is close to you and still, filthy as your garments are, shun not the face of your best, your only Friend! And breathe out this prayer, “Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. Purge me, oh, purge me now, for Your love’s sake.”

II. Let us turn to another individual who figures in the group. We have, in the second place, AN ADVERSARY. Satan stood before the Angel

to resist Joshua. Does not his opposition seem superfluous? Poor Joshua feels enough the filth upon his garments without needing to have the devil to withstand him. And I, poor I, do often feel so much my own sinfulness that it seems a work of supererogation on the devil's part to lay accusations—conscience accuses enough without him!

But yet, so cruel is he that he avails himself of the times of the weakness of God's people—then and there to resist them. Observe what he is called. He is called Satan, which signifies an adversary. He is an adversary and that by nature. His nature is now so vile that he cannot help being the adversary of everything that is good. From the day on which he was expelled from Heaven and dragged with him a third part of the stars of glory, he has been God's bitterest foe. And as to man, from the hour in which it was said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," he discovered in that humble creature, man, his great destroyer. And he has never ceased to nibble at the heel of the seed of the woman, foreknowing how terribly his head is to be bruised.

There is something, however, very comforting in the thought that he is an adversary—I would sooner have him for an adversary than for a friend! O my Soul, it were dread work with you if Satan were a friend of yours, for then with him you must forever dwell in darkness and in the deeps—shut out from the friendship of God! But to have Satan for an adversary is a comfortable omen, for it looks as if *God* were our Friend and so far let us be comforted in this matter. Yet, remember, Satan is an adversary not to be despised. Of keen intellect, ripened by years of experience, with a fullness of cunning and craft which made even the serpent, when possessed by him, more subtle than any other beast of the field, he is an antagonist worthy of angelic might.

Gabriel might lose in such a conflict if he did not stand clad in the golden armor of perfect innocence. We, so apt to sin, carrying about with us so much tinder, had need to fear the fiery sparks which he scatters. It is a dreadful thing to stand foot to foot with Apollyon. Read Bunyan's description of Christian's fight in the Valley of Humiliation and you have there a shadow of what the true conflict is. Better to endure all kinds of temporal pains and trials than to be beset by Satan. He who wins, gains nothing—and he who fails will find his weight full heavy when the dragon sets his foot upon his neck. You have a stern adversary here and one who will never cease to vex you till you shall be out of gunshot of him, in having crossed the river of death.

Now you will perceive, if you look at the passage, that this adversary selected a most fitting place in which to do Joshua damage. He came to accuse him before the Angel—before God's own Son! Oh, if he could once make the Lord loose His hold of us, then we should soon be his prey! You perceive he does not attack Joshua first, but he comes before the Angel to prevent Joshua's being accepted. If Satan can once persuade you or me to think we are not God's children and not accepted, he knows that he has done us serious injury. In the arsenals of Hell there are great stores of "ifs"—"ifs" are Satan's bombshells—"If you are the Son of God."

If he can make you doubt, then he makes a breach in your wall. If you are strong enough to say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him," you will then come off more than conqueror! But the drift of Satan is to touch you just there, in that place where your strength lies. He is like Delilah—he feels that if he can cut off the locks of your *faith*, where your strength dwells—then he may put out your eyes and sell you to the Philistines forever. Take care, take care, when Satan comes to accuse you before the Angel and to make you doubt your interest in the Lord Jesus, that you at once leave the case in the Angel's hands—for your Advocate can plead better against the accuser than you can!

And it is best for you to hold your peace and to let that great Advocate stand up and say, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" You will agree with me that the adversary not only selected a very fit place by coming at once to the Throne to lay the accusation, but a very fit opportunity. Joshua had his filthy garments on. Satan is a great coward—he will generally meddle with God's people when they are down. I find that when I am in good physical health, I am not often tempted of Satan to despondency or doubt. But whenever I get depressed in spirit, or my liver is out of order, or my head aches—then comes the hissing serpent—"God has forsaken you! You are no child of God! You are unfaithful to your Master! You have no part in the blood of sprinkling," and such-like things.

You old rascal! If you say as much as that to me in my days of health—when my blood is leaping in my veins—I shall be more than a match for you! But to meet me just then, when you understand that I am weak, yes, this is just like you, Satan. What a thorough devil our enemy is! I can call him by no worse name than his own! But if worse there were, richly would he deserve it. You must expect, Christian, when you have lost your sense of justification, when you are conscious of sin, when you feel unfit to minister before God—you must expect that just then he will come to accuse you.

If Joshua's garment had been perfectly clean that morning when he went to minister as a priest, Satan would have let him alone. But see Joshua depressed in spirit and heavy in mind—weeping over his sins—then comes Satan and he says, "Now, I shall battle with him! God will hate Joshua, for He cannot bear filth. He will be sure to cast away the filthy priest. And Joshua is hating himself, too, and so I shall plunge him in despair and make an end of the man." Surely, so it would have been if the Angel had not been there!

But the Angel of the Lord, by His Presence, is ever a wall of fire round about His people and a Glory in the midst! If the lion of Hell comes prowling forth to seize the very weakest lamb, the great Shepherd will deliver the lamb out of his teeth—nor shall the infernal lion rend the meanest of His sheep. Commentators have puzzled themselves to know what Satan would have to say against Joshua. As I read their conjectures I thought that it would never have puzzled me—for my question would be, in my own case—"Which one out of the fifty thousand things the devil

would choose to bring?" Not what he *could* bring, but I ask which one out of fifty thousand things he *would* choose to bring?

Truly, dear Friend, if Satan wants to accuse us—any page of our history—any hour of any day will furnish him material for his charges! Yesterday you were impatient. The day before you were proud. Another day you were slothful, on another, angry. Oh what a den of unclean birds the human heart is! I would to God we could wring their necks, but they are too many for any power less than Divine to destroy them all! One chirps at one time and one at another and between them they maintain a dolorous discord! Talk of perfection in the flesh? The man who dreams of it is either a fool or a knave, one of the two!

He is either a fool and does not know his own heart, or else he is a knave before God and is dishonest and does not call that sin which is sin. Perfection in the flesh? Why, those Believers who live nearest to God and have the deepest experience of Divine things will tell you they have given up that dream long ago! They never expect to be perfect except in Christ Jesus and never to be complete in themselves but only to be complete in Him. If the old accuser wants reasons for accusation, he may, indeed, find as many as he wills and continue to accuse as long as ever he pleases—for we are altogether as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

I have heard of a certain Divine that he used always to carry about with him a little book. This little book had only three leaves in it and to tell the truth there was not a single word in the book. The first was a sheet of black paper, black as jet. The next was a sheet of red—scarlet. And the next was a sheet of white without spot. Day by day he used to take out this little book and at last he told some one the secret of what it meant. He said, "There is the black leaf—that is my sin and the wrath of God which my sin deserves. I look and look and think it is not black enough, though it is black as black can be. Then the next, that is the leaf of the atoning sacrifice, the precious blood—the red leaf—how I do delight to look at that and look and look again. Then there is the white leaf. That is my soul, as it is washed in Jesus' blood, made white as snow through the righteousness of Jesus Christ and washing in the fountain which Christ has filled from His own veins."

Ah, that first black leaf! That black leaf! Surely, if Satan looks over it, it will be no puzzle to *him* to find something against you! He may continue to plead against you till doomsday and always find ground in your shortcomings for accusing you before the Angel of God! And what was it that Satan was after, after all, with Joshua? Was it that he hated Joshua's sins? Did he bring these before the Angel because he really was vexed that such a sinner as Joshua should defile the courts of God's House? Ah, not a bit of it! It is an edifying spectacle, certainly, to see Satan pleading *against* sin! It is sometimes good to turn the tables on Satan, as Martin Luther does and tell him, "Supposing I am all you say I am, yet what are you, that you should bring accusations against me?"

"I am no servant of yours, Satan. If my Master does not find fault with me, who am I that I should be afraid because you assail and accuse me?"

What are you, after all? You do but look round my castle wall and smile at every rift and so tell me where it needs mending! What are you but a fierce dog, keeping me awake by your howling? Better that I have you, than be without you, lest I fall into a deadly slumber and so sleep myself into carnal security and spiritual death. What are you after all, arch Fiend, but one who, like a terrible tempest, drives me nearer to my Savior and compels me to find a harbor in His bosom?"

Satan aims at our destruction—that is the point at which he drives. He does not care for our pleasure—it is our total and eternal ruin. Let us know this and never be beguiled by him. In whatever way he puts sin, let us understand it to be sin, still, and therefore keep out of his clutches. When at the council of Basle, a certain cardinal had spoken very fairly about Protestants, the Emperor Sigismund rose and said, "Yes, he talks very prettily, but remember, he is a Roman—he is a Roman still." So when the adversary advances with his blandishments and temptations, remember he is a devil still, though dressed in his best robes! You can always detect him under any of his various disguises—for his desire is at all times and all seasons your total destruction!

We have now a very gloomy picture before us. We have the poor Believer in Christ willing to minister unto the Lord, but quite unable to do so because of his filthy garments. And we have, at the same time, a clamorous accuser who is crying out before the bar of justice, "Condemn him! Condemn him! Condemn him!" And well may that poor Believer tremble from head to foot as he recollects how true the charge is!

III. But stop! The picture changes now, for THE ANGEL SPEAKS! He has been silent till now, but now He comes into the foreground. "The Lord rebuke you Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log plucked from the fire?" Take note that this rebuke comes at the right season. When Satan accuses, Christ pleads. He does not wait till the case has gone against us and *then* expresses His regret, but He is always a very present help in time of trouble.

He knows the heart of Satan, being Omniscient God. And long before Satan can accuse He puts in the blessed plea on our behalf and delays the action till He gives an answer which silences forever every accusation. Do not think, Christian, that there will ever come a night so dark that there will be no light shining for you in it, or that Satan will be able to surprise the Savior and take you by storm! In the nick of time Christ will be sure to be your help. Observe that this rebuke also came from the very highest authority. He says, "Jehovah rebuke you, Satan." Christ does not merely rebuke Satan Himself, but He prays the Lord to do it.

The eternal God, who is full of justice, says to the accuser, "I have justified, why do you accuse? I accepted My own dear Son in the place of the poor sinner with the filthy garments on—why do you accuse?" That is a joyous utterance of the Apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." If God justifies, that very act is a rebuke to all the accusations of the false Fiend! Courage, Christian! The Voice which silenced your cruel foe is the Voice that rolls the stars along—against which nothing can stand.

You must not fail to observe, however, that this rebuke was founded upon *electing* love. You that deny the doctrine of election come here and read this verse—"Jehovah rebuke you, Satan! Even Jehovah who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" If God has chosen His people, then it is of no use for Satan to attempt their overthrow. Christ does not here meet Satan with any, "ifs," "ands," "buts," nor "perhapses." He does not meet him with those truths which are merely matters of experience and about which there may be a question—He meets him with the high mysterious Truth of God which was settled before the world was—He throws, as it were, this chain into his teeth and bids him champ that till he breaks his teeth. "God has chosen Jerusalem!" Let that be rebuke enough.

I think your experience will bear out what I now say—that it is all very well to live on spoon victuals and on milk when you have no trials and troubles. But if it ever comes to a pinch between your soul and sin—if you are in the deep waters of conscious sinfulness and Satan is accusing you—nothing will do for your soul to meet the adversary with but the doctrines of Sovereign Grace. You may be an Arminian in the summer, but you must be a Calvinist in the roaring winds of winter. Arminianism is a very pretty sort of theology for a painted boat upon a glassy lake. But they that do business on deep waters, and weather storms and hurricanes must have a good substantial boat of everlasting immutable love! Otherwise, if the vessel is not staunchly and well built—its tacklings will become loose—and they cannot strengthen their mast and the vessel will drive upon the quicksands.

Beloved, in my spiritual building I want to get more and more onto the rock, immediately on the rock. I know I am told that the rock does not yield a harvest—that election is not a practical truth—but after all, if I want a house built, let me have it on the rock, for if it does not yield me any present practical results, yet I must have some comfort—I must have some place to dwell in the storm! I can go out to other fields to sow my corn and reap my harvest, but for my everlasting confidence I want a rock.

Rest assured that the doctrines commonly called Calvinistic are the only doctrines that can shut the mouths of devils and fill the mouths of saints in the day of famine and in the time of extremity. "The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" When I am bowed down under sin, next to my Bible I love such books as "Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty," or "Dr. Crisp's Sermons." Albeit that they do not contain all the Truth of God, yet they teach very clearly that part of it which a troubled spirit needs. Does eternal love ordain sinners to eternal life irrespective of their works? Does the Lord absolutely, out of sovereign mercy, make men to be His children? Did God choose the chief of sinners and does He ever cast them away?

Does He say, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy"? Does He declare that He is absolutely justified in doing whatever He wills with His own? Does He, on such terms as that, choose me? Then blessed be His name—such an election as this just suits my case! And I find that believing the doctrine in that light I can say to all my doubts and fears, "Jeho-

vah who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" The rebuke is forcibly applicable to the case in hand. He says, "Is this not a log plucked from the fire." Satan says, "The man's garments are filthy!" "Well," says Jesus, "how do you expect them to be otherwise? When you pull a log out of the fire, do you expect to find it milk-white or polished?"

No, it had begun to crack and burn and though you have plucked it out of the fire, it is, in itself, still black and charred. So it is with the child of God. What is he at his best? Till he is taken up to Heaven, he is nothing but a log plucked out of the fire. It is his daily moan that he is a sinner. But Christ accepts him as he is—and He shuts the devil's mouth by telling him, "You say this man is black—of course he is—what did I think he was but that? He is a log plucked out of the fire!"

"I plucked him out of it. He was burning when he was in it—he is black now he is out of it. He was what I knew he would be—he is not what I mean to make him—but he is what I knew he would be. I have chosen him as a log plucked out of the fire. What have you to say to that?" Observe that this plea did not require a single word to be added to it from Joshua. If you look, Joshua did not say a solitary word. This so silenced the devil that he was speechless. How often Satan has been nonplussed! He has made up a very pretty case against us—he has caught us in our worst moments and he has thought, "I will sift him like wheat in my sieve."

His plans would have succeeded, but there was a "but" in his way—(an unfortunate "but" for him, but a blessed "but" for us)! "But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." Satan is something like Haman. What an admirable plot Haman had laid for the destruction of Mordecai and the Jews! Yes, but there was one little thing which he had not reckoned on—the Jews had a friend at court who lay in the bosom of the king. And so Satan has often a scheme for the destruction of God's people, but there is one thing which frustrates him, namely, that they have a dear Friend at Court who lies in the bosom of the Eternal King and who pleads for them! And while He is there poor Joshua shall never fail, for the great Joshua, even Jesus his near kinsman, says, "The Lord rebuke you Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log plucked out of the fire?"

IV. We have not yet entered into the soul of our text, but here it is—A MATCHLESS DEED OF GRACE. Thus said the Angel, "take away the filthy garments from him." Here is a picture of sin removed. Do you not think you see him? They have taken off his vestments, every single piece of the robe which was too defiled for him to wear has been taken away and there he stands! And as the Angel looks at him He sees the man's nakedness, but He cannot see any defilement, for the filth is all gone!

So is every pardoned sinner! So am I this morning—so are you, dear Brothers and Sisters. God has commanded, "Take away his filthy garments from him," and as easily as we take off filthy robes, so easily does God take away sin through the Atonement of Christ. There is more than that here. The Lord does not only take away the sin itself, but He takes away the consciousness of it. You feel as if you could not serve God be-

cause sin is heavy on you. Look to Jesus, the Covenant Angel. Hear Him say, "It is finished," and if you can but lay hold on Him, in a moment you will lose all sense of sin!

You will know yourself to be a sinner, but at the same time you will feel that you are a blood-washed sinner—a sinner saved by Divine Grace! And your soul, with your Savior's garments on—made holy as the Holy One—will venture close to the Throne and stand there unabashed. That is a delightful sentence where Paul speaks of "having our conscience purged from dead works." Not merely having the dead works forgiven, but having the *conscience* purged of them so that you have no more conscience of sin. Sin is gone! You do not stand, now, in God's sight as a *sinner*, but as one who is perfect in Christ Jesus! You have not a sin in God's book against you—you are absolved. Christ has said it, "Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you."

You have an admirable picture of this in Joshua's losing his filthy garments. Nor was this all. The order was now given to clothe him—"I will clothe you with rich robes." Christ has performed complete obedience to the Divine Law. He had no need to do this for Himself, but He did it for His people. What He did is ours. The perfect obedience of Christ is imputed to every Believer! We wrap ourselves about with the garments of Christ, just as Jacob put on the robes of his brother Esau. And our Father gives us the blessing, because He finds us in our brother's clothes. Oh, this is gracious, because all the righteousness you and I could ever have if we had been perfect would only have been *human*—but this is Divine!

Christ is the Lord our Righteousness and we are sumptuously arrayed in His seamless robe. Here let me remark that this is matter of experience, too, for the Believer gets to feel that he can now minister before God without trembling, because he wears Christ's garments. Oh, how delightful it is to preach dressed in the robes of Christ, or to pray when you feel you have Christ's vestments on! Oh, how fair a thing it is to minister at God's altar when you know that you are dressed in the white linen, the righteousness of Christ—so clean that even God's all-seeing eyes cannot detect so much as a spot or blemish on it.

Pure, lovely, beautiful—without blemish from head to foot in the sight of God is every justified soul! Oh, Christian, never be satisfied unless you know this and live in the constant enjoyment of it. Notice one more thing and I will not keep you longer. The Prophet was so astonished to see the alteration which had taken place in Joshua dressed out in his new and sumptuous apparel that he broke in upon the vision, and spoke, himself! "And I said, Let them put a clean turban upon his head." I do not know what business Zechariah had to speak, but truly, if I had seen the vision, I must have done the same.

Gazing through my tears, seeing the Lord's people thus transformed from filthiness to cleanliness and from shame to beauty, I think I should have said, "Now, Lord, finish the work. Make that servant of Yours to serve You. As he is perfectly clothed, now, Lord, put on the miter and make him fit to do your work." Some of God's people appear to me to for-

get this. They get as far as imputed righteousness and believe themselves to be accepted in the Beloved. There they are, content to tarry. But, ah, my soul desires even to say, "Lord, put a fair miter on the head of every one of Your saved ones."

Some of you, I trust, are saved, but then how little you do for Christ! My prayer shall be for you—"Lord, put the miter on their heads! Make them priests—they ought to be such. You have washed them, cleansed them and clothed them on purpose that they may be such—but they have laid aside their miter—Lord, put it on their heads." I pray that you may have it on your head today! That you may in your family! In the Sunday school! Tomorrow in your business—in the street and in the shop! Go forth wearing the miter—ordained to be true priests unto God and exercising your functions! Do not lay aside your office! Some act with their miters as our kings and queens do with their crowns—they only put them on upon State occasions—they do not always wear them because they are too heavy.

Oh Christian, your State occasion should be always! You are always dear to Christ and always near the Father's heart. Never take your miter off! Believers, put it on and go forth from this time forth praising and blessing the Covenant Angel who, in Jehovah's name, has taken away your filthy garments and who still stands by! I like that closing sentence—"And the angel of the Lord stood by." Oh, yes, we want Him *always* to stand by! When you have your new garments on, when you wear your miter, you still need His Presence. "Abide with us," must be our daily prayer. We still need His strength, His comfort, His smile—the help of His arm, the light of His countenance—for if we have Him not, we shall soon slip from our steadfastness and have reason to stand again, like Joshua, with filthy garments on.

I have thus preached after a very feeble sort to God's people. There is this voice to sinners. Your case is like that of Joshua at first—for you have filthy garments on. Do not try to wash them. Nothing is said here about washing the garments, not a word! Do not try to make those old rags any better—there is nothing said about stitching or mending. Just confess that they are too bad to be mended, too filthy to be washed, and turn your eyes to Christ, the wounded Sufferer, and ask Him this morning to speak the word—"Take away the filthy garments from him. Clothe him with a change of raiment."

I tell you, Sinner, what He did for Joshua, He will do for you! Oh seek His face and live! God help you to seek it and to find it this very morning and He shall have the praise forever and ever. Amen.

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

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

GOD'S FIREBRANDS

NO. 3233

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 1911.

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

***"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?
Zechariah 3:2.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on verses 1 to 5 is Sermon #611, Volume 11—
ZECHARIAH'S VISION OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>]

IT may be well to explain these words, for simple as they are, a few words of exposition may be useful to open up the metaphor and enforce the thrilling Truth of God that underlies it.

There is mention of *a fire*. A cry of "FIRE!" has something fearful in it. When a fire begins to get the upper hand with us, it is terrible in its destructiveness. The fire here meant is more awful than any flame that makes havoc of matter, and its devastations are ten thousand times more appalling! It is the *fire of sin*. It blazed in the heart of an angel and he became a devil. Its sparks fell into the bosom of mother Eve and into the heart father Adam—and Paradise was burned up and the world became a wilderness. Sin is a fire which destroys the comfort of mankind, here, and all the joy of mankind hereafter. It is a flame which yields no comfortable warmth. The sinner may dance in the light of it for a moment, but in sorrow will he have to lie down in it forever! Woe unto those who have to make their bed in this fire—to dwell with these consuming flames for a term that knows no ending!

There is, further, mention of *a brand*. Nothing can be more suitable to burn in the fire than a brand. It is not a branch just taken from the tree, fresh and full of sap—it is a brand—dry, sere timber, fit for the burning. It is not a mass of stone or iron, but a combustible brand. And what does this indicate but man's natural heart which is so congenial to the fire of sin? Our heart is like the tinder—Satan has but to strike the spark and how readily does the spark find a nest within our bosom! As the firebrand fits the fire, so does the sinner fit in with sin. When sin and the sinner come in contact, it is, "Hail fellow, well met!" They are bosom companions. The sinner's heart is the nest well prepared—and sins are the foul birds which come to nestle there! Not to go a step without a particular application, it will be well for us all to understand that *we* are, ourselves, like the brands—there is a fitness between us and sin. If we burn in the fire of sin, it is no wonder! With our fallen nature, it is no greater marvel that we should be incited by sin than that the firebrand should kindle in the flame!

Beyond the distinct allusion to a fire and a brand, we read of *a brand in the fire*. Nor is it merely a brand lying upon the heap, to be, by-and-by, put upon the flames—it is “a brand plucked out of the fire.” It has been in the fire! Does not this portray our condition—not only congenial for the fire of sin, but actually burning and blazing in it? We began very early. Disobedience to parents, angry tempers, petty lies, many sorts of childish obstinacies and wrongdoings—all these were like the first catching on fire of the brand. We have blazed away the reverse of merrily since then—some have become charred with sin till their very bodies contain the marks of that tremendous fire, while in every case the *soul* receives a charring and blackening from the flame. Not one of us has been able, even with godly training and Christian parentage, to escape from burning to some extent in this fire. Alas! Alas, for those who are even now in it!

There is a fair side to the picture—it is not altogether gloomy. While we have a fire, a brand and a brand in the fire, we also have, blessed be God, *a brand plucked out of the fire*. Sinners these, who though they have still within them the propensity to sin, are no longer in the fire of sin! They have been taken away from it. They sin through infirmity, but willful sin they do not commit. Their nature has been challenged. They have received the renewing Grace of God. The fire that once burned within them has been quenched. They recollect, to their grief and sorrow, the mischief that sin did to them, but it is not doing them the same mischief now. They are delivered from the body of sin and death!

Still, the force of the passage seems to lie in the words “*plucked out of*.” You may sit down on the bench by the hearth in one of those good old country fireplaces where they still burn the logs and, perhaps, a brand drops out upon the hearth where it flames a little while and then goes out. This is not a picture that we can appropriate, for there never was an instance known of a man, by himself, dropping out of the fire of sin! Alas, we love it too well! “The burnt child dreads the fire,” says the proverb, but we are like the silly moth that flies at the candle and singes its wings, yet still uses those wings to mount up again into the flame! And if it falls—all full of pain and torment, with burnt legs and with almost all its wing gone—it struggles, it pants, it labors to get into the fire again! Such is man. He loves this fire which is his destruction! In youth, we put our finger into the flame. We feel that it is burnt, yet again we put our hand into it. Then, in later years, we persist deliberately till that sin has consumed us from head to foot! And we lie down in our grave with our bones filled with disease—foul fruit of the sins of our youth—our very corpses in their mortality bearing witness to the corruption of our morals!

Albeit the Christian is relieved of that peril, he does not escape by his own free will. He is *plucked out of it*. To be plucked out, there needs a hand quick to rescue. You know that pierced hand and how it burnt itself when it was thrust into the hot coals to pluck us out like brands from the burning! It was no use waiting till we dropped out, for we would never have done so—there was no hope of that. With all the appliances of

Grace and of Judgment, the two together could not bring us out! But effectual vocation did it, when the Spirit of the living God took the firebrand in His hand and without asking it whether it would or not, by the sweet and irresistible compulsions of Divine Grace plucked the brand out of the fire! Every Believer in the Lord Jesus is a trophy of the strength as well as of the mercy of God. It took as much Omnipotence to snatch him from the fire as it needs to make a world—and every Believer may feel that he is a brand plucked from the fire.

This question, as it appears to me, will bear three renderings. First, it may be looked upon as *an exclamation of wonder*—“Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire!” Secondly, *as an enquiry or hope*—“Is not *this* a brand— particularly this one—“plucked out of the fire?” And, in the third place, it is certainly *a defiance for us, assured of our safety, to throw into the face of Satan, the accuser*—“Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

I. THE TEXT BEARS THE SENSE OF WONDERMENT—“Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

It was said of Joshua, the High Priest. There was such astonishment at his preservation, that with hands uplifted, the question was asked, “Is not this man just like a firebrand snatched from among the glowing coals?” Nor is this marvel confined to Joshua. I believe this is *a matter of wonder in the case of every saved sinner*. Was there ever a man saved by Grace who was not a wonder? Is not every Christian conscious that there is some peculiarity about his own salvation which makes it marvelous? If you cannot all chime in with, “Yes,” I must at least lead the chorus in which an overwhelming multitude will join—confessing that it was so with myself! For a long while, I could not believe that it was possible that my sins could be forgiven. I do not know why, but I seemed to be the odd person in the world. When the catalog was made out, it seemed to me that, for some reason, I must have been left out. If God had saved *me* and *not* the rest of the world, I would have wondered, indeed! But if He had saved all the world except me, that would have seemed to be according to the common course—and a right course, too. And now, being saved by Grace, I cannot help saying, “Yes, I am a brand plucked out of the fire!” And does not each Believer say the same? Why, look at the Believer! He is fallen, lost, and yet, though lost in his first parent, he is saved in Christ! The Believer’s own nature is depraved like that of other men and yet, contrary to nature, his is made a new creature! As though Niagara were suddenly made to leap upwards instead of falling downwards, our nature, so mighty for sin, has been suddenly turned into the opposite direction and we have been compelled to seek after Grace and holiness!

Out of the state of our natural depravity we have been plucked so that every man who is delivered from its sway may well say, “Am not I a brand plucked out of the fire?” Each Christian, knowing his own heart and having a special acquaintance with his own peculiar besetting sin, feels as if

the conquest of his own will by the Grace of God were a more illustrious trophy of that Grace than the conquest of a thousand others! I can well understand that none of us will yield the palm in Heaven to any other as to our indebtedness to the Mercy of God. You may sing, and sing loudly, each one of you, and each one say, "I owe more to God's Grace than any other"—but there is not one of us who will concede the point! We shall each strike up our own peculiar note and louder yet, and louder yet, and louder until our notes of gratitude will rise to the seventh Heaven—"unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood: to whom be Glory and dominion forever and ever!" Each Christian, then, for some reason, will feel that he is peculiarly "a brand plucked out of the fire." I envy not the feeling of any Believer who should dispute this. May you and I be more thoroughly baptized into the spirit of humility—that with deeper gratitude we may feel how peculiarly we are indebted to the Grace of God!

Though this is the case universally, there are instances so uncommon that they excite surprise in the minds of all who hear of them. In the cases of extraordinary conversion, one of the first is *the salvation of the extremely aged*. Imagine a person, here, who has lived to be 70 or 80 years old and all this time his heart has never heard the sigh of repentance and never felt the joy of pardon! You have lived only to cumber the ground all these years and you are still an enemy to God! While on the borders of the grave you have no hope of Heaven. O Soul, your case is very sad! It were enough to make angels weep, if weep they could, to think that such an one as you, after so many years of long-suffering, should not be melted thereby! Now, suppose the Lord should appear to you tonight and say to you, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you. I took you into the House of Prayer tonight on purpose that My Word might come with power to your soul, and I have this to say to you—"Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." What do you say, you hoary Jacob, but without Jacob's faith, leaning upon your staff—would it not be a wonder if now you should begin to love the Lord and begin to believe in Jesus? Oh, may God give you Grace to do so! And then I am sure you will say to your kinsfolk and acquaintance, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

There have been instance of persons converted at the most advanced age. There was one who went, I believe, to hear Mr. Toplady preach the very day when he turned a hundred! He had been a constant neglecter of the House of God, but when he arrived at the age of a hundred, attracted by the fame of Mr. Toplady, who was an exceedingly popular, and he certainly was a highly evangelical preacher, and happened to be preaching in the town where the man lived, he said he would go on that day to hear him, that he might remember his birthday. He went—and that day God, in His Grace, met with him! I remember, too, the instance of a man who was converted by a sermon which he heard Mr. Flavel preach, and which

was blessed to him 83 years *after he had heard it*, when he was at the age of ninety-eight. The Word came with power to his soul after all that interval of time! Just as he was on the borders of the tomb, he was made to enter into eternal life! If the God of Infinite Mercy gives such a blessing to aged ones here—then they will be brands plucked out of the fire!

Remarkable, too—I might almost say *exceptional*—is *the conversion of people who have been accustomed to hear the Gospel from their youth up, who, though not, perhaps, absolutely aged, have nevertheless been for years receiving Gospel privileges without any result*. They have been lying at Bethesda's pool with its many porches, for 40 or 50 years! Oh, there are some such here. You have not heard *me* all that time. Some other ministry has, in times past, fallen upon your ears and, perhaps, our own voice is now familiar to you through your having heard it these 10 or 12 years. You listened to it at first with attention. You were riveted for a little while. Then it grew to be an ordinary thing and though you still give the preacher a fair hearing, there is very little of that drinking in of the Word of God which there once seemed to be. Some of you, perhaps, will almost go to sleep here now. I sometimes wish that you were elsewhere—perhaps another voice would make your ears tingle—you know my voice full well. It is quite possible for a minister to preach too long to any one set of people—they can get so accustomed to the tones of his voice that they are never awakened. The “click, click” of the mill gets to be so to the miller that he goes to sleep. Over in Bankside, I am told, when a man is first put inside a boiler while the rivets are being fastened, he cannot stay long—the noise is so dreadful. But after a time, the boilermaker gets so used to the horrible din that he can almost go to sleep inside! Well, now, so it is, too, under any ministry when the people get Gospel-hardened. The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. The influences which tend to make some people better, make other people a great deal worse. Some of you have thus trifled with your own conscience! Should you be saved tonight, you would be brands plucked out of the fire, and may we not hope that you shall be? Will not some of us pray for it?

Further still, and apparently the wonder increases, *there have been cases of gross sinners in which this marvel has been still more exciting!* It is a merciful thing that God forgives drunkenness. Some of those who have wallowed in it have been saved. We sometimes talk of a man being “as drunk as a beast,” but who ever heard of a beast being drunk? Why, it is more beastly than anything a beast ever does! I do not believe that the devil himself is ever guilty of anything like that. I never heard even him charged with being a drunk. It is a sin which has no sort of excuse—those who fall into it generally fall into other deadly vices. It is the devil's backdoor to Hell and everything that is hellish, for he that once gives away his brains to drink is ready to be caught by Satan for anything! Oh, but while the drunk cannot have eternal life abiding in him while he is such, is it not a joy to think of the many drunks who have been washed and saved? This night, there are sitting here those who have done with

their cups, who have left behind them their strong drink and who have renounced the haunts of their debauchery! They are washed and cleansed—and when they think of the contrast between where they used to be on Sunday night and where they are now, they give an echo to the question—“Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

Very frequently where this sin comes, blasphemy is added to it! And how many we have who, though now saved by Grace, were once fearful swearers and could dare the God who made them to destroy them! Or to inflict the most horrible judgments which it were a shame even to mention, upon them! But Almighty Grace takes the swearer and says to him, “You shall curse no longer, for I have blessed you; I do not intend that you should imprecate curses on yourself; you shall now begin to plead with Me for saving mercy!” Many, many, many such, whose tongues might well have rotted in their mouths through blasphemy, have been cleansed by Jesus’ blood! And the tongue can now sing, that once could curse, and the lips can now pray, that once could utter oaths! “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” Oh, you are here, Jack, are you? You can swear! Sometimes, when you are at sea, you roll out an oath or two. And when you are on shore, you know what you are—but may my Master meet you and may He once and for all transform you and put His Holy Spirit to dwell in you, instead of the seven devils that are now there! And then you will say, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

Can we pass over *the case of some who have given themselves up to sin, to work it with greediness?* Alas, how men turn aside with scorn from the harlot in the street, and they think of her as though she must be consigned to the seventh Hell, albeit that they, themselves, perhaps, are viler still! But how shall we give a preference to one sinner rather than to another when it must take *two to commit this iniquity?* But, alas, we know that in London, our streets abound with those whose very names seem to make the cheek of modesty to mantle with a blush. Well, should there be such an one strayed in here—Sister—for you are a Sister, still—the Lord Jesus receives sinners, and though you have sinned very foully, “there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared.” And His voice still says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Whoever you may be that has fallen into these polluting sins which do such terrible mischief and which bring down God’s anger upon men—still the heart of God melts with pity to the chief of sinners and He cries, “How can I give you up?” and lets the lifted thunder drop! Oh, when such are saved—and there are scores, and scores, and scores, to our knowledge, now rejoicing in Christ who have found peace in this House, though once the chief of sinners—when such are saved, we say of each one of them, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

Or, what if you have even worn the felon’s dress? What if you have even plunged into such sin that the very thought of it makes your ears tingle? What if the darkness of the night could tell of such hideous crimes that the brightness of day seems all too good for such an offender as you have been? Still the rivers and floods of Divine Mercy can break

forth and rise above the loftiest Alps and Andes of iniquity! The deluge of the Savior's pardoning Grace shall mount to 20 cubits upwards, until the tops of the mountains of sin are covered and you, the chief of sinners, shall have it said of you, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

We have gone a good length in the way of wonderment, yet one wonder, I think, is greater than all. I have almost ceased to wonder when the swearer is converted, or when the harlot is saved—not because it is not a mighty act of Grace, but because it is common enough to be often repeated! God's mercy is extended very freely to such sinners as these, but there is a wonder which I do not often see. I do see it, though not often—I wish I could. It is *when a self-righteous religious man gets saved*.

"What," you say, "do you mean by that?" Why, I mean those good people who go to Church and Chapel regularly, have family prayers, say their own prayers and think themselves upright! They will not confess that they have sinned, except in the mere complimentary way in which they are accustomed to say that they are "miserable sinners," though they do not look very miserable! Perhaps I address some such, now, who felt, while I was preaching to the sinner, as if their dainty holiness was quite shocked. They are double-distilled in their refinement. They are unutterably holy and free from hypocrisy—their heart all the while loathing the plan of salvation and rejecting the Grace of God—because they believe that they are as good as they need be! To talk to them of crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is to insult them! Have they not been baptized? Have they not been confirmed? Have they not gone through all the means? All must be right with them—they are so good—who could think of finding fault with *them*?

Now, if ever such people as these are saved from this terrible disease of self-righteousness, we would have to say, indeed, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And nowadays it is getting so common that it ought to be a subject of prayer with God's people that God would deliver this land from the spreading poison—the Romanism, *alias* Puseyism—which has covered it almost everywhere! If a man wants to make sure of everlasting wrath, let him fall into the deep ditch of Puseyism, for the abhorred of the Lord fall therein! You may get out the common sinner, but those who wrap themselves about with vestments and fine garments of ceremony—who shall reach these? The hocus-pocus of the priesthood, the gewgaws, the ceremonies, the mummerly which they designate worship—these things form the refuge of lies behind which they hide themselves—and the true Gospel of the blessed God is scarcely heard! What with their chants and intoning, how can the still small voice of the Gospel be heard? Through the dim smoke of incense and the glare of gorgeous vestments, how shall Christ have a hearing? The Man of Nazareth, alone, is He who can save sinners! May He, in His mighty power to save, rend away these rags of Rome from before His Cross and let the naked

beauty and simplicity of the Gospel shine out again! Once more may we have to say, in the words of Cowper—

***“Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenings words—
‘BELIEVE AND LIVE.’”***

II. With more brevity than the preacher likes, though with perhaps as much amplitude as will be pleasant to yourselves, we shall now take the text BY WAY OF ENQUIRY OR HOPE. Our time has so far gone that I can only hint at what I meant to say.

When a sinner's eyes are suffused with tears and the sorrowful cry breaks forth, “Alas! Woe is me!” you may then say, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” for the tear of sorrow for sin is a blessed omen of Mercy's dawning! May Mercy reach her noontide soon! And when, alone, the knee is bent and the whispered prayer goes up, “Jesus, Master, pity me! Save me, or I die,” the angels recognize the penitent's prayer. They say, “Behold, he prays!” And then they feel that this is “a brand plucked out of the fire.” The tear of penitence and the prayer of the seeking soul are evidences of the working of Almighty Grace!

And when the poor soul at last, driven by necessity, throws itself flat at the foot of the Cross and rests its hope wholly and alone on Jesus, then we may say of it, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

And when, in the midst of many a conflict and soul-struggle, the heart flings away its idols and resolves to love Christ, and vows in His strength to be devoted to His service, we may say again with pleasure, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

I would invite you to think over these signs of Grace and if you see them in yourselves, may you ask the question, and be able to answer it with joy, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

III. And lastly, WHAT A QUESTION OF DEFIANCE THIS IS!

Do you not catch the idea of the text? There stood Joshua, the High Priest. There stood the angel of the Lord and there stood Satan. The adversary began to attack Joshua, but the angel of the Lord said to him, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you: Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?’ What have you to do with him? If God has plucked him out of the fire, you can never put him in again. Seeing God has plucked him out of the fire, go your way and mind your own business! You have nothing to do with this saved soul, this elect vessel, this one whom God has chosen, in whom the Spirit's power has shown itself! He has plucked him out of the fire! Go your way, Satan, and leave this soul alone!”

It is a defiance full of majesty and grandeur! *It reflects a gorgeous luster on the past.* “God saved that soul,” says the angel to Satan. “Why did He do it? Why, because He chose him, because He ordained him unto eternal life, because everlasting love had set itself upon him! What have you to do with him? If God has chosen him, do you think that you can undo the Divine decree? Can you reverse the counsels of the Most High, or dash in pieces the settled purposes of the Infinite mind? Go your way!

God has snatched him from the fire, determined to save him. Go and think not to frustrate that Divine design!"

Nor less did the angel seem *to dart a look forward*. If God had plucked him from the fire why did He do it? To let him go back again? Will God play fast and loose with men? Does He pluck brands out of the fire to thrust them into the flame again? Absurd! Preposterous! Why has He plucked this brand out of the fire? Why, to keep it from ever being burned! That brand, taken out of the fire, shall be exhibited in Heaven as a proof of what God's Almighty Grace can do! And therefore the angel says to the devil, "Get out of here! What have you to do with this man? God means to save him, so can you destroy him? God has done that which is the earnest and pledge of his perfect eternal safety—do you think that you can thwart God's resolution and intention?"

Now, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, realize in yourselves this precious thought, each one of you. If the Lord has changed you. If, indeed, you are a brand plucked out of the fire, why should you fear the temptation which now assails you? Dread not all the temptations that may attack you! Weak as you are, the God who has done so much for you cannot leave you! He will not leave His purpose half accomplished! He will not be disappointed. He will to the end carry on His work till He brings you up to Heaven. Why, I think some of you who were very great offenders ought to often take comfort from your conversion—you can say, "What a change there is in me! How far beyond anything I could ever have worked in myself. It must have been God's work—

***'And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me, to put me to shame?'***

The whole end to which we drive is this—May God enable us all to see that our salvation is in Him! Jonah had to go into the whale's belly to learn that grand axiom of theology—and the most of us had to be sorely beaten before we found out that "salvation is of the Lord." If you know this, look to the Lord for it! Repose yourself on Him right now and you shall be His forever—you shall dwell on high, your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks—and your eyes shall see the King in His beauty—they shall behold the land that is very far off!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOB 1.

Verse 1. *There was a man in the land of Uz.* Job was a man, indeed—a true man—a man of the highest type, for he was a man of God.

1. *Whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright.* Job was thoroughly true and sincere. And in this sense he "was perfect and upright."

1. *And one that feared God, and eschewed evil.* He had both sides of a godly character—a love of God and a hatred of sin.

2. *And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.* Job was highly favored in having such a family of sons and daughters.

3. *His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East.* Job was not a poor man, yet he was a man of God—one of those “camels” that manage to go through “the eye of a needle.”

4. *And his sons went and feasted in their houses, each on his appointed day; and sent and called for their three sisters—*Who were very modest and retiring, and would not have gone to the feast if they had not been sent for, but their brothers were kind and thoughtful, as all good brothers will be.

4, 5. *To eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them.* Job did not go to the feast. Perhaps he felt too old—his character was too staid for such a gathering. He had higher joys that were nearer his heart than any earthly feast could be.

5. *And rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their heart. Thus did Job continually.* He thought, “Perhaps, in their rejoicing, unholy thoughts may have intruded. They may have been unguarded and lax in their conduct. They may not have fallen into any gross sin, but in their feasting they may have sinned against God. Therefore I will offer sacrifices for them.” “Thus did Job continually.” Not only occasionally, but every day he sacrificed upon his altar unto God, and so sought to keep his household right before Jehovah.

6. *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.* Into Heaven? Oh, no! The Presence of God is very widespread and there was no need to admit the evil spirit into Heaven in order that he might be present before God!

7. *And the LORD said unto Satan, From where do you come?* God is Satan's Master, so He asks him where he has been. I wonder whether if the Lord were to put that question to everybody here, “From where do you come?” if each of us could give a satisfactory answer to it.

7. *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.* Uneasy, restless, ever active, like a roaring lion “seeking whom he may devour.” Ah, we little know how near Satan is to us now! And even in our hours of prayer, when we are nearest to God, he may come and assail us.

8. *And the LORD said unto Satan, Have you considered My servant Job—*[See Sermon #623, Volume 116—SATAN CONSIDERING THE SAINTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “He is an example to you. He may well chide you, he is so obedient, and you are so rebellious: ‘Have you considered My servant Job’—

8, 9. *That there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said—*We may be certain that if there had been anything bad

in Job, Satan would have found it out and brought it against him. However excellent a man is, though there are none like him on earth, you can find fault with him if you want to do so. Satan found fault with Job because he had prospered. And his friends afterwards found fault with him because he did not prosper! So you can make anything into a blot on the character of men if you have a mind to do so. "Satan answered the Lord, and said"—

9, 10. *Does Job fear God for nothing? Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?* The black dog of Hell had been prowling around to see where he could get in, so he knew that there was a hedge around Job and round his house and all that he had. Notice how the devil insinuates that Job feared God for what he could get out of Him. "His love is cupboard love," says Satan, "he is well paid by Providence for his reverence to God."

10. *You have blessed the work of his hands*—Even the devil dared not deny that Job was a working man, or say that he had come by his estate by oppression or plunder. No. He said to God, "You have blessed the work of his hands"—

10, 11. *And his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.* Oh, what mischief Satan can imagine against the righteous! The mercy is that although he is mighty, he is not *almighty*—he is very malicious, but there is One who is far wiser and stronger than he is who can always circumvent and overpower him!

12-15. *And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the Presence of the LORD. And there was a day when Job's sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away; yes, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you.* Job had not wronged these Sabeans—they were plunderers on the lookout for spoil. And when Satan moved them, they came and stole the Patriarch's oxen and asses—and slew his servants.

16. *While he was yet speaking*—As if to give Job no time to rally his faith and encourage his heart—

16. *There came, also, another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from Heaven, and has burned up the sheep, and the servants and consumed them; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you.* This calamity must have distressed Job all the more because "the fire of God" had burnt up the sheep that he was accustomed to offer in sacrifice to Jehovah—and the blow had seemed to come directly from God, Himself—as if it was lightning that had destroyed both sheep and shepherds, too. Poor Job had not time to recover from that shock before the next blow fell upon him—

17. *While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels and have carried them away, yes, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell you.* He had not time to think before the heaviest stroke of all came—

18, 19. *While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and, they are dead; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you.* Satan had arranged to bring on the Patriarch's troubles so quickly, one after another, as to utterly overwhelm the good man—at least, so the devil hoped it would prove—yet it did not.

20. *Then Job arose—*With all his burden on him, he arose—

20. *And tore his mantle, and shaved his head—*He did not pull his hair out as a Pagan, or a maniac, or a person delirious through trouble might have done. But he deliberately “tore his mantle, and shaved his head”—

20. *And fell down upon the ground and worshipped—*Grand old man! How bravely does he play the man here! He “fell down upon the ground and worshipped”—

21. *And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there.* That is, to the womb of Mother Earth.

21. *The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.* [See Sermons #2457, Volume 42—JOB'S RESIGNATION and #3025, Volume 53—FIFTEEN YEARS LATER—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I think these are the grandest words in the whole record of human speech! Considering the circumstances of the man at the time, that he should thus speak was, I think, a miracle of Grace!

22. *In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

—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.**

DONE IN A DAY, BUT WONDERED AT FOREVER

NO. 953

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day,
says the Lord of hosts. They shall call
every man his neighbor under the vine, and under the fig tree.”
Zechariah 3:9, 10.*

WE cull the text from one of Zechariah's most instructive visions. It is a stone from a diamond field. All the context is rich in precious things, but we cannot, though we would be very glad to do so, linger over them this morning. We must be satisfied with this one brilliant stone. Taking the text as it stands, and by itself, it is evidently descriptive of those long expected and happy days when God will once and for all forgive His Israel and restore His long-banished ones to their former place of favor and of joy. As a consequence thereof, He shall cause them to dwell in their own land under the happiest circumstances, surrounded by peace and enjoyment, praising and blessing the God of mercy.

But we may, from the dealings of God with one particular case, usually extract the rule of the Divine procedure—for the Lord is under no necessity to alter His modes of action, and is not subject to change. As He works in one case, so may we expect Him to do in another, if the circumstances taken in are all similar. I purpose this morning, to draw, therefore, from the text nothing about Israel after the *flesh*, but much concerning the *spiritual* Israel—believing souls who are the true seed of the father of the faithful.

Our object will be to glorify the fullness and richness of the Divine mercy which pardons the greatest sin and sheds abroad the most delightful peace. May the Holy Spirit now instruct both the preacher and the congregation. While all our eyes are gazing upon the promise of Grace, may it be fulfilled in our midst.

I. Our first remarks will gather around the question, WHAT IS TO BE REMOVED? What does the text speak of? The reply is, “the iniquity of that land.” The term “iniquity” or, in-equity, is a very comprehensive one—including everything that is not equitable, not right towards God, not just towards man. It comprehends the entire compass of sin, for a sin of commission is an in-equity of excess, and an omission is an in-equity of falling short. The text, therefore, in the term “iniquity” comprehends every violation of equity either by way of transgression or shortcoming.

It includes sins against the first and second table, sins of the body, the hand, the tongue. Sins which more immediately spring from and end in the soul, sins against God and man, sins of youth, and sins of old age. Widely extended as iniquity is, God declares that He will remove *all of it*

from His people in *one day*. The great variety of the sin to be removed is clear from the additional words, “that land.”

The offenses of a whole nation make up a complete catalogue of crimes. When high and low, old and young, rich and poor, literate and illiterate are considered as one body, the mass of their united sin is diversified, indeed. In the throng I see a despiser of parents in one place, and a Sabbath-breaker in another. Search the land over and you will be sure to find liars, slanderers, drunkards, gluttons, swearers, thieves, harlots, murderers, and I know not what of wickedness besides.

The one city of Jerusalem was so sinful that Ezekiel likened it to a boiling pot, and said of it, “Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is there. She has wearied herself with lies. In your filthiness is lewdness.” In a land so large as Israel, though comparatively small, there must have been criminals of all kinds—wretches defiled with sins of the blackest dye—a more than Newgate calendar of reprobates. And yet it is promised that all these varieties of sin shall be removed in one day! From sins of thought and heart right up to blood-red murder, and the most desperate adulteries—all are spoken of as to be removed.

The iniquity of a land, however, is not only that of the generation then dwelling in it, but the accumulated sin of *past* generations, even as we read that, “the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full.” If anyone would speak correctly of the sins of Israel he would not mean the sins of the Israel of that particular hour, but the heaped-up sins of their fathers who had provoked God many long generations before. Now grasp the grand idea of mercy’s boundless plan—in one day—the promise declares that God shall not only remove all the sins of one man, but all the sins of many men! Yes, and all the sins that have accumulated and laid up a store of wrath against a whole nation!

What mercy is this which blots out the long records of the past, sweeps out the rotting heaps of old transgression and cleanses the Augean stable of a guilty nation’s sin? “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” What a miracle of infinite mercy! The iniquity rises before us like a huge mountain whose peak defies the thunderbolts of God, but lo, eternal Mercy, like a sea, swallows up the mountain and it is gone, to be found no more. It is clear, then, from the text, that the Lord is able to forgive sins of every shade and form.

What is *your* sin, my Hearer? Is it one peculiar to yourself? Yet can God forgive it. Are your sins of many sorts, so that you could not set them in order before your eyes because they are too varied and multitudinous? Yet can He remove them all in one day. No matter though one of your sins lie, as it were, in the far east, and another is found in the far west—He can cleanse the whole land of your nature. Though one of your sins is an attack upon the heights of Heaven, and another dives into the lowest blasphemies of Hell—He is both the God of the hills and of the valleys—and such enormities as yours He can remove.

When a whole land is purged, sins similar to yours must have been in the number of those blotted out. Therefore there is hope for you, since what has been done can be done again. What are your sins? Are they as scarlet? “No,” says one, “they are of another hue.” Well, then, if they are

crimson He will make one as wool and the other as snow. He will take away *all* iniquity. He will forgive all manner of sin and blasphemy. Whatever their tint and shade, and however double-dyed and ingrained our sins may be, the blood of Jesus can remove them all in one day.

In addition, let every sinner here remember that the text indicates not only variety of sin, but vast quantities of sin—the sin of a land consisting of millions of people is no light thing to remove in one day, yet the promise guarantees it. Eternal love takes to itself the new sharp threshing instrument of the Atonement, and therewith beats the mountains of sin till they become as chaff and the wind does carry them away. Learn, then, that however many your sins may be—you might as well count the sands on the seashore as number your transgressions—they can all be removed from you as far as the east is from the west.

As the tide covers all the sand, so can forgiveness cover all your sin. As night covers all things, so can love cast a mantle over all your wrong doings. As the sun exhales a myriad dewdrops, so can eternal love cause all your sins to pass away. In the case of Israel, the iniquity to be removed had been continuous and aggravated. The iniquity of the land of Israel was an iniquity which had continued from generation to generation. Their first fathers rebelled in the wilderness. They sinned afterwards under the judges. They revolted under the kings. More and more they went astray, and when sold into captivity they still transgressed.

If cured of one sin they became more inveterate in another. Though idolatry had been driven out of the Jews before our Savior's time, yet their heart was still apostate, for they crucified the Lord of Glory. So, my dear Hearer, if the continued sin of the Jews, which had for so long a period accumulated could be put away from the land in one day, so can yours. O you sinners of ripe years, O you transgressors of seventy or eighty years—there is hope for you!

From the text I hear the silver trumpets ring, "I will remove the iniquity in one day"—the continuous iniquity—then why not *your* continued iniquity? Though you have added stone of sin to stone till the mound of your transgressions stands as a memorial to God against you, yet He can remove the heap, and that in one single day. Is not this good news to sinners? I am sure it is to me! I do devoutly bless and thank my heavenly Father that He has put such great promises in His Word, and spoken so largely of His mercy to the guilty—for mine is a case of which I am obliged to say as Baxter did, "O Lord of Mercy, give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn. I must have great mercy or I perish."

See, then, in the text, the power of God to remove sin very remarkably set forth. The Prophet speaks of the sin of a whole land, of a most sinful land, a highly privileged land which had turned every privilege into provocation. Yet in one day the Lord would remove it all! The inference is clear, O penitent Sinner, that He can remove your sin, also. O you Hearer of the Gospel, convicted in your own conscience of having been a trifler with Divine things, despair not! Though you have gone as far as you can in sin, the Lord, through Jesus Christ, can put your sin away.

I know how your mind is this morning. If you are aroused to see your state by nature, you are mourning that ever you had a being. O Man, it were, indeed, enough to make you mourn that you were born if there were not hope of a second birth, and hope in the infinite mercy of God for the removal of your hideous defilements! Take heart from the text, and approach your gracious King through Jesus the appointed Mediator—for if you believe, He will this day, even this day—take away all your transgressions, receive you graciously, and love you freely. The wayfaring man, though a fool, may in this text clearly see that our God is abundantly able to pardon, for He removes a nation's accumulated iniquity in one day.

II. Secondly, we shall consider WHAT WAS TO BE DONE WITH IT. "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." It shall be remitted and forgiven. In some parts of Scripture we read of sin being "wiped out," and the expression is remarkably expressive. Sometimes the wiping out refers to the housewife's meaning of the word—when the dish is wiped out and turned bottom upwards. So can God take our sinful souls and wipe them right out so that they shall be perfectly clean—and the pot which was filthy and had death in it shall be, "holiness unto the Lord."

At other times the wiping out refers to the erasure of notes made upon tablets. Some writings were cleared off with a sponge. At other times, if the tablet was of wax and the marks were made with an iron pen, or stylus, then the wax was softened and smoothed again—and all evidence of the record totally disappeared. Though our sins are written with an iron pen and engraved with the point of a diamond upon the very horns of our altars, yet will the Lord make the record to disappear when His mercy is revealed to our faith.

He blots out the handwriting which was against us. He puts it out of the way, nailing it to the Cross. He makes our sins, like clouds, to pass away forever. God can, O Sinner, wipe out your transgressions so that they shall not exist! Through the precious blood of Jesus He can finish your transgressions, and make an end of all your sins.

If we take the word "remove" as it stands in the text, then it is as though a great stone lay at the door of God's mercy. "Sin lies at the door," who shall roll away the stone for us? "I," says God, "will remove the iniquity of this land in one day." Or it is like a burden pressing on our shoulders. Speak of the load which Atlas carried, when he is fabled to have sustained the world. it was nothing compared with this more than Atlantean load which crushes us down, and will crush us to the lowest Hell. "I will remove it," says the Savior, and He has kept His Word.

He took the load upon His own shoulders and so removed it from us. And then He carried it right up to the Cross, and from the top of Calvary He hurled it into His sepulcher. And there He left it, a dead and buried thing. And if it is searched for, it shall not be found, "Yes, it shall not be," says the Lord. He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness for all His people.

It is as though sin were looked upon as a substance, exceedingly heavy, but capable of removal. Not, however, capable of removal by any *human* hands, for it is as firmly settled in its place as the everlasting hills. But the Lord plucks it up by its roots, removes it, and casts it into the depths

of the sea. Blessed be His name! He has so removed our sins, as Believers, that none can ever bring them back again to accuse or condemn us. He has fulfilled the promise, "I will remove the iniquity of that land." And once removed by Sovereign Grace, it shall never be brought back again.

"As far as the east is from the west"—measure that, you astronomers! "As far as the east is from the west"—O swift-winged angel, compute the space! "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." The Lord has done it. It is finished! Our iniquity is removed. The depths have covered our sins, they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Listen patiently to this word. The removal of our transgressions lies in four things. There is the removal of the *punishment*. The man whom God pardons cannot be punished for sin. It were a mock pardon that left a man in the executioner's custody. The royal pardon bids every angel of justice hold off his hand. Your sins shall never rise against you, Sinner, if God forgives them. For you there is no Hell. For you no never-dying worm, no fire unquenchable. Forgiven! The sentence is stayed, no, *revoked*.

The removal of transgression implies next, the taking away of the *guilt* of it as before the Lord. Sin has made God angry. It is a breach of His Law. It is a dishonor to His name. Yet God will forgive the believing sinner so that no anger shall linger in His bosom against him. He will cast his sins behind His back, put them out of His mind. Oh, miracle of miracles! Can God put anything behind His back when He sees all things? Can Omniscience find a corner where His eyes can never peer? Yes. He says, "I will cast your sins behind My back." O God, Your Word in this case is marvelous and strange, but we perceive right well Your gracious meaning—the transgressions of Your people shall not be remembered against them any more forever—their guilt is utterly removed.

The removal of sin implies, thirdly, the putting away of the *defilement* of sin. Sin makes us to be polluted creatures. We are like degraded priests no longer clad in fair white garments, but wearing sordid, and filthy robes. When the sin is put away, the defilement consequent upon it also is cleansed and we become pure before God—personally acceptable with God. What a mercy is this! It is no less a mercy to be cleansed from personal defilement than to be delivered from future punishment.

Again, the removal of sin includes, in the fourth place, the total destruction of the *dominion* of sin over our nature. Not that in us sin has lost all its power—but that in the Believer it has lost its *reigning* power, and is dethroned. The position of sin in a natural man is that of a king on his throne. The position of sin in a Christian is that of a bandit hiding in secret places trying to get back its old usurped dominion, but failing in the attempt, for "sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the Law, but under Grace."

Thus the promise of the text is a very full one. The removal of sin includes the remission of the punishment, the putting away of the guilt, the cleansing of the defilement, the dethronement of the evil power. Ah, my dear Hearers, my heart leaps within me for joy to think that I am able to tell you that such a fourfold, four times precious blessing, is to be conferred by God upon poor sinful men.

O Sinner, how I wish you would have it this day. I love the word “this day.” If in one day a land’s iniquity could be so completely removed, why not yours today? Why not on this Lord’s-day? How true a Sunday would it become to you? If you believe you have your sin removed, faith finds out the great Sin-Bearer and sees the transgression borne away by Him. O that pardoning Grace were given to everyone in this assembly, so that it could be safely said, “The Lord has removed the iniquity of the whole congregation of the Tabernacle in one day.”

Talk not of bell ringing—oh, what *heart* ringing, what heavenly songs, what soundings of the golden harps there would be if it might be so! O that the Almighty Spirit would apply the atoning blood, and remove the iniquity of all this multitude in one single day! Do it, Lord, and we will bless Your gracious name!

III. But we must turn to the third point, which is this—HOW LONG IT TAKES TO REMOVE THE SIN. “I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day.” It took a great many days to pile up the sin, but one day sees it removed. The iniquity of the land began when the people entered it. They had not been long in Canaan before Achan took of the forbidden thing, and he was but a type of the rest.

They were a stiff-necked and rebellious people whose very nature was averse to the service of the Lord their God. Throughout the hundreds of years of the judges, the kings, the captivities, and so on, they continued to revolt from the Divine authority. They heaped up transgression till it stood aloft in mountainous heights. And yet when the dreadful pile was completed, the Lord made it to disappear in one day. Yes, and our sins have taken a long time to heap up—they comprise the sins of our youth, the sins of our manhood, the transgressions of our riper years—and it may be we have added to these the sins of our old age.

One may say, as he looks at his sin, “That is forty years’ work.” Another may mournfully confess, “That is seventy years’ accumulation.” If each sin deserves a tear, O to be a Naomi! For we have need that clouds and rains dwell in our eyes. Our souls have need of all the watery things that nature can produce. But we may dry our tears, for though many days were taken for the formation of the sin, the Lord says He will remove it all in one day. In one single day seventy years of sin are forever put away by our Lord Jesus—truly for this His name shall be called “WONDERFUL.”

Think, dear Brethren, that this iniquity could not have been removed by all the repenting in the world. Though a man should repent of sin, if it were possible, not for one day, but for twenty thousand years, yet he could not remove his sin by repentance. Man tries to act as a bleacher to his sin—he dips the stained garment into the strong liquid which is to make it white, hoping that some spots will be removed.

But when he takes it out again, if his eyes are clear, he says, “Alas, it seems as spotted as ever. I laid it to soak in that which I thought full surely would take out the stain, but so far as I can see, there is another stain added to the rest. I find myself worse instead of better. I must add a more pungent salt. I must use a stronger lye. I must make my tears more briny, I must fetch them up from the deep salt wells of my heart.”

He lays his vesture again to soak, but each time, as he takes it out, his own eyes become more keen and he sees more foulness in the garment than he had observed before. Then he goes and takes unto himself niter and much soap. But when he has used it all, when he has gone to his Church, when he has gone to his Chapel, when he has repeated his prayers, attended to ceremonies, done, I know not what, to prove the genuineness of his repentance—ah, the iniquity is still there, and will be there, and must be—let him do what he may. Yet what your repenting cannot do in thousands of years God can do for you, Sinner—and that in one single day!

The people of Israel had been chastised very severely. Many times they were carried away captive and pillaged and robbed. But as often as they were chastised they so often returned to their sins, till the Lord said, “Why should you be smitten any more? You will revolt more and more.” Now, what many years of chastisement could not remove, God’s mercy removed in a single day. Oh, how some of you have been flogged and whipped! You have lost your property, perhaps. You have lost your health, it may be, through early sin. You have lost the dearest friends you ever had.

You have been tried in body, tried in estate—but for all that you hug your sin, and the guilt of it still clings to you. Ah, but Jehovah Jesus can remove it in one day! What His Providence cannot do, his Grace can do. In one day Infinite Mercy can remove the sin. During all the years that Israel had sinned they had still offered sacrifices, but their sacrifices had never taken away sin. It is clear, since they had to offer the sacrifices every year, that their sins were not removed, for then no further sacrifice would have been needed.

So, my dear Hearer, no sacrifice of yours or mine can ever take away sin. There are still men in what is called this “enlightened nineteenth century” who impertinently claim to be a special caste of priests, and will offer a sacrifice on our behalf before God. Well, let them go on with their worship if they will. Let the priests of Baal cry aloud and spare not even to the chapter’s dreadful end—but no sin is ever put away in this fashion.

The one sacrifice of Christ upon Golgotha, the one sin-bearing of transgression upon Calvary has put away sin in one day, and put it away forever, so that no further sacrifice is wanted, no new blood, no new atonement—

“It is done, the great transaction’s done,”

Heaven is satisfied. Justice is content. Mercy has a free channel. God is glorified. In one day, without help, alone, solitary—God, in the Person of His Son—has put away the transgression of His elect, and put it away forever and ever.

Thus I might continue to show you the marvelous act of God in putting away iniquity in one day, because the pains of Hell, even, could not have removed sin, not even throughout eternity. Banished from God’s Presence, the sinner at the end of ten thousand times ten thousand years would be as guilty as he was before—and as liable, still, to bear the wrath of God. For him there is no hope that suffering could ever make atonement. He must, forever and forever, as long as God’s Word is true, lie under the weight of sin.

There ought to be, among Christians, no question about the doctrine of the eternity of punishment. There could be none if men were not wise above what is written, for if Heaven is eternal, Hell must be. "These shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." The two things are put together in such a way that you must doubt the one if you doubt the other. No, you cannot rightly believe God concerning the one side without believing Him as to the other, also.

But herein is the triumph of Christ. Dreadful as sin is, His Cross is more glorious! Awful as the transgression against God's Law is, so awful that none can measure its tremendous deeps, yet more glorious still is that most effectual Atonement which Christ has worked out and brought in—by which in one single day He has removed forever all the sin of His people. Oh, but this is a grand text! Who shall speak of it as he should? I wish that you would feel it, my dear Friends, and that would be better than my speaking upon it.

Let it be, then, literally stated, that in one single moment all the sin which lies upon a sinner can be swept away! The word "one day" is used to show that the act of God in forgiving sin is instantaneous. Christ in one day put away sin by His suffering and death. Faith brings Christ to us, and —

***"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through Christ's blood."***

The dying thief had not to wait a month to get pardon, or else he would have died unsaved. He did but say, "Lord, remember me," and the answer came, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." You may have begun this morning the blackest sinner out of Hell—you may, before this service is closed, if God's Grace meets with you—be pure through the precious blood. Who shall describe that wondrous change from darkness into marvelous light, from death into spiritual life? May the Eternal Spirit work such a change as that in you!

Remember, this change is not only possible to ordinary sinners, to such as have been moral and have kept within the bounds of the laws that regulate mankind in reference to themselves—but it is true of the very worst of sinners, the most degraded, depraved, abandoned—those who have gone to the utmost extravagance of transgression. One single day, faith being exercised, will put your guilt all away! One single word from the great King, "Absolvo te," "I absolve you," and all sin is gone!

She to whom Christ said, "Your sins which are many are forgiven you," received the pardon then and there. May that same voice in the power of the Spirit speak to some hearts today! And may they go out of this place justified, saying, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies—who is he that condemns?"

IV. One would like to linger here, but I must not. For we must notice, in the fourth place, WHO IT IS THAT REMOVES INIQUITY IN ONE DAY. Here is the point of the text, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." "I," "I," "I." That accounts for the wonder. What cannot God do? He can pluck the sun from his sphere, quench the lamps of night, shake the

heavens, and dry up the sea—nothing is impossible to God, nor too hard for Him.

“I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” When Jehovah puts His hand to a work, then it is done. All without Him must fail. But when He does it, how readily is it accomplished! It is always, “I,” when you come to the pardon of sin. “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.”

How He “I’s” it there! “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” Jehovah alone can say unto the soul, “I am your salvation. Who can forgive sins but God only.” He forgives all your iniquities. He laid our sins on Jesus, and He, therefore, Himself takes them away from us. It is the Lord that pardons, the Lord that cleanses evermore. Hope then, O worn-out Transgressor, bowed down with sin—what could not be done by others—*God* can do!

Tarry a moment over that word “I.” Let me take it and translate it. The “I” of Jehovah is not one, but three. To begin, then—“May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you,” for it is He who says, “I will remove the iniquity of that land.” He was laid as the one foundation stone of our hope, upon which seven eyes are fixed. He who was engraved with the graver’s tool when He was fastened to the Cross, and His side was pierced—He it is that has removed the iniquity of His people in one day, by bearing it, by making a recompense to Almighty Justice for it all.

See, then, the Crucified—He uplifts His pierced hands, He bares His open side, and He says—“Sinner, look to Me. I will remove your iniquity in one day.” But, “May the love of God be with you,” for it is the Father who says, “I will remove the iniquity of this land in one day.” The returning prodigal said, “Father, I have sinned,” and it was the father, the same offended father, who bid them take off his rags and kill for him the fatted calf. It was the father who rejoiced that his son that was lost was found, and that he who was dead was alive again. The Father, therefore, removes the sins of His children.

And, “May the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you,” for it is the Holy Spirit, also, who says, “I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day.” He brings the blood that Jesus shed, the Jesus that the Father gave. He applies it to the conscience, sprinkles it upon the heart, and makes those to be actually and experimentally cleansed who in God’s sight were cleansed by the death of Christ. “I will remove it.” Oh, did you ever feel within your heart the power of the Holy Spirit removing your iniquity in one day?

I shall never forget when my iniquity was removed. It was, indeed, in one single moment. Wretched I was, and more. My sins terrified, alarmed me—they haunted me day and night. They made me to sit on the doorstep of Hell. But how changed was the scene when I heard and understood that text, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” Then I was enabled to look to Jesus, and one look removed mountains. As I looked, my iniquity was forgiven, my joy was overflowing. I had to restrain myself and to do violence to my feelings in order to keep my seat.

If the Methodists cry out, “Hallelujah,” I could for once have cried out, “Hallelujah,” with the loudest of them! Oh, the bliss of pardon, when it comes by the Holy Spirit! You may hear about it, my Brethren—you may

read about it—and both of these are well in their way. I hope you will continue both to hear and read, but these are not enough. It is essential that you *receive* the Word with living power within from God Himself, against whom you have offended.

You can only find pardon and peace by looking to Jesus. The simple act of throwing yourself into His dear arms will bring it—nothing else will. It will come at once, come suddenly—and when it comes it will bring to you results of blessedness that shall know no end. “I,” says God, “I will do it.” “Give unto the Lord, then, you pardoned, give unto the Lord glory and strength! Give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His name.”

Take now your songs and go forth and sing, “O God, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.” If you choose your joy in that sweet verse of our poet you will do well—

***“Jesus is become at length,
My salvation and my strength!
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.
Praise you, then, His glorious name,
Publish His exalted fame,
Still His worth your praise exceeds
Excellent are all His deeds.”***

Continue till you mount to Heaven to sing, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory forever and ever.”

V. And now to conclude. The last point of the text is, WHAT STATE FOLLOWS PARDON. “They shall call every man his neighbor under the vine, and under the fig tree.” Yes, wherever pardon comes, peace follows. In times of war the fig trees are cut down, the vines are destroyed. And if not, the inhabitants are kept within doors and often are driven into the eaves of the earth for shelter.

But the picture before us in the text represents the people as sitting at ease in their gardens and in their courtyards, where the luxuriant vines yield them shelter. The words admirably picture a scene of peace—each man under his vine and fig tree. I wonder why it is people cannot quote Scripture rightly in prayer, but there are very few who ever do. How often have I heard, “They shall sit every man under his vine and fig tree, none daring to make them afraid.” I would like to find that in the Bible!

The text in Micah is, “And none shall make them afraid.” They dare do it, but they cannot do it. There is the point. They dare, but they cannot. The impudence of Satan is unlimited—he dares to do anything—but he cannot though he dares. Our text does not mention the fact, but it implies that no enemy can molest. A soul pardoned is a soul at peace. If God forgives me, nothing can distress me.

“Strike,” said Luther, “strike, Lord, if You will, for now You have forgiven me I will bear Your strokes and sing.” Oh, yes! If sin is pardoned, nothing can harm us. For us the poison is gone, the sting is departed, the evil is annihilated. We have in the pardon of sin an antidote for all that might have distressed us. We must and shall have peace.

But the text also implies neighborliness. They are not each one to sit under the vine, and under the fig tree, and say “Glory be to God I am a

pardoned man, I am saved, I do not care about my neighbors one bit.” No—he that is a gracious soul invites his neighbor, (for so it might run), invites him to commune with him! Grace is the most neighborly thing in the world. Christ’s people are called sheep, sheep are gregarious—you do not meet sheep one by one—they go in flocks. They love company, good company.

So you shall find the people of God. They are good company-keeping people. I do not mean that they have great entertainments, and care for idle chit-chat—but this is how they are described—“Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard.” Somebody said, “The good friends at the Tabernacle blocked up the steps a good deal after service by standing to talk with one another.” Well, if you talk about Christ, and things Divine, the more you talk the better—of holy conversation there need be no limit.

If you talk *against* your neighbor, be home with you! If you talk gossip and scandal, you have no right to do it on the Tabernacle steps—no! Where have you a right to do it? No where! Gossiping slander is at all times vile, but if our conversation is of Jesus, then the more we speak together, and the more sociable we are, the more the House of God on earth becomes like Heaven above. God save us from a stiff gentility that knows nobody because it does not know itself. May we, on the other hand, rejoice in what God has done for us and all His people, and, therefore, make ourselves familiar with the consecrated brotherhood of saints.

Do not only sit under the fig tree, but call each man your neighbor. Say, “Rejoice with me! Come and help my joy, I cannot rejoice alone. Come and hear, all you that fear God, I will tell you what God has done for my soul.” We will make even the heathen among whom we dwell to say, “The Lord has done great things for them.” And we will say, “Yes, the Lord has done great things for us whereof we are glad.” Christian sociability, Christian communion, Christian friendship, Christian communication the one with the other is a most desirable and fitting thing—and where sin is pardoned and peace is implanted it is quite sure to follow.

But I must note again there is not only peace and neighborliness in the text, but there is comfort. They might sit, and they might sit together in misery—but in this case they sit in comfort under the vine, its broad leaves giving them shade. They sit under the fig tree, too, finding a cool retreat from the heat of the day. And oh, how Believers, when they meet together in communion, what comfort they have in the Holy Spirit! I could not help rejoicing today over a good Sister who has been away from here a long time.

She had had a deal of trouble, and I praised God when she said, “Oh, but I should not have minded the trouble if I could have got to the Tabernacle on Sundays and weekdays, for there you could at least forget your troubles for an hour or two, and then go away strong to contend with them again.” Yes, and when sitting under the shadow of Christ, under the leaves of His Truth, under the droppings of His familiar love, Christian fellowship becomes very sweet. One almost feels, when Jesus draws near to our assemblies, that if Heaven is better than this, it must be very good,

indeed. We get such earnest anticipation of the joy of the glorified saints that we are fairly overcome with excessive delight!

But note, it was not only comfort they had, but substantial enjoyment and real supply of needs. They sat under the vine—then there was wine for them to drink. They sat under the fig tree—then there were figs for them to eat. So when God gives pardon and peace, He gives to our souls a satisfaction with good things. We find in Jesus Christ, if we sit under His shadow with delight, that His fruit is sweet unto our taste—

***“All my capacious powers can wish
In Christ do richly meet;
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.”***

Now, my Beloved Friends—you that are unsaved and remain so. I can understand that you seek company and that you will go and call every man his neighbor, “Come, let us make mirth, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die, let us break the Sabbath, let us break God’s bands asunder, and cast His cords from us.” I can understand that, and I think you also can understand that the company you keep on earth will be the company you will have to keep forever. “Bind them in bundles to burn them,” will be the Lord’s command. Like with like. They that depart from Christ on earth will hear Him say, “Depart, you cursed, forever.” O that you might be led to seek God, and then to seek His people!

But as for you that love God, I am sure if Grace is reigning in your hearts you will feel a yearning after holy company, and your company will be such as love what you love, such as hope to be with Jesus where you will be. “Oh, but God’s people have many faults!” My dear Friend, so have you, but despite all the faults of the Church—

***“My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains.
There may best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns.”***

There is no better company than the company that Christ keeps! There is no better house than the house that Christ inhabits. May we be willing to be doorkeepers in the House of God! May we, by God’s Grace, be glad to be the least in the Church, so long as we may be numbered among the chosen, redeemed by the blood of Jesus! May the Lord give us perfect pardon, perfect peace, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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

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

THE GOLDEN LAMP AND ITS GOODLY LESSONS NO. 1569

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

*“And the angel that talked with me came again and awakened me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep and said unto me, What do you see? And I said, I have looked and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it and it has seven lamps thereon and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl and the other upon the left side. And I answered again and said unto him, What are these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Don’t you know what these are? And I said, No, my lord. Then he said, These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”
Zechariah 4:1-3; 12-14.*

THE Prophet, as he tells us in the introduction to His vision, had to be awakened by the angel as one is awakened out of his sleep. His mind was dull and heavy. Perhaps he was weary and worn out. Do you not often feel a similar lethargy from which you need to be awakened before your mind is equal to the study of those Truths which God is revealing to your soul? May it not, then, be well, at the commencement of our meditation, to pray the Lord to awaken us as a man is awakened out of his sleep? A divinely mysterious power can brood over us and quicken us out of lethargy. Have you ever felt it? “Or ever I was aware my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” I had been slow before, but when the Spirit came, then was fulfilled that ancient proverb, “Draw me and I will run after You.”

The touch of the Holy Spirit makes our faculties strong, our powers of thought are greatly enlarged and we get the key to mysteries which we never had been able to unlock before. Come, blessed Spirit, then, to each one of Your slumbering children at this good hour and awaken us, that we may see what You would set before us! Like young Samuel, whom You called in his sleep, we would, each one, heartily say, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.”

Beloved Friends, we live in a world which is naturally shrouded in darkness. The “Prince of this world,” “the Prince of the power of the air” is a dark spirit loving ignorance and sin! This darkness hovers over all the world as it did over Egypt—a darkness that might be felt is upon the souls of men! We sometimes fear that this gloom will thicken into an awful midnight. When we mix up with men in the ordinary avocations of life and hear their profane language; when we see the angry passions, the earthly propensities and the worldly policies that prevail among people who are

held in repute among their fellow creatures, if we are children of God we cannot fail to be distressed that the world should still be so benighted and so destitute of that knowledge which purifies the heart.

Nearly 1,900 years have passed since the blessed feet of our Divine Master touched this globe and yet it still smokes beneath the hoof of the Wicked One! The sun has risen on this Egypt and yet a miserable midnight covers the guilty people. We are apt, therefore, to become somewhat desponding, lest the Light of the knowledge of God should gradually wane—till at length it shall utterly die out. What, then, would become of the world? If the one golden candlestick were taken out of its place—if those who are the light of the world should all be removed and if the sure Word of Prophecy which is like unto a light that shines in a dark place, should become extinct—what, then, would be the horrible darkness?

Now, I think the vision of Zechariah may remove all fear on that score. Rest you well assured that the lighthouse which God has lighted to guide men across the boisterous sea and preserve them from the peril of eternal shipwreck shall have its lamps trimmed throughout all time! Until the “Sun of Righteousness” shall rise, that lantern shall never go out, for the Lord will take care that the Light of God shall still shine, notwithstanding all that the powers of darkness may do, or devise to extinguish it. This one thought I beseech you so to grasp that it may strengthen your faith and comfort your hearts—the light of God’s Grace has been kindled never to be quenched! To this end I invite your attention to the interesting parable contained in the marvelous vision which Zechariah the Prophet beheld and described.

I. First, turn aside and see this great sight! Look, I beseech you, at THE WONDERFUL LAMP WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED TO LIGHT THE SONS OF MEN. “He said unto me, What do you see? And I said, I have looked and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it and it has seven lamps thereon and seven pipes to its seven lamps, which are upon the top.” Here is a candlestick that must challenge the notice of all who gaze at it, for it is of costly material and curious form—the work of wisdom fitted for the Holy Place of the tabernacle of the Most High! It resembles the candlestick whose pattern Moses received from God and yet, in some respects, it differs, as we shall see.

The object is scarcely more remarkable than its position. Note that it stood in the open. Under the old Covenant the candlestick stood within curtains where only priestly eyes might see it—it was hidden from the mass of the people. We are very apt to think that because the Jewish ritual was full of symbols, the worship of the people must have been of so materialistic a character that there was little or nothing to raise the soul to spiritual adoration of the Invisible One. But it was not so—to the average Israelite there was little more of symbol than to us. Although it is true that within the Holy Place there *were* many symbols, yet there were very few of God’s people who ever saw one of them and most probably we, ourselves, know far more about the types than the Jews ever did.

The worship was not visible to the camp, for it was within an enclosed space and when the people were settled in Canaan the actual temple area could only hold a few of the vast multitudes who inhabited the land. Within the Holy Place, the holiest of all, the “Holy of Holies,” no man ever

entered except the High Priest and he but once in the year so that they who worshipped God in the further parts of Palestine would, for the most part, not even see the Tabernacle or the Temple! And when they did go up to Jerusalem, they believed that the symbols were inside, behind the veil. Their worship had less of the visible about it than we are apt to imagine, for most of the material emblems were simply certified to them by testimony and not otherwise verified to their senses.

Then, as if to let us know that the Light of God did not yet fully shine among men and that the fullness of Grace and Truth had not yet been revealed, seeing Christ had not come, the seven-branched golden candlestick stood out of sight of the mass of the people, shut in within the curtains, enclosed within the Holy Place. But the lamp which Zechariah saw was in the open air! We are quite sure of this because he saw two olive trees growing, one on each side of it. It was, therefore, in an open space. Today, Beloved, "the veil of the temple is torn in two." What was mystery before has become plain to us now. Now we see Jesus and, seeing Jesus, we behold a Light such as never greeted the eyes of Prophets and kings. Though they longed to behold it, they died without the sight.

Let us take care that we keep this lamp in the open—do not let us suffer anyone to shut it up. Let the Gospel be preached plainly to the masses of the people. Let the adorable name of Jesus Christ be proclaimed in your street corners. In every place where you can have access to the sons of men, let it be known that there is salvation in none other than by Him and all that believe in Him shall obtain the forgiveness of sins. Some would cover up the golden lamp with ceremonial observances and others would hide it away under philosophical quibbles and theological jargon! But be it yours to be a "city set on a hill that cannot be hid" and what is said to you in secret, speak in the light—what you learn in closets—publish aloud upon the housetops!

Lift up the beacon that it may flame afar all over the land and across the sea! Let the blaze of Gospel light flare out till dwellers in the utmost parts of the earth shall ask, "What is this light? From where does it come?" and you shall answer, "It is the candlestick of the Lord once hidden among the peculiar people, but now set out before the nations in Christ Jesus! It was once concealed under type and emblem, but now made manifest by Him who speaks no more by parable, but tells us plainly of the Father."

Note, next, that it was a lamp of pure gold. This is a fact of much significance. We are emphatically told that it was a "candlestick all of gold." The major vessels of the tabernacle were all of gold and this, I think, indicates that the lamp which God has kindled is of the most precious kind. The Church, which may be said to represent this candlestick, is as God has made it—of pure gold. Those who are united together in the fellowship of the Church of God on earth should be a holy people, precious in the sight of the Lord, as gold is precious among metals. There should be no mixture of dross and tin, no careless reception of carnal men and mere formalists—but those who are elect of God, precious in His sight and honorable.

God's chosen should be choice men. The lamp which holds the golden light should itself be of gold! The Lord will not use an unholy church to be

His light-bearer and where there is an apostasy as to doctrine, an absence of spiritual life, or a defection as to holiness of conduct, He will not use such a church, lest His holy name be polluted among men! His candlestick is all of pure gold! His people are a “peculiar people,” “sanctified unto Himself,” “zealous of good works.” If any who seem to be religious delight themselves in sin—if they fail in purity—they have no power to give light. And because of their depravity they are as spots in our solemn feasts and mists that dim the brightness of our shining.

Ungodly churches are not the candles of the Lord! If men find pleasure in unrighteousness, they exert an influence baneful as the shadow of death. How can the Light of God shine from them while they serve the Prince of Darkness? What a mercy it is that God has set up a Church in the world which shall bear testimony to His name and shall scatter the Light abroad, because His Grace makes and keeps it “holiness unto the Lord”! Let us love the Church of God! We must never think that any one congregation, or any *thousand* congregations, can comprise the whole of that Church! It is not for us to say, “The temple of the Lord are we.” God forbid!

He has a people scattered up and down throughout the whole earth—He has a remnant even among churches which err from the faith who have still kept their garments unspotted from the world, “And they shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels.” Let us pray for the Church militant, the entire body of His elect, the redeemed of the Lord, the quickened of the Spirit, the called-out ones, the true ecclesiae, the assemblies of the Lord, for these are they that are His candlesticks, standing in the open as a “city set upon a hill that cannot be hid,” holding forth the Word of Life, that all who see the Church in its life and the Church in its testimony may behold the Light of God!

This wonderful candlestick, all of gold, you will observe, is lit with golden oil. Such is the expression used in our text. At the 12th verse, we read, “Which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves.” The quality of the oil is, doubtless, here commended, for I suppose it means the very best possible oil of a rich golden color and in value, in splendor, in purity and in clearness excellent beyond all praise. This represents that precious doctrine, that golden Truth of God, that fullness of Gospel Grace which keeps alive the Light of the Church of God. Or may it not remind us of the Divine Spirit, who, coming into His Church and imparting to her the golden oil of His Graces and gifts, enables her to maintain her brilliance of testimony and to scatter her Light among the sons of men.

The Holy Spirit is also the flame by which the oil is kindled and made to burn and give its light—and thus we have the Truth of God on a blaze with sacred fervor—sound doctrine united with intense zeal—and all because the Spirit of Truth is present and reveals Himself at the same time as the Spirit of Power! We will say of this golden oil that it is the Truth, the living and incorruptible Word of God. This is the oil which the Church must burn and with this she must trim her lamps. No strange doctrines, no vain traditions, no scientific conjectures, no poetical reveries, no thoughts of men, no excogitations of human brains, but the revealed Word of God, the Truth as Jesus Christ has given it to us! The Truth as the Holy

Spirit has revealed it in the sacred Book! The Truth as He brings it home with Divine power to our understanding and conscience.

This it is that we must use and we must take care that if we have it, we empty it out of ourselves into the golden pipes that they may never be without sacred oil to keep the flame alive! Precious beyond all conception is the Truth of God! God will not be served with falsehood, but in Truth is His delight. Take care that you bring nothing here but the best of the best, nothing but the unadulterated olive oil of Revelation. What blunders and mistakes we make in the management of our own business! Should not this make us very careful in doing the work of the Lord that we do it not in a slovenly manner and so provoke Him to anger?

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope we desire to be clean before God as to His Truth. I pray you not to trifle with it! Never tack with the wind of public opinion, but watch, if necessary, while the world lasts and wait for the fulfillment of God's Word and be assured that it will surely come to pass. Though you may well be tolerant of error in others, since you are so liable to it yourselves, yet be jealous of your own hearts and keep out of them every false doctrine. "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." If there is any adulteration of the oil, the lamps will burn but dimly—perhaps they will go out. This golden lamp shone with a sevenfold brightness! There were seven lamps to this golden candlestick and there were seven pipes to the seven lamps—and, as some read it, there were seven pipes to each one of these lamps, so that it gave seven times the light that the old lamp of the Temple ever gave.

The suggestion has been hazarded that there were seven times seven pipes and the Hebrew might allow of such a translation. At any rate, there was seven times more light given by this mystic lamp seen by Zechariah than had ever been given by the candlestick of the old dispensation. God has given us Light enough to flood the world with, today, in the generous Gospel that is preached among all nations. The light of the Law all but blinded the dim eyes of the Jew, but oh, the Light of the Gospel! How it has sometimes overpowered all our senses! Saul of Tarsus tells us that about noon, suddenly there shone a great light round about him and he fell to the earth. So, too, many of us can testify that when the Glory of God in the salvation of a lost sinner first flashed upon our souls, we were so amazed that no strength remained in us!

"Dissolved by His goodness we fell to the ground and wept to the praise of the mercy we found." Overpowering was the effect when the brilliance of Gospel Light beamed upon our weak eyes at first and even now, though the Lord has strengthened our spiritual sight so that we rejoice in the Light, it is still, at times, more than we can bear! What a glory it has! Vain men ask us to delight ourselves with the sparks they have kindled! Let it suffice that our Light renders all the flashes of natural joy, things too dim to notice! They tell us of something new they have thought up. To their apprehension, no doubt, it seems very wonderful. They may strike their matches and light their candles if they will—we are more than satisfied with the Eternal Sun!

You may bring your ancient lamps from Rome. You may fetch your tapers from Oxford and the Anglican imitators of Rome, but the lamp which the Holy Spirit has kindled by the Divine Word is better than all the glare

of Antichrist! This despised Book has seven times more light than all the solons of antiquity or all the glare of modern times. There is none like it! Only have eyes to see it and you shall rejoice in this Light! It is the Light of God, Himself! Spread it, then, if you have it and let it shine in your families! Let it shine on the town or city where you dwell! Let it shine all over the earth, for there is no such light as the Light of the Eternal Gospel, “the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Oh that all saw it and loved it and lived in it!

II. Thus have I spoken about the wonderful lamp. Now, I ask those of you who love the study of God’s Word to follow me a little in considering the description that is given of THE COMPLETE MACHINERY, THE PERFECT APPARATUS PROVIDED FOR THIS LAMP. If you notice, it was a “Candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it and it has seven lamps thereon and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl and the other upon the left side.” We do not read anything about pipes and bowls in the old Temple lamp. I suppose that each one of its seven lights had to be fed distinctly and separately by the officiating priest with a separate portion of oil, but in this case there seems to have been a bowl at the top of the seven branches into which the golden oil first entered and from which it flowed out again and thus each of the branch lights was fed.

At any rate, you see that a complete apparatus was provided and is described. The details are given. The pipes, bowl and so on were all arranged with exquisite precision. Correspondingly, in the Church of God we ought to pay much attention to detail. I do not think we look to it half as much as we should. If the lamps are to be kept trimmed, you must attend to the pipes and you must see to the golden oil. We ought, each man, to think, “Now, I have something to do to keep this candlestick in proper order. I have something to do with keeping this lamp burning.” One man may be compared, as it were, to the bowl because he yields much of the light of intelligence and instruction, communicating knowledge and counsel to the Church of God.

Another is a pipe to the Sunday school and yet another golden pipe runs to the young men’s class. One is a pipe to the poor and ignorant in the streets, another to the sick, another is a golden pipe to those who are at home with their families. There is some point to which each one in Christ’s Church may help to conduct the golden oil to keep the blessed flame of the Truth of God always burning in this dark world. I want you, Brothers and Sisters, to look, one and all of you, after the details of Church work. Especially in a Church of such magnitude as this, with such a multiplicity of agencies, attention to detail is most requisite. What can one overseer do? What could 20 pastors do? It is impossible if you leave this work entirely to us that it will ever be properly discharged.

Oh no—let each member have its own office in the body, even as each pipe had its own oil to carry to the one light of the candlestick which it had to supply. Do not get out of your place, do not interfere with other people’s service—do your own work and see that it is well done and then look over all the Church and pray the Lord to supervise the whole, so that the golden bowl and the golden pipes may all be in full operation. Of this machinery which is thus mentioned in detail there seems to have been an

abundance. If there were seven pipes to each one of the lights of the lamp, (and I think it was so), there could have been no lack of service. So, beloved Friends, we must mind that the Church in her machinery is ever kept abundantly supplied!

We ought not to be slack in our labors nor scanty in our equipments. The everlasting Gospel should be promulgated with great energy and varied service. Little oil will mean little light—little Grace will mean little work for God and little Glory to His blessed name. But let us endeavor to make every arrangement more effective. The light might not be extinguished even in one pipe—to the completeness of the Divine design every light must be in good order. Be it our aim to keep the seven pipes constantly flowing and feeding so as to convey a sevenfold measure of oil that the light may burn steadily on from hour to hour till the Lord comes! This apparatus still further suggests to us the idea of unity. As I have already said, there were seven distinct lights to the old lamp of the Jewish sanctuary and these could be individually filled—but here they are all one.

One bowl is filled with oil and from it the oil runs down the pipes to each of the lights. So is there unity in the Church. We all suffer if one suffers! We are all the better if one is in a prosperous condition. No man lives to himself and no man dies to himself. Though I speak of myself now as a fool, yet, it is true—if I decline in Grace I injure all of you, more or less, and you, also, in some measure, exert a like influence upon me, though not to the same extent, because you do not occupy the same public station. Every member of the Church who grows poor in Grace impoverishes all the rest in some degree. We act and react upon each other. I am sure the preacher can do injury to the hearer and the hearer can, in measure, injure the preacher. Let your Grace decline and your prayerfulness be restrained and the pastor must feel the loss and his ministry will bear melancholy evidence that the Spirit of God is not witnessing mightily among us.

So instead of one enriching the other we may, by sinful neglect, mutually endanger our prosperity—no, we may beggar each other and become partners in destitution and distress! May it never be so with us, but may we always prove ourselves to be a warm-hearted, loving, prayerful people who are so glowing ourselves that we warm up those that are cold and kindle fresh life in those that are expiring! Then if the whole congregation is consecrated to God and the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ gladdens them all and they are filled with the fruits of righteousness, the minister can never be dull and drowsy—his heart will be aglow with sacred fervor and his preaching will be resplendent with Divine Light and fire!

The pews will respond to the pulpit! Fire will kindle to a flame and the flame will kindle fresh fire! Vitality will promote revival—our tone will be spirited and inspiriting! A breath from the four winds will make a stir among the dry bones and an army shall presently arise. The force of sympathy shall be felt and oh, free commerce in all our holy gifts will flourish in our commonwealth! Oh may it be so! I know it is desirable and I feel that it will be attained. Nor is it merely for one Church we are thus anxious—*all* the Churches need the same consecration. If one Church is dull, it injures other Churches. All the Churches of Jesus Christ are really one and, as even my little finger cannot be ailing without my head suffering in

consequence, so even the smallest Church in the most remote village cannot decline without the entire body of the faithful, whether it is known to themselves or not, being losers thereby.

Look well, then, to every portion of the apparatus of this golden lamp—examine its details—keep it well trimmed and abundantly supplied. Remember its unity, for with all its many pipes, it is but one candlestick.

III. But the most remarkable disclosure in this vision was THE MYSTERIOUS SUPPLY BY WHICH THESE LAMPS ARE KEPT BURNING. There were no priests to trim these lamps, nor is mention made of anyone being appointed to keep them in order! No golden snuffers nor golden snuff dishes were used. Nor was any oil brought by any living man to replenish them. That is remarkable! Moreover there is no mention of oil being given by the people. The lamp in the Temple was fed by the offerings of the people—they brought the best oil to keep the lamp perpetually burning before the altar. There is nothing of the kind here—that is not the way by which this oil gets to the lamp in the vision before us. Neither by priest nor people is it supplied.

But how, then? Why simply by a natural process without any machinery—for there are two olive branches—“Two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl and the other upon the left side. And these trees in this vision empty the golden oil out of themselves through the two golden pipes and so the marvelous lamp is kept supplied! It is a very amazing picture which is now before you, oil flowing directly from the living tree and at once creating light! Ordinarily, when the olive tree yields its berries, they must be taken to the mill and ground before oil can be produced. I have gone into the olive mill, myself, and seen the great stones crushing the berries and I have seen the other processes by which the olive oil is prepared for the lamp—but there is no mention, here, of any mill, or press, or strainer, or jar, or bottle of oil.

The food of this light does not come in that way at all, but the tree grows and, in a mysterious way imparts its fatness to the bowl from the pipe and in this way the flame is fed. Thus we are shown that the Light of God is not dependent upon human will or human skill! It is an apt illustration of the text we were reading just now which lights up the whole chapter. “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.” Not by your grinding out your oil by laboriously turning the mill of study, nor by your contributions of wealth, nor by your eloquence and logic, but by Divine agency shall living men be raised up and through these living men shall come the wondrous golden oil of Grace by which the lamp of testimony shall be kept bright and the darkness of the world shall be overcome!

At first sight the provision may appear to be inadequate to the purpose. For God to make two olive trees grow by the side of the candlestick seems, at first, to be a deficient arrangement because the trees stand out so separate from the lamp that we cannot perceive any connection between them. Had I beheld that vision as the Prophet saw it, I feel I should have been as perplexed as he was. I would have said, “What are these?” I could not have made it out. Two olive trees growing by the side of a candelabrum! What connection can there be between them and it? But that is the very pith of the vision! You are to be shown the unique manner in which the

Lord keeps His Church burning and shining without mechanism. He simply raises up chosen men, perhaps only two, sometimes more, who live and grow and in their life and growth they bring forth, by God's Grace, as from their very souls, the sacred Truth of God—the holy oil with which the lamp of God is kept burning!

I suppose that the two olive trees represent, in this case Joshua, the High Priest, of whom we read that his filthy garments were taken away and he was clothed with change of raiment. And Zerubbabel, of whom we read in this chapter that his hands had laid the foundation and his hands should finish the house. These were the two men whom God strengthened and enabled to set up a standard because of the Truth of God. The Lord qualified them to build the Temple that He might be glorified. Those two men, by Divine Grace, carried out the Lord's design, moving the people to the sacred service. Joshua was made the ruler and teacher of the people and Zerubbabel was promised that his hands should lay the top stone, as his hands had laid the foundation of the Temple. And this, too, when Judah's lamp burned dim and her light was well-near gone out!

These two, though they were nothing in themselves but godly men, who, like living trees, brought forth fruit unto God, should be the means, according to the appointment of God, of keeping up the sacred Testimony so long as they lived. Such means certainly appear insignificant in comparison with the magnificent result to be achieved. But that is God's way of working—He generally works by ones or twos and when He uses two, He couples them well. In the missions of the Lord's ordaining we observe Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, Calvin and Luther, Whitefield and Wesley.

Foolish persons rail at a one-man ministry, but what can they say against a two-man ministry? To the end of time there will be two witnesses—representative men will rise in pairs and do the work of the Lord so as to awaken the whole Church. Little as the world may think of them at the time, men do arise whose influence wonderfully displays the power of God, for they are made to stand like olive trees and, by some mysterious means, it is through them that the lamp of God is kept burning continuously! Of these two men I want you to notice two things. You wonder how it is that God should speak of them as keeping the lamp burning. He does so speak of them, for He says, "These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

First, remember that they are able to do this because they stand before the Lord of the whole earth! Those whom God chooses to do His work stand as His servants in His sight—they could do *nothing* of themselves or by themselves, but their testimony comes from God and their unction is of the Holy One and they are clothed with Divine energy—otherwise they would be weak as the rest of their brothers. Then be sure of this that they have been anointed—they are said to be "anointed ones." We have no power to pour forth oil till we have been, ourselves, anointed. It is not possible that we should feed the holy Light until God has worked in us the will of His own good Spirit. These men are said to have been filled with the Spirit of God according to the sixth verse—"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord."

There is Joshua! You can see him. He is clad in filthy garments! Is this the Lord's High Priest? Is this he that is to instruct the people? Is he the man who wears garments that are old and soiled and foul? Yes, that is the man! "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts," and My Spirit shall rest upon this poor Joshua, this brand plucked out of the burning and he shall teach My people! There is the other man over yonder—Zerubbabel. He is a poor, timid creature. It is the day of small things with him. He has but little confidence. God has to chide him and say, "Who has despised the day of small things?" But he is the man before whom the mountain shall become a plain! He is the man that shall build the Temple of the Lord because the Spirit of God shall be upon Him—"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."

You will always find that when God chooses men to do His work, He makes it palpable to everybody that they are nothing but men. Sometimes they have imperfections over which we mourn very much and over which they mourn far more than we do! But these manifest tokens of their infirmity show more distinctly the infinite skill of Him who uses such poor instruments. The frailty of the earthen vessels is made evident so that the excellency of the power which is of God and not of them may be the more conspicuous! So it is with God's work, for He will have it known that it is not by charm of eloquence, nor by force of reasoning, but by His Spirit that He operates with resistless power! He takes men, poor humble men that seem no more able to trim the golden lamp than two olive trees would be and He works by them to the praise of the Glory of His Grace!

Yet these men must be full of faith. "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain." I doubt not that Zerubbabel grasped that promise, relied upon it and rejoiced in it and proved himself to be a man of faith. God will use us, whatever our faults are, if we have faith! I do not know what use He could make of any man who has no faith. Read the 11th chapter of Hebrews and notice on what strange men God set the seal of His approbation because they had faith. Samson may be quoted as an extreme case—speaking after the manner of men we might have thought that God would have set him aside, altogether, because there were such serious flaws in his character. Yet he was a great child-man who, with all his faults, believed in God and, perhaps, believed more in God than many who were far better than he in other respects.

With a thousand enemies before him, only think of that *one* man, daring, through His confidence in God, to fling himself upon them all—with no weapon except a poor ass's jawbone! Look! He leaps upon the crowd! "Heaps upon heaps. With the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men." He never counted the odds. He just went at it, believing that God would help him, however tremendous the struggle might be. So when they put him, blind as he was, into that huge temple of the Philistine gods where everything was so strong and massive that it could bear up all the Philistine lords up there in the gallery, he begins feeling for the pillars. This poor blind man, whose hair had been shorn and who had been made a prisoner by his bitter adversaries, feels for the huge columns, believing that God would enable him to snap them like reeds, or rock them to and fro as bulrushes!

Oh what a desperate and glorious tug was that! What a transcendent act of faith when he bowed himself with all his might and pulled the structure down upon the heads of his oppressors! A glorious faith animated him! He was a poor specimen of propriety in many respects—he was made of strange stuff—but there was grandeur in his faith and *that* saved him! O my dear Brother, if you can believe God, God can use you! But if you have no faith, or if you have but a weak, trembling faith, your unbelief will hinder the Lord and it will be said of you, “God could not do many mighty works by him, because of his unbelief.”

Oh, if we could believe more implicitly and venture to act more unreservedly on the certainty of the covenanted promises, what exploits we might achieve! The limit of our usefulness is narrowly set by our lack of confidence in God. If we had more faith, the harvests we reap which yield tenfold, might yield fifty-fold, or a hundred-fold! With more faith the weakest of us might be as David and David would be as the Angel of the Lord! God grant us His Grace that we may so believe and rely upon His sure Word that we may become men fit for His use and profitable for His service. One thing more is prominent and unmistakable about these men—these olive-tree men that fed the lamp and kept it burning—they ascribed all their success to Grace, for it is said that when the top stone of the Temple should be brought out there should be shouts of, “Grace, Grace, unto it.”

If souls are saved, it is always by a ministry of Grace! Whatever else is left out in a soul-saving testimony, there must be a clear ring as to Grace! Election by the Grace of the Father, regeneration by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, remission of sins by the Grace of God through the atoning blood of Jesus—Grace beginning, continuing and perfecting! I like the word, “Grace,” even when it is coupled with an adjective and spoken of as, “Sovereign Grace,” “Free Grace,” “Effectual Grace”—and all those whom God will bless must be men that love His Grace and feel His Grace and preach His Grace—for this is the very essence of the golden oil by which the lamp is trimmed. These men, or rather these trees, emptied out the golden oil, “out of themselves.”

They did not *make* the golden oil—it came into them by the miraculous power of God—the process was beyond Nature! Men cannot create Grace any more than trees could prepare oil themselves. Olive trees cannot distil oil without a press, nor can men be the means of Grace to others unless God shall cause them to be so and then they empty out themselves to a good and gracious purpose. Well, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you want to know how to be useful, one of the things that is absolutely necessary is that you empty yourselves out! Do you expect to give anything to another without losing it yourself? You will be mistaken! Take it as a general rule that nothing can come *out* of you that is not *in* you and as the next general rule it takes something out of you to give something to other people.

Paul said he did not merely wish to impart the Gospel to the people, but himself, also. Though he did not preach himself, yet he was willing to spend and be spent so long as he could bring souls to Christ. I believe the difference between the result of the labor of one man and another is often this—one gives more out from himself than another. I am acquainted with some very learned Brothers of mine who do not feed many people. They

are huge barrels of learning, like the Heidelberg wine cask and they are full to the brim with the best wine in the world, but never much comes out! On the other hand, I have never, myself, been anything but a very small cask but I let everything run out that is put into me. If you have not 10 talents to boast of, turn the one talent you have over and over and over again and you will make far more of it than if you let many talents lie still and rust.

Take care that you are actively earnest in the cause of the Master and a blessing will surely come out of it. Oh how it shows the wisdom of God and the power of God when He makes simple means produce surprising results and, by feeble instruments, compasses His infinite forethoughts! God might have been glorified by doing the work Himself, as when of old He stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, speaking and it was done. But He is far more glorified by using poor, unworthy creatures for the accomplishment of His Divine purposes! When Quintin Matsys made the celebrated well-cover at Antwerp, it would have been highly creditable to him even if he had used the best of implements to make it with.

When we are told, however, that his fellow workmen robbed him of his tools and that he did it with one common hammer or some such instrument, our estimation of the artist's skill is greatly enhanced. It is no wonder that the Spirit of God can, Himself, convert souls—the wonder is that He converts men by us! That we, who are so imperfect and so feeble, should become channels of blessing is a great marvel! Those two olive trees might, it was feared, grow in the way of the light, but God made them to be its maintainers! The branches of our infirmity might hide the light from the people's eyes if Grace did not intervene and make every one of them yield its olives and pour out its measure of oil for the supply of the golden candelabrum!

Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, if you have the Light of God, shed it! If you have Grace, endeavor to impart it! The Lord has blessed you—ask Him to bless you *more* by His Holy Spirit. Let those olive trees, yielding abundance of oil, be your model that your lively vigor may prove of lasting value to the Church. So be the Lord with you from now on and forever. Amen and amen!

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

INDEPENDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

NO. 149

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.”
Zechariah 4:6.***

GOD’S first and greatest object is His own glory. There was a time, before all time, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days. When God dwelt alone in the magnificence of His sublime solitude. Whether He should create, or not create was a question depending upon the answer to another question—would it be to His honor or not? He determined that He would glorify Himself by creating. But, in creating, beyond all doubt, His motive was His glory. And since that time, He has ever ruled the earth and even blessed it with the same object in His infinite mind—His own glory and honor.

Lesser motive for God to have were less than Divine. It is the highest position to which you or I could attain, to live for God. And the very highest virtue of God is for Him to magnify Himself in all His greatness as the Infinite and the Eternal. Whatever, then, God permits or does, He does with this one motive—His own glory. And even salvation, costly though it was and infinitely a benefaction to us, had for its first object and for its grand result the exaltation of the Being and of the attributes of the Supreme Ruler.

Now, as this is true in the general of the great acts of God, this is equally true in the minutiae of them. It is true that God has a Church, that that Church has been redeemed and will be preserved for His glory. And it is equally true that everything that is done to the Church, in the Church, or for the Church either with the permission or by the power of God, is for God’s glory, as well as for the Church’s welfare. You will notice, in reading Scripture, that whenever God has blessed the Church, He has secured Himself the glory of the blessing, though they have had the profit of it.

Sometimes He has been pleased to redeem His people by might but then He has so used the might and power that all the glory has come to Him and His head alone has worn the crown. Did He smite Egypt and lead forth His people with a strong hand and outstretched arm? The glory was not to the rod of Moses but to the Almighty power which made the rod so potent. Did He lead His people through the wilderness and defend them from their enemies? Still, did He, by teaching the people their dependence upon Him, preserve to Himself all the glory. Moses nor Aaron among the priests or Prophets could share the honor with Him.

And tell me, if you will, of slaughtered Anak and the destruction of the tribes of Canaan. Tell me of Israel's possessing the promised land. Tell me of Philistines routed and laid heaps on heaps, of Midianites made to fall on each other. Tell me of kings and princes who fled apace and fell until the ground was white like the snow in Salmon. I will say of every one of these triumphs, "Sing you *to the Lord*, for *He* has triumphed gloriously." And I will say at the end of every victory, "Crown *Him*, crown *Him*, for *He* has done it. And let *His* name be exalted and extolled, world without end."

Sometimes, however, God chooses not to employ the agency of power. If He chooses to save, by might and by power, it is that glory may be unto Him. And when He says, "Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord," it is still with the same object and the same desire, that we may be led—

***"To give to the King of kings renown,
The Lord of Lords with glory crown,"***

God is jealous of His own honor. He will not suffer even His Church to be delivered in such a way as to honor men more than God. He will take to Himself the Throne without a rival. He will wear a crown that never head did wear and sway a scepter that never hand has grasped, for as truly as He is God, the earth shall know that He and He alone has done it and unto Him shall be the glory.

Now, my objects this morning will be to glorify God by showing to you, who love the Savior, that the preservation and the triumph of the Church are both of them to be accomplished, not by might, nor by power but by the Spirit of God, in order that all the honor might be to God and none of it to man. I shall divide my text very simply. It divides itself. First, *not by might*. Secondly, *nor by power*. Thirdly *but by My Spirit*.

You will ask me whether there is any distinction to be drawn between these two words, "NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER." I answer, yes. The best Hebrew scholars tell us that the "might," in the first place, may be translated, "army." The Septuagint does so translate it. It signifies power *collectively*—the power of a number of men combined together. The second word, "power," signifies the prowess of a single individual, so that I might paraphrase my text thus—"Not by the combined might of men laboring to assist each other, nor by the separate might of any single hero, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." And now you will see the distinction which is not without a difference.

To begin, then, the preservation and the triumph of the Church cannot be accomplished BY MIGHT—that is, not by might collectively.

First, let us consider that collected might to represent *human armies*. The Church, we affirm, can neither be preserved nor can its interests be promoted by human armies. We have all thought otherwise in our time and have foolishly said when a fresh territory was annexed to our empire, "Ah! what a Providence that England has annexed India"—or taken to itself some other territory. "Now a door is opened for the Gospel. A Christian power will necessarily encourage Christianity and seeing that a

Christian power is at the head of the Government, it will be likely that the natives will be induced to search into the authenticity of our Revelation and so great results will follow.

“Who can tell but that at the point of the British bayonet, the Gospel will be carried and that by the edge of the true sword of valiant men, Christ’s Gospel will be proclaimed?” I have said so myself—and now I know I am a fool for my pains and that Christ’s Church has been also miserably fooled. For this I will assert and prove, too, that the progress of the arms of a Christian nation is not the progress of Christianity. And that the spread of our empire, so far from being advantageous to the Gospel, I will hold and this day proclaim, has been hostile to it.

We will just confine our attention for a moment or two to India. I believe that British rule there has been useful in many ways. I shall not deny the civilizing influence of European society. Or that great things have been done for humanity. But I do assert and can prove it, that there would have been greater probability of the Gospel spreading in India if it had been let alone, than there has been ever since the domination of Great Britain. You thought that when Christians, as you called them, had the land, they would favor religion. Now I will state a fact which ought to go through the length and breadth of the land. It does not rest on hearsay, I was informed of it a little while ago by a clergyman, upon whose memory the fact is vividly impressed.

A Sepoy in a certain regiment was converted to God by a missionary. He proposed to be baptized and become a Christian. Mark, not a Christian after our way and fashion, as a Baptist, or an Independent or a Methodist. But a Christian according to the fashion of the Episcopalian Church established in this realm. He was seen by the chaplain and was received as a Christian. What do you think became of that Sepoy? Let the East India Company blush forever. He was stripped of his regimentals, dismissed from service and sent home because he had become a Christian! Ah, we dreamed that if the Sepoy had the power they would help us! Alas, the policy of greed cannot easily be made to assist the Kingdom of Christ.

But I have another string to my bow. I believe that the help of Government would have been far worse than its opposition. I do regret that the Company sometimes discourages missionary enterprise. But I believe that had they encouraged it, it would have been far worse still, for their encouragement would have been the greatest hindrance we could receive. If I had tomorrow to go to India to preach the Gospel, I should pray to God, if such a thing could be, that He would give me a black face and make me like a Hindu. For otherwise I should feel that when I preached I should be regarded as one of the lords—one of the oppressors.

It may sometime be added—and I should not expect my congregation to listen to me as a man speaking to men, a Brother to Brother, a Christian full of love—but they would hear me and only object to me, because even my white face would give me some appearance of superiority. Why in England, our missionaries and our clergymen have assumed a kind of superi-

ority and dignity over the people. They have called themselves clergy and the people laity. And the result has been that they have weakened their influence. I have thought it right to come among my fellow men and be a man among men, just one of themselves, their equal and their friend. And they have rallied around me and not refused to love me.

And I should not expect to be successful in preaching the Gospel unless I might stand and feel that I am a Brother, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. If I cannot stand before them thus, I cannot get at their hearts. Send me, then, to India as one of the dominant ruling race and you give me a work I cannot accomplish when you tell me to evangelize its inhabitants. In that day when John Williams fell in Erromanga you wept, but it was a more hopeful day for Erromanga than the day when our missionaries in India first landed there. I had rather go to preach to the greatest savages that live, than I would go to preach in the place that is under British rule.

Not for the fault of Britain but simply because I, as a Briton, would be looked upon as one of the superiors, one of the lords and that would take away much of my power to do good. Now, will you just cast your eye upon the world? Did you ever hear of a nation under British rule being converted to God? Mr. Moffat and our great friend Dr. Livingstone have been laboring in Africa with great success and many have been converted. Did you ever hear of Kaffir tribes protected by England ever being converted? It is only a people that have been left to themselves and preached to by men as men, that have been brought to God.

For my part, I conceive that when an enterprise begins in martyrdom, it is none the less likely to succeed. But when conquerors begin to preach the Gospel to those they have conquered—it will not succeed, God will teach us that it is not by might. All swords that have ever flashed from scabbards have not aided Christ a single grain. Mohammedans' religion might be sustained by scimitars but Christians' religion must be sustained by love. The great crime of war can never promote the religion of peace. The battle and the garment rolled in blood are not a fitting prelude to "peace on earth, goodwill to men." And I do firmly hold that the slaughter of men—bayonets and swords and guns have never yet been and never can be, promoters of the Gospel.

The Gospel will proceed without them but never through them. "Not by might." Now don't be fooled again if you hear of the English conquering in China. Don't go down on your knees and thank God for it and say it's such a heavenly thing for the spread of the Gospel—it is not. Experience teaches you that and if you look upon the map you will find I have stated only the truth—that where our arms have been victorious, the Gospel has been hindered rather than not. So that where South Sea Islanders have bowed their knees and cast their idols to the bats, British Hindus have kept their idols. And where Bechuanas and Bushmen have turned unto the Lord, British Affairs have not been converted—not perhaps because

they were British but because the very fact of the missionary being a Briton, put him above them and weakened their influence.

Hush your trump, O War—put away your gaudy trappings and your bloodstained drapery if you think that the cannon with the Cross upon it is really sanctified. And if you imagine that your banner has become holy, you dream a lie. God does not want you to help His cause. “It is not by armies, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord.”

Now, understanding this word “might,” in another sense, to *signify great corporations*, or, as we say, denominations of men. Nowadays, people get a strange notion in their head and they form what they call a denomination. It is all wrong. There never ought to have been any denominations at all, for according to Scripture, every Church is independent of every other. There ought to have been as many separate Churches as there were separate opinions. Denominations, which are the gathering up of those Churches, I take it, ought not to have existed at all. They may do some good but they do a world of mischief. Now, when first a denomination starts it is very much opposed. Take, for instance, Methodism.

How earnest were its first preachers, how indefatigably did they toil and how incessantly were they persecuted. Yet what a harvest of souls God gave to them! What a great blessing was showered from the cloud that first started at Oxford, with those few young men preaching the everlasting Gospel! Methodism goes on till it grows to be a most respectable kind of society, its ramifications extend all over England and it has societies in every country—and now—God forbid I should say anything against Methodism—let those who like it believe it. I do not like it—but I do say now, when they have come to the greatest, is the time when they are doing the least.

They will confess that the ancient power of Methodism has to a great degree failed. That power which once seemed to turn the world upside down and set the whole of the Churches on fire with a Divine light and life is to a great degree quenched. Wars and rumors of wars are in their camp, till, what with new connections and old connections, reformed and confessional and an infinite quantity of names, one does not know into how many fraternities they intend to divide themselves.

The fact is that just when the corporation began to be the greatest, God said, “Now then. You have done your work, to a great degree. It shall not be by you any longer. Not by might, not by your allied forces. You have said your efforts will cover the earth with the Gospel.” “Now,” says God, “I will diminish you by thousands. I will take off your roll year by year as many as would make another denomination strong. And though you shall still exist, you shall have to weep and repent with bitterness because of your departed zeal.” It is just the same with every other denomination.

When we Baptists were reckoned to be the poorest lot in the world and everybody sneered at us, we did far more good than we do now. There was far more pure doctrine and far better preaching than there is at the present time. But we began to be respectable—and just as we began to be re-

spectable we began to lose our power. Every fresh Gothic Baptist Chapel was a diminution of simplicity. And every fresh place where the minister become intellectual, as it was called, was just a loss of evangelical might. Till now, as a denomination, we are just as low as any other—and we need some of our old leaders again—just to preach the Word with demonstration and with power and to overthrow all those grand conventionalisms which have tried to make the Baptist denomination respectable.

I pray to God I may never be called to preach to a much applauded congregation. It would be a sad and evil day. To be despised, to be spit upon, to be caricatured and to be jeered is the highest honor that a Christian minister can have. And to be pampered, flattered and applauded by men is a poor, base thing, that is not worth having. If any come here and say, “They are not a respectable sort.” We reply, “we labor to preach to the poor.” But mark this, whenever a great denomination begins to get too great, God will cut away its horns and take away its glory till the world shall say, “It is not by might nor by power.”

And now I shall give one more application of the word “might.” It is so with one particular Church just as I have been observing. I tremble for the Church of which I am the pastor. I never trembled for it when we were few. When we were earnest in prayer and devout in supplication. When it was a thing of contempt to go into “that miserable Baptist Chapel on Park Street.” When we were despised and maligned and slandered. I never trembled for us then—God was blessing the ministry—souls were saved and we walked together in the fear of the Lord and in love. But I tremble for it now—now that God has enlarged our borders and given us to count our members not by tens but by hundreds—now that we can say we are the largest Baptist Church in England.

I tremble now because now is just the time when we shall begin to say, “We are a great people.” “We shall do very much.” “We are a great agency.” “The world will look upon us and we will do a great deal.” If we ever say that, God will say, “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm,” and He will hide the light of His countenance from us, so that our mountain that stands firm shall begin to shake. O Churches!—All of you here that are representatives of Churches, carry the tidings. O Churches! Take heed lest you trust in yourselves. Take heed lest you say, “We are a respectable body.” “We are a mighty number.” “We are a potent people.”

Take heed lest you begin to glory in your own strength. For when that is done, “Ichabod” shall be written on your walls and your glory shall depart from you. Remember that He who was with us when we were but few must be with us now we are many, or else we must fail. And He who strengthened us when we were but as “little in Israel,” must be with us—now that we are like “the thousands of Manasseh.” Or else it is all over with us and our day is past. “Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord.”

II. NOR BY POWER, that is, individual strength. You know, Beloved, that after all, the greatest works that have been done have been done by

the *ones*. The hundreds do not often do much, the companies never do—it is the units—just the single individuals that after all are the power and the might. Take any parish in England where there is a well-regulated society for doing good—it is some young woman or some young man who is the very life of it. Take any Church—there are multitudes in it but it is some two or three that do the work. Look on the Reformation. There might be many reformers but there was but one Luther. There might be many teachers but there was but one Calvin.

Look upon the preachers of the last age—the mighty preachers who stirred up the Churches. There were many coworkers with them but after all it was not Whitfield's friends, nor Wesley's friends but the men themselves that did it. Individual effort is, after all, the grand thing. A man alone can do more than a man with fifty men at his heels to fetter him. Committees are very seldom of much use and bodies and societies sometimes are loss of strength instead of a gain. It is said that if Noah's Ark had had to be built by a company, they would not have laid the keel yet. And it is perhaps true. There is scarcely anything done by a body—it almost always fails. Because what is many men's business is just nobody's business at all.

Just the same with religion—the grand things must be done by the ones. The great works of God must be accomplished by single men. Look back through old history. Who delivered Israel from the Philistines? It was a solitary Samson. Who was it gathered the people together to rout the Midianites? It was one Gideon, who cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Who was he that smote the enemy? It was one Shamgar, with his ox goad, or it was an Elon, who with his dagger put an end to his country's tyrant. Separate men—Davids with their slings and stones, have done more than armies could accomplish. "But," says God, "it is not even by individual might the Gospel is to be spread." Take individual might in different senses.

Sometimes we may say, of this kind, it represents learning. We discover here and there certain great and mighty men in learning that can take an infidel, strap him on to the dissecting board and just anatomize him in a minute. They are great doctors of divinity, they have achieved the highest titles that can be given them at the universities. They have read the Scriptures thoroughly, they are mighty theologians, they could dispute with John Owen and could entirely take the wind out of the sails of Calvin. They know a great deal, a very great deal. They can write most excellent reviews and are much gifted in philosophical disquisitions. But did you ever hear, in the course of all your life, of anyone of these being blessed by God to lead any great religious movement?

Such a thing may have been but I have forgotten all about it. There may have been such an occurrence but I do not remember it. This I *am* sure of—the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ had taken no degree, except it was a good degree of being excellent fishermen. This I am certain of—that all through the ages, God has not often used men of any very

great intellectual compass—they have not seemed to be men of profound learning. They have generally been men of determined will and strong principle but not often of any very high intellectual attainments. Do I, therefore, rail at learning? O, no! God forbid! The more of that the better.

Let men be as wise as they can be and as learned as they can be but still the fact remains and there is no one that can dispute it—that God has often taken the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, in order that men may see, “It is not by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” I have the pleasure and happiness of being acquainted with a large number of the most eminent ministers in England. I have walked and talked with them and spoken to them about the things of the kingdom. If they were present they would not think me severe in what I am about to say. Many of those at whose feet we have been prepared to sit as little children to hear their wisdom, confess as ministers that when they reviewed their life, they felt that it has been unprofitable.

They are learned men but they would say with Owen, “I would give up all my talents to preach like Bunyan the tinker.” They have wished that they could be known for something else besides having attained profound learning and research. My Brethren, it is not their fault. They have labored well and earnestly. I find no fault whatever with them. It is God’s supremacy that stamps this upon them and makes them feel the force of it—it is their very intellectual prowess that makes them feel this way. They are incapable of being used by God, as a mass at least, though individuals may be, for any very great result in the Church because then it would seem to be by *power*.

“No, no,” says one. “If a man is not learned that does not mean much, a man must be eloquent.” That is another mistake—it is not by power of *eloquence* that souls are saved. I believe every man that preaches the Gospel in his heart is eloquent. I have used a wrong word. I mean, however, that great oratorical powers are very seldom made use of by God for any very great result. Not even here is God pleased to let it be seen to be by power. You have heard of the preaching of Whitfield—did you ever read his sermons? If you did you will say they were rather contemptible productions. There is nothing in them that I should think could have approached to oratory. It was only the man’s earnestness that made him eloquent.

Have you heard any preacher that has been blessed by God to move the multitude? He has been eloquent, for he has spoken earnestly but as to oratory there has been none of it. I, for my own part, must eschew every pretension thereunto. I am certain I never think, when I come into this pulpit, “How shall I talk to this people in a grand fashion?” I think when I come up here, “I have got something to say, I will tell it.” How I will tell them, it does not mean much to me. I shall find the words somehow or other I daresay, God helping me.

But about any of the *graces* of eloquence or the words of oratory, I am utterly and quite in the dark, nor do I wish to imitate any who have been

masters in that. I believe that the men whom we call eloquent, now that they are dead, were laughed at in their day as poor bungling speakers. Now they are buried they are canonized but in their lives they were abused.

Now, my Brethren—God, I think, will generally cast a slur upon fine speaking and grand compositions and so on in order that He may show that it is not by individual power but by His Spirit. I could stand here and point my finger in a certain circle around this place and I could pause at such a Chapel and say, “There is a man preaching there whose compositions are worthy to be read by the most intellectual of persons but whose Chapel contains this morning, a hundred.” I will point you to another of whose preaching we can say that it was the most faultless oratory to which we ever listened but his congregation were nearly all of them asleep.

We might point you to another, of whom we could say that there was the most chaste simplicity, the most extraordinary beauty in the compositions he delivered but there has not been a soul known to be saved in the Chapel for years. Now, why is that? I think it is because God says, it is not by power, it shall not be by individual power. And I will say this, that whenever God is pleased to raise up a man by individual power to move the world, or to work any reform, he invariably selects a man whose faults and whose errors are so glaring and apparent to everyone, that we are obliged to say, “I wonder that man should do it, surely it must be of God, it could not be of that man.”

No, there are some men who are too great for God’s designs, their style is too excellent. If God blessed them the world would cry—especially the literary world—it is their *talent* that God blesses. But God, on the other hand, takes up some rough fellow, truly an earthen vessel, puts His treasure in him and just shakes the whole world. People cry, “We do not see how it is, it is not in the man, certainly.” The critic takes up his pen, dips it in gall, writes a most fearful character about the man. The man reads it and says, “It is true and I am glad of it for if it had not been true God would not have used me. I glory in my infirmities, because Christ’s own power rests on me. If I had not those infirmities so much could not have been done but the very infirmities have insured against men’s saying, ‘It was the man.’ ”

I have often been delighted at some of my opponents. They have sneered at everything in me—from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot I have been all over bruises and putrefying sores. Every word has been vulgarity. Every action has been grotesque, the whole of it has been abominable and blasphemous. And I said, “Well that is delightful, now that is good.” And while some persons have said, “Now we must defend our minister,” I have thought, “You had better let it alone, it is much the best that it should be so. For suppose it is true—and it is, the most of it—there is all the more glory to God. For who can deny that the work is done?’ ”

And He is a great workman that can use bad tools and yet produce a fine piece of workmanship. And if the conversion of hundreds of souls now present, if the sobriety of drunkards, if the chastity of harlots, if the salvation of men who have been swearers, blasphemers, thieves and vagabonds from their youth up is not a grand result, I do not know what is. And if I have been the unwieldy, uncouth, unworthy tool employed in doing it, I bless God, for then you cannot honor me but must give all the glory to Him and to Him all the glory belongs. He will have it proved that "It is not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord."

III. And now to conclude lest I weary you. While the progress and advance of the Church are neither to be accomplished by the collected might of armies, corporations, nor Churches. Nor by the separate exertions of individuals, by the might neither of learning nor of eloquence, yet both the objects are to be accomplished BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

I was thinking, yesterday, my Friends, what a magnificent change would come over the face of Christendom if God were on a sudden to pour out His Spirit as He did on the day of Pentecost. I was then sitting down meditating upon this sermon and I thought, oh, if God should pour His Spirit upon *me*, should I not leap from this place where I am now sitting and on my knees begin to pray as I never did before? And should I not go next Sabbath-Day to a congregation who would feel a solemn awe about them? Every word I spoke would strike like arrows from the bow of God. And they themselves would feel that it was "none other than the house of God and the very gate of Heaven!"

Thousands would cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" And they go away carrying the Divine fire till the whole of this city would be kindled. And then I had pictured to myself what would come over all the Churches if they were in the same condition and all the people received that same Spirit. I had seen the minister from Monday morning till Saturday night doing little or nothing—delivering his weekly lecture, attending one Prayer Meeting and thinking himself hard worked. I saw him, on a sudden, start from his couch and go round to all the sick of his Chapel and I marked how he delivered a short address of comfort to the sick with such holy gravity and such Divine simplicity, that they lifted their heads from their pillows and began to sing, even in the agonies of death.

I thought I saw others of them girding up their loins and crying, "What am I doing?—men are perishing and I am preaching to them but three times a week and am called to the work of the ministry." I thought I read of all those ministers going into the open air to preach next Monday night. I thought I saw the whole of them flying, like angels fly, to-and-fro this land. And then I thought I saw the deacons all full of the Spirit, too and found them with all their powers doing everything in the fear of God. I found those who had been lords and rulers no longer seeking to be like Diotrephes. I saw the heavenly influence spread over every mind.

I saw the vestries too small for the Prayer Meetings and I saw the Chapels crowded and I heard the Brethren who year after year had prayed

the same monotonous prayer, break forth in earnest burning words. I saw the whole assembly melted in tears when the pastor addressed them and urged them to prayer and I heard the Brethren one by one as they rose up speak like men who had been with Jesus and had learned how to pray. They prayed as if they had heard Christ pray in Gethsemane—that prayer which was such as never man prayed. And then I thought I saw all those members and those deacons and those pastors going out into the world. And, oh, I pictured what preaching there would be, what tract distributing, what alms giving, what holy living!

And then I already thought I heard every house at vesper uttering its song and every cottage in the early morn sending up its prayer to Heaven. I thought I saw upon every plowshare “consecrated to God,” and every bell upon the horses, “holiness unto the Lord.” And then I thought I saw the different denominations rushing into each others arms. I saw the bishop doff his miter and clasp his dissenting Brother and call him Friend and bid him preach in his cathedral. And I thought I saw the stiff puritanical dissenter casting away his hatred of conformity and receiving the Church of England Brother to his heart. I thought I saw baptized and unbaptized sitting at one table.

I saw Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Independent and Quaker agreeing in one thing—that Christ crucified was All—and clasping one another’s hands. Yes, and then I thought I saw the angels coming down from Heaven. And it was not long before I finished my daydream by hearing the shout—“Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” It was a daydream but it will be true some day. By the Spirit of God all this will be accomplished. How and by what means I know not but I know the great agency must be the Holy Spirit.

And now, dear Friends, let me counsel you. The grand thing the Church wants in this time is God’s Holy Spirit. You all set up plans and say, “Now, if the Church were altered a little bit, it would go on better.” You think if there were different ministers, or different Church order, or something different, then all would be well. No, dear Friends, it is not there where the mistake lies, it is that we don’t want more of the Spirit. It is as if you saw a locomotive engine upon a railway and it would not go and they put up a driver and they said, “Now, that driver will do.” They try another and another. One proposes that such-and-such a wheel should be altered but still it will not go.

Someone then bursts in among those who are conversing and says, “No, Friends. But the reason why it will not move is because there is no steam. You have no fire, you have no water in the boiler—that’s why it will not go. There may be some faults about it. It may want a bit of paint here and there but it will go well enough with all those faults if you do but get the steam up.” But now people are saying, “this must be altered and that must be altered. But it would go no better unless God the Spirit should come to bless us. You may have the same ministers and they shall be a thousand times more useful for God, if God is pleased to bless them. You

shall have the same deacons, they shall be a thousand times more influential than they are now, when the Spirit is poured down upon them from on high.

That is the Church's great want and until that want be supplied we may reform and reform and still be just the same. We want the Holy Spirit and then whatever faults there may be in our organization, they can never materially impede the progress of Christianity, when once the Spirit of the Lord God is in our midst. But I beseech you be earnest in praying for this. Do you know that there is no reason today why I should not have preached today so that every soul in the place was converted, if God the Holy Spirit had been pleased to manifest Himself? There is not any solitary shadow of a reason why every soul that has been within the sound of my lips should not have been converted by something said today if God the Holy Spirit had been pleased to bless the word!

Now I will repeat—there is not a humble Primitive Methodist, nor a poor insignificant preacher of any sort on earth, but who, if he preaches the Truth, God the Spirit may not make as useful in conversion as any of the great departed, who are now before God's Throne. All we NEED is the *Spirit of God*. Dear Christian Friends, go home and pray for it. Give no rest until God reveals Himself. Do not tarry. Here you are—do not be content to go on in your everlasting jog—trot as you go. Do not be content with the mere round of formalities. Awake, O Zion! Awake, awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Jerusalem. Start from your slumbers, awake from your lethargy and cry unto God and say unto Him, "Awake, awake! Put on Your strength, O arm of the Lord, as in the ancient days." Then when He shall do it, you will find that while it is not by might, nor by power, it is by God's Spirit.

And now I conclude with a brief address that shall not occupy but a moment. Sinner, unconverted Sinner, you have often tried to save yourself but you have often failed. You have, by your own power and might sought to curb your evil passions and licentious desires with you. I lament that all your efforts have been unsuccessful. And I warn you—it will always be unsuccessful—for *you* never can by your own might save yourself. With all the strength you have you never can regenerate your own soul. You can never cause yourself to be born again and though the new birth is absolutely necessary, it is absolutely impossible to you unless God the Spirit shall do it.

I pray for you that God the Spirit may convict you of sin and if you are already convicted, I bid you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He has died for you, has washed away your sins. You are forgiven. Believe that. Be happy and go your way rejoicing. And God Almighty be with you until you die.

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

SMALL THINGS NOT TO BE DESPISED

NO. 2601

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 18, 1898.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1883.**

***“For who has despised the day of small things?”
Zechariah 4:10.***

IT is a very great folly to despise “the day of small things,” for it is usually God’s way to begin His great works with small things. We see it every day, for the first dawn of light is but feeble and yet, by-and-by, it grows into the full noontide heat and glory. We know how the early spring comes with its buds of promise, but it takes some time before we get to the beauties of summer or the wealth of autumn. How tiny is the seed that is sown in the garden, yet out of it there comes the lovely flower! How small is the acorn, but how great is the oak that grows up from it! The stream commences with but a gentle rivulet, but it flows on till it becomes a brook, and then a river—perhaps a mighty Amazon—before its course is run!

God begins with men in “the day of small things”—He began so with us. How little and how feeble were we when first we came upon the scene of action! He that is now a giant was once so feeble that he could not move from place to place except as he was carried in his mother’s arms. Let us, then, not despise “the day of small things,” as we see that God begins with little things in Nature and among the sons and daughters of men. And I am sure that He does so in the great work of His Church. Long ago He began to build a spiritual temple for His own habitation, but, at first, the stones of the foundation were hidden from the great mass of mankind. How little was known in the world at large concerning Abraham and his seed! How very, very slowly did the walls of that great temple rise! Even in the time of Zechariah, it was still “the day of small things” with the people of the Lord.

Comparatively speaking, it is still so, for what is the Christian Church compared with the great mass of the heathen world and of those who reject the Savior? Our Lord’s method of spreading His Truth among men was to begin with a handful of disciples in an upper room at Jerusalem, to fill them with His Spirit and then to let them be scattered over the whole known world. This is usually God’s plan of working in His Church and also in individual Believers. Of course there are various degrees of ability and Grace even among the Lord’s own people. One of the old Puritans said that some men are born with beards and, certainly, there are

some Believers who, almost as soon as they are converted, seem to take great strides and to make speedy advances so that they soon become very useful and are even able to teach things which others only learn after long years of experience. But, generally speaking, this is the order of the growth of Grace in the heart, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

First, the Truth of God is heard and felt, and the heart bleeds under conviction of guilt. By-and-by another Truth is discovered and the wounded heart is bound up by faith in Christ. This faith grows to full assurance—there is a gradual conformity to the image of Christ—and that image becomes more and more clear till the man reaches the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ Jesus. But first there is the beginning which is small and afterwards there is the latter end which shows a great increase. It is within our souls as it is in the world—the day begins with the dawn, but the shining light "shines more and more unto the perfect day."

Woe unto that man who despises "the day of small things" in the Church of Christ, or who despises "the day of smart things" in any individual Believer, for it is God's day—it is a day out of which great things will yet come and, therefore, he that despises it really despises his Maker's work and despises the great and glorious things which are to come out of the small things which are at present apparent! I know some professing Christians who, I am afraid, despise "the day of small things" in little Churches. There is gathered a small community of godly people. Perhaps they are poor and many of them illiterate. And some of you rich folk who think yourselves wonderfully intelligent—though I am not always sure that you are—if you happen to settle down in that village, you say that you would like to attend the little Chapel or mission room, but the minister puts his h's in the wrong place and his speech is ungrammatical and, of course, that is very painful to your refined taste! Then the people are very poor and you hardly think that the Church is advancing at all, so to help it, you leave it alone! "God forbid," you say, "that we should despise the day of small things!" But you are very sorry that everything is on such a small scale! You say that you pity the poor people, but, instead of helping them, you lie quietly by, or you go off to a more fashionable place where you meet with some of your own class and feel more at home. There, the h's are put in properly, though the Gospel is left out of the preaching! But the people who attend are such a "respectable" sort of folk that you feel it is quite the correct thing to worship with them. If any of you have any respect for yourselves while acting in such a way as that, I hope you will soon discover that there is really nothing "respectable" in that kind of respectability! I mean that there is nothing that should make a man respected when he gives up his convictions and leaves his own true Brothers and Sisters for the sake of getting into a better class of society and seeming to be of a superior order to the godly poor people to whom he might be of real service.

To me, it seems that it should be your glory to join the poorest and weakest churches of your denomination and wherever you go, to say,

“This little cause is not as strong as I should like it to be, but, by the Grace of God, I will make it more influential. At any rate, I will throw in my weight to strengthen the weak things of Zion and certainly I will not despise the day of small things” Where would have been our flourishing Churches of today if our forefathers had disdained to sustain them while *they* were yet in their infancy? I thank God for the men who did not mind going down into back yards and up into haylofts that they might worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. I always delight in those who were willing to stand on the village green with the people sitting down on felled trees or logs to listen to them—and who were not afraid of being called fanatics and of bearing all manner of reproach and scorn for Christ’s sake! But if you and I grow to be such great and grand people as some we have known, we must mind that the Lord does not take us down a notch or two, and that, perhaps, by a very painful process. He asks, as if in indignation, “Who has despised the day of small things?” and I believe that He is grieved with any of His servants when they fall into such a state of mind as that—and begin to despise His Church because she is despised by the world, and look down on His people as the high peaks of Bashan seemed to regard with contempt the lowly hill of Zion—and, therefore, the Psalmist said to them, “Why leap you, you high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in; yes, the Lord will dwell in it forever.”

My special objective at this time is to reprove those who despise the earlier and weaker works of Grace in the soul. True, it is “the day of small things,” but it is a subject for rejoicing and is not to be despised. First, I shall speak to *proud professors who despise “the day of small things” in young beginners*. Then I shall have a little talk with *young beginners who despise “the day of small things” in themselves*. And thirdly, I shall speak of *those who do not despise “the day of small things.”* When this question is put to them, “Who has despised the day of small things?” they can answer, “Lord, you know that we have not done so; we have rejoiced in the small signs of Grace in young beginners and we hope to see great things grow out of them.”

I. First of all, THERE ARE SOME PROFESSING CHRISTIANS WHO DESPISE “THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS” IN OTHERS.

I am sure I do not know exactly at what point the day of Grace begins in some people. There are some who, even before they fully receive the Gospel, have some good thing in them. “Oh, no,” you say, “that cannot be.” Well, just think a moment. Before the sower went forth to sow, there was a certain part of the farm which was described as “honest and good ground.” There was another part that was like the highway and another part covered with thorns or stones. But there was something which distinguished the “honest and good ground” from all the rest of the land. I do not say that it was, then, bringing forth any fruit to God’s Glory, but I do say that God had, from a very early period—I do not know when—made that ground ready and fit to receive the Seed. So I can believe that before a man even hears the Gospel at all, there may be an antecedent

work of what I may almost call secondary Grace—not *saving* Grace, but a making ready of the heart for the reception of the saving Grace of God.

In my own experience, I never quite know where I am to put my finger upon the beginning of God's work in my soul. I can tell the very day and hour when I was converted, but I had many stirrings of conscience before that. I know that I was very effectually convinced of sin, but when the gracious work began, I cannot say. One of the first things that I recollect is lying awake at night because I had done something wrong to my mother. I do not know whether that was not the Grace of God working in my heart even then—I think that it was. I am sure that it was, in some measure, the Lord graciously working within me and making me ready for the more manifest work of His Spirit.

Now, dear Friends, do not despise those little things, those preparation works, but whenever you see them in children, or in adults, be thankful for them. Frequently, when I have been receiving members into the Church, I have asked of a good woman, "Is your husband a Christian?" and the answer has often been, "Well, Sir, he is a very good husband, but I am afraid that he is not a Christian." Then I have enquired, "What does he do with himself on Sundays?" "Oh, Sir, he is always at the Tabernacle! He has been attending the services for years and he is very fond of you, Sir. He will run home and hurry over his tea so as to get to the Prayer Meeting on Monday, and on Thursday nights, he is never absent." I have said, "My good woman, does your husband show such love to the Lord's House and to the minister, and yet he is not converted?" "Yes," she answers, "he is not converted, for sometimes he does what he knows is not right. Still, his attendance upon the means of Grace is a great check upon him. He is a dear good husband, much better than he used to be, but I am afraid he is not a Christian and that he does not truly pray for pardon." "Ah," I say, "let us have a little prayer together about him and let us firmly believe that we shall have him yet. If a man continues to come where we are constantly firing the Gospel gun, one of the stray shots will hit him yet! Be sure that you encourage him to keep on coming and mind that you are very kind to him and help him all you can in finding the Savior—and we will yet rejoice together over him." When moths fly very near the candle, sooner or later they will singe their wings—there is a great Gospel candle burning here and I do not doubt that some of these human moths will dash into the flame, by-and-by! So I hope you will encourage them to come here, again and again, until they are blessedly caught so that they can never fly away. Such people as I have been describing have very curious whims and fancies—they will take offense at almost anything at all, so we must tread very softly and tenderly—and not grieve any with whom it is, in this sense, "the day of small things."

I have known some come to Christ at last and trust Him, but it was with such a very little faith that I hardly know whether, in their case, it was faith born or unbelief dying. You remember the poor man who said to Christ, "Lord, I believe," and then he felt as if he had gone a little too far with his declaration, for he drew back and said, "Help You my unbe-

lief.” And these poor halting souls are just in that state—I hope they do believe, but I am sure that they are very unbelieving. They begin to pray, but, oh, what strange prayer it is! Some of them repeat a form of prayer they learned a long while ago which is quite inapplicable to their present case, but still they do mean to pray somehow. They want to pray and though it can scarcely be called prayer, yet I expect that God accepts it as prayer and graciously answers it. They have begun to repent—they have not a very clear view of what sin is, but they know that it is something they would like to get rid of. They are like Paul when he was at Melita—I am not sure that he understood much about snakes and their bites—but when a viper fastened itself onto his hand, he shook it off into the fire. So, these people could not define sin, theologically, but they wish that they were clear of it, they long to be pardoned. It is “the day of small things” with them and it is not to be despised.

Ah, dear Friends, when a man tries to get away alone, that he may read his Bible, do not despise him! When a tear falls during a sermon and he brushes it away and wants to make you believe that there was something the matter with his nose, do not despise him, even for that! I have seen that sort of thing happen many a time and I have been pleased to notice it. We ought to delight in anything and everything that looks in the right direction—and never think of despising it.

Now I want to come to the most important point—Why ought we not to despise these small things—these feeble beginnings? Especially when there is a little Grace in any people, why must we not despise them?

Well, first, *because in the Church of Christ, there always were and there always will be babes as well as men.* Do not despise the babes—where are the men to come from if there are no babes? If it happens in God’s family as it does in most families, you will soon find that it will not do to despise the babes. How very grieved all loving parents are when their infants are despised! You may ignore the big son if you like, but do not despise the babes. So, with regard to Christ’s family, be sure to honor the little ones—take care of them, never stand in their way. When they want to come to Christ, allow them to come. It does not say, “draw them,” for they are wanting to come, but get out of their way and do not hinder them from coming. And whenever you meet with one who has lately been born of God and who is tender of heart, do not despise him. As long as the family of Christ is to increase, there always must be babes, and babes must never be despised.

Again, dear Friends, do not speak harshly to those who are newly born to God, for *you were once a babe.* Yes, yes, though you do not like to be reminded of it, you, great giant that you now are, were once an infant! And you with your deep experience and your profound knowledge, you who think you can set everybody else right, why, once you hardly knew that twice two made four! You had to begin at the very beginning just like others have had to do! So remember what you used to be, look back to the hole of the pit from where you were dug and do not begin to despise others who are in the same condition in which you once were!

Remember, again, that *the greatest saints in this world, or who ever were in this world, were babes in Grace once.* Whether it was Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, they all began with little Grace and weak spiritual life at the first. Yes, there is not a bright spirit before the Throne of God who has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, but once was only an infant in spiritual things! And if the greatest were once so little, that is a good reason why we should never despise “the day of small things.”

Besides, dear Friends, it should always check every tendency in this direction when we remember that *God made and God loves the very least Believer.* You know, a silver sixpence is as really silver as a half-crown. And the Queen’s image on the one is as genuine as on the other. They are current coin of the realm and I am sure you will not treat with scorn the little pieces of money. Then why should we despise the small coins in Christ’s treasury? When our dear young Brothers and Sisters are made of the same metal and stamped with the same image as we are, why should we despise them, though we happen to be, or *think* we are, of somewhat more weight and value in the Church of God than they are? Oh, do not despise the lowly violet that hides its head among the leaves! It is quite as much a flower of God’s making as the finest tulip that airs its beauty aloft, or the most brilliant standard rose that is before your eyes! God made the little things and God loves them and, as parents have a special love for their weak and little children, so has God a special favor towards the lambs of His flock, and He takes special care of the seedlings in His garden which have not yet come to the fullness of growth. Therefore, do not despise them.

If you do, there is one sentence I would utter that ought to rebuke you very effectually. *Your Master would not despise them if He were here.* Christ has a quick eye to see little Graces in His people and when He sees them, He delights in them. A diamond is a diamond if it is ever so small. And Christ’s people are Christ’s people let them have ever so little Grace. Oh, if the Lord Jesus Christ would have carried that lamb in His bosom, why do you refuse to carry it? Why do you neglect it? Why should there be so often heard stinging words and keen, cutting, sarcastic remarks about the feebleness of knowledge or the defects of practice, when, if there is but Grace in the heart, you and I ought to rejoice to see it? I have often quoted to you the words of Jerome when he said that he loved Christ in Augustine and he loved Augustine in Christ. So ought we to love the weakest Believers—to love Christ in them, and to love them in Christ. May the Holy Spirit teach us to be like our Master in this respect as well as in all others!

I have finished this word of gentle rebuke when I add that if you and I do despise “the day of small things,” *the probability is that we shall have to smart for it.* You remember that passage in Ezekiel where the Lord speaks of the fat cattle pushing the weak cattle with their horns and their shoulders? They were big bulls of Bashan and they were always goring one and pushing against another because they happened to be weak and sickly—and the Lord said that He would judge between cattle

and cattle and those that had been so headstrong, so proud and so cruel would have to smart for it. The day shall come, my proud Brother, when you will be glad to sit at the feet of that young Christian you now despise! I have noticed that sort of thing many a time. It is a part of my pastoral observation that when persons who were genuine Christians have been proudly lifted up, they have been made to go down very low till they have envied those they once despised, and said, "If we felt as sure of salvation as that dear young man that we judged so harshly, we would willingly enough change places with him and take what we called his inexperience and his lack of knowledge, if we could be just as simple in our confidence in Christ as he is." Therefore, Beloved, if you do not want to bring the rod upon your own back, despise not "the day of small things," but be ready to cherish and comfort all in whom the work of Grace has apparently begun even to the lightest extent!

II. Now, secondly, THERE ARE SOME WHO DESPISE "THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS" IN THEMSELVES. They think that it is very humble to do so. I am not sure that it is—I think it is very foolish to do so.

There are some who despise "the day of small things" in themselves in this way—they *pass by the small things*. Suppose that a young man is impressed, under a sermon, with a sense of sin. A wise thing for him to do is to get home as quickly as he can and cry, "Lord, I do not know whether this is true repentance, but, if it is not, make it so! Lord, I am half afraid that I am only a stony-ground hearer and that this good Seed will spring up for a little while and then will wither. Lord, break my stony heart and do it effectually." Be very thankful, dear Friends, if you have the faintest spiritual impressions. I know some men who would almost give their eyes if they could but feel anything, but they say that they sit and hear, and the only result is what Cowper said—

***"If anything is felt, 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel."***

So, if you have any spiritual feeling at all, do not despise it, but go to God with it and pray that the work which seems to be begun in you may be carried on until it is complete—and that if it is not begun, it may begin at once. When you feel, sometimes, in the assemblies of God's House, a softening influence stealing over your spirit, or when possibly, in the middle of your work—you do not know why—you suddenly feel very tender in heart—or, perhaps, walking down into the City early in the morning, before many people are astir, you feel a solemnity quite unusual to you—do not despise it! These little things may lead on to a blessed saving work—I pray the Lord that you may take care of these dewdrops of Grace. It there are but a few tiny drops and if they are but cared for and valued, the Lord will yet look still more graciously upon you and send you a copious shower of blessing. Do not despise anything that looks like Grace in your heart. God help you to take it as a gardener at this time of the year takes the little slips and cuttings and puts them in silver sand to make them grow, that he may have the flowering plants, by-and-by. Use your cuttings—the little things that seem as if they could not have

any life in them. God would have you plant them in favorable circumstances, that they may grow to His praise and glory.

Some despise “the day of small things” in themselves because *they do not think that any good can come of them*. When I was preaching this morning, [Sermon #1739, Volume 29—“Bankrupt Debtors Discharged”—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] I thought that, perhaps, some poor soul would take comfort to himself, and I said to a Brother when I went outside, “I do like, sometimes, to have a subject which comes rolling up like a sea of Grace” because there are so many people who are like oysters in the riverbeds waiting for the tide to return. I did hope, this morning, that it was a flood tide, and that some of you would open your shells and that the blessed Word of God would come into your very souls! If you do that, it will come in. The oyster cannot make the sea roll up, but whenever he feels it rolling over him, he says, “Now is the time for me to open my shell,” and when you feel, “Now is the time for me to seek the Lord, now is the day of salvation, now is the high tide of Grace,” you shall have the blessing! It is all around you, or else you would not have opened your shell. It is the very flood tide of Grace that has made you feel what you feel. Therefore be glad and do not despise it. It may seem a little thing to feel tender and solemn, but it is not so—it is often the beginning of a blessed work of Grace—therefore value it highly.

I have known some to despise the blessing *by resolutely resisting its entrance into their hearts*. I can never forget some instances of this resistance that I have known. I was preaching once, in a certain city, and a gentleman who had been very kind to me was in the congregation, but I saw him get up in the middle of the sermon and go out of the building. The Brother who was with me slipped out after him and said to him, “My dear Sir, why did you come out?” He answered, “Mr. Spurgeon has got me in his hands. I am like an India rubber doll and he can twist me into any shape that he likes. I am afraid that if I had listened to him for another ten minutes, I would have been converted.” So off he went, deliberately stamping out, as far as he could, the spark of the Truth of God as it came toward him. He would not let the good Seed grow—he invited the birds of the air to come and steal it away. Do not forget that although the Lord graciously changes man’s will and He has absolute power over the human will and makes men willing in the day of His power, yet He never saves anybody against his will and, while the will stands out against God and is unrenewed and unchanged, the man is still unsaved. It seems to me a dreadful thing that people can come to the House of God without any desire to get a blessing and there cover themselves up in armor of mail to keep every arrow from getting anywhere near their hearts. That is one method of despising “the day of small things.”

I know some others who despise “the day of small things” because *if they get a little good in their hearts, they do not try to get more*. If we did not expect a little child to ever grow, we would really be despising it, putting it down as a dwarf or a monstrosity. So, if the Grace of God has come into your heart, you will do all in your power to make it to grow and

increase and thus prove that you do not despise it. I think I have said enough to show that if any here have the slightest sign of the beginnings of Grace, any glimmerings of the Divine Light, any first outlines of the image of Christ upon their heart, they must not despise them, but they should pray God to bless them and bring them to maturity. If they do so, I will tell you what God will do—it is hinted at in the verse from which our text is taken—“For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel.” They had begun to build, but it was such a poor paltry piece of work and the wall was still so low, that they despised it. But when they saw the prince standing there, with the plummet in his hand and saw stone after stone brought and laid in its place—and their great leader officiating as the chief architect, they said to one another—“Look, the prince is there with the plummet in his hand! He is a man who never undertakes a task unless he goes through with it, so, depend upon it, the work will be completed.”

In like manner I can see that, although it may be very little Grace that is in your heart, yet Christ has come with that Grace! Christ is building in your heart, Christ is laying the foundation stone, the Prince of the kings of the earth, Christ Jesus, is there with His plummet and He that has begun the good work in you will carry it on till it is perfected in Glory! Oh, what a blessing it is to look to Christ with the plummet in His hand and say, “Great Master-Builder, I will not despise these foundations because, as yet, they are scarcely seen above the soil, for I know that You, who have begun the good work, will carry it on and perfectly perform all that You have promised. The Temple will yet appear to Your praise where now there seems to be but a tiny heap of stones.”

That is the way to cure you of despising “the day of small things” in yourselves.

III. Now, my last point is this. THERE ARE SOME WHO NEVER DESPISE “THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.” I have time for only a few words on this part of my subject, but I wish them to be very tender words.

First, *true pastors* never despise “the day of small things.” Speaking for myself, I can say that I love to see in those of you who are unconverted any sign of serious thought, any intimation of a coming change, any token that you are turning unto the Lord. My heart is gladdened whenever I perceive it. Does anyone think that I despise it? Why, I pray to God continually to bring it to pass! Despise it? I look for it as the reward of my toil! If I did but know that I had awakened thought in any one of you, I would go home happy! If I did but hear that the Lord was bringing a score or two to Himself, I would gladly lie awake at night to bless His name for such a mercy as that! I do not care for the vastness of this congregation, but I do care for the individual souls in it and I rejoice most of all over those who are saved out of it. What good is it simply to bring you here and to have you sitting quietly while I talk to you? It is a waste of time and labor unless it brings you to Christ! But if I know that any of you are brought to penitence and faith, I am sure that I do not despise it, for I value such blessings above the choicest gold!

And let me also tell you that *your dear parents, your Christian wife and your godly daughter* who persuaded you to come to this service do not despise “the day of small things.” I have known some of our members do really extraordinary things in order to get people to come here in the hope that they might be converted. There was one who, after many attempts, at last induced a man to promise that he would come with him one day, so he went round to fetch him. “Oh, I cannot come!” said the man, “I am making a rabbit hutch.” “Well,” said the other, “I have one ready made that I will give you.” “But,” said the man, “I cannot come, I promised to go and see a man who has a pair of pigeons to sell.” My friend answered, “I have a pair of pigeons I will give to you if you will come with me.” It was all in vain. He might offer the man what he would, he could not get him. I hope that he has brought him by this time, but if not, I know that he will stick to him till he does see him here! And I know another thing, that he will bring the friend to his own seat and he will, if necessary, stand in the aisle and pray for him all through the service! Well, now, if he gets his friend to hear the Word and sees that he is impressed by it, you do not suppose that he will despise “the day of small things,” do you? On the contrary, he will be glad even for the slightest sign of the working of God’s Spirit in his friend’s heart!

Your godly mother, when she hears that you have been to the Tabernacle, will say, “Bless God for that!” If she finds that you have begun to pray, her heart will leap within her! A dear father, a minister of the Gospel, writes to me, and says, “My son had never decided for God till he went to hear you at Exeter Hall. During the evening sermon he bowed his head and gave himself up to the Lord. And now he is proposed as a member of my Church. God bless you, Sir!” It is always so with true Christians—they do not despise “the day of small things,” but they are glad when their children are brought to Christ! And it is just the same with *all soul-winners* and I hope that many here are of that class. If they can spy anything like the tiniest egg of Grace, they feel so glad! And they watch you and they say to one another, “Is that light that I can see there in the East?” And the other says, “I do not know. I am afraid it is not.” “Oh,” says the first friend, “but I think it is. Does it not look a little gray just over there?” “No,” replies the other, “I am afraid that it is not morning light yet.” That is how some of us talk about you—we are often talking and praying about you, dear Hearers, and we say to one another, “When will So-and-So come to the Savior?” There is a good man here whom I pray for nearly every day and I know that his wife does the same. He loves to come here, yet he is still an unsaved man. But, by the Grace of God, he cannot remain where he is if prayer can stir him! We will pray him out of it and bring him to the Savior—may the Lord grant that it may speedily be so!

There is one other Person who never despises “the day of small things,” and with Him I finish. And that is, *our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*. He is so eager to see of the travail of His soul that if He spies in you even a desire after Him, He is pleased with it. Believe me, if you have but a spark of desire after Christ, He has a whole furnace of

desire after you! Oh, that you would have Him as your Savior! He is free to every soul of you who will have Him! Is it not put just so in His last invitation? “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Do not think that He excludes you—you may exclude yourself, but if there is in your heart any wish, any shadow of a wish, anything like a desire for Christ, you may come, and welcome! Mercy’s gate is wide open. Christ invites you to His house and to His heart. Oh, come to Him and come now! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” May His Divine Spirit lead you to believe on Him at this moment! To believe on Him is to trust Him. Throw yourself on Him, sink or swim. Take Christ to be yours! Have you done it? Then you are saved, for, “he that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” His believing is the evidence that he is already a saved man! So, go your ways and the Lord be with you, but I charge every one of you, meet me in Heaven! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 54:1-10.**

Verse 1. *Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the LORD.* In this Western clime we do not know all the misery which was felt by Eastern women who were childless. They were looked down upon and despised. Yet here God bids them sing! And, dear Friends, if you and I feel as if our hearts have become barren so that we cannot think of God or raise our thoughts towards Him as we would desire. If we feel that we have become useless and for that reason our spirit is greatly depressed, let us give heed to this sweet, this charming exhortation of Jehovah—“Sing, O barren soul; break forth into singing, and cry aloud,” for God can turn our barrenness into fruitfulness and make us to rejoice exceedingly before Him. If we are now sighing and crying because we are not what we ought to be, or what we want to be, God can, in the richness of His Grace, make us all that we desire! Therefore let us begin to be joyful even before the miracle of mercy is worked! Let us have unbounded faith in God and expect Him to bless us even while we are in our lowest state.

2, 3. *Enlarge the place of your tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; for you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.* This was good news for the poor Gentiles who were so long spiritually barren, but whose seed was to spread all over the earth! This prophecy has been already fulfilled in a great measure and the very wording of it is a direction to us if we desire to see the Church of God increased. Make ready for God’s blessing, you who are pining and groaning for greater things than these—God is about to bless you! Enlarge your tents! Lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes! Prepare for the coming blessing, for you are to have better and brighter days than you

have ever known! Therefore be no more sad, but look forward with joyful anticipation to the good things in store for you.

4. *Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more.* I am not going to interpret the passage in its strict connection, but to use it for our comfort and instruction. O you that are cast down, you poor trembling ones that would gladly be at one with God, but feel as if you cannot find Him, believe in the Lord your God and trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, for there are glad times coming for you! All your former days of sadness shall be forgotten and you shall have such joy and delight as you can hardly imagine at present.

5. *For your Maker is your husband; the LORD of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel the God of the whole earth shall He be called.* Oh, what a blessing that is! This is a wide-spread mercy—“The God of the whole earth shall He be called.” My Soul, come and hide beneath the shadow of these earth-covering wings, for there is room for you beneath their welcome shelter and, once there, you shall not be banished from that sacred spot, for it is written, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Your Maker is your husband,” united to you in eternal wedlock! Therefore, be of good comfort.

6. *For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God.* Poor rejected one, has the world cast you off? Do its sinful pleasures pall upon you? Listen, “The Lord has called you.” You are divorced from the world that you may be forever united to Him!

7, 8. *For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the LORD your Redeemer.* What words of comfort lie here to those of the Lord’s people who have fallen into spiritual darkness and come upon evil days! God still remembers you! His wrath is but for a moment and will swiftly pass away—but His age-enduring kindness which sweeps across the boundless eternity shall be with you forever!

9, 10. *For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you.* Oh, for Grace, oh, for the help of the Holy Spirit to lay hold upon these precious promises, and to feed on them!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— 416, 602, 538

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.**

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE DEPRESSED

NO. 3489

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1915.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 27TH, 1871.

“For who has despised the day of small things?”
Zechariah 4:10.

ZECHARIAH was engaged in the building of the Temple. When its foundations were laid, it struck everybody as being a very small edifice compared with the former glorious structure of Solomon. The friends of the enterprise lamented that it should be so small—the foes of it rejoiced and uttered strong expressions of contempt! Both friends and foes doubted whether, even on that small scale, the structure would ever be completed. They might lay the foundations and they might raise the walls a little way, but they were too feeble a folk, possessed of too little riches and too little strength, to carry out the enterprise. It was the day of small things. Friends trembled. Foes jeered. But the Prophet rebuked them both—rebuked the unbelief of friends and the contempt of enemies, by this question—“Who has despised the day of small things?”—and by a subsequent prophecy which removed the fear.

Now we shall use this question at this time for the comfort of two sorts of people—first, *for weak Believers* and, secondly, *for feeble workers*. Our objective shall be the strengthening of the hands that hang down and the confirming of the feeble knees. We will begin, first of all, with—

I. WEAK BELIEVERS.

Let us describe them. It is with them a day of small things. Probably you have only been lately brought into the family of God. A few months ago you were a stranger to the Divine Life and to the things of God. You have been born-again and you have the weakness of an infant. You are not as strong, yet, as you will be when you have grown in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is the early day with you and it is also the day of small things. Now your *knowledge is small*. My dear Brothers and Sisters, you have not been a Bible student long—thank God that you know yourself a sinner and Christ is your Savior! That is precious knowledge, but you feel now what you once would not have confessed—your own ignorance of the things of God! Especially do the deep things of God trouble you. There are some Doctrines that appear to be mysterious, that are very simple to other Believers, but are depressing to you. They are high—you cannot attain to them. They are to you what hard nuts would be to children whose teeth have not yet appeared. Well, be not at all alarmed about this! All in God's family have once been children! There are some that seem to be born with know-

ledge—Christians that come to a height in Christ very rapidly. But these are only here and there. Israel did not produce a Samson every day. Most have to go through a long period of spiritual infancy and youth. And, alas, there are but few in the Church, even now, who might be called fathers! Do not marvel, therefore, if you are somewhat small in your knowledge.

Your *discernment, too, is small*. It is possible that anybody with a fluent tongue could lead you into error. You have, however, discernment, if you are a child of God, sufficient to be kept from deadly errors, for though there are some who would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect, yet the elect cannot be deceived, for, the Life of God being in them, they discern between the precious and the vile—they choose not the things of the world—but they follow after the things of God! Your discernment, however, seeming so small, need not afflict you. It is by reason of use—when the senses are exercised—that we fully discern between all that is good and all that is evil. Thank God for a little discernment—though you see men as trees walking, and your eyes are only half opened—a little Light of God is better than none at all! Not long ago you were in total darkness. Now if there is a glimmer, be thankful, for remember where a glimmer can enter, the full noontide can come—yes, and shall come in due season! Therefore, despise not the time of small discernment.

Of course, you, my dear Brother or Sister, have *little experience*. I trust you will not fake experience and try to talk as if you had the experience of the veteran saints when you are as yet only a raw recruit. You have not yet done business on the great waters. The more fierce temptations of Satan have not assailed you—the wind has been tempered as yet to the shorn lamb—God has not hung heavy weights on slender threads, but has put a small burden on a weak back. Be thankful that it is so! Thank Him for the experience that you have, and do not be desponding because you have not more. It will all come in due time. “Despises not the day of small things.” It is always unwise to get down a biography and say, “Oh, I cannot be right because I have not felt all this good man did.” If a child of ten years of age were to take down the diary of his grandfather and were to say, “Because I do not feel my grandfather’s weakness, do not require to use his spectacles, or lean upon his staff, therefore I am not one of the same family,” it would be very foolish reasoning! Your experience will ripen. As yet it is but natural that it should be green. Wait a while and bless God for what you have.

Probably this, however, does not trouble you as much as one other thing, you have but *little faith*, and that faith being small, your feelings are very variable. I often hear this from young beginners in the Divine Life, “I was so happy a month ago, but I have lost that happiness.” Perhaps tomorrow, after they have been at the House of God, they will be as cheerful as possible, but the next day their joy may be gone! Beware, my dear Christian Friends, of living by feeling! John Bunyan puts down Mr. Live-by-Feeling as one of the worst enemies of the town of Mansoul. I think he said he was hanged. I am afraid he, somehow or other, escaped

from the executioner, for I very commonly meet him—and there is no villain that hates the souls of men and causes more sorrow to the people of God than this Mr. Live-by-Feeling! He that lives by feelings will be happy, today, and unhappy tomorrow—and if our salvation depended upon our feelings, we would be lost one day and saved another, for they are as fickle as the weather and go up and down like a barometer! We live by faith, and if that faith is weak, bless God that weak faith *is* faith and that weak faith is *true* faith! If you believe in Christ Jesus, though your faith is as a grain of mustard seed, it will save you, and it will, by-and-by, grow into something stronger. A diamond is a diamond, and the smallest scrap of it is of the same nature as the Koh-I-Noor, and he that has but little faith has faith, for all that! It is not great faith that is essential to salvation, but faith that links the soul to Christ, and that soul is, therefore, saved! Instead of mourning so much that your faith is not strong, bless God that you have any faith at all, for if He sees that you despise the faith He has given you, it may be long before He gives you more! Prize that little, and when He sees that you are so glad and thankful for that little, then will He multiply it and increase it—and your faith shall mount even to the full assurance of faith!

I think I hear you also add to all this the complaint that *your other Graces seem to be small, too*. “Oh,” you say, “my patience is so little. If I have a little pain, I begin to cry out. I was in hopes I should be able to bear it—bear it without murmuring. My courage is so little—the blush is on my cheek if anybody asks me about Christ—I think I could hardly confess Him before half a dozen, much less before the world. I am very weak, indeed.” Ah, I don’t wonder. I have known some who have been strong by reason of years and have still been lacking in that virtue. But where faith is weak, of course, the rest will be weak. A plant that has a weak root will naturally have a weak stem and then will have but weak fruit. Your weakness of faith sends a weakness through the whole. But for all this, though you are to seek for more faith, and consequently for more Grace—for stronger Graces, yet do not despise what Graces you have. Thank God for them! And pray that the few clusters that are now upon you may be multiplied a thousand-fold to the praise of the Glory of His Grace. Thus I have tried to describe those who are passing through the day of small things.

But the text asks, “*Who has despised the day of small things?*” Well, some have, but there is a great comfort in this—*God the Father has not!* He has looked upon you—you with little Grace, and little love, and little faith—and He has not despised you! No, God is always near the feeble saint. If I saw a young man crossing a common alone, I would not be at all astonished, and I would not look round for his father. But I saw today, as I went home, a very tiny little tot right out on the Common—a pretty little girl, and I thought, “The father or mother are near somewhere.” And truly there was the father behind a tree whom I had not seen. I was as good as sure that the little thing was not there all alone! And when I see a little weak child of God, I feel sure that God the Father

is near, watching with wakeful eyes and tending with gracious care the feebleness of His newborn child! He does not despise you if you are resting on His promise. The humble and contrite have a word all to themselves in Scripture, that these He will not despise!

It is another sweet and consoling thought, that *God the Son does not despise the day of small things*. Jesus Christ does not, for you remember this word, “He shall carry the lambs in His bosom.” We put that which we most prize nearest our heart, and this is what Jesus does. Some of us, perhaps, have outgrown the state in which we were lambs, but to ride in that heavenly carriage of the Savior’s bosom—we might well be content to go back and be lambs again! He does not despise the day of small things.

And it is equally consolatory to reflect that the *Holy Spirit does not despise the day of small things*, for He it is who, having planted in the heart the grain of mustard seed, watches over it till it becomes a tree! He it is who, having seen the new-born child of Grace, does nurse, feed and tend it until it comes to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. The blessed Godhead despises not the weak Believer! O weak Believer, be consoled by this!

Who is it, then, that may despise the day of small things? Perhaps Satan has told you and whispered in your ear that such little Grace as yours is not worth having, that such an insignificant plant as you are will surely be rooted up. Now let me tell you that Satan is a liar, for he, himself, does not despise the day of small things! I am sure of that because he always makes a dead set upon those who are just coming to Christ. As soon as ever he sees that the soul is a little wounded by conviction. As soon as ever he discovers that a heart begins to pray, he will assault it with fiercer temptations than ever! I have known him try to drive such a one to suicide, or to lead him into worse sin than he has ever committed before. He—

**“Trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.”**

He may tell you that the little Grace in us is of no account, but he knows right well that it is the handful of corn on the top of the mountain—the fruit of which shall shake like Lebanon! He knows it is the little Grace in the heart that overthrows his kingdom there.

“Ah,” you say, “but I have been greatly troubled lately because I have many *friends who despise me*, because though I can hardly say I am a Believer, yet I have some desire towards God.” What sort of friends are these? Are they worldly friends? Oh, do not fret about what they say! It would never trouble me if I were an artist, if a blind man were to utter the sharpest criticism on my works. What does he know about it? And when an ungodly person begins to say about your piety that it is deficient and faulty, poor Soul, let him say what he will—it need not affect you! “Ah,” you say, “the persons that seem to despise me, and to put me out, and tell me that I am no child of God, are, I believe, Christians.” Well then, do two things—first, lay what they say to you, in a measure, to heart, because it may be if God’s children do not see in you the mark of a

child, perhaps you are not a child! Let it lead you to examination. Oh, dear Friends, it is very easy to be self-deceived and God may employ, perhaps, one of His servants to enlighten you upon this—and deliver you from a strong delusion! But, on the other hand, if you really do trust in your Savior, if you have begun to pray, if you have some love to God—and any Christian treats you harshly as if he thought you a hypocrite, forgive him—bear it! He has made a mistake. He would not do so if he knew you better. Say within yourself, “After all, if my Brother does not know me, it is enough if my Father does. If my Father loves me, though my Brother gives me the cold shoulder, I will be sorry for it, but it shall not break my heart. I will cling the closer to my Lord because His servants seem shy of me.” Why, it is not much wonder, is it, that some Christians should be afraid of some of you converts, for think what you used to be a little while ago? Why, a mother hears her son say he is converted. A month or two ago she knew where he spent his evenings and what were his habits of sin, and though she hopes it is so, she is afraid lest she should lead him to presumption. And she rejoices with trembling and, perhaps, tells him more about her trembling than she does about her rejoicing!

Why, the saints of old could not think Saul was converted at first! He was to be brought into the church meeting and received—I will suppose the case. I should not wonder before he came, when he saw the elders, one of them would say, “Well, the young man seems to know something of the Grace of God—there is certainly a change in him. But it is a remarkable thing that he should wish to join the very people he was persecuting—perhaps it is a mere impulse. It may be, after all, that he will go back to his old companions.” Do you wonder they should say so? I don’t! I am not at all surprised. I am sorry when there are unjust suspicions. I am sorry when a genuine child of God is questioned. But I would not have you lay it much to heart. As I have said before, if your Father knows you, you need not be so broken in heart because your Brother does not! Be glad that God does not despise the day of small things!

And now let me say to you who are in this state of small things, that I earnestly trust that you will not, yourselves, despise the day of small things “How can we do that?” you ask. Why, you can do it by desponding! I think there was a time when you would have been ready to leap for joy, if you had been told that God would have given you a little faith! And now you have got a little faith and, instead of rejoicing, you are sighing, and moaning, and mourning! Do not do so. Be thankful for moonlight, and you shall get sunlight! Be thankful for sunlight, and you shall get that Light of Heaven which is as the light of seven days! Do not despond lest you seem to despise the mercy which God has given you! A poor patient that has been very, very lame and weak, and could not rise from his bed, is at last able to walk with a stick. “Well,” he says to himself, “I wish I could walk, and run, and leap as other men.” Suppose he sits down and frets because he cannot? His physician might put his hand on his shoulder and say, “My good fellow, why, you ought to be thankful you can

stand at all! A little while ago, you know, you could not stand upright. Be glad for what you have—don't seem to despise what has been done for you." I say to every Christian here, while you long after strength, don't seem to despise the Grace that God has bestowed, but rejoice and bless His name!

You can despise the day of small things, again, *by not seeking after more*. "That is strange," you say. Well, a man who has got a little and does not want more—it looks as if he despises the little! He who has a little light and does not ask for more light, does not care for light at all. You that have a little faith and do not want more faith—do not value faith at all—you are despising it! On the one hand, do not despond because you have the day of small things, but in the next place, do not stand still and be satisfied with what you have! Prove your value of the little by earnestly seeking after more Divine Grace! Do not despise the Grace that God has given you, but bless God for it—and do this in the presence of His people. If you hold your tongue about your Grace and never let anyone know, surely it must be because you do not think it is worth saying anything about! Tell your brothers, tell your sisters, and they of the Lord's household, that the Lord has done gracious things for you! And then it will be seen that you do not despise His Grace.

And now let us run over a thought or two about these small things in weak Believers. Be it remembered that little faith is saving faith, and that the day of small things is a day of safe things. Be it remembered that it is natural that living things should begin small. The man is first a baby. The daylight is first of all twilight. It is by little and by little that we come unto the stature of men in Christ Jesus. The day of small things is not only natural, but promising. Small things are living things. Let them alone, and they grow. The day of small things has its beauty and its excellence. I have known some who in later years would have liked to have gone back to their first days. Oh, well do some of us remember when we would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon! We had not much knowledge, but oh, how we longed to know! We stood in the aisles, then, and we never got tired! Now we need soft seats and very comfortable places—and the atmosphere must neither be too hot nor too cold! We are now getting dainty, perhaps, but in those first young days of spiritual life, what appetites we had for Divine Truth, and what zeal, what sacred fire was in our heart! True, some of it was wild fire and, perhaps, the energy of the flesh mingled with the power of the Spirit, but, for all that, God remembers the love of our espousals and so do we remember, too! The mother loves her grown-up son, but sometimes she thinks she does not love him as she did when she could fondle him in her arms. Oh, the beauty of a little child! Oh, the beauty of a lamb in the faith! I dare say the farmer and the butcher like the sheep better than the lambs, but the lambs are best to look at, at any rate! And the rosebud—there is a charm about it that there is not in the full-blown rose. And so in the day of small things there is a special excellence that we ought not to despise. Besides, small as Grace may be in the heart, it is Divine—it is a spark from the ever-blazing sun! He is a partaker of the Divine Nature who has

even a little living faith in Christ. And being Divine, it is immortal! Not all the devils in Hell could quench the feeblest spark of Grace that ever dropped into the heart of man! If God has given you faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will defy all earth and Hell, all time and eternity ever to destroy it! So there is much reason why we should not despise the day of small things.

One word and I leave this point. You Christians, don't despise anybody, but especially do not despise any in whom you see even a little love to Christ. But do more—look after them, look after the little ones! I think I have heard of a shepherd who had a remarkably fine flock of sheep—and he had a secret about them. He was often asked how it was that his flocks seemed so much to excel all others. At last he told the secret—"I give my principal attention to the lambs." Now you elders of the church, and you, my matronly Sisters, you that know the Lord, and have known Him for years, look up the lambs! Search them out and take a special care of them! For if they are well nurtured in their early days, they will get a strength of spiritual constitution that will make them the joy of the Good Shepherd during the rest of their days! Now I leave that point. In the second place, I said that I would address a word or two to—

II. FEEBLE WORKERS.

Thank God there are many workers here tonight, and maybe they will put themselves down as feeble. May the words I utter be an encouragement to them, and to feeble workers collectively! When a Church begins, it is usually small and the day of small things is a time of considerable anxiety and fear. I may be addressing some who are members of a newly-organized Church. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do not despise the day of small things! Rest assured that God does not save by numbers, and that results are not in the Spiritual Kingdom in proportion to numbers! I have been reading lately with considerable care, the life of John Wesley by two or three different authors in order to get, as well as I could, a fair idea of the good man. And one thing I have noticed—that the beginnings of the work which has become so wonderfully large were very small, indeed. Mr. Wesley and his first brethren were not rich people. Nearly all that joined him were poor. Here and there, there was a person of some standing, but the Methodists were the poor of the land. And his first preachers were not men of education. One or two were so, but the most were good outdoor preachers—head preachers, magnificent preachers as God made them by His Spirit—they were not men who had had the benefit of college training, or who were remarkable for ability. The Methodists had neither money nor eminent men, at first, and their numbers were very few. During the whole life of that good man, which was protracted for so many years, the denomination did not attain any very remarkable size. They were few, and apparently feeble, but Methodism was never so glorious as it was at first—and there were never as many conversions, I believe, as in those early days.

Now I speak sorrowfully. It is a great denomination. It abounds in wealth—I am glad it does. It has mighty orators—I rejoice it has. But it

has no increase, no conversions! This year and other years it remains stationary. I do not say this because that is an exceptional denomination, for almost all others have the same tale. Year by year as the statistics come in, it is just this. "No increase—hardly hold our ground." I use that as an illustration here—this Church will get in precisely the same condition if we do not look out—just the same state! When we have not the means, we get the blessing—and when we seem to have the might and power—then the blessing does not come. Oh, may God send us poverty! May God send us lack of means and take away our power of speech if it must be, and help us only to stammer, if we may only thus get the blessing! Oh, I crave to be useful to souls, and all the rest may go where it will. And each Church must crave the same. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Instead of despising the day of small things, we ought to be encouraged! It is by the small things that God seems to work, but the great things He does not often use. He won't have Gideon's great host—let them go to their homes—let the mass of them go! Bring them down to the water—pick out only the men that lap—and then there is a very few. You can count them almost on your fingers—just two or three hundred men. Then Gideon shall go forth against the Midianites! And as the cake of barley bread smote the tent, and it lay along, so the sound of the sword of the Lord and of Gideon at the dead of night shall make the host to tremble and the Lord God shall get to Himself the victory! Never mind your feebleness, Brothers and Sisters! Never mind your fewness, your poverty, your lack of ability! Throw your souls into God's cause, pray mightily, lay hold on the gates of Heaven, stir Heaven and earth, rather than be defeated in winning souls—and you will see results that will astonish you! "Who has despised the day of small things?"

Now take the case of each Christian individually. Every one of us ought to be at work for Christ, but the great mass of us cannot do great things. Don't despise, then, the day of little things! You can only give a penny. Now then, He that sat over by the treasury did not despise the widow's two mites that made a farthing. Your little thank-offering, if given from your heart, is as acceptable as if it had been a hundred times as much! Don't, therefore, neglect to do the little. Don't despise the day of small things. You can only give away a tract in the street. Don't say, "I won't do that." Souls have been saved by the distribution of tracts and sermons! Scatter them, scatter them! They will be good seed. You know not where they may fall. You can only write a letter to a friend, sometimes, about Christ. Don't neglect to do it! Write one tomorrow! Remember a playmate of yours—you may take liberties with him about his soul from your intimacy with him. Write to him about his state before God, and urge him to seek the Savior! Who knows?—a sermon may miss him, but a letter from the well-known school companion will reach his heart. Mother, it is only two or three little children at home that you have an influence over. Despise not the day of small things! Take them tomorrow—put your arms around their necks as they kneel by you—pray, "God bless my boys and girls, and save them"—tell them of Christ now. Oh, how well can mothers preach to children! I can never forget my mother's

teaching. On a Sunday night, when we were at home, she would have us round the table and explain the Scriptures as we read, and then pray—and one night she left an impression on my mind that never will be erased, when she said, “I have told you, my dear children, the way of salvation, and if you perish you will perish justly. I shall have to say, ‘Amen,’ to your condemnation if you are condemned.” And I could not bear that! Anybody else might say, “Amen,” but not my mother!

Oh, you don’t know—you that have to deal with children—what you may do! Despise not these little opportunities. Put a word in edgeways for Christ—you that go about in trains, you that go into workshops and factories. If Christians were men who were all true to their colors, I think we should soon see a great change come over our great establishments. Speak up for Jesus! Be not ashamed of Him! And because you can say but little, don’t refuse, therefore, to say that, but rather say it over 20 times, and so make the little into much! Again, and again, and again, repeat the feeble stroke, and there shall come to be as much result from it as from one tremendous blow! God accepts your little works if they are done in faith in His dear Son. God will give success to your little works! God will educate you by your little works to do greater works—and your little works may call out others who shall do greater works by far than ever you shall be able to accomplish! Evangelists, go on preaching at the street corner! You that visit the low lodging houses, go on! Get into the room and talk of Jesus Christ there as you have done. You that go into the country towns on the Sabbath and speak on the village greens of Christ, go on with it! I am glad to see you, but I am glad to miss you when I know you are about the Master’s work! We don’t want to keep the salt in the box—let it be rubbed into the putrid mass to stop the putrification. We don’t want the seed forever in the corn bin—let it be scattered and it will give us more! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, wake up if any of you are asleep! Don’t let an ounce of strength in this Church be wasted—not a single grain of ability, either in the way of doing, or praying, or giving, or holy living! Spend and be spent, for who has despised the day of small things?

The Lord encourage weak Believers, and the Lord accept the efforts of feeble workers, and send to both His richest benediction for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ZECHARIAH 7; 8:9-22.**

Verse 1. *And it came to pass in the fourth year of King Darius, that the Word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu.* God’s Prophets were not always in the spirit, and when the Word of God came to them, it was a notable day, and they marked it in their diary! I think that we, too, who are not Prophets can remember some special time when God’s Word was peculiarly precious to us. We can put down “the fourth day of the ninth month.”

2, 3. *When they had sent unto the house of God, Sherezer and Regem-Melech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, and to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of Hosts, and to the Prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?* On that day the Jews had kept a fast to commemorate the terrible calamity which happened to the Temple in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Now these people were living away in Babylon and it occurred to them that, as the Temple was now being built and Jerusalem was restored, it was a question whether they ought to keep that fast any longer since it was not kept by Divine command. It was a fast of their own inventing—and the question was whether they ought not to abandon it when things had so changed. So they sent messengers to the Temple to inquire of the priests and of the Prophets, and to pray to God, Himself. When we have a difficult question lying on the conscience, it is well to settle it, and not allow it to rest on the heart unsatisfied.

4, 5. *Then came the Word of the LORD of Hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me?* There is the point! You can fast to self. You can fast to your own pride. If we have no thought of honoring God in our fasting, there is nothing in it. The question is, “Did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me?”

6. *And when you did eat, and when you did drink, did not you eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?* If a holy feast is not kept with a view to God, it is not kept at all! It is a feast to yourselves. You have missed the mark altogether.

7. *Should you not hear the words which the LORD has cried by the former Prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?* Well, what was that word? Zechariah has it fresh from God, and he states it.

8-10. *And the Word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaks the LORD of Hosts, saying. Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion, every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.* This is what God said—most just, most fit for God to require of His people.

11, 12. *But they refused to listen, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, so that they should not hear. Yes, they made their hearts as an adamant stone lest they should hear the Law, and the words which the LORD of Hosts has sent by His Spirit by the former Prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of Hosts. And well there might! When God requires what is so just and so commendable, and men will not yield and will not even hear about it, they deserve that God should grow wrathful with them.*

13. *Therefore it is come to pass, that as He cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear; says the LORD of Hosts. The*

punishment of sin seems to be according to the sin itself. If men will not hear God, neither will God hear them!

14. *But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.* Now, in the next Chapter, the Prophet goes on to speak not so much of the people's sin as of God's resolve to have mercy upon them. He speaks with gentle warnings and with loving promises.

Zechariah 8:9-22.

Verses 9, 10. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts: Let your hands be strong, you that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the Prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of Hosts was laid, that the Temple might be built. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men, everyone, against his neighbor.* See into what a state sin brought Israel? There was no bread, no work, no wage, no peace. Every man was the enemy of his neighbor!

11. *But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, says the LORD of Hosts.* He would change everything and give them happiness and prosperity.

12. *For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.* God can turn our estate as easily as a man turns his hand.

***“The Lord can clear the darkest skies,
Can give us day for night.”***

As the wheel revolves, so can the whole fortune of a man change speedily under the kind hand of God!

13. *And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.* The Jew had become the very model of a curse. “You are as cursed as a Jew,” said the enemies of Israel! But God would make them to be the very model of a blessing, so that men would say, “You are as blessed as they of Israel.”

14, 15. *For thus says the LORD of Hosts, As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked Me to wrath, says the LORD of Hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear you not.* It is a very instructive and encouraging passage. When God threatened to punish His people, He did it. He did not play with words. He punished them and repented not. And so when God promises to bless His people, He will not run back from His Word, but He will carry out every jot and tittle of it in the blessing of His people!

16, 17. *These are the things that you shall do: Speak you every man the truth to his neighbor: execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates. And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor;*

and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, says the LORD. He will have His people true, even if they swear to their own hurt. They must not change. They are to speak the truth, though a thousand calamities should be let loose thereby! May God make us a truth-loving, truth-speaking, truth-doing people!

18. *And the Word of the LORD of Hosts came unto me, saying—* This is the point that I call your attention to. You had the question when I began to read—here is the answer.

19. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts, The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah, joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.* Here is an answer to more than they asked for! The messengers only inquired about one fast—what they should do with it—namely, the fast of the fifth month. But they get instruction upon three other fasts. If you come to God's Word upon any point, you will not only be resolved upon that point, but you will be guided in many other ways, for God's Word is full of instruction—and they that are willing to be taught of it shall become wise in all ways. So now they are told that these fasts were to be turned into feasts.

20, 21. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities. And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of Hosts: I will go also.* It is a fine thing when we invite other people and can always say, "I will go also." There are many people who say, "Do as I do, not as I say!" But if our example keeps pace with our precept, there will be power in our precept. "Let us go," they said—and he that said it added, "I will go also."

22. *Yes, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.* And it is so, even now. We have received our religion from a Jew. We believe in One who was of the seed of Abraham. We rejoice in Him as also the Son of God, and many nations come crowding about the Christ of God.

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

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

THE KING-PRIEST

NO. 1495

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He shall sit and rule on His throne; and He shall be a priest
on His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”
Zechariah 6:13.***

LET us first look at the historical setting of this passage. It would seem that three Jews of the captivity had come from Babylon with a contribution towards the building of the temple at Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Joshua. Their names are given in the 10th verse of the chapter before us. Now, the Jews at Jerusalem had become exceedingly exclusive and, in some measure, rightly so. They would not accept help for the building of the Temple from Samaritans because they were a mixed race. They had said to them, “You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God, but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel.”

Possibly they had begun to feel some coolness with reference to the captivity at Babylon inasmuch as if any did not come back to their own land, their descent must be proven before they would be acknowledged. If they would not quit the ease and comfort of the towns in which they were settled and come up to Jerusalem to work with their brethren, could they be sure that they were really Israelites? At any rate there would need to be some enquiry into the pedigree of anyone offering gifts to make sure they might not be receiving help from Samaritan pretenders.

There was, however, no difficulty about the acceptance of the offerings in *this* case, for the Prophet Zechariah was bid to hasten down that same day and meet the three worthy Jews from Babylon. He was to accept for the Lord the tribute which they had brought and make of it crowns of silver and gold. He was then to go with these Brothers and Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, their host, down to the Temple, call for the High Priest, Joshua, or Jesus, the son of Josedech, and place these coronets of silver and gold upon his head.

This was to be done, not as an honor to the individual, but as a prophetic token that there would, in due time, arise One who would be a Priest crowned with many crowns. This illustrious Person, who is called, “the Branch,” was to spring out of the decayed house of David, like a shoot from a tree which has been cut down even to the stump—according to the prophecy of Isaiah—“and there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (11:1). He was to be both a Priest and a King even as David had prophesied in the 110th Psalm—“The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Now Melchizedek combined the king and the priest in one person, as also does our Lord Jesus of whom Zechariah spoke. This royal Priest was to build the real Temple of God, which the Temple at Jerusalem could

never be, for the Highest dwells not in temples made with hands. It was also intimated by the Prophet that as at that particular time men had come from afar and had brought offerings to the Temple, so in the days of this great Priest-King many should come from the uttermost ends of the earth and should, *themselves*, be built into the Temple of the Lord God.

This is the historical setting of our text. Now we have to learn its *spiritual* lesson. May the Holy Spirit be our Instructor. Last Sabbath morning we spoke of the Foundation of the Temple of God. We saw how—

**“The Church’s one Foundation
Is Jesus Christ, our Lord.”**

We may not forget that He who is the Foundation is also the Builder of the spiritual house—“He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory.” There is but One who is the true Architect and Master Builder of the Church of God, even Jesus Christ! His hands have laid the foundation of the house, His hands shall also finish it. So great is the fullness of our Lord Jesus that no figures can exhaust His Character—He is not only Foundation and Builder, but He is the “Headstone of the corner”—the Pinnacle as well as the Basement, the Omega as well as the Alpha, the Finisher as well as the Beginner.

He begins, He carries on and He completes the Divine structure of the Church and when all this is done, it is He that establishes the structure, provisions and furnishes it, keeps and preserves it and, best of all, it is He that is the Glory in the midst, dwelling in the Church, as a monarch in His own halls and making it to be a palace as well as a temple! It is the Lord Jesus who walks among the golden candlesticks of the Church, who loads her table with bread and wine and sends forth His rod of power from her midst. As a King as well as a Priest, He dwells in His palace-temple. As the Shekinah was the Glory of the Tabernacle of God among men in days of old, so is the Presence of Jesus the Glory of the Church at this hour. “Lo, I am always with you; even unto the end of the world” is our pillar of cloud and of fire, our glory and our defense.

Our text tells us that the promised Builder of the spiritual temple will inhabit and build it in His double Character as Priest and King. The Church is built up by none other than by this Melchisidec and it is built by Him in virtue of both His offices as King and Priest. As King He puts forth power and as Priest He displays holiness. As a King He builds up the walls and as a Priest He sanctifies them unto the Lord. At this moment it will be well for our faith to open her eyes and look up into Heaven, itself, and see our great exalted Priest-King sitting at the right hand of God and yet at the same time working, by His Spirit, among men for the perfecting of His Church below. Our Solomon is both reigning and building! Of His Throne we may well say, “there was not the same in any kingdom,” and of His Temple we may also add that it is “exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all countries.”

I shall try, this morning, to set our Lord Jesus before you, as far as I can, in that double Glory which is peculiar to Himself—in the majesty of His royalty and the holiness of His priesthood. Such lights meet not in any other star! To no one else belongs the royal priesthood, save only that He reflects His own brightness upon His brethren, whom He has made to be priests and kings! The subject will run thus—first let us consider *the glo-*

rious combination of offices in the Person of Christ. Secondly, let us notice *the happy result* of it—"the counsel of peace shall be between them both." And then, thirdly, let us suggest *the action on our part which is harmonious thereto*—make crowns and set them upon the head of Jesus.

I. First, then, I want you to consider at this time THE GLORIOUS COMBINATION which is found in the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord. Note, first that He is King and of Him, as King, it is written, "He shall sit and rule upon His throne." One has the idea of ease suggested by the expression. Few kings have been able to sit and rule. Most have been forced to rise and rush here and there to defend their sovereignty! No other seat in the world is so uneasy as a throne! We have seen monarchs elevated by their soldiers, or borne aloft by the fickle throng—bayonets or ballot boxes have been the frail supports of their thrones.

The last few centuries have been a sorry time for kings. As once men feared to be thought Prophets, so might men in revolutionary times have cried out, each one, "I am not a king nor the son of a king." But our Lord Jesus sits upon a Throne which knows no trouble—once and for all He has bled and died and now He has gone into Glory never to be disturbed again. The Lord who has set Him on the Throne by an unalterable decree, has His enemies in derision and Jesus waits in perfect rest until His foes shall be made His footstool. Publicly recognized as King of kings by the Divine enthronement which His Father has given Him, He is not a King warring for a disputed crown, nor battling to drive invaders from His realm—He sits and rules upon His Throne!

Sitting is the posture of abiding as well as resting. Jesus reigns on and will reign on so long as the moon endures. "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." Even we, who are yet young, have seen dynasties come and go and we have seen the kingdoms of the earth moved and tossed to and fro as the waves of the sea. But the Throne of Jesus has not been shaken, for it is written, "The Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever." "The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the people." "The Lord shall reign forever and ever." Hallelujah! As a King, He is described as sitting *upon His own Throne*. He has not usurped the throne of another, but His right to sovereignty is indisputable. He is well qualified to be King of men since He is their Redeemer.

His Father has given Him a crown as the reward of the travail of His soul, even as He promised, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death." He sits upon a Throne which He has won by conquest, for He has vanquished the powers of darkness and led captivity captive. His right to His Throne can never be disputed, for it is accorded to Him by the enthusiastic approval of all His people. Do we not sing—

***"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!"?***

There is no monarch so secure as He! He is really and truly King by Divine right. He is King by descent, for He is Son and heir of the Highest. He is King by His own intrinsic excellence, for there is none to be compared to Him. And he is King by His own native might and majesty, for He Himself holds His Throne against all comers and shall hold it till all enemies shall be under His feet. Thus is He spoken of as King.

A hint or two is given as to His position as Priest, namely, that He is first, Priest, before He is King, for so was the type in the text. Joshua, the son of Josedech was already High Priest and then he was crowned with the gold and silver crowns. Now, the kingdom of which we speak today is not that of Christ's essential royalty as by Divine Nature and, therefore, Lord of All, but that which His Father has given Him, because, "Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Why 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, 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."

Jesus reigns because He died. For the suffering of death He is crowned with glory and honor. The saints in Heaven sing, "You are worthy to take the Book and to open the seals thereof, for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood." We note, too, with regard to our Lord's Priesthood, that He is said to sit, for if He sits as King, it is implied that He sits as Priest. Indeed, it is expressly said, "He shall be a Priest upon His throne." Now, of no other priest is it said that he sits, for the Apostle says, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." There was no seat provided within the Holy Place for Aaron, or for any of the priests—they were servants of God and they stood, daily ministering.

"But this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God; from that time waiting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified." Jesus still sits forevermore in quiet expectancy, for all His work is done—there is no merit to be worked out to complete His righteousness, no sufferings to be endured to perfect His Atonement. "It is finished," He said, as He gave up the ghost—and it is finished! And in token thereof, Jehovah says to Him, "Sit You at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool." So far, then, we have a glimpse of the King sitting on His Throne and of the Priest, crowned and resting from His labors—we have seen each office.

Now we are to see the two combined in the Lord Jesus. And to make the combination clear we shall notice, first, that as a Priest, He is royal. And then, secondly, that as a King, He is priestly. Consider, now, that as a Priest, our Lord is royal. He was a Priest when He honored the Law by His death. He was a Priest when He took upon Himself our sins and bore them, offering His own soul as the Victim upon the Altar of His body. He was to the fullest, a Priest when He presented His one Sacrifice for sin. But never let it be forgotten that even then, in His Nature, He was a King! The sword of vengeance awoke against the Man who was Jehovah's Fellow even when He bled. The Laws which He vindicated had been ordained by Himself and it adds a special Glory to His priestly work of Atonement that it was worked by the royal Lawgiver Himself.

The *subjects* broke the Laws, but it was the *King* who bore the penalty! He that is under law offends, but He that made the Law came under the Law that He might make amends to the injured honor of His own justice!

This was a notable deed of love and of justice combined. Let us be even more amazed at the Sacrifice of our great High Priest, because of the dignity of His Nature and the supremacy of His rank, for He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a Servant! Our Lord stooped to the lowest service for our sakes when He was acting a Priest among us in these lower realms.

He presented Himself as an Offering for sin and men scourged Him, spat upon Him and hung Him up like a felon—and in all this shame and suffering we look to Him as our Savior! Thus He made expiation for sin. But though we are to look to Him in that capacity for the pardon of sin, as men sought cleansing from a priest, we must never forget that now He expects homage from us and we must come to Him for government as men pay obedience to a king. Think of Him as the Crucified One as much as you will, for as such He is your atoning Sacrifice, but remember that this same Jesus which was crucified, God has proclaimed to be both Lord and King. Trust in the Man of the crown of thorns must foster and nourish reverence for the Lord who wears many crowns.

We must not only trust but worship. We must never separate from that shame and spitting the fact that the four living creatures and the elders prostrate themselves before the Lamb and sing unto His praise, “You are worthy to take the Book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood.”—

**“Salvation to God, who sits on the Throne,
Let all cry aloud, and honor the Son!
The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
Fall down on their faces and worship the Lamb.”**

O you that come to Him today laden with guilt and full of fears to wash yourselves in the fountain which He filled from His own veins, you must also come to *obey* Him and to walk in His statutes! You may not come to Him merely that you may get your sins forgiven—you must come to be cleansed from the power of evil—and to yield yourselves unto God. Jesus was given that He might be Leader and Commander to the people, as well as their Deliverer and Savior.

A true disciple looks to His Master for ruling as well as for teaching and he expects to render obedience as well as to receive instruction. There may be no separation between these two points—our Priest to save must always be regarded as our King to rule. He puts away sin, but He expects to reign over the forgiven spirit. He washes our feet, but He looks to see that we also practice His precepts and example of love, for He says—“You also ought to wash one another’s feet.” At this moment in Heaven, if your eyes of faith can see the Lord Jesus, you perceive that He is pleading for His people as a Priest. It is a priest’s duty to offer intercession for those over whom he is appointed—and this Jesus does continually.

Has He not said, “For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest”? He always lives to make intercession for them that come to God by Him. But do not forget that our Lord does not make intercession otherwise than royally. There is no prostration, now, amidst the olives of the gloomy garden; no bloody sweat; no strong crying and tears. He says not, “Not as I will, but as You will,” but He urges His case in another fashion. The interceding Priest has laid aside His blood-

stained garments and put on His robes of holiness for Glory and for beauty! He wears the jeweled breastplate; ephod of gold and blue and purple and scarlet; miter and fine linen and gold; and girdle of needlework the High Priest wore on favored days—all typical of the Glory of the Lord Jesus now that He has gone within the veil.

With authority He pleads with God from the Throne of His power. He asks and He has. He speaks and it is done, for the Intercessor of the saints before the Throne of God is now the King immortal, eternal, invisible—the only wise God, our Savior! Oh, what prevalence there is in His plea! And when we give Him our cause to plead, how confident we may feel that the blessing will come to us. As a Priest our Redeemer not only pleads with God, but He blesses the people. It was the work of the High Priest to pronounce the benediction over the house of Israel. Jesus does that, but He does it royally! I mean He does it with the power of a king as well as with the commission of a priest. He does not merely *wish* us good, but He *works* us good! There is Omnipotent Sovereignty at the back of the priestly benediction. He that speaks and declares His people to be justified, accepted, preserved and blessed is He who can make good His words.

The benediction of Jesus, the Priest, is the benediction of Jesus the King! Let us rejoice and be glad in this.

And now, Beloved, it is as a Priest that Jesus sends out His Gospel to the ends of the earth. In that Gospel He invites men to come to Him that He may purge them from their uncleanness. Today He speaks by us, His ministers, and bids men come to the great Priest that He may heal them of their leprosy and deliver them from all manner of defilement. But, mark you, it is an invitation from a King as well as from a Priest—and he that rejects it shall be counted guilty of disloyalty and high treason! “He that believes not shall be *damned*.” It is not, O sons of men, that Jesus offers you salvation and leaves it up to you whether you will have it or not! If you reject it your rejection will be required at your hands! Beware, you despisers, and wonder and perish!

The invitation to the wedding of the great King is made freely, of His voluntary bounty, but if any who are bid shall refuse to come, the King will be angry and send forth His armies against those who thus proclaim their enmity. Jesus is not only Priest, asking you to come to Him and receive of His forgiving love, but He is King as well—and He will break, with a rod of iron, all that dare to trample on His blood and slight His priestly Grace. Thus I have put forward the combination in one form and testified that Jesus, as a Priest, is right kingly in all that He does.

Let us now turn the other side of the Truth towards the light and see that as a *King He always retains His priestly Character* and, in the deeds of His Sovereignty, He acts not otherwise than as the High Priest of His people. The Lord Jesus Christ is King over all at this very moment. He reigns over the whole world and, notwithstanding all this hurly-burly of affairs, this perpetual clamor of wars and rumors of wars, His kingdom rules over all! Our Lord is Master of the game and He shall surely win at the end. “The government shall be upon His shoulders.”

But, blessed be His name, our Lord’s kingly majesty is ever softened and sweetened by His priestly tenderness, otherwise He would have

crushed this world out of existence long ago! If Rule had been all and Mercy had not claimed her share, Justice would have swept away this rebellious race! If Jesus were not Priest as well as King, He would say to His angels, "Go and smite that nation which refuses My Gospel. Destroy Anti-christ that lifts his triple crown against My Sovereignty. Go and scourge that favored nation which, having the Gospel of peace, yet chooses war and with high looks and lofty words provokes bloodshed."

He does not destroy because His office is to forgive and save! A priest must show longsuffering, gentleness and compassion, for, to that end, is he taken from among men and ordained for men in the things of God. Such is our Lord—"He is not slack concerning His promise, but He is longsuffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." This longsuffering of the King leads to repentance—its intent is man's salvation. We, who are short of patience, cry eagerly to Him, "Come, O King. Come, O King!" But He answers, "I tarry yet a while in mercy that still more may be gathered to My name and may wash themselves in My atoning blood." Think of this, my Brothers and Sisters! Do not lower Christ's Sovereignty, but at the same time learn to see it shining with gentler beams through the medium of His priestly Character!

And, now, today, among His servants, Jesus alone is King and as King He commands us. He lays certain laws upon His servants and He bids us teach all men to observe His statutes. But, oh, it is so sweet to think that our King in Zion is also a faithful and merciful High Priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, ready to help us and prompt to forgive us. My Brothers and Sisters, though Jesus commands you, yet He pities your weakness and helps you to obey. He has given you a Law, but He knows your feebleness and so He gives you Grace to keep it! Yes, and when you do not keep it, He has pity upon the ignorant and upon them that are out of the way—and your sins of ignorance and of transgression He continues, still, to put away.

When His servants were about Him here on earth, He not only gave His commands to them, but He prayed for them that they might be kept from disobeying in the hour of trial. And He restored them when they had fallen. He not only ruled His little band of followers, but He kept them in the name of the Lord. He was their King and their Priest, too. Read the commands of Jesus with becoming reverence, for He is your king! But let them not distress you, for He knows your weakness and will help you to do what, of yourself, you are incapable of doing! He is King, but the priestly garment is always over the kingly vesture—whatever the ornaments of His imperial splendor, He is still clothed with a garment down to the feet. The priesthood covers all and removes all cause of dread from every believing mind.

The same is true of our great King when He goes out to war. He is the Lord mighty in battle—in righteousness He does judge and make war. The Psalmist cries, "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most mighty, with Your glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under You." But the wars of Christ

are not like the wars of earthly monarchs. His sword is not in His hand, but it goes out of His mouth—and with this He smites and rules the nations! He is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, but it is His own blood!

Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood, but this is a warfare of another fashion, for He wrestles not with men, but with their sins! Not with princes and armies, but with falsehood and iniquity! His victories are not those of mighty men who return from the fray amidst the groans of widows and the cries of orphans, but His bloodless triumphs make glad the poor and the oppressed and only crush down principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places, bringing good to all who seek His face! He is a King, but always the patron and true Priest of men. Among ourselves at this day, Beloved, we who know Him delight to acknowledge Him as our King. O Lord Jesus, You greater Joseph, the Shepherd and Stone of Israel, all our sheaves pay obedience unto Your sheaf and all Your father's children bow down before You!

You more glorious Judah, You are He whom Your brothers shall praise! Unto You shall the gathering of the people be! The Chief among 10,000 and the altogether lovely are You. Yes, Beloved, this glorious One is our Brother and delights to be regarded as a Priest taken from among men, being one of ourselves, able to sympathize with our infirmities! Our Lord is higher than the highest and yet He stoops as low as the lowest. He is kingly even to Deity and yet so truly a Priest that in all our afflictions He is afflicted! He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Ruler of our race, He is yet partaker of our flesh and blood and He is acquainted with all our sorrows. True King and yet true Priest.

Thus I would have you blend the idea in both ways and see Jesus as a royal Priest and a priestly King—

***“Jesus, the King of Glory, reigns
On Sion's heavenly hill.
Looks like a lamb that has been slain,
And wears His priesthood still.”***

Such is your Lord. May your view of Him be clear; your faith in Him be firm; your love to Him be fervent; your joy in Him be overflowing and your obedience to Him be constant. Trust the Priest and serve the King! And always pay your vows unto Him who is “a Priest upon His throne.”

II. Secondly and very briefly, we shall now meditate upon THE HAPPY RESULT of all this. The text says, “The counsel of peace shall be between them both.” I confess myself unable dogmatically to interpret this passage, for there are no less than three possible meanings. I must give them all and leave you to judge for yourselves. The most natural reading, to my mind, is that when we shall see, in the Person of Christ, the King and the Priest combined, the counsel of peace shall be between them both. These offices, the King and the Priest, being combined in one, shall make a deep and lasting peace for us—a peace arranged by the deep thought and counsel of God—and therefore full of wisdom, truth, and certainty. When we see the Lawgiver Himself making Atonement for our transgressions, we have peace, indeed! When Ruler and Savior meet in one Person, the rest is sure and profound.

Beloved, if this is not the meaning of the passage, it is at least a precious Truth of God. If we need peace, we can only obtain it by knowing Christ as Priest and King. The counsel of peace must lie between these two. Oh, do you know Christ, my dear Hearers, as your Priest? Have you seen Him offering Sacrifice for your sin? Does He stand, instead of you, before God? Do you present your prayers and your praises to God through Him? Well, then, you have begun to know what peace is, for peace comes through the blood of Jesus the Priest—peace by His righteousness, peace by His Sacrifice.

But if, knowing this, you are still in trouble of heart, remember that you need to know Him, also, as your King. When He subdues your iniquities; when the power of sin is taken away as well as the guilt of it, then you shall know the perfection of peace. “Take My yoke upon you,” He says, “and learn of Me, and you shall find rest unto your souls.” It is not in a mere belief in Christ as your Savior that you will ever get perfect peace—it is by yielding up yourself unto Him that He may rule and reign over you completely. This Man shall be the peace when He is Lord as well as Priest. As long as your will rebels against your Redeemer’s rule, you cannot have unbroken rest. It is idle for you to talk about trusting in the blood of Jesus unless you submit to His scepter!

The Cross itself cannot save you if you divorce it from the crown. Your Savior must be a Priest upon His Throne to you. His blood must be on your conscience and His yoke must be upon your neck. There is no counsel of peace until it is between both these—the kingly Priest, the priestly King, alone, can make and maintain the peace of God within you. That is a great and deep Truth of God—may we learn it well. But it is thought by some wise men that the text means the counsel of peace shall be between Jehovah, the Father, and the Son. I am not sure that such a meaning would suggest itself to every reader and as the most obvious meaning is generally to be preferred, I will not contend for this second meaning.

However, as an interpretation, it is certainly not too far-fetched and, even if it cannot be sustained, it is certainly a very great Truth of God. It is between God, the Eternal Father, and Jesus Christ, our Melchizedek, or King-Priest, that the counsel of peace has been established on our behalf. You never know God so as to have peace with Him till you know God in human flesh. Only the Incarnate God can end the trouble of your spirit. Yes, and it must be that Incarnate God bleeding, suffering, dying, making expiation for sin and then rising to the Throne and ruling over all that must be seen before you can perceive how the infinitely glorious Jehovah can be at peace with you. God in Covenant is God at peace with man.

There was a counsel between the Trinity at the making of man, “Let Us make man” and so, also, there was a counsel between the Divine Persons at the *redemption* of man—the counsel of peace is between them both. It is a joy for us to know that between Jesus, our Priest-King, and the Everlasting God, peace has been established for us. Peace which never can be broken! Our first Covenant head, Adam, broke the treaty and left us at war with God. But the second Adam has fulfilled and established the Covenant of Grace and, believing in His name, we have peace with God!

But there is a third meaning and although I am not sure of it as the sense here, it is assuredly a blessed Truth and appears to me to be congruous with the connection. Let me go back to the historical circumstances. Here were these three men that had come from Babylon. The Prophet is to take them to the house of a Jew in Jerusalem. There might be some little differences between these men and the Jerusalem Jews. These Babylonian Jews had not come up to dwell in Jerusalem, but Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, was a resident there and he might have demurred and have said, "We cannot take your present to the Temple because you do not bring yourselves and come to abide with your own people."

No, but they were to go up, together, bearing the gold and silver crowns and put them upon the head of the priest. They were to go up in unity and love—and they were to furnish in their own persons, types of other far-off ones who should come to the great crowned Priest whose coming the Prophet had foretold. Thus said the Prophet, "They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and you shall know that the Lord of Hosts has sent Me unto you." Now, certainly, it is in Jesus Christ, the Priest and King, that the Jews who were near and the Gentiles who were afar off are brought together and made one!

In Him the middle wall of partition is broken down and the counsel of peace is between us both. The day shall come when our glorious Lord shall be more clearly manifested than now, in the glory of His Second Advent and when the Jews shall behold Him as the priestly King and bow before Him. Then shall the fullness of the Gentiles also be gathered in and the Lord Jesus Christ shall reign over the whole earth. May that day speedily dawn! We have reason to expect it, therefore, let us pray for it and strive for its coming. Jesus the Priest and King is the uniter of the divided nations! Jew and Gentile are, after all, of one blood and one God is the Father of all—why should they not become one? "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin," but one touch of Jesus Christ shall do it infinitely better—shall do it once and for all!

III. I close with the third point, which is this—THE ACTION WHICH IS HARMONIOUS WITH THESE TRUTHS. The connection of our text suggests to us to do exactly what the prophet Zechariah advised the Babylonian Jews and Josiah to do. I will read you what he said—"Take silver and gold and make crowns and set them upon the head of Joshua" or Jesus. This is what is to be done. First, "take." "Take silver and gold." That is, bring the choicest things you have. If Jesus Christ is Priest, should you not bring your offerings to Him! If Jesus Christ is King, should you not bring tribute to your King!

If you have gold and silver, bring them, for to Him shall be given of the gold of Ophir. If you have talent, which is much more valuable than gold and silver, bring ability, tact, genius—bring all the acquisitions of learning, all the acquirements of experience—and all your natural talents and consecrate them all to Him. Whether you have these or not, bring your *heart*, which is more precious, by far! It is the very essence of your being—make this a crown for Jesus. Come, bring your soul, your life, your all. Has He redeemed you? Then be His forever! Is He your King? Do not mock

Him with a half-hearted service—be loyal to such a Sovereign and serve Him with spirit, soul and body. Take silver and gold and bring them to Him. Bring your whole being to Him.

What next? “Take,” then, “*make.*” “Make crowns.” Come, my Brothers and Sisters, I invite you to this occupation! You say, “We are neither goldsmiths nor silversmiths.” Nevertheless, make crowns! Try your hands, this morning, and make crowns for Jesus with such material as you have. Fashion the crown of *memory*. Think of what He has done for you from the first day until now. Interweave and intertwist the recollections of the past—hammer out the gold of gratitude—set in it the gems of love and make a crown for His dear head. Make crowns by holy contemplation and thought! Think how great your Lord is and how great He deserves to be blessed, ever-blessed!

Then make crowns of purposes of what you hope to be and do. Plot and plan within your spirit something you have not yet done, which you are able to do before you go home to Heaven. Look for some child you may teach; some sinner you may woo and win; some treasure you may spend for Jesus; some precious promise you may whisper in the ears of the distressed; some holy enterprise you may suggest to earnest youth. Make crowns! It seems to me so sweet that it should be said, “Set them upon the head of Jesus.” Brothers and Sisters, let us crown Him *ourselves*. We hope to do so in Heaven—let us do it here. Our love shall be the gold, our praise shall find the gems, our thanksgivings and our humble labors shall furnish the silver and then we will set the golden chaplets about His brow which once was torn with thorns for us! Crowns for Jesus! Crowns for Jesus! Crowns for our priestly King! Let us make and bring them.

I return to that blessed precept, “Set them upon the head of Jesus.” Whenever we have made a crown, let us take care to put it on His head ourselves. Have you ever, when you have been doing something for Him, or giving something to His cause, wished that you could present it to Him personally? Well, you may do so in spirit and that is as much a matter of fact as if you did it bodily. With your shoes off your feet, let your spirit draw near to Jesus and, in thought, offer to Him the deed which you have worked. Speak to Him and tell Him that this is done only for Him. I do not know a greater pleasure upon earth than to think of something you can do for Jesus—and then to do it for Him and to tell Him so!

“Jesus, I did it all for You. I thought not of my Brothers and Sisters’ praise, nor do I think of it now, but I did this deed for You alone. Here is the best crown I can make and by Your Grace I put it on Your head.” The love of Jesus will suggest and produce many a deed which otherwise had never been done. If you have a beautiful alabaster box, it is not pleasant to break it and if you have choice ointment, it is not according to nature to pour it out upon another. No, but when you are before *His* feet, the feet of Jesus, your *Lord*, then is it a delight to break the alabaster box and to pour out its fragrant contents for Him! The utmost waste is economy when it is done for Him! And to sacrifice strength, soul, health, *life* is to save it all when it is spent for Him!

Where should it go? Where should my all go? For what should my bodily frame be consumed? For what should my soul be poured out but for

His honor? Do you not feel it so? You will, if you distinctly recognize that He is King and Priest. You will bring crowns to put on His head if you know who and what He is. And what is said last? It is said that this should be a memorial to those three men and to the brother who had entertained them. I suppose these crowns of silver and gold were hung up in the Temple and, when anybody said, "What are those crowns, yonder?" it would be answered, "Those are crowns which were made, by order of the Prophet Zechariah, by Heldai and Tobijah and Jedaiah, who came from Babylon. And they are in memory of those men and of the hospitality of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, who entertained them at his house when they came. They are hung up in the Temple in honor of the coming priestly King and in memory of those four men who presented an offering to the Lord."

It seems very amazing that God should allow, in His house, memorials of His *servants*, but He does so. And our great priestly King allows memorials of His people in His Temple now. We shall never forget, shall we, while the world stands, the sacrifice of Paul and how he made crowns and set them on the head of Jesus? Never while the earth lasts shall we forget the sacrifice of John, Peter and James. No, the Church will not forget the sacrifices of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Wycliffe. And the holy lives and ardent ministries of Whitefield and Wesley shall not be forgotten in the Church because they made crowns and set them on the head of Jesus!

"Oh," you say, "but we must not remember *men!*" "No," I say, "we may remember men and, women, too, for our Lord has set us the example. "Wherever this Gospel is preached there shall this which this woman has done be mentioned for a memorial of her." My Master thinks much of His people and in the plenitude of His great goodness the little things which they do for Him are held in remembrance. Did he not say of Cornelius, "Your prayers and your alms have come up as a memorial of you"? This is sweet to think upon. While our King-Priest shall have the crowns and wear them, yet we, if we bring love tokens and honorable spoils to Him, shall be remembered, too, in that day when He shall award the praise to His people, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

The Lord whom we serve will immortalize our service by uniting it with His service! We shall rest from our labors, but our works shall follow us. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance! They shall shine forth as the sun when their Lord's Glory shall be revealed. Their Priest shall make them priests! Their King shall make them kings and they shall forever be filled with the vision of the Priest upon His Throne. So may it be with us! Amen.

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

CHRIST GLORIFIED AS THE BUILDER OF HIS CHURCH NO. 191

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 2, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS**

***“He shall build the temple of the Lord and He shall bear the glory.”
Zechariah 6:13.***

***“There’s music in all things, if men had ears;
This world is but the echo of the spheres.”***

HEAVEN sings evermore. Before the Throne of God, angels and redeemed saints extol His name. And this world is singing, too. Sometimes with the loud noise of the rolling thunder, of the boiling sea of the dashing cataract and of the lowing cattle. And often with that still, solemn harmony which flows from the vast creation, when in its silence it praises God. Such is the song which gushes in silence from the mountain lifting its head to the sky, covering its face sometimes with the wings of mist and at other times unveiling its snow-white brow before its Maker and reflecting back His sunshine. It gratefully thanks Him for the light with which it has been made to glisten and for the gladness of which it is the solitary spectator, as in its grandeur it looks down upon the laughing valleys. The tune to which Heaven and earth are set is the same in Heaven. They sing, “The Lord be exalted. Let His name be magnified forever.”

And the earth sings the same—“Great are You in Your works, O Lord! And unto You be glory.” It would seem, therefore, a strange anomaly if the Church, the temple of the living God, should be void of song and we bless God that such an anomaly does not exist, for “day and night they praise God in His temple.” And while it is true the ceaseless circles of the starry heavens are praising Him without cessation, it is also true that the stars of earth, the Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, are each of them evermore singing their hymns of praise to Him.

Today, in this house, thousands of voices shout His name and when the sun of today shall set, it shall rise upon another land where Christian hearts awakened shall begin to praise as we have just concluded. And when tomorrow we shall enter upon the business of the week, we will praise Him when we rise, we will praise Him when we retire to rest and we will solace ourselves with the sweet thought that when the link of praise here is covered with darkness, another golden link is sparkling in the sunshine in the lands where the sun is rising when it sets upon us.

And mark how the music of the Church is set to the same tune as that of Heaven and earth—“Great God, You are to be magnified.” Is not this the

unanimous song of all the redeemed below? When we sing, is not this the sole burden of our hosannas and hallelujahs?—"Unto Him that lives and sits upon the Throne, unto Him be glory, world without end." Now, my text is one note of the song. May God help me to understand and to make you to understand it also. "*He shall build the temple of the Lord and He shall bear the glory.*"

We all know that the Lord Jesus Christ is here alluded to, for the context runs—"Behold the Man, whose name is the Branch"—which title is ever applied to the Messiah, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. "He grew up out of His place and He shall build the temple of the Lord. Even He shall build the temple of the Lord and He shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule upon His throne. And He shall be a priest upon His throne—and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Now we shall notice this morning, first of all, the *temple*, that is the Church of Christ. We shall notice next, its *builder*—"He," that is Jesus, "shall build the temple." Then we shall stop a moment and pause to admire His *glory*—"He shall bear the glory." Then we shall attempt, under the good hand of the Holy Spirit, to make some *practical applications of the subject*.

I. The first point is THE TEMPLE. The temple is the Church of God. And here let me begin by just observing that when I use the term "Church of God," I use it in a very different sense from that in which it is sometimes understood. It is usual with many Church of England people to use the term "Church" as specially applying to the bishops, archdeacons, rectors, curates and so forth—these are said to be the Church and the young man who becomes a pastor of any congregation is said to "enter the Church." Now I believe that such a use of the term is not Scriptural. I would never for one moment grant to any man that the ministers of the Gospel constitute the Church. If you speak of the army, the whole of the soldiers constitute it. The officers may sometimes be spoken of first and foremost, but still the private soldier is as much a part of the army as the highest officer.

And it is so in the Church of God—all Christians constitute the Church. Any company of Christian men gathered together in holy bonds of communion for the purpose of receiving God's ordinances and preaching what they regard to be God's Truths, is a Church. And the whole of these Churches gathered into one, in fact all the true Believers in Christ scattered throughout the world, constitute the One true Universal Apostolic Church, built upon a Rock, against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail. Do not imagine, therefore, when I speak at any time of the Church, that I mean the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London and some twenty other dignitaries and the whole host of ministers.

Nor when I speak of the Church do I mean the deacons, the elders and pastors of the Baptist denomination, or any other—I mean all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth—for these make up the one Universal Church which has communion in itself with itself, not

always in the outward sign, but always in the inward grace. The Church which was elect of God before the foundation of the world, which was redeemed by Christ with His own precious blood, which has been called by His Spirit, which is preserved by His grace and which at last shall be gathered in to make the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven.

Well, now, this Church is called the temple of God and Christ is said to be its Builder. Why is the Church called the temple? I reply very briefly, because the temple was the place where *God especially dwelt*. It was true that He did not wholly dwell in the temple made with hands, of man's building, which Solomon piled upon the mount of Zion. But it is true that in a special sense the Infinite Majesty there held its tabernacle and its dwelling place. Between the wings of the overshadowing cherubim there did shine the bright light of the Shekinah, the *type*, the *manifestation* and the *proof* of the special presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

It is true God is everywhere. In the highest heavens and in the deepest Hell God is to be found—but especially did He dwell in His temple—so that when His people prayed, they were bid to turn their eye towards the temple as Daniel did when he opened his window towards Jerusalem and offered his prayer. Now such is the Church. If you would find God, He dwells on every hilltop and in every valley. God is everywhere in creation. But if you want a special display of Him, if you would know what is the secret place of the tabernacle of the Host High, the inner chamber of Divinity—you must go where you find the Church of true Believers. For it is here He makes His continual residence known—in the hearts of the humble and contrite who tremble at His Word.

Again, the temple was the place of the *clearest manifestation*. He who would see God the best of all, must see Him in His temple. I repeat, He was to be discovered everywhere. If you stood on Carmel's top and looked towards the great sea wherein are all the ships and the great leviathan He had made to play therein, there might God be discovered in His great strength. If you turned your eye on the same hill and looked toward the vale of Esdraelon there was God to be seen in every blade of grass, in every sheep feeding by the stream. God is everywhere to be discovered. But if you would see Him it is not on Bashan, it is not on Sermon, it is not on Tabor. It was on Mount Zion that the Lord God loved to make a special display of Himself.

It is so with the Church. God is to be seen in the midst of her, her Helper, her Strength, her Teacher, her Guide, her Deliverer, her Sanctifier in holy communion—in the breaking of bread and in the pouring out of wine, in holy baptism—in the *immersion* of Believers into the Lord Jesus Christ. He is seen in the preaching of the Word, in the constant declaration of the great salvation of Jesus, in the lifting up of the Cross, in the high exalting of Him that died upon it, in the preaching of the Covenant, in the declaration of the grace of God—here is He to be seen, here is His

name written in brighter letters and in clearer lines than elsewhere the wide world over.

Hence His Church is said to be His temple. Oh, Christian people, you know this, for God dwells in you and walks with you. You dwell in Him and He dwells in you—"the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His covenant." It is your happy privilege to walk with God. He manifests Himself to you as He does not unto the world. He takes you into His inner chamber. He manifests His love. The Song of Solomon is sung in your courts and nowhere else. It is not the song of the world, it is the sonnet of the inner chamber, the song of the house of wine, the music of the banquet. You understand this, for you have been brought into near acquaintance with Christ. You have been made to lean your head upon His bosom, you have been taught to look into His heart and to see eternal thoughts of love there towards you. You know, better than we can tell you, what it is to be the temple of the living God.

And once more. We should fail to describe the reason why the word "temple" is used to picture the Church if we did not observe that the Church is like the temple—a *place of worship*. There was a Law passed by God that no offering should be presented to Him except upon the one altar in His temple at Jerusalem and that Law is extant to this day. No acceptable service can be offered to Christ except by His Church. Only those who believe in Christ can offer songs and prayers and praises that shall be received of God. Whatever ordinances *you* attend to, who are without Christ in your hearts, you do belie that ordinance and prostitute it—you do not honor God.

Two men go up to the temple to pray, the one a Believer the other an unbeliever. He that is an unbeliever may have the gifts of oratory, the mightiest fluency of speech. But his prayer is an abomination unto God—while the most feeble utterance of the true Believer is received with smiles by Him that sits upon the Throne. Two persons go to the Master's table—the one loves the ordinance in its outward sign and reverences it with superstition, but he knows not Christ. The other believes in Jesus and knows how to eat His flesh and drink His blood as a worthy partaker in that Divine ordinance. God is honored in the one, the ordinance is dishonored in the other.

Two persons come to holy Baptism—the one loves the Master, believes in His name and trusts Him. He is baptized, he honors Christ. Another comes, perhaps an unconscious infant, one who is incapable of faith. Or has no faith. He dishonors God, he dishonors the ordinance in venturing to touch it, when he is not one of the Church and therefore has no right to offer sacrifice of prayer and praise unto the Lord our God. There is only one altar—that is Christ. And there is only one set of priests, namely, the Church of God, the men chosen out of the world to be clothed in white robes to minister at His altar. And whosoever pretends to worship God, worships Him not. His offering is like that of Cain. God has no respect to his sacrifice, for without faith it is impossible to please God. We care not

who it is that does the act—unless he believes he cannot win pleasure from God—nor shall his sacrifice be accepted.

I have thus noted the reasons why the Church is said to be the temple. As there was only one temple, so there is only one Church. That one Church is His holy place, where God dwells, where God accepts worship, where songs of praise are daily uttered and the smoking incense of prayer continually comes up before His nostrils with acceptance.

II. We have an interesting subject in the second part of our text. “He shall build the temple of the Lord.” CHRIST IS THE CHURCH’S ONLY BUILDER. Now, I shall want to make a parallel between Christ’s building the Church and Solomon, as the builder of the first temple. When Solomon built the temple, the first thing he did was to obtain instructions with regard to the model upon which he should build it. Solomon was exceedingly wise, but I do not think he was his own architect. The Lord, who had shown the pattern of the old tabernacle in the wilderness to Moses, doubtless showed the pattern of the temple to Solomon, so that the pillars and the roof and the floor thereof were all ordained of God and every one of them settled in Heaven.

Now, Christ Jesus in this is no Solomon—with this exception—that being God over all, blessed forever, He was His own architect. Christ has made the plan of His Church. You and I have made a great many plans for the building up of that Church. The Presbyterian makes his plans extremely precise. He will put an elder in every corner and the Presbytery is the great groundwork—the pillar and the ground of the truth and right is he in so doing to an extent.

The Episcopalian builds his temple, too. He will have a bishop at the doorpost and he will have a priest to shut the gate. He will have everything built according to the model that was seen by Cranmer in the mount, if he ever was there at all. And those of us who are of severer discipline and have a simpler style, must have Christ’s Church always built in the congregational order—every congregation distinct and separate and governed by its own bishop and deacons and elders.

But mark, Christ does not attend to our points of Church government, for there is one part of Christ’s Church that is Episcopalian and looks as if a bishop of the Church of England had ordered it. Another part is Presbyterian, another Baptist, another, Congregational. And yet all these styles of architecture somehow fused into one by the Great Architect make that goodly structure which is called “the temple of Christ, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.” Christ must be His own architect. He will bring out different points of truth in different ways.

Why, I believe that different denominations are sent on purpose to set out different truths. There are some of our Brethren a little too high—they bring out better than any other people, the grand old truths of sovereign grace. There are some, on the other hand, a little too low. They bring out with great clearness the great and truthful doctrines of man’s responsibility. So that two truths that might have been neglected, either the one or

the other—if only one form of Christianity existed—are both brought out, both made resplendent, by the different denominations of God's people, who are alike chosen of God and precious to Him.

God forbid I should say anything that would bolster up any in their errors. Nevertheless God's people, even in error, are a precious people. Even when they seem to be as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter, they are still comparable to fine gold. Rest assured that the Lord has deep designs to answer, even by the divisions of His Church. We must not interfere with Christ's reasons, nor with His style of architecture. Every stone that is in the temple, Jesus Christ ordained should be put where it is. Even those stones that are most contemptible and unseen, were put in their places by Him. There is not one board of cedar, one piece of burnished pinnacle that was not foreseen and prearranged in that eternal Covenant of Grace which was the great plan that Christ, the Almighty Architect, drew for the building of the temple to His praise. Christ, then, is the only Architect and He shall bear the glory, for He designed the building.

Now, remember that when Solomon set to work to build his temple, he found a mountain ready for his purpose, mount Moriah. The top of it was not quite broad enough, he had therefore to enlarge it, so that there might be room for the beautiful temple, the joy of the whole earth. When Jesus Christ came to build *His* temple, he found no mountain on which to build it. He had no mountain in our nature, He had to find a mountain in His own and the mountain upon which He has built His Church is the mountain of His own unchangeable affection, His own strong love, His own omnipotent grace and infallible truthfulness. It is this that constitutes the mountain upon which the Church is built and on this the foundation has been dug and the great stones laid in the trenches with oaths and promises and blood to make them stand secure, even though earth should rock and all creation suffer decay.

Then after Solomon had his mountain ready and the foundation built, the next trouble was he had no trees near at hand—there were, however, fine trees growing in Lebanon, but his servants had not skill enough to cut them down. He had therefore, to send for Hiram, king of Tyre, with his servants, to cut down the trees upon Lebanon, which, after being shaped according to the model, were to be sent by rafts or floats to Joppa, the port nearest to Jerusalem and there brought a short distance over land for the building of the temple.

He had to do the same with the stones of the quarry. For the different stones that were needed for the building had to be hewn out of the quarry by Hiram's servants, assisted by some of Solomon's people, who had inferior skill and therefore were set about the more laborious and rougher parts of the work. The same fact you will notice, if you will read the history of the building of Solomon's temple, occurred with regard to the making of the vessels of the house. It is said that Hiram did cast them and Solomon found the gold. And the molds were made in the great plain and

Solomon did cast them there, with Hiram for his chief designer and director.

Ah, but herein Solomon fails to be a type of Christ. Christ builds the temple Himself. There stand the cedars of Lebanon that the Lord has planted but they are not ready for the building. They are not cut down, nor shaped nor made into those planks of cedar, whose odoriferous beauty shall make glad the courts of the Lord in Paradise. No. Jesus Christ must cut them down with the axe of *conviction*. He must cut them up with the great saw of His Law, He must plane and polish them with His holy Gospel. And when He has made them fit to be pillars in the house of the Lord, *then* they shall be carried across the sea to Heaven. *Then* shall they be placed in His temple forever. No Hiram is needed. The axe is in *His* hand, the plane is in *His* hand, too. He understands well that business. Was He not a carpenter on earth?

And spiritually, He shall be the same to His Church forever and ever. It is even the same with the stones of the temple. We are like rough stones in the quarry. Behold the hole of the pit from where we were dug and the rock from where we were hewn. But we were hewn out of that rock by no hand but Christ's. He raised up seed unto Abraham out of the stones of the pit. It was His own hammer that broke the rock in pieces and His own arm of strength that wielded the hammer when He dashed us from the rock of our sin. Though we are each of us being polished so that we may be ready for the temple, yet there is nothing that polishes but Christ. Afflictions cannot sanctify us, except as they are used by Christ as His mallet and His chisel. Our joys and our efforts cannot make us ready for Heaven apart from the hand of Jesus who fashions our hearts aright and prepares us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thus you notice that herein Jesus Christ excels Solomon for He provides all the materials. He hews them Himself. He roughcasts them first and then afterwards, during life, polishes them till He makes them ready to transport them to the hill of God, whereon His temple is to be built. I was thinking what a pretty figure was that floating of the trees of Lebanon after being hewn into planks and made ready to be fixed as pillars of the temple—what a fine emblem of death! Is it not just so with us? Here we grow and are at length cut down and made ready to become pillars of the temple. Across the stream of death we are ferried by a loving hand and brought to the port of Jerusalem where we are safely landed, to go no more out forever, but to abide as eternal pillars in the temple of our Lord. Now you know the men of Tyre floated these rafts. But no *stranger*, no foreigner shall float us across the stream of death.

It is remarkable that Jesus Christ always uses expressions with regard to His people which impute their death to Him alone. You will recollect the expression in the Revelation—"Thrust in Your sickle and reap—for the time is come for You to reap. For the harvest of the earth is ripe." But when He begins to reap, He reaps not the vintage—which represents the wicked that were to be crushed—but the harvest which represents the

godly. Then it is said, “He that sat upon the Throne thrust in the sickle.” He did not leave it to His angels, He did it Himself. It is so with the bringing of those planks and the moving of those stones. I say no king of Tyre and Sidon shall do it. Jesus Christ, who is the death of death, and Hell’s destruction—He Himself shall pilot us across the stream and land us safe on Canaan’s side. “He shall build the temple of the Lord.”

Well, after these things were brought, Solomon had to employ many thousand workmen to put them in their proper places. You know that in Solomon’s temple there was no sound of hammer heard, for the stones were made ready in the quarries and brought all shaped and marked so that the masons might know the exact spot in which they were to be placed—so that no sound of iron was needed. All the planks and timbers were carried to their right places and all the catches with which they were to be linked together were prepared so that there might not even be the driving of a nail—everything was ready beforehand.

It is the same with us. When we get to Heaven, there will be no sanctifying us there, no squaring us with affliction, no hammering us with the rod, no making us. We must be made meet here. And blessed be His name, all *that* Christ will do beforehand. When we get there, we shall not need angels to put this member of the Church in one place and that member in another. Christ who brought the stones from the quarry and made them ready, shall Himself place the people in their inheritance in Paradise. For He has Himself said, “I go to prepare a place for you and if I go away, I will come again and I will receive you unto Myself.”

Christ shall be His own usher, He shall receive His people Himself. He shall stand at the gates of Heaven Himself to take His own people and to put them in their allotted heritage in the land of the blessed. I have no doubt you have read many times the story of Solomon’s temple and you have noticed that he overlaid all the temple with gold. He provided much of the substance, but his father David brought him a good store. Now Jesus will overlay all of us with gold when He builds us in Heaven. Do not imagine we shall be in Heaven what we are today. No, Beloved, if the cedar could see itself after it had been made into a pillar, it would not know itself. If you could see yourselves as you shall be made, you would say, “It does not yet appear how great we must be made.” Nor were these pillars of cedars to be left naked and unadorned—though they had been fair and lovely then—they were overlaid with sheets of gold. So shall we be. “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body,” plated with pure gold—no longer what it was, but precious, lustrous, glorified.

And in the temple we understand there was a great brazen sea in which the priests did wash themselves and there were other brazen seas in which they washed the lambs and bullocks when they were offered. In Heaven there is a great laver in which all our souls have been washed, “for they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Now Christ Himself prepares this sacred sea. He filled it with

blood from His own veins. As for our prayers and praises, the great laver in which they are washed was also made and filled by Christ—so that they with us are clean and we offer acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I say again, before I leave this head, there is no part of the great temple of the Church which was not made by Christ. There is a great deal in the Church on earth that Christ had nothing to do with, but there is nothing in His true Church and nothing especially in His glorified Church, which was not put there by Him. Therefore, we may well come to the conclusion, on the last head, here, He shall bear all the glory, for He was the only Builder of it

III. Now, what a sweet thing it is to try and GLORIFY CHRIST. I am happy this morning to have a subject that will magnify my Master. But is it not a sad thing, that when we would magnify Christ most, our poor, failing lips refuse to speak? Oh, if you would know my Master's glory, you must see it for yourselves, for like the Queen of Sheba, the half can never be told you, even by those who know Him most and love Him best. Half His glory never can be told. Pause awhile and let me endeavor to address to you a few loving words. Your Master, O you saints of the Lord, has prepared you and will build you into His temple. Speak and say, He *shall* have all the glory.

Let us note, first, that the glory which He shall have will be a weighty glory. Dr. Gill says, "the expression implies that the glory will be a weighty one, for it said, 'He shall bear the glory.'" "They shall hang," says another expression, "upon Him all the glory of His Father's house." And in another place, we are told, that there is "an exceeding weight of glory," which is prepared for the righteous. How great then, the weight of glory which shall be given to Christ! Oh, think not that Christ is to be glorified in such humble measure as He is on earth! The songs of Heaven are nobler strains than ours. The hearts of the redeemed pay Him loftier homage than we can offer. Try not to judge of the magnificence of Christ by the pomp of kings, or by the reverence paid to mighty men on earth. His glory far surpasses all the glory of this time and space.

The honor which shall be bestowed upon Him is as the brightness of the sun. The honors of earth are but the twinkling of a fading star. Before Him, at this very day, principalities and powers do bow themselves. Ten thousand times ten thousand seraphim wait at His footstool. "The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," and all these wait His beck and His command. And as for His redeemed, how do they magnify Him?—never staying, never changing, never wearying. They raise their shout higher and higher and higher and yet louder and louder still—the strain is lifted up and evermore it is the same. "To Him that lives and was dead and is alive forevermore, unto Him be glory, world without end."

And note again, that this glory is *undivided* glory in the Church of Christ in Heaven—no one is glorified but Christ. He who is honored on

earth has someone to share the honor with him, some inferior helper who labored with him in the work. But Christ has none. He is glorified and it is all His own glory. Oh, when you get to Heaven, you children of God, will you praise any but your Master? Calvinists, today you love John Calvin—will you praise him there? Lutherans today you do love the memory of that stern Reformer—will you sing the song of Luther in Heaven? Followers of Wesley, you have a reverence for that evangelist—will you in Heaven have a note for John Wesley? None, none, none! Giving up all names and all honors of men, the strain shall rise in undivided unison—“unto HIM that loved us, that washed us from our sins in HIS blood, unto HIM be glory forever and ever.”

But again—He shall have *all* the glory. All that can be conceived, all that can be desired, all that can be imagined shall come to Him. Today you praise Him, but not as you can wish. In Heaven you shall praise Him to the summit of your desire. Today you see Him magnified, but you see not all things put under Him. In Heaven all things shall acknowledge His dominion. There every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue confess that He is Lord. He shall have *all* the glory.

But to conclude on this point, this glory is *continual* glory. It says He *shall* bear all the glory. When shall this dominion become depleted? When shall this promise be so fulfilled that it is put away as a worn out garment? Never—

**“While life and thought and being last,
Or immortality endures,”**

we shall never leave off praising Christ. We think we can almost guess how we shall feel when we get to Heaven with regard to our Master. Methinks if I should ever be privileged to behold His blessed face with joy, I shall want nothing but to be allowed to approach His Throne and cast what little honor I may have before His feet and then be there and evermore adore the matchless splendor of His love, the marvels of His might.

Suppose someone entering were to say to the redeemed, “Suspend your songs for a moment! You have been praising Christ, lo, these six thousand years—many of you have without cessation praised Him now these many centuries! Stop your song a moment—pause and give your songs to someone else for an instant.” Oh, can you conceive the scorn with which the myriad eyes of the redeemed would smite the tempter?

“Stop from praising Him? No, never! Time may stop, for it shall be no more. The world may stop, for its revolutions must cease. The universe may stop its cycles and the moving of its world but for us to stop our songs—never, never!” And it shall be said, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” He shall have all the glory and He shall have it forever. His name shall endure forever. His name shall continue as long as the thousands of suns—men shall be blessed in Him and all generations shall call Him blessed. Therefore shall they praise Him forever and ever.

IV. Now, in conclusion, let us make A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF OUR TEXT. Brothers and Sisters, are we today built upon Christ? Can we say that we hope that we are a part of His temple—that His handiwork has been exhibited upon us and that we are built together with Christ? If so, listen to one word of exhortation. Let us evermore honor Him. Oh, methinks every beam of cedar and every slab of gold and every stone of the temple felt honored when it was raised up to be a part of the fabric for Jehovah's praise. And if that cedar, that marble, could have been vocal in that day when the flame descended from Heaven—the token of Jehovah's Presence—the store and the cedar and the gold and the silver and the brass—all would have burst out into song and would have said, "We praise You, O God, for You have made the gold more than gold and the cedar more than cedar, inasmuch as You have consecrated us to be the temple of Your indwelling."

And now, will you not do the same? O my Brothers and Sisters! God has highly honored you to be stones in the temple of Christ. When you think of what you were and what you might have been—how you might have been stones in the black dungeons of vengeance forever—dark damp stones, where the mobs and the greed and the slimy thing forever might have lived—disgraced, abandoned, cast away in blackness of darkness forever. When you think of this and then remember that you are stones in Jehovah's temple—living stones—oh, you must say that you will praise Him, for man is more than man, now that God dwells in him.

Daughters of Jerusalem, rejoice! You are more than women now. Sons of Israel, rejoice! For your manhood is exalted, He has made you temples of the Holy Spirit—God dwelling in you and you in Him. Go out from this place and sing His praise. Go forth to honor Him and while the dumb world wants you to be its mouth, go and speak for the mountain, for the hill, for the lake, for the river, for the oak and for the insect—speak for all things. For you are to be like the temple, the seat of the worship of all worlds. You are to be like the priests and offerer of the sacrifices of all creatures.

Let me address myself last of all to others of you. Alas, my Hearers, I have many here who have no portion in Israel, neither any lot in Jacob. How many of you there are who are not stones in the spiritual temple, never to be used in the building up of God's Jerusalem. Let me ask you one thing. It may seem a slight thing today to be left out of the roll of Christ's Church—will it seem a slight thing to be left out when Christ shall call for His people? When you are all assembled around His great white throne at last and the books shall be opened, oh, how dreadful the suspense, while name after name is read! How dreadful your suspense, when it comes to the last name and yours has been left out! That verse of our hymn has often impressed me very solemnly—

***"I love to meet among them now,
Before Your gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all.***

But can I bear the piercing thought —

***What if my name should be left out,
When You for them shall call?"***

Sinner conceive it! The list is read and your name unmentioned. Laugh at religion now! Scoff at Christ now! Now that the angels are gathering for the judgment! Now that the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long—now that the heavens are red with fire, that the great furnace of Hell overleaps its boundary and is about to encircle you in its flame—now despise religion! Ah, no. I see you. Now your stiff knees are bending, now your bold forehead for the first time is covered with the hot sweat of trembling. Now your eyes that once were full of scorn are full of tears—you do look on Him whom you did despise and you are weeping for your sin.

O Sinner, it will be too late then. There is no cutting of the stone after it gets to Jerusalem. Where you fall there you lie. Where judgment ends, there eternity shall leave you. Time shall be no more when judgment comes—and when time is no more—change is impossible! In eternity there can be no change, no deliverance, no signing of acquittal. Once lost, lost forever. Once damned, damned to all eternity. Will you choose this and despise Christ? Or will you have Christ and have Heaven?

I charge you by Him that shall judge the quick and the dead, whose I am and whom I serve, who is the searcher of all hearts—choose this day whom you will serve. If sin is best serve sin and reap its wages. If you can make your bed in Hell, if you can endure eternal burnings, be honest with yourself and look at the wages while you do the work. But if you would have Heaven, if you would be among the many who shall be glorified with Christ, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe now, today! “If you will hear His voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation.” “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Brothers and Sisters, Mothers and Fathers, believe and live! Cast yourself at Jesus’ feet, put your trust in Him—

***“Renounce your works and ways with grief,
And fly to this most sure relief,”***

giving up all you are to come to Him, to be saved by Him now and saved eternally. O Lord, bless my weak but earnest appeal, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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

GOD OR SELF—WHICH?

NO. 438

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 9, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Speak unto all the people of the land and to the priests,
saying, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth
and seventh month, even those seventy years,
did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me?
And when you did eat and when you
did drink, did not you eat for
yourselves and drink
for yourselves.”
Zechariah 7:5, 6.*

AFTER the Jewish people had been thoroughly cured of their idolatrous tendencies by their seventy years of captivity, they fell into another evil—they became superstitiously regardful of ceremonies but they lost the life and spirit of devotion and neglected the weightier matters of the Law.

Phariseeism, in the spirit of it, had commenced, in the time of Zechariah. Great attention was paid to the formalities and externals of worship, but the vitality of godliness was unknown. The mint, the anise, the cummin of religion—these were all strictly tithed. But truth, mercy, charity, justice, were trod under foot. They multiplied ceremonies to themselves, apart from God’s Word. They had fasts which Moses never commanded, and feasts of which the tabernacle in the wilderness knew nothing.

They had ordained for themselves a certain fast for the burning of the temple by the Chaldees, and a question which seemed to them very important had arisen, as to whether this fast should be observed now that the temple was rebuilt. The Jews in Persia sent an honorable deputation to Jerusalem upon this important matter. They received no direct answer, for it was nothing to the Lord their God whether they fasted or not, since He had not commanded it, and could not accept their will-worship at their hands.

Learn this, then, with regard to all religious ceremonies whatever. If they are not expressly commanded of God, it is a small matter how men keep them. In fact, it were vastly better if they left them alone. Some time ago in convocation, the very wonderful question was discussed as to whether a child’s father and mother might be its godfather and god-mother. Is there not a prior question? Does the Lord ordain such offices in His Word? And again, has He anywhere commanded infants to be sprinkled?

What matters it how the deed is done if the Lord has not ordained it in Holy Scripture? To the Law and to the testimony. If you find it not there, though you keep every rubric of your Church, you have not done it unto God, for He has not required it at your hands. “In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” I would that all our Churches were willing to search for the foundation of all their ceremonies in Scripture. This is the way to promote true Christian unity. Not to hide our views but to speak plainly. Not to settle down upon our old

rituals, but to examine them and see whether they are of God or not, for let us be sure of this—if we do anything which is not according to God's Word, in whatever spirit we may do it, or however well we may perform it—it is not a service that God can accept of us.

However, though these deputies obtained no answer upon that point, since it was not material whether they did fast or not, yet they had some information upon a much more vital matter. They were informed by the questions asked of them, that all religion must have God for its object, or else it was nothing before Him. The question was solemnly asked of them and upon its answer all depended—"When you fasted did you fast *unto Me*? Or when you feasted on your solemn feast days did you not eat to yourselves and drink to yourselves?"

I shall try, this morning, to work out this great Scriptural Truth, first showing that *in our religious worship our doing it unto God is the main thing*. Secondly, that *in the world our service to God must be done for His own sake, or else it is nothing*. And, thirdly, we shall use our text as a *test of our condition before God*, asking ourselves solemnly whether we have lived unto God, or whether we have been all this while living to ourselves, eating to ourselves, and drinking to ourselves.

I. First of all, then, WITH REGARD TO OUR RELIGIOUS WORSHIP. You know, Brethren, there are various modes in which the Christian Church attempts to worship God. And we are not about, this morning, to discuss the acceptableness of these different methods—whether it shall be by book or extemporary—whether it shall be with sound of music or with the joyous voices of men and women. Whether the ceremony shall be pompous or simple—whether it shall be under the consecrated dome, or in an ordinary chamber.

These are matters of secondary importance, for they concern only the carcass, while we have now to deal with the soul of worship. We are apt to fall into a mistake and value the services of Sunday for something which God does not regard. For instance, in the singing of God's praises it is well to have melody that we may sing with our understanding as well as with our spirit. But after all, if any man shall be satisfied because his voice has been in tune and time, in singing the words of the Psalm, and if he shall think that therefore he has praised God, alas, how mistaken he is!

Or in the prayer. If we shall think that a certain fluency, an apparent reverence and propriety of expression are the only necessary things, and if we forget that we are worshipping God, alas, what is our prayer? We might as well have been dumb. And if in preaching our hearers shall regard merely the orthodoxy of the doctrine, or the eloquence, or the fitness of the style, alas, they have not worshipped God, because in all this they forget the question "Have you *heard* as unto God? Have you *sung* as unto God? Did you *pray* as unto God?"

For if not, though the sermon is orthodox and eloquent, though the singing is as the voice of many waters, though the prayer goes up to Heaven and seems to be unexceptionable in expression, yet the worship is only vain and worthless, lacking holiness *unto the Lord*, since it is not done as unto God and is not really an offering unto Him. Take that as the guide, this morning, and I think I may speak home to your consciences.

How many who frequent the House of Prayer, worship God *carelessly*? They sing, but with no more heart than if they were singing in their own

houses some common ditty. The prayer is offered and often that is the dullest part of the service, and their eyes are gazing about here and there. Or if the eyes of the head are shut, the eyes of their hearts are open enough, looking not, however, to God, but to vanity. And when the sermon is delivered they care but little for its precious message, or if they lend some attention, yet what a weariness it is!

You see in some congregations nodding heads and eyes that are given to slumber. They think there is nothing particular in hearing the Gospel. They listen to the entreaty of God's ambassador as to a thrice told tale but that is all. Were it an oration upon politics, they might be a great deal more enthusiastic than they are, and if it were anything which touched their personal estates, they would be forward to catch every word. But as it is only about their *souls*, only about *eternity*, only about *God*, it does not mean much!

Now, think—do you really think that your thus coming up to God's House is acceptable in His sight? If you come thus, you have not come to *Him*. You have not come to worship *Him*. How can He take this at your hands? What would you think if a courtier, who should pretend to be doing honor to his monarch, should be nodding before the throne, sleeping in the audience chamber? What would you think if some person should have the audience of a king, and while the petition is yet in his hands, should be gazing about with a vacant stare, or turning his back upon the throne?

Surely this were insult, instead of homage, and well might the gates of the palace be barred forever against the wretch whose conduct should be thus infamous. Let us take care that we are not satisfied with merely sitting in our pews and maintaining an apparently decorous behavior in God's House, for—

**“God abhors the sacrifice,
Where not the heart is found.”**

A larger number of our attendants miss the mark in another way. They are not altogether careless, but still their worship is not done as unto God, for they are content with the service itself. Provided they have sung—have somewhat joined in the prayer—and to some degree enjoyed the service, they are content, although no dew from Heaven rests upon their hearts. They look merely to *man* and no further, and if the minister should be in a low frame of mind—and what mortal can help that at times?—these persons, never having learned to seek God in His sanctuary, say that it was no means of Divine Grace to their souls.

The pitcher was empty and as they had not learned to draw directly from the well, they went home thirsty. They looked to the *man* and never thought of his *Master*. It is no marvel that the opportunity has been a lost one to them. Blessed are they who come up to God's House to use the means, but not to rest in them—but rather desiring to find the God of the means in the means! Oh, how glorious it is when the song carries me up to Heaven's courts! How blessed when the prayer is offered, if my soul can breathe its desire into the ear of Christ and have fellowship with Him. Oh, it is blessed to be in God's House when the Lord Himself is in our midst!

What if the preacher should miscarry?—if all the while I am lifting up my heart to God, desiring that His Truth should be blessed to me, I shall profit under him. He may be clownish, but he will not be so to me. His ex-

pressions may be out of order, but they will reach my heart. And even if *his* heart should not be affected, yet mine will be if I am having dealings with God and not with man.

Oh, how many of you come here to hear the *man*, to gratify your curiosity, to regale your ears, to find matter for conversation—but not to behold the beauty of the Lord, nor to enquire in His Temple. Well, we are glad to see you anyhow, for we hope that being in the way, God will meet with you. But I would have you savingly converted, and then you will come here to hear God's Word, to talk to God, to speak to God. Is it not true that some of you do not use the Day of Rest and the House of Prayer for their real purpose, which is that man may meet with God?

There was a man who professed great love to his friend and therefore he would spend a day in his company. He rapped at the door and the servant said the master was not at home. "It does not matter," he said, "I will wait inside and take my ease. I shall do quite as well though the master is not at home if you will bring me abundance to eat and drink." So he entered and took a chair and made himself very comfortable and feasted to his heart's content. And he went home boasting that he had enjoyed the visit.

Then his companions asked him—"Was the master there?" "Oh no, he was not there." "But I thought you went to see *him*?" He had pretended a great desire to have converse with his friend but evidently he was lying, for if he had gone to see the master and the master had not been at home, he would have said—"Well, I will call another day but I have missed my errand this time."

So there are some who go up to the House of God. They think they go there to worship *the Lord*. They have no enjoyment of His Presence, they have no communion with His Son, they have no indwelling of His Spirit but they enjoy the day for all that, which shows they did not go to worship God at all. When we put the question to them—"Did you at all fast unto the Lord" their answer must be—"No, verily, we only sought self. We did not seek the Master's Presence."

But there are others and these are not a few, who think they worship God acceptably when they merely do so as *a matter of custom*. It is a lamentable fact that in many of the suburban parts of this great city, where new villas are rising up, thousands of the people never attend any place of worship—I will not say because, being in the country, they are withdrawn from the wholesome restraints of society, but because, at any rate they do not feel its constraints.

They can spend the morning in bed, or the afternoon in the garden, too glad that they are not under the sorrowful burden of going to a place of worship. But with some of you it is the reverse. You are in such a position that you would hardly be counted respectable if you did not frequent a Church or Chapel—and so you go. The Sunday morning very properly sees you arrayed in your best garments and you enter the House of God with the multitude. But if you go there only as a matter of custom, do not think that God accepts your worship, for you rather obey your neighbors than your God.

Have you ever heard of the traveler, who, when he was in Protestant England, was accounted a devout follower of the Reformers? Sometime, when his course of journey led him to Rome, and as often as there was

the mass, he might be observed among the crowd, bowing as they bowed, a thorough Papist. Soon he made a journey to Mecca that he might see the world and there, among the Mohammedan, he was as reverent as any—quite willing to receive the dogma of the Prophet.

Some who heard of it said, “What is this? How can you act so?” And he said, “Oh, when I am in Rome, I do as Rome does. And when I am at London, I do as London does. And when I am at Mecca I do as Mecca may do. It is all the same to me,” and straightway all who knew him despised him. We have some such in England. They happen to live near Christian people and they do the same as they do. Oh, my dear Hearers, I fear many of you would have been idolaters if that had been the custom of the country, and if so, what is the value of your worship?

No doubt, also, there is a small sprinkling of people attending all places of worship who come as a *matter of profit*, which is detestable. We have heard of some country towns—I do not think it takes place much in London, for it does not pay—where people ask, “Which is the most respectable congregation in this town? We must take a seat there.” Now what are they doing when they pretend to be worshipping God? Why, Sirs, if that is the reason why they go to a certain place of worship, they are following their trade on the Lord’s day—and as far as the sin of it goes, they might as well have their shop open as shut—for they carry their shops on their backs to the place of worship.

We suspect that some come among us for this reason. Christ had such followers. There were loaves and fishes to be given away, and therefore they fell into raptures—“What a sweet Preacher! What a profitable ministry! We are so fed under Him.” And they flocked in multitudes to listen to Him that they might afterwards eat and be filled.

I remember one case of this kind that came under my own knowledge. Preaching about in the country, I had often noticed in a certain county, a man in a smock frock who was a regular follower. He seemed to be amazingly attentive to the service, and thinking that he looked an extremely poor man, I one day gave him five shillings. When I preached twenty miles off he was there again, and I gave him some more help fancying that he was a tried child of God. When I was preaching in another place in the same county, he was there again! The thought suddenly struck me whether that man did not find something more attractive in the palms of my hands than in the words of my lips, so I gave him no more.

The next time I saw him he put himself in my way but I avoided him. And then, at last being again in the same county, he came up and asked me to give him something. “No,” I said, “you will not have anything now. I see what you have come for. You have only come pretending to delight in the Word and to be so profited by it, whereas it is profit you get out of me, not profit from the Gospel.” These people—there are such in all congregations—ought, at least, to be well aware that their pretended worship of God is detestable in His sight.

If you have had meat in your hands and a dog has followed you, you might feel pleased that the dog had taken a great affection to your person. But as soon as the meat was gone, when he turned his tail, you discovered that it was an affection for the *meat* and not for you. Such are some who come to God’s House. They have an affection for what is given by the charity of the saints, but they have no love to the saints nor to the saints’

Master. The sooner such people mend their ways, the better. This cupboard love, this love of God for what they get out of Him, is despicable to honest men, and it must be an abomination in the sight of the Most High.

Once more only upon this point. Beyond a doubt, some public worship is offered by those who attend our sanctuaries, *in the idea that they are getting merit by it*. Well, Sir, and so you prayed because you thought to atone for sin by it? You sang to help yourself to Heaven? You heard a sermon to help yourself to be accepted before God? You have done it to yourself, and the Lord's voice to you is—"Did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me? Did you not eat unto yourselves and drink unto yourselves?"

All religious worship done with a view that we may thereby be meritoriously saved, is really only a service rendered unto our own interests and not unto God. How can we expect the Eternal One to accept as an offering to Himself, what is really an offering to our own selfishness? "But is not a man to do anything to save himself?" you ask. No, I answer—NO! NO! NO! He is to let Christ save him. By faith, he is to put himself in Christ's hands, that Christ may save him. Then after that he may *do* as much as ever he can out of *gratitude* to his Savior.

Why, Sirs, when your servile works are done to gain a righteousness, do you think you win the approbation of Heaven? What? Build a palace for God out of the mud of your own selfishness? Think that God can be bribed to bless you by deeds which you have done with self as a motive? God hates that which a man does with the idea that he can win the Lord's love. You must come to God as undeserving of anything at His hands. Take His love and His mercy freely, and *then* go and do good works, and pray, and sing, and preach if you can, but never with a view of getting good to yourselves—but only that you may glorify Him and at last may enter into His rest.

I say, and with this I leave the point, that that Worship, and that worship only, which is for God and not for self in any sense, God accepts. And whether it is with a view to temporal profit, or from mere custom, or with a view to merit, that we attend to spiritual ordinances, rites, ceremonies, or what not—we have done nothing that God can receive—and we might as well have left the whole undone.

II. But now I shall turn to a wider circle for a moment or two. BY THIS WE MAY TEST ALL THE OTHER RELIGIOUS ACTS OF MEN.

Many a brave deed has been done with the sound of which the world has rung for years which nevertheless has never been received by the Most High. Some have served God out of ostentation, that they might show what great things they could do. Remember Jehu when he said, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord God of Hosts." Jehu has many imitators.

"Lend me your pen, Sir." "Yes." "I hereby write my name for five thousand pounds at the head of the list. Is not that an acceptable offering to God? There are very few in England that will give as much as I have—report it in all the newspapers. Shouldn't the world know that there still exists one liberal man?" Is not that splendid gift accepted? No, Brethren, certainly not, because it was given for his own praise and for his own glory and not for the glory of God.

If it is our earnestness in preaching the Gospel, if we are only earnest in order that people may think us earnest—if we are only zealous that men may say of us, "That man does more than the rest. What a zealous,

earnest man he is”—we have offered *nothing* to God. We have been sacrificing on our own shrines and offering incense before our own image.

A certain king had a minstrel and he bade him play before him. It was a day of high feasting. The cups were flowing and many great guests were assembled. The minstrel laid his fingers among the strings of his harp and woke them all to the sweetest melody, but the hymn was to the glory of himself. It was a celebration of the exploits of song which the bard had himself performed. He had excelled high Howell's harp and emulated great Llewellyn's lay. In high-sounding strains he sang of himself and all his glories.

When the feast was over the harpist said to the monarch, "Oh King, give me my guerdon. Let the minstrel be paid." And the king said, "You have sung unto yourself—pay yourself—your own praises were your theme. Be yourself the paymaster." He cried, "Did I not sing sweetly? O, king, give me the gold!" But the king replied, "So much the worse for your pride that you should lavish such sweetness upon yourself."

Brethren, even if a man should grow gray-headed in the performance of good works, yet when at the last, if it is known that he has done it all to himself, his Lord will say, "You have done well enough in the eyes of man but so much the worse, because you did it only to yourself, that your own praises might be sung, and that your own name might be extolled." That is a singular text in Hosea—"Israel is an empty vine. He brings forth fruit unto himself." There was fruit, only it was brought forth to *himself*, which before God is *emptiness*.

Take care of ostentation. Be ready to serve God when none can see you. Prefer not to let your right hand know what your left hand does. Shun the very thought of getting a market for your own honor. Go behind the wall and serve your Master, sooner than sound the trumpet before you in the streets. When Mr. Morrison, the Missionary to China, needed an assistant, Mr. Milne, afterwards the celebrated Dr. Milne, offered himself. As soon as the examiners had talked with him, they saw that his heart was right enough but he had a clownish look and a dullness of expression.

When the youth was gone out of the room, one of the examiners said, "He is scarcely a proper person to send, we need a man of greater intellect." At last they agreed that they had better send him as a servant, the servant of the mission, to do the work of the household—clean Dr. Morrison's boots and such like things, I suppose. So Dr. Phillip was requested to communicate this to him and he told him that the committee did not feel he was qualified to go as a Missionary, would he mind going as a servant? The youth's eye sparkled and he said, "It is too much honor for me even if I am but a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the Lord my God."

And thus he went forth and afterwards, as you know, became one of the most useful of missionaries. How many a man would have said, "Gentlemen, I did not come for that. This is treating me with a want of respect. Surely you do not know who I am, or else you would not suppose for a moment that I would be willing to be a mere drudge, and menial servant!" They know not the Lord who only desire His service for the honor which it brings—but they have their hearts right before Him who want no honor for themselves but only desire that *His* name may be extolled above the hills—that *He* may be made famous in the earth.

What would you say of a workman whom you should employ to build a house for you and who, when the house was done, should prepare a piece of stone with his own name upon it to be put right in the front so that everybody might say that he had built it? Why, you would say, “No, Sir, it is mine to choose the inscription. It is my house, not yours.” Did you ever hear of a pen that after a book had been written, required its own name placed at the bottom? It was enough for the real author to be known. What mattered it whether it was a gold pen, or a steel pen, or a quill pen that wrote it?

So you and I are only God’s pens. He uses us and why ought we to care to be known? No, let the real Author be known, for “we are *His* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” There was the difference between John Wesley and George Whitfield. Mr. George Whitfield had all the popularity of Mr. Wesley and all the opportunity that John had to make a denomination but he said, “No. I do not condemn my Brother, John, but I could not do what he does. Let my name perish. Let only Christ’s name last forever.”

The day will come when the man who was willing that his name should perish rather than it should supplant the brighter name of Christ, will shine all the brighter for this self-denial. Let us mind that we have no sinister ends, no selfish objects in view. But let it be God alone, Christ alone, and His glory alone, or else we may ask ourselves the question afresh—“Did you at all fast *unto Me*, even *to Me*? And when you did eat and when you did drink, did not you eat *for yourselves* and drink *for yourselves*?”

Again upon this point. How many of our religious actions, our attempts to propagate the Gospel of Christ have been very greatly promoted by strife and rivalry? Sometimes the strife has occurred in a single congregation, and a new Chapel has been built because some few disrespectful words were spoken and a slight disagreement ripened and rotted into a quarrel. The general public has thought, “Well, the persons who contributed to that new place must certainly have done some service to God.” But it may be that it was really service to the devil, for they only built it that they might gratify their own resentments and say to those whom they left, “See how well we can do without you.”

How often have different Christians strived to increase their congregations or their denominations out of a spirit of jealous rivalry? The Wesleyans were awake, therefore the Baptists must be. Or the Church of England had a school and therefore the Dissenters must. How many have run in the race that they might keep up with, or exceed their rivals? Now concerning religious rivalry and religious strife, whatever others may have said of it, we only say, “These things are not of God.” The Lord may say of all that we have ever done out of mere denominational pride, out of jealousy and to make our own names great in the earth—“Did you at all fast *unto Me*, even *to Me*? When you did eat and when you did drink, did you not do it *unto yourselves*?”

I would to God we were all contending earnestly for the faith and provoking one another to love and to good works! But to do good for the mere sake of doing more than some person whom I look upon as my rival is not serving God. It is indulging my weaker passions under the pretense of honoring the Lord. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I have had to ask myself this question scores of times, “Have I done it unto God?” I have gone groaning

from this platform because I could not preach as I wished, but this has been my comfort, “Well, I did *desire* to glorify Christ. I did *desire* to free my conscience of the blood of men. I did want to tell men the whole Truth of God whether they liked it or not.”

But sometimes when I have got on better and the words have flowed fluently and the sentences have had a little polish about them (they have not much at any time) I have thought, “Well, I went on pretty well this morning.” Just then my conscience has smote me—“You made the people pleased but did you glorify your Master? Did you lay the axe at the foot of the tree? Did you come down on their consciences? Did you strive to drive the nail right into their hearts? You might have done better with rougher words than with those garnished utterances.”

I have no uneasiness about rough sentences, but I have, when I have not been earnest in my Master’s cause. Oh, I think it must be so with you, sometimes. You Sunday school teachers, are you sure that you teach for Jesus Christ? May it not be possible that you teach for custom, or that you do it because you like the association of your fellow teachers? You tract distributors, are you sure that when you distribute the tracts it is with an idea of winning souls to Christ? Is it not because your conscience tells you you ought to be doing *something*?

And you who go out preaching, are you sure that you preach only for Christ’s glory? Does it not sometimes happen that you are tempted to glorify yourselves, and try to be fine and great when you ought to be simple and plain and earnest with the souls of men? Oh, when I think of some who spend all the week writing out their sermons and touching up every line and every sentence, I fear there must be something of self there! And when I hear some preachers with such splendid diction, with words so nicely picked, I cannot help thinking that there must be a sacrificing to the genius of oratory or to the beauty of eloquence, rather than to the Master’s cause. I say of everything that is done for self—down with it! Down with it! Let Dagon fall! Break these images, every one of them—smite them like the proud Philistine or the boastful Babylonian king. What have we to do with idolatrous self-worship? O Lord, deliver us from it!

I shall not detain you longer upon this point when I have said another word. Though this is a Protestant land it is beyond all question that there are some Popish enough to perform great religious acts by way of merit. What a goodly row of almshouses was erected by that miserly old grinder of the poor as an atonement for his hoarding propensities! What a splendid donation to that hospital! A very proper thing, indeed, but the person who left it never gave a farthing to a beggar in his life! And he would not have given it now, only he could not take it with him and so he has left it as an atonement for sin.

Sometimes persons think that the doing of some outrageous religious act will take them to Heaven—frequenting Church prayer twice a day, fasting in Lent, decorating the altar with needlework, putting stained glass in the window, giving a new organ or such like. At the suggestion of their priest they do many such things, and thus they go on working like blind asses at a mill, from morning to night and make as much real progress. Do I address any such persons here? I do not find fault with you for what you do, but I do find fault with you for *why* you are doing it. If you dream

that you are saving yourselves, remember that your acts are selfish acts and that there is nothing good in them.

They may be good things in themselves, but as they are done not unto God, but evidently with a view to your own welfare, they are done to yourselves and He will not, therefore, accept them. Let there be never such splendid deeds of alms-giving, never such marvelous mortifications of the flesh, never such devout attendance at daily prayer—they avail nothing before God—when they proceed from a self-righteous heart. Away with them! Away with them all! They are dross and dung before the Most High, if you bring them to Him with a view of purchasing salvation. No, you must have done with these, and trust in Jesus only. When a man can say, “I am saved. Christ is mine”—then he can serve God acceptably and his deeds shall be received through Christ Jesus.

III. Now for our last point. It seems to me that our text may be a TEST OF OUR SPIRITUAL STATE.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, may I solemnly ask you now to put your souls into the scales for a few minutes by way of self-examination. What can you and I say with regard to our lives since we have known the Lord? Have we lived unto Christ? Dare we take the Apostle Paul’s motto—“For me to live is Christ, to die is gain”? Oh, Beloved, it is not what we *have done*, so much as with what *object* we have done it. For every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the *heart*. Have we in our hearts longed to serve *Him*?

“Oh,” I hear one say, “it was little I could do, Sir. I was poor. I could not give Him gold. I was uneducated, I could not give Him words.” Ah, my Brethren, it is possible that what you have been able to do may be more acceptable than what some others have done, if you can say, “I did not desire my own honor. I was content to be humble, to be obscure, to be unknown and to be forgotten, if I might but lift *Him* up and praise *Him* in my little sphere and make *Him* glorious among men.”

I fear, Beloved Brethren, that some of us do but little for Christ, even outwardly, and I blush to confess that in that little which we do there is so much that is spoiled by our looking after self. Have we not sometimes prayed at the Prayer Meeting with the view of being thought gifted men! Have we not joined a Church that we might be a little better thought of? May we not have labored more abundantly that there might be the whisper about—“So-and-So is a flourishing Christian, a useful man”?

Do we not compliment ourselves thus—“Well, people think very highly of me. They say such-and-such, and it must be all right”? Are we not smuggling over the frontier some of the merchandise of pride? It has been lately remarked, and not before it was necessary, that this is an age in which the word *pride* means what it never meant before. You hear gentlemen on the platform say, “I am proud.” You hear the minister, himself, when speaking of something that has been done for him, “I am proud.” The words, “I am proud,” do not mean any hurt now, because we have forgotten that pride in any shape and in every shape is detestable in the eyes of God.

We even talk of a *decent* pride. I saw a good young woman the other day—I dare say she is here this morning—and she told me she could not come now on a Sunday because her clothes were getting so bad. And she said, “I thought it was decent pride to stop coming.” And I said, “No, my

Sister, no pride is decent.” I saw her last Sunday standing down there and I have no doubt she enjoyed what was said as well in her cotton dress as she would have done if she could have worn her silk one. All pride is *indecent*.

A few Sundays ago, when we had the mourning for Prince Albert, some people could not go to Church because the dressmakers had been so busy that they could not get their black things ready and it was called *decent pride* which kept them at home. But I say again—it was *indecent pride*—indecent pride such as the Lord God of Hosts abhors. We must have done with these prides, but yet I do fear that pride has so mixed with all we have done and so stained our best acts, that we have reason to cry out this morning, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Lord have mercy upon us, for Jesus’ sake.”

There is another arrow in my quiver and it must be shot. Alas, alas! I address some this morning who never did anything for God in their lives. To whom it would make no difference if there were no God at all, except that they would be rather glad than otherwise. A man—a man, mark that—made in the image of his maker and yet he has never said a good word for his Creator! The breath in his nostrils this morning is the gift of God. The comforts of his home are gifts from the liberality of the God that has made him, and yet he has never done anything for that God in his life!

Touch him upon the point of what he has done for man and he may have done much—let men applaud him. If a great general has won battles for men, let men honor him. If a philanthropist has done much for men—let men be grateful. If you have spent your time for your families, let your families thank you. But there are some here who have done nothing for God. “Hear, O Heavens and give ear O Earth. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib but they know not, neither do they consider.”

A man would not keep even a dog which never looked to him with thankfulness, never frisked about his feet with joy at his liberality. And yet here are men more brutish than their own dogs—fed by God and never thankful to Him—they have never done anything for Him in all their lives! I know there are many here who, if their consciences sleep not, must stand convicted. Again I repeat it, we will not touch you upon the point of what you have done for *man*—but let me remind you that *man* did not make you—that it is not your deeds for others that can save you, it is not your nation that can save your soul.

It is God! It is God and yet you have forgotten Him and He is not in all your thoughts. You can go to bed without a prayer to Him. You can rise in the morning without a hymn of thankfulness! A God forgotten in His own world, a God unknown by His own creatures, a God—and such a God! So good, so gracious, so tender, so loving—a God who has given His own Son to die, and yet by His own creature so lightly deemed, that he gives Him not a word or thought.

Well, Soul, well, Sinner, what a mercy it is that God has not forgotten *you*. If He had forgotten to give you your bread, where had you been? If He had forgotten to let the sun shine on you—if He had forgotten to let the fields yield their harvests—if He had forgotten to keep back the fever—if He had forgotten you when you were lying last year upon a sick bed—or

when you were out in that storm at sea and the wind had rent away the mast—or when your gun exploded in your hand—you had been howling in Hell now! But He has not forgotten you and you are yet alive. Oh, may His long-suffering lead you to repentance for having lived as if there were no God to love and yourself the only thing worth caring for!

But, Soul, let me remind you that long-suffering does not last forever. The Roman judges were attended by lictors, as you know. These lictors carried on their shoulders a bundle of rods, and in the center an axe. Now, when the judge condemned any man to be beaten by the rods, the following scene always took place. The rods were tied about with leather thongs, which were knotted a great many times. When the judge condemned the man to be beaten, his back was stripped, the lictor then untied one knot, and then another and another, which took some little time and during all this time the judge was looking in the face of the person to be scourged, watching him to see if he saw hardness of heart and rebellion there.

If he did, then the blows came heavy, and perhaps the axe followed. But if he looked in the criminal's face and saw repentance expressed there, it often happened that before the last knot was untied, the judge would say, "the punishment is remitted, tie up the rods again."

Now, you that have forgotten God, remember His rods, too, are bound up with many knots. Many of those knots have been untied for some of you. Six years ago you laid ill with the cholera. There was a knot untied then. Before that you had had many warnings that were like loosening of the knots. And now, this morning, the fingers of Eternal Justice are loosening another of the knots.

Sinner, it may be it is the last, and God is looking in your face. And what does He see there? Does He see a brow of brass? Is your heart saying, "I have loved pleasure and after it I will go"? Then it is possible that Justice will untie the last knot and then comes the axe. Take heed, Sinner, when once God's axe is taken, you can not escape it. He shall dash you in pieces and there is none to deliver.

O God of mercy, touch the sinner's heart and make him repent. Compel him to feel his need of Christ. Lord, lead him to Jesus and then, by Your Grace, the rods shall never be untied and he shall never be smitten!

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

MARVELOUS! MARVELOUS!

NO. 1747

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 28, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Thus says the LORD of Hosts: If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes? says the LORD of Hosts.”
Zechariah 8:6.*

GOD sent His servant Zechariah with a promise that Jerusalem should be rebuilt and that it should enjoy a time of great peace and prosperity. Instead of men being slain in battle in the prime of their days, old men and old women were to dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, “every man with his staff in his hand for very age.” And whereas war had often cut off the women and the children, the promise further added, “the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.” Everything was to be prosperous in the land around, so as to bring plenty into the city—“For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.”

It was a sweet assurance and it ought to have made them very happy, but it did not. When this gracious promise came, it startled the people, for it seemed past belief! The unbelievers did not say, point blank, “This promise is not true,” but deep in their brains they thought as much. It is not the general habit of unbelief among God’s people to give a flat contradiction to His promises—we are hardly honest enough to our own thoughts to express them with deliberate plainness of speech—even unbelief loves to wear some cobweb covering or other so that its naked deformity may not appear. Our reverence for the Lord will not permit us to distinctly call Him a liar, but it comes to much the same thing, for in our heart of hearts we deny the truthfulness of His Word.

The remnant of Israel said, “How can this thing be? In these days, in these troublous days, in these threatening days, how can Jerusalem be made to prosper? Former hopes have been disappointed. We see no better signs of the times and no doubt, if our hopes are now raised, they will again be disappointed. How can the city rise from its ashes? We can hardly think it possible! At any rate, it will be marvelous, extremely difficult, exceedingly unlikely, indeed, impossible!” They did not say dogmatically, “It will not be,” but they said, “It will be a marvelous thing”—by which they meant that it was not in the least likely. You who carry Bibles with you which have the marginal readings, will notice that in the margin there is the word, “difficult,” and the text may be read thus, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts: If it is difficult in your eyes, will it also be difficult in My eyes?”

This is the only instance in which the word, “difficult,” occurs in our version of the Bible, and in this case it is only to be found in the margin. There is too much of God in the Bible for difficulties to live in it! I would be very glad if I could always put the word, “difficult,” into the margin of my life and never let it stand in the substance of it. I wish my faith would banish it. Difficulty *does* crop up, now and then, through unbelief, but where God manifests Himself, difficulty vanishes! Leave it in the margin, Brothers and Sisters! Leave it in the margin! Let it not be read in the annals of your actual life. A brave self-reliance blots the word, “difficult,” out of its dictionary and a full God-reliance may much more safely do so. If God is for us, all things can be accomplished. Things impossible with men are possible with God!

The remnant of Israel said, “It will be difficult,” but then they softened the words a little, and said, “It will be marvelous in our eyes.” Still, it came to this—they did not believe the Word of the Lord. They could not conceive how the promise could be fulfilled and, therefore, because it surpassed their conception, they supposed that the Lord was equally non-pleased and perplexed. Because the restored prosperity of Jerusalem would be a great wonder, they doubted if it could ever be accomplished! Yet, blessed be the name of the Lord, it *was* accomplished, for, “though we believe not, He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” It certainly was a marvelous thing that Jerusalem, after having been so dreadfully destroyed, should again lift up its head and enjoy a little period of sunlight—but we are called upon to believe in even *greater* wonders—wonders of a spiritual kind which are more difficult to believe than material miracles!

I am going to talk about what to every intelligent and awakened mind will be the greatest wonder of all, namely, the possibility of our salvation by faith which is in Christ Jesus. Satan will assail you who are saved and you who are seeking to be saved. And he will aim a blow at your faith. If he does not dare to tell you in his own native tongue of point-blank lying, that the promise which the Gospel makes to the Believer is false, yet he will lead you to think it highly improbable—too good to be true, too wonderful ever to happen—in a word, he will make it appear marvelous in your eyes and he will hint that it is incredible. So this morning I am going, first, to speak upon carnal reasoning, how it runs. Secondly, to offer a correction to that reasoning by pointing out an untruth which lies at the bottom of it. And, thirdly, I will try, in conclusion, to dwell upon the truth of the matter and see if we cannot enjoy some right reasoning.

O blessed Spirit of Grace, teach our reason right reason at this hour and make us to perceive all things in the light of the Truth of God!

I. Here we have before us a specimen of CARNAL REASONING. The Jews of those days said, “It is difficult; it will never be performed. It is marvelous in our eyes; it will never happen.” This kind of speech comes from men as soon as they begin to think about their souls and to desire the salvation of the Lord. We inform them, in God’s name, that whoever repents of sin and confesses it, and believes in Jesus Christ, shall receive immediate pardon. This good news surprises them, as well it may.

Straightway the old serpent begins to hiss out a doubt and they ask, "How can it be? Can a man receive, in one *moment*, forgiveness for 50 years of sin? How can his conscience be cleared by the simple act of believing in Christ? How can the record of a life of evil be blotted out at once?"

Assuredly, it does not seem possible to a troubled mind! Reason decides that it must be very difficult. Common sense assents that it is a marvelous affair altogether—and the poor awakened hearts conclude that the promise of full, free forgiveness cannot be true. Thus they push the promise of God concerning pardon to one side as a good thing which is quite past belief. Then comes the blessing of renewal of heart, such as God speaks of in the Covenant promise, "A new heart, also, will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." Our hearer understands that upon his believing in Jesus he is born again and becomes a new creature with new likes and new hates—an entirely altered being! But *understanding* the promise is one thing and *believing* it is another!

A new heart the awakened one desires, but he considers it too great a marvel. He asks, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Can I, who have been accustomed to do evil, learn to do well? It will be marvelous, indeed, if such a sinner as I should be turned into a saint—if such a rebel as I should become a loyal subject of King Jesus! Such a conversion will be most extraordinary. I do not think it can be carried out." He knows that he cannot subdue his own stubborn will, nor conquer his own unruly passions and, therefore, he concludes that the thing is impossible and not to be looked for. Thus another choice Covenant promise is thrown to one side by unbelief and the man sits down in self-created despair, under the persuasion that a new birth for him would be too marvelous a thing to expect!

Even if the awakened soul proceeds as far as believing in the first two blessings, unbelief comes to him in another way, for this thief is sure to meet the traveler to Zion again and again! The Lord has promised that the righteous shall hold onto His way and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger. And Christ has declared that the living water which He gives shall be no transient gift, but shall be in a man a well of water springing up into everlasting life. "Oh, but," says the tempted one, "how can I hope to persevere to the end? I shall be, one of these days, tempted so strongly that I shall be carried off my feet! What with indwelling sin and a cunning tempter and a world full of evil, I cannot hope to endure to the end! I shall, one day, fall by the hand of the enemy. Do you assure me that the righteous shall hold onto their way? Then it will be marvelous—it must be so difficult that I fear it is improbable, if not impossible." Thus unbelief pushes to one side another Covenant blessing.

Further on there comes to the man who has been helped to persevere for a while, the promise that he shall ultimately be presented faultless before the Presence of God with exceeding joy—this promise is assailed in the same manner. The serpent of unbelief leaves its slimy trail upon everything! We are told that a day shall come when the Believer shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, made meet to dwell with the

angels in light, yes, and to dwell with God Himself forever! And straightway the soul is tempted to think this wonderful effect of Grace to be impossible! When we remember how often we have been worsted by the enemy, how frail, how fallible we are—and how fierce and subtle is our adversary—we dare not hope that we shall see him utterly defeated and his power broken to pieces. We dwell upon the fact that it will be very marvelous—indeed, the more we think of it, the more marvelous it becomes in our eyes!

And, alas, unbelief leaps upon the back of our wonder and we judge that the blessing can never be ours. Thus another promised blessing is thrown under the table. In fact, each mercy of God's Covenant is looked at, wondered at and then renounced—not because it is *undesirable*—but because it is so good, so rich, so full! O wretched unbelief which makes the excellence of the favor into a reason for refusing it! Help us, O Holy Spirit, to believe our Lord and to reason no more in this evil fashion! I have known children of God, in the time of their great trial when they have been surrounded with afflictions, oppressed with poverty and depressed in spirit, to become quite incredulous as to the possibility of deliverance. They ask, “How can God cause our bread to be given us and our water to be sure, now? Can He bring us out of such sore trouble as this? We know that He has been gracious to His people in other instances, but our case is one of peculiar difficulty! Surely our Lord has forsaken us—our God will be gracious no more.”

This comes of reasoning, falsely called. When *we* see no passage through our straits, we are sadly apt to conclude that God sees none! He has promised that with every trial He will make us a way of escape, but we doubt His Word. Like the unbelieving lord in the Book of Kings, we say, “If God would make windows in Heaven, might such a thing be?” Have you ever said that, my Brother, in your spirit? Dear Sister, has not the Evil One whispered such a word in your ears in dark times? Have you not fancied that you have passed beyond the reach of Divine help and will surely perish? In this way carnal reason is sure to argue and rob God of His Glory and our souls of consolation! It has been so from the beginning, that while doubting God we cover our unbelief with an evil sophistry—and this sophistry does not avail to remove the mischievous tendencies of our mistrust.

Unbelievers, by this wicked reasoning, are left in their spiritual death, while Believers are hampered and sorely wounded. O accursed Unbelief, this is your false argument, “It is marvelous and, therefore, it cannot be true!” We answer you that *because* it is marvelous it is all the more likely to be true!

II. Secondly, we will now aim our arrows at the dark spot in this carnal argument which makes it all to be false, or, in other words, we will CORRECT THIS REASONING. First, let us note that when because the blessing promised is marvelous we, therefore, doubt the promise of God concerning it, we must have forgotten God. “If it is marvelous in your eyes, says the Lord of Hosts, is it therefore marvelous in My eyes?” God Himself puts it

so and there is but one answer to the question. My text is a very singular one, for it is hedged in with the name of the Lord and with a double, “thus says the Lord of Hosts.”

It begins with, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts,” and it finishes up with, “says the Lord of Hosts,” as if twice to bring to our memory that God is and that God has made a promise—and that this Promiser is Jehovah the great and powerful, the Lord of all who has countless armies at His beck and call! This unbelief forgets and, hence, her error. To come to our one subject, that of your own salvation, you hear the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus and your mind replies, “It is marvelous, it is difficult.” Do you not see that you are looking at it as if *you* had made the promise? From *that* standpoint it *would* be, indeed, difficult, even impossible! But whose promise is it? It is not *yours* but God’s! If you were to promise to give yourself eternal life, to keep yourself to the end and sanctify yourself perfectly, what a foolish person you would be to undertake what you could not possibly perform! But it is not your promise—it is God’s promise. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Look at it in that light. It is a marvelous promise for you to receive, but the God who spoke it knew what He was saying and He knew that He had power to perform it! It is the promise of God, “who alone does great wonders.” Remember that! And remember, next, that God does not look to *you* to fulfill *His* promises. Do not fall into such a foolish thought! If you make a promise, it is your own business to carry it out, is it not? And if God makes a promise that He will save a sinner—whose work is it to save that sinner? Why, it is the work of the God who made the promise! It is written, “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” “Marvelous,” you say, but who said it? Why, God! Then it is *God’s* department to make it true. If you would but remember this—that the pardon of sin is *God’s* business, that the renewing of the heart is *God’s* business, that the keeping of the saint to the end is *God’s* business, that the sanctifying and perfecting of all Believers is *God’s* business—then you would find it more easy to believe.

Can anything surpass the power of God? Did you ever hear of the Lord being baffled in His designs? Can it be possible that He has promised what He is not able to perform? The false reasoning which cries, “It is marvelous and, therefore, impossible,” ignores altogether the fact that God is a marvelous Being and that if His promise is marvelous, it is like Himself! He is a great God and His power and wisdom are infinite—can anything surpass His ability? Would you have the infinite God confine His promises and gifts to common-place matters? Would it be seemly that the Lord, who is infinite in resources, should do nothing but what you can understand? O Sirs, you forget the Eternal and, therefore, doubt the promise—do so no more!

And, further, the error which vitiates the argument of carnal reason takes another shape. There is here, as far as the Lord is thought of at all, an underestimate of God. The Lord puts this very plainly in our text—“If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days,

should it also be marvelous in My eyes?” You are judging God as if He were like yourself! You have been calculating Divine possibilities by the scale of your own capacity! You have lowered God to the limit of *your* understanding! You have narrowed Him to *your* notion of what He can do and thus you degrade His greatness to your littleness—His wisdom to your folly, His power to your weakness! The deed of salvation is marvelous with *you*, but it is not strange with *God*, to whom it has been the great thought of eternity, towards which He causes all things to move.

Everything in wonder depends upon the person affected by it—a trader goes to Africa. He takes with him a looking-glass and you see the chiefs gather around. And with wonder they gaze upon their own pleasing countenances in the mirror. It is marvelous to them! It becomes the talk of the tribe! But that mirror is not marvelous to the trader who brought it there. A musical box is set playing and a whole village of Negroes gather about it, unanimously believing that it must be at least a spirit, if not a god. To them it is a great marvel and they expect the white man to marvel, too, for they measure his capacity by their own. Yet their wonderful thing is, to an Englishman, a mere simplicity. Shall we set it down for certain that what is a wonder to us is a wonder to *God*? This would be absurd! The Lord can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even *think*—there is no bounding His power, no searching of His understanding.

“But my sin,” you say, “who is to subdue it?” Not you, certainly! But the Lord of Hosts is able to overcome the power of sin! Do not measure God by yourself. “But my trouble, who can bring me through it?” Nobody can except the everlasting God who faints not, neither is He weary. The end of the creature is the starting place of the Creator! The limit of our power is soon reached, but the wings of the morning could not bear us beyond the Divine power. Whatever the Lord wills, is accomplished—you can be sure of that! When we begin to doubt whether God will love us to the end, is it not measuring God’s patience by our impatience? Is there not a calculating of God’s Immutability by our mutability? Because we change and grow weary, shall we fancy that the Lord also changes? Is there variableness and turning with the great Father of Lights? Has not the Lord declared, “I am God; I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed”?

When we doubt God’s wisdom by questioning whether He can find a way of keeping His Word and helping us, is it not because our little knowledge is exhausted and our plans broken down and, therefore, we conclude that God’s plans will break down, too, and His invention will fail to contrive our deliverance? Beloved, it is not so! The Lord’s way is in the whirlwind and the clouds are the dust of His feet! His footsteps are not seen, but He walks on the sea! He rides on the wings of the wind! He has sway everywhere and all things answer to His purpose and accomplish His designs! Leave off doubting and believe that the Lord’s thoughts are as high above your thoughts as the heavens are above the earth! It is at bottom our pride which makes us judge the Lord to be like ourselves. If you degrade God to be like to man, it is because you idolize man and make *him* to be God!

Who are you, you creature of an hour? Who are you, you creeping insect upon the bay leaf of existence? Who are you, poor mortal, that today is and tomorrow is shoveled back into mother earth, that you should begin to measure God? Go, measure Heaven with your span, weigh the Alps in scales and the Andes in balances! Go and hold the Atlantic in the hollow of your hand and when you have done these things know that you are not at the *beginning* of the measurement of the wisdom, the power, the truth and the goodness of the Lord! This, however, is the fault of carnal reasoning, that it judges the Lord of Hosts by the miserable standard of human weakness. Do you not see, dear Friends, that if we begin to say that God's promise is so marvelous that it cannot be performed, we do the infinite God high dishonor? You dishonor His power by imagining that a difficulty has arisen which He cannot meet. You suppose a power greater than God, since it baffles and defeats Him. What is this but to set up another god? It is a fault charged upon Israel of old as a very provoking crime, that they limited the Holy One of Israel. Oh that we may never be guilty of this offense!

But you do worse than that, for I can suppose God to bear the dishonor of His power being limited, but it is far worse, practically, to insinuate that He boasts beyond His capabilities! I tremble as I say that unbelief accuses the Lord of vain boasting! When a man promises you what he knows he cannot perform, what opinion do you form of him? You say at once, "Why, the man is a boaster! He is big at talking, but small at performing." Will you insinuate that of the Lord God? Has it come to this, that you dare criticize your Maker? Do you dare insinuate that the Infinite Jehovah has promised to a sinner what He is incapable of giving him? God says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—and dare you say, "No, I could not be saved." Does God, then, speak beyond His ability? Does He promise what He is not able to perform?

This is a form of blasphemy from which, I pray, we may be cleansed through the blood of our Lord Jesus! Or is it that you dream that God does not know His own strength? What? Is the Almighty *ignorant*? Is the only wise God unaware of His own power? Does He not know what He can do? I will not say that a man brags when he promises what he cannot perform, provided that he is unaware of his inability, for in such a case he blunders through ignorance or conceit. Do you dare charge either of these upon *God*? Far from me to have such an evil thought! I feel, this morning, that if all your sins were mine, yet since the Lord has promised pardon to him that believes, I could and would believe over the head of all that mass of sin! Yes, if all the iniquities of all the men that ever lived were laid upon my soul, yet upon that assurance, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin," I would even venture my soul's hope of salvation and be sure of success!

If the Lord has given a promise to His people that He will keep them to the end and that they shall not perish, then He will keep them to the end without fail. Why, Brothers and Sisters, if our road to Heaven were thick with devils, so that they stood like blades of wheat in a corn field, yet we

should be able to force a lane right through the serried host, the Lord Jehovah being our Helper! If all the powers that are, or were, or can be, were to raise themselves up against the promise of God, in the name of God would we defy and defeat them! The Word of the Lord makes us more than conquerors. David said of old, "They compassed me about like bees; yes, they compassed me about, but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." What can stand against the feeblest man that lives if he has God's promise to back him? The Lord can do just what He wills, whoever may oppose!

Therefore let us fling away this folly of ours in supposing that because a work of Grace is marvelous or difficult in our eyes, it is, therefore, marvelous or difficult in the eyes of the Lord! That which is difficult with us is easy with Him! There is a radical mistake at the bottom of all this wicked, unbelieving reasoning—it leaves out the Lord altogether, or degrades Him below the Glory of His Godhead.

III. We have reached the third division of our discourse and here let us practice a little RIGHT REASONING. I invite any here who are troubled with doubts about the promise of God to follow me in a few simple considerations. First, it is quite clear that for our salvation, marvels must be worked. It will be a wonder in all of us for any one of us to attain Heaven—it will need the Omnipotence of God to renew, preserve and perfect us. It is a rule with regard to miracles that God is very economical with them. In the Romish Church you have miracles in abundance, such as they are, but they are, for the most part, needless parades of power.

When St. Denis, after his head was cut off, picked it up in his hands and walked a thousand miles with it, the dear man might as well have saved himself and his head the unsightly pilgrimage! When the blood of St. Januarius liquefies, or a Madonna winks, it may be interesting, but one does not see the necessity for either performance! The God of the Scriptures has no hand in such miracles—they are not of the same order as those which are worked by His right hand. Our Lord never uses a miracle where the same thing could be done by the ordinary processes of Nature. But whenever a miracle is requisite, a miracle is forthcoming—there is no stint of power though there is no wasteful display of it, either.

I argue, then, that if it is necessary for you to be saved in order that God's promise may be kept, you shall be saved! And if, in order to this, marvels are needed, marvels will happen. The Lord reserves no strength when it is necessary to expend it for the fulfillment of His promises. If Omnipotence must make bare His arm, it shall be bared. The Lord led His people Israel to the Red Sea—perhaps if the Egyptians had not come up, it might have been possible to make rafts to ferry them across the water and we are sure it would have been done if it had been the best way of achieving the Lord's design. But when the Egyptians were so close behind that you could hear the neighing of their horses and almost feel the hot breath of their vengeful masters, then there remained no ordinary way for the people of God to escape, and lo, the mighty depths yawned before the

tribes and a road was opened through the heart of the sea that the people of God might pass through!

So it shall be with you. If to forgive your sin needs a miracle of Grace, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and the miracle of Grace is done! If to change your nature needs the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit—if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit waits to work that great change. No, He *has* worked the change, and your *faith* is the evidence of it! If it shall need all the power of God to keep one of His children to the end, all that power shall be, for though God works not miracles till they are needed, He is not slow to do so when the case demands them. He will shake Heaven and earth to complete the salvation of His chosen! Therefore, if a deed of Grace is marvelous in your eyes, say to yourself, “Marvelous as it is, nothing short of it will do and, therefore, it shall be done.”

It was marvelous that God should become Man, but as there was no salvation for His apart from Immanuel, “God With Us,” Jesus was born of a woman! It is marvelous that the Son of God should die, but as there was no salvation apart from His death, He died upon the Cross. If the Lord has given a promise, it must be carried out, cost what it may, for His name is, “God That Cannot Lie.” If there is no way of bringing a saint to God except by the Holy Spirit’s dwelling in him, which is a great wonder, then the Holy Spirit shall dwell in him, for the many sons must be brought unto Glory, and if marvels as many as the hairs on their heads are needed, so many marvels there shall be!

A second little bit of reasoning may tend to comfort some of you, namely, that, after all, marvelous things are the rule with God. I say not *miracles*, although it is difficult to draw the line between the ordinary processes of God’s working and the extraordinary ones, for the ordinary are extraordinary and His extraordinary deeds can hardly be more marvelous than His daily operations! All the works of God in creation are marvels. Take the telescope and search out the stars. Assuredly an “undevout astronomer is mad.” When we perceive somewhat of the multitudes of worlds that God has made—their vast distances, the proportions of their bulk, the regularity of their orbits and the rapidity of their motions—we discover that the great machinery of Nature is ordered by infinite skill! “It is the Lord’s doing” and it is marvelous in our eyes!

Surely that God who flings the stars about with both His hands can give us our daily bread! if He makes worlds to fly off like sparks from the anvil of His Omnipotence, He can make new creatures in Christ Jesus! If He keeps all those heavenly lamps shining so brightly for centuries, He can sustain Grace in the hearts of His people without difficulty! But now if you have done with the telescope, please put it away and let me lend you a *microscope*. Look at a butterfly from your garden. No, you need not trouble to examine the whole creature, a portion of a broken wing will suffice for your astonishment. Here is a spider’s eye! Are you not surprised? This is the petal of a flower—what amazing beauty! Take but a single portion of a minute blood vessel and study it awhile. I hear you say, “I never

could have believed it! This glass reveals to me such wonders that I am utterly astounded!”

God is as great in the little as in the great—He is God everywhere! If a man carefully fashions a needle it appears to be exquisitely smooth and polished. Ah, it is only bright because your eyes are weak. Put it under the microscope. It is transformed into a rough bar of iron! No works of man will bear to be examined with a microscope—but you may search the Lord’s work with the utmost care—the most common, plain, simple—the most ordinary creation of God is perfect! Since, then, all Nature teems with marvels, why put aside a promise of God because it involves a marvel? Is such conduct reasonable? However, if you have read through all the pages of Nature, which I am sure you have not, I would invite you to peruse the Book of Providence and see what marvels are there! I will give you no illustrations, because your own life will probably furnish you with many.

If not, look at the history of any country—see how wondrously God has worked out His everlasting purposes of justice or of mercy in each land. The story of Providence contains a world of wonders! Why, then, should you doubt the promise of God because it involves a marvel? You should, rather, believe it for that very reason! I think there is good reasoning in all this. Follow me yet a little further, when I say that you must be prepared to abandon altogether the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ if you make it a rule to disbelieve the marvelous. The greatest marvel that I ever heard of is this—“Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the finite.” How the Infinite could become one with the finite, so that the Baby at Bethlehem should be the Mighty God, *I cannot explain and I think you cannot, either.* Are you prepared to forego the Incarnation of Christ? For if you are not, you must not refuse to believe in any act of God because it is marvelous—for it cannot be more marvelous than God in human flesh!

Think again—it is a cardinal doctrine of Christianity that the dead will rise again—that at the sounding of the trumpet of God they that are in their graves will rise to be judged in their bodies. Is not this a marvel? Stand in a cemetery and ask the question, “Can these dry bones live?” Do you believe in the Resurrection? Then you must never set aside any promise of God because it involves a marvel. You also believe, according to the Word of the Lord, that this world will one day be the home of God’s Glory, for there shall be new heavens and a new earth in which dwells righteousness and the travail of the groaning creation shall come to an end—and this world shall be made anew a temple for the Lord. What an extraordinary thing this will be! Yet you believe it. Do not, therefore, ever doubt a single promise that God makes either to saint or sinner because it contains a marvel.

Yet, again, I want you to follow me in another thought, namely, that greater marvels have been already worked than any which your salvation and mine will involve! Brothers and Sisters, if it had been whispered to any of us that God would take upon Himself human form and dwell among men, we should have looked much astonished! But if the Prophet

had added, "In that form He will be despised and spit upon, and hung up to die a felon's death because He will bear the sin of man which will be laid upon His perfect Person, so that He will be made a curse for us," we should have said, "No, that cannot be!" Beloved, it has *been!* Atonement has been accomplished! Christ has borne the load of His people's sins up to the Cross and He has hurled that weight from His shoulders into His own sepulcher and left them there, buried forever!

No wonder like this remains to be done—the greatest deed is finished! The renewal of our nature and the forgiveness of our sin are but little things compared with what Christ has already done! That He should *now* save His people seems, to me, not at all extraordinary—it would be more extraordinary that He should die and *not* save those for whom He died! Having paid the ransom price for His heritage, it is but a natural consequence that it should be set free. The greater wonder has already amazed angels, principalities and powers! Oh, think not, though I, for lack of time, have passed lightly over this miracle of miracles—the death of our blessed Lord—that there is not much more to be said of this great wonder! Why, in dying, our Lord destroyed death, and cried, "Where is your sting?"

In rising again, He burst the bands of the sepulcher and opened a way to life to all Believers! In ascending the starry road, He led captivity captive and took possession of Heaven in the name of all His redeemed! And now, this day, He that was despised and rejected has all power given to Him in Heaven and in earth on our behalf! These great wonders have been finished and registered in Heaven! It only remains for us simply to receive the result of them by believing in Christ Jesus our Lord! To deliver us from the wrath to come is but now a comparatively small marvel. Compared with the griefs and death of the Son of God, *nothing* great remains! Think of that and let your faith be encouraged.

I will not detain you except to remind you of the sweet thought that the more marvels there may be in our salvation the more glorifying it will be to God. Think of that. The more difficult it will be to save you, the more glory to God when He has achieved it. Your sin washed away will only demonstrate the power of the precious blood of Jesus! Your hard, stubborn will subdued will only prove the might of the love of Christ upon your soul! Your trials, temptations, weaknesses and infirmities will only glorify that almighty strength which is working in you to produce your ultimate perfection! Believe the promise all the more because it is so wonderful and, therefore, so honoring to the Lord. Do not let the marvel stagger you—let it encourage you! Say, "If this involved nothing wonderful, I could not think it came from God, but inasmuch as it is great and high, it is all the more worthy of God." Make the difficulties of the Bible a help to your faith and let the greatness of Grace render you the more hopeful of receiving it.

Lastly, let me say, whenever you have any doubts and fears, turn your mind away from the *thing* that is promised to the faithful *Promiser*. We need altogether larger ideas of God! If we had them, we would find it easy to believe His Word. I remember when I was a boy, being taken to see the residence of one of our nobility, and the good friend who took me noticed

my astonishment at the largeness of the house. I was amazed at it, having never seen anything like it, and so I said, "What a house for a man to live in!" "Bless you, boy," he said, "this is only the kitchen!" I was only looking at the servants' apartments and was astonished at the grandeur! The mansion itself was a far nobler affair! Oftentimes when you see what the Lord has done, you are ready to cry out, "How can all this be? His goodness, His mercy, is it as great as this?" Rest assured that you have only seen a little of His goodness, as if it were the kitchen of His great house—you have not seen the palace of the Most High where He reveals His full power and splendor!

You know the story of the general, who, having led his men into a difficult position, went round at night to their tents. He said to himself, "If they are all in good heart we shall fight well tomorrow, for certainly this battle needs all our valor. I need to know the spirit of my men." Going round the camp, secretly, he heard in a tent some half-dozen soldiers conversing, and one of them above the rest was saying, "I think our general has made a great mistake this time. Look at the enemy—they have so many cavalry, so many infantry and guns," and so forth. He added up all the force of the enemy and another soldier chimed in, "What do you suppose our strength to be?" So the other calculated—so many footmen, so many horsemen, so many artillerymen, and so on. He was just going to total it up and make a very small concern of the whole, when the general drew aside the canvas of the tent and said, "And pray, my man, how many do you count *me* for?" Did all the general's skill, valor and renown count for nothing? He who had won so many fights—could he not win again?

Just so, the Lord Jesus Christ, whenever we begin summing up our strength, or rather, our *weakness*, seems to appear and ask, "How many do you count Me for?" O Sirs! You have not counted the Lord Jesus at the millionth part of what He is! No, the firmest Believer here has not yet reached the trailing skirts of the garments of Divine Omnipotence! Let us enlarge our minds! Come, Blessed Spirit, reveal Christ in us and let us know more of God and trust Him better! And let nothing be unbelievably marvelous in our eyes, since nothing can be too hard for the Lord! God bless all of you. Amen.

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

BELIEVERS A BLESSING

NO. 3045

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 1907.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 12, 1871.**

***“You shall be a blessing,”
Zechariah 8:13.***

SO terribly had God punished idolatrous Israel and Judah that their names were a byword and a proverb among all the surrounding nations. If any man wished to pronounce upon his fellow man the most dreadful curse that he could utter, he would say, “May you become like a Jew—may a blight fall upon your whole life as awful as that which has fallen upon Israel!” Even the heathen used the Jewish nation as a model of their cursing and blasphemed the name of Jehovah who had poured out the vials of His wrath upon them. But God declared that He would return to His ancient people in love and mercy—and replenish them in the multitude of His loving kindnesses to them so that, from that time, instead of being the pattern of cursing, they should be used as the model of a blessing—that when men wished good things for one another, they would say, “May you be as blessed as the children of Israel, whom the Lord of Hosts has favored above all the rest of mankind!” You remember that old Jacob, when he blessed the sons of Joseph, uttered a sort of formula for future use by others, “He blessed them that day, saying, In you shall Israel bless, saying, God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.” And I believe that to this day, in Jewish marriages, the blessing is given to the newly-married couple, “As Isaac and Rebekah may they be!” In like manner would God make His people to become the model of benediction as before they had been the pattern of a curse.

Leaving that primary meaning of the passage, I am going to apply the promise of the text to the *spiritual* Israel. In His inscrutable wisdom, God allowed His ancient people, the nation of Israel, to become a curse among the other nations of the earth. Their idolatry was not only high treason against God, but it also gave the very heathen reason to blaspheme His holy name. The Lord said, by the mouth of the Prophet Jeremiah, “Has a nation changed their gods which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be astonished, O you heavens at this and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, says the Lord. For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” Israel turned aside from Jehovah to worship Baal, Ashtaroth and other false gods without number—and so,

by evil example, Israel led other people into idolatry, dishonored the name of the Most High and became a curse among the nations. Yet Israel was the guardian of the Oracles of God and the time will yet come when God shall again visit His ancient people—and the branches that have been broken off, because of unbelief, shall be grafted again into their own olive tree—and their “fullness” shall be “the riches of the Gentiles,” as Paul so plainly shows in the parable of the olive trees in Romans 11:11-36. Indeed, at this very hour a Jew is the riches of Jews and Gentiles alike, for our Lord sprang out of Judah and, therefore, do we “take hold of the skirt of Him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with You.” And He is to us, “more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” The Son of Mary, who is also the Son of God, is our blessed Lord and Savior, and in Him is that ancient promise fulfilled which was made to Jacob at Bethel, “In you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” We cannot sing too often that grand Coronation Anthem of the Christian Church—

***“All hail the power of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!
Crown Him, you martyrs of our God,
Who from His altar call.
Extol the stem of Jesse’s rod,
And crown Him Lord of all!
You chosen seed of Israel’s race,
A remnant weak and small,
Hail Him who saves you by His Grace,
And crown Him Lord of all!”***

Yet let us not omit to sing also —

***“The hymn shall yet in Zion swell
That sounds Messiah’s praise,
And Your loved name, Immanuel!
As once in ancient days.
For Israel yet shall own her King,
For her salvation waits,
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing
With praise in all her gates.”***

Whereas through sin, then, Israel had been a curse to the other nations of the earth, she shall, through the mercy of God, be a blessing when she repents of her sin and accepts the Messiah whom she has so long rejected. But we need not confine to the literal Israel and Judah the promise of our text, for it belongs to all the people of God, and so to you, Beloved, who are, by faith, the true seed of believing Abraham! This promise is applicable to you—“You shall be a blessing.”

I. And first, I want to remind you that THIS PROMISE QUICKENS REGRET WITHIN OUR SPIRITS—“You shall be a blessing.”

Then the first emotion in our heart is that of *penitential sorrow*. If God says that He will make us a blessing, surely it is implied that once we were not so. Let us look back to the days of our unregeneracy. It may be that some of us were great curses to our families and to the

neighborhood in which we dwelt. If so, we must look back with deep sorrow upon the past, for, albeit that God has blotted out the guilt of our iniquity, yet the *consequences* of the sin still continue. We cannot undo the evil that we have done to others. If we first tempted them and they fell into sin, we may be forgiven the temptation, but we cannot recall it, nor can we put them back into the place from which they have fallen. A child once learned an evil word from you—oh, how gladly would you unsay that word if you could! But it entered that child's memory and it will abide there, perhaps forever! If you led others into places of frivolous amusement, or into haunts of vice, you may abhor those places, now, and God may have forgiven you the sin of your youth—but what about those whom you led there—what will become of them? You can pray for them and I know that you will do so. You will plead with them if you know where they are and you will be quickened in your service for the Savior by your remembrance of the earnestness with which you served Satan in those evil days of the past—but Beloved, there must still remain the bitter fruit of perpetual regret that you cannot destroy the results of that early sowing of bad seed! The handfuls of cockle and darnel that you scattered broadcast in the furrows—you cannot call them back again! The firebrands you have thrown, the hot coals that you have cast about and which caused such a terrible conflagration—you cannot undo the mischief and ruin that they worked! The results of good or evil deeds will abide forever and ever, so let us beware what we do since it can never be undone. So, first, when God makes us a blessing, it reminds us that we were once a curse.

It also brings to us—at least it does to me—a *painful remembrance of the time wasted*—time spent unprofitably before our conversion when, if we were not actually doing damage to the souls of others, yet we allowed opportunities for doing them good to glide by unused. Oh, these blessed hours, these precious hours, these more than golden hours in which Christians may win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ! Angels never had them and the spirits of just men made perfect have them no more. Though they can render other and perhaps yet higher service to their Lord, this special service of soul-winning is reserved for us who are still living on this earth. We have, at the longest, only a few days, or weeks, or months, or years allotted to us in which we may glorify God by being a blessing to our fellow creatures after we have found the Lord for ourselves! Yet some of us allowed many years to pass away before we even gave earnest heed to these things for ourselves. Those of us who were brought to know the Lord in our early youth, bless Him for that, yet we regret that we were not saved in our childhood. We wish we had given to God the very first rays of the morning of our life as well as the bright beams of the fuller day, so that we might have been made a blessing to the Church and the world as soon as we had intellect and understanding—and were capable of influencing the minds and hearts of others.

There is another reflection which is also a sorrowful one and causes us deep regret—namely that since the ever-blessed hour when the Holy Spirit taught us to trust in Jesus and gave us new life in Him, *we have not been such a blessing to our fellow creatures as we ought to have been.* Not altogether in vain have we lived—we have not sown to the flesh, but to the Spirit—yet how scanty has been our sowing of the Good Seed of the Kingdom! And, in consequence, how small has been the harvest that we have reaped! Oh, that we had availed ourselves of all the golden opportunities we have had of serving the Lord Jesus Christ! How much more good we might have done had we been earnest at all times, fervent at all seasons, had we thrown spirit, soul and body entirely into this holy service—and lived and breathed alone for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! If we had reached the ideal Christian life so that we did eat, drink and sleep eternal life, having Christ living in us and we living in Him, how much more we might have achieved than any of us have yet done! The capacity to “be a blessing” to others was given to all of us who have believed in Jesus at our conversion—but we have left that precious talent unused to a very large extent. To some Christians, and to some now present, this message must go home and this question must be asked and answered—what have we done for Him who died to save us? Alas, how little—at the most, how little—but by the most idle, alas, alas, how little! God help you to turn your regret to practical account while the glad sound of the text rings in your ears like the music of a silver bell, “You shall be a blessing.” Let your tears fall plenteously as you recall the sad fact that before you knew the Lord, you were a curse to others—and not a blessing—and that even since you have known Him, you have not grasped the truth of the text and realized the fullness of its blessed meaning as you should have done, for such tears of regret will be likely to lead you to change your course of action for the future!

II. Let us now notice, in the second place, that OUR TEXT IS CALCULATED TO EXCITE INQUIRY as well as to quicken regret. Inquiries will come something in this style from young Believers, “Will you kindly tell us what we can do by which we shall be a blessing? We hear the promise of the text, but how can we get it fulfilled in our own experience? In what way can we be made a blessing to others?” Beloved Friends, there are many ways in which God can make you the channels of blessing to your fellow creatures if you are, yourselves, regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

First, it will probably be *by your consistent conduct* that you will be made a blessing to others more than in any other way. An unholy professor is a downright curse both to the church and to the world and, as for a church of inconsistent members, Satan himself could not devise an instrument more fitted to carry out his diabolical purposes! A community of ungodly men that is known by everybody to be a synagogue of Satan is robbed of much of its power to do mischief—but if it is misnamed a Church of Christ, it is potent for all manner of evil! An unholy professor outside the Church of God may batter against the walls

with small effect but inside, he would be like the concealed soldiers in the wooden horse who opened the gates of Troy to the besiegers. It was only an Apostle who could be such a “son of perdition” as Judas was, so beware, you who profess to be followers of Christ! You have great capacities for usefulness, but your position gives you immense capacities for doing damage to the cause of Christ. Only holy Christians are useful Christians—and the preaching of Christ’s Truth must be backed up by the consistent living of Christ’s followers if it is to have its due effect upon the hearts and lives of the ungodly. No doubt many a shaft has missed the mark because it has not been shot from the bow of a consistent preacher, or because it has been turned aside by inconsistency in the church of which he is the pastor. Oh, for holy living! The honest tradesman who has just weights and measures. The diligent domestic servant who sweeps under the mats and in the dark corners. The laborious workman who may be trusted when his master is absent. The man who would not tell a lie even though he could win a fortune or a throne by doing so. The man who in all things acts justly towards men and walks humbly before his God—these are the people who “shall be a blessing” to all around them! If a man had no tongue and so never spoke a word. If it were not in his power to bestow as much as a farthing upon the poor. If he could not visit the sick or the prisoners, yet his very presence upon the earth would be in itself a blessing—a silent reproof, but none the less eloquent to ungodly men—and a powerful example to such as wish to walk in the way of righteousness. “Be you holy,” for so shall you serve God and serve the Church of Christ and, in the highest sense, serve your generation and serve the world! I love to sing, with John Newton—

***“Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me!
Once I admired its trifles too,
But Grace has set me free!
Now, Lord, I would be Yours alone,
And wholly live to Thee!”***

But, in addition to that, all Christians may be made a blessing to others *by instructing them in the Truths of the Gospel*. The world is still very dark, spiritually, though many people foolishly speak of “this enlightened century.” It has “light” of a certain sort—or rather, of a very *uncertain* sort—within it. But the light that is in it is almost entirely darkness! It is still true of the bulk of mankind, as it was in Isaiah’s day—they “put darkness for light, and light for darkness...bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!” Today the scarcest thing in the whole world is true spiritual light and, where it is revealed, men hate it and try to banish it from their sight! Philosophy is exalted above Revelation. Science, falsely so-called, is set up in the place of Christ who is the Wisdom of God, though true science is never in conflict with the true Gospel. And anything that pretends to be light is preferred by many to Him who is “the true Light.” Spiritual Light is mainly conveyed to the dark souls of

men through the proclamation of the Gospel—the good news concerning Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners. So, proclaim that—

**“Old, old story
Of Jesus and His love”—**

to as many as you can! Tell it to thousands, to hundreds, to scores—tell it to one if you cannot tell it to more. Tell to all, as far as you can, these precious things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ—His Incarnation, His holy life, His wondrous Words, His perfect example and His substitutionary death! Tell these things to your children and charge them to tell them to *their* children—and to charge *their* children to tell them to the generation following. Tell that great central Truth of the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ to the man who sits beside you in the tram or train, or who calls at your house on business! Seize every opportunity you can get of letting men know, by the Inspired Word of God, or by the written or spoken message, all that you can about “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood,” “and by Him all that believe are justified from all things.” And not only justified, but also glorified! Every true testimony to Christ brings glory to God and blessing to men. A preacher may halt and limp, his elocution may be faulty, his theology may be open to criticism—but if it is “the Gospel of Christ” that he proclaims, it will be precious Truth to the saints who hear him—and sinners will be saved by it!

Not only by instructing men will you be a blessing to them, but also *by reproof*. This is a far more difficult matter and probably nine out of ten of us had better keep to the easier task of giving instruction. Yet now and then there will come occasions when you must not see sin in your Brother or Sister without rebuking it. If I hear blasphemy and am able to condemn it, yet do not, my silence makes me a sharer in the sin. I am always afraid lest when I hear God’s name blasphemed, my guilty silence should make me an accomplice of the blasphemer. A rebuke need not be and should not be discourteous or disrespectful. And it should not be unduly severe, but I am afraid that nowadays we are not so likely to err by our harshness, as by failing to be faithful to our conscience and our God. We must boldly stand up, at all costs, for God, for truth, for purity. Shut your ear to the lascivious song—do not allow it to be sung in your house—and let not scandal be spoken at your table! Set your face like a flint against sin of every kind and, God speeding your testimony, you “shall be a blessing.”

More frequently, however, and much more pleasingly to yourself, you can be a blessing *by giving words of comfort*. And often something more substantial than words to the poor and afflicted ones with whom you may come into contact. If you know someone who is fighting with a fierce temptation, go and help to succor him. If you know another who is struggling with a troublesome doubt, try to assist him to drive it away. Your experience may be just what he needs to know, so tell him. Be not backward or bashful in speaking of what the Lord has done for you. I am

always grieved when I hear of any persons coming to this Tabernacle for a long time and nobody speaking to them—let it not be so. Do endeavor, Brothers and Sisters—you who know Christ by experience—to tell others of the sweetness that you have found in Him and of the faithfulness of God to His promises—and of the power of prayer and the reality of faith. You will thus bring many a poor soul out of bondage who, but for you, might have lingered long in Doubting Castle in the dungeons of Giant Despair. God grant you the Grace “to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” A word on wheels, as Solomon calls, “a word fitly spoken,” is like apples of gold on plates of silver.

Besides that you can be a blessing *by your actions*, as well as by your words. Some of you have the means with which you can assist your poorer neighbors. Of all people who ought to be kind and neighborly. Of all who should be sympathetic and generous, the Christian should be the first! The tendency nowadays is to get everything under a cast-iron code of law and I should not wonder if a law is passed, some day, making it penal to give sixpence to a poor person who is starving. Somebody said to me today when I was telling him how I had been deceived by a vagabond whom I had relieved, “It is such as you who make the vagabonds.” If so, I shall go on making vagabonds sooner than let the stream of charity in my soul be frozen into ice! It is better to be taken in a few times than to let the heart become hardened like steel against the real poverty that there is in London and many other places besides—the gaunt, grim poverty that may soon be seen if we will but take a little trouble to search for it. Be charitable, notwithstanding all the mischief that unworthy applicants may make of your charity, remembering the command of our Savior to His disciples, “Give to him that asks you.”

You can also “be a blessing” in many other ways which I need not mention now. In such a vast city as this metropolis, there is work for all to do. A Christian living in a remote hamlet might, perhaps, say to his minister, “Sir, can you find me an opportunity of serving the Lord?” But no person who lives in London ought to ask another person, “What can I do for Christ?” If he is willing to do *anything* for the Master, the work lies at his door! Floods of sin are surging all around you—and sinners are sinking in them! Stretch out your hands to help them—

**“Rescue the perishing, care for the dying—
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave.”**

In such a city as this, with hundreds of thousands—I might truthfully say, millions—needing the Bread of Life and the Water of Life—and with many of them literally needing bread and water—all of you can do something to relieve them! And I beseech you, if you love your Lord and Master, do the first thing that comes to hand and “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” Well did Dr. Horatius Bonar write—

**“‘Tis not for man to trifle!
Life is brief,
And sin is here.**

***Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours,
All must be earnest in a world like ours.
Not many lives but only one have we,
One, only one—
How sacred should that one life always be,
That narrow span!
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.”***

III. Now we must pass on to the third point which is that OUR TEXT IS ALSO CALCULATED TO SUGGEST ENDEAVOR. It has quickened regret and excited inquiry—now it suggests endeavor. But what endeavor?

Well, first I think *it stirs us up to look for a blessing upon what we have already tried to do for Christ and His Church.* You, my Brother, have been teaching a Sunday school class for two years—is it not time that you saw some blessing? Go and look for it! Perhaps in looking for it, you will be the means, under God, of bringing it to your scholars. I think that an earnest, godly teacher, believing that God had blessed his message, would be well repaid if he asked the boys or girls in his class, “Has God blessed your souls through my teaching?” If he asked that question with tears, it might be more effective than all his ordinary teaching. And you, my dear Brother, have you been preaching in some little mission-room in London or in the country and have you seen no “fruit” from your sowing of the Good Seed of the Kingdom? Have you asked, “Who has believed our report?” If so, I ask you—“Have you believed the promise of my text, ‘You shall be a blessing?’” If not, do so at once and go and inquire if there has not been a blessing—and never rest satisfied until you have it!

Next, *the text bids us look for a blessing wherever we may be and whatever we may do.* What have you been doing just lately? You have moved to a more suitable neighborhood? Then let one of your first questions there be, “How can I be a blessing here?” You have been recently married. I congratulate you and suggest that you should ask, “How can I, in my new relationship, be made a blessing?” You, my Friend over yonder, have gone down in the world lately—well then, ask yourself, “For what purpose am I put in this lower position? Is it not that I may be a blessing to some whom I could not have reached under happier circumstances?” Are you a commercial traveler? Are you not sent from town to town to be a blessing to those you meet? Are you a tradesman? Are you not put behind the counter to be a blessing there?

So I might go on addressing the members of various trades or professions, but I want to remind you that *there are some persons who ought, above all others, to aim at being a blessing to their fellow creatures.* And I put, first of all, ministers of the Gospel. O my Brothers in the ministry, if we are not a blessing, we are a double curse! Every so-called “place of worship” in which the true Gospel is not preached is a curse, for it is like a sepulcher full of rotteness doing nothing but harm!

Worldlings more often judge Christianity by fruitless trees than by fruit-bearing trees. O preacher, be a blessing, or never enter the pulpit again!

This rule should also apply to parents. What a blessing Christian parents often are to their children! I can conceive of nothing more natural and, at the same time, nothing more blessed than a father and mother who, by precept and example, have trained up their children in God's fear and whose loving instruction and earnest prayers have been blessed by the Holy Spirit to their children's salvation! What greater joy can we have than to see our children walking in the Truth of God? God grant that you, fathers and mothers, may all diligently seek to be a blessing to your offspring!

There may be some domestic servants here. If so, let me remind you that you have great opportunities for being made a blessing. Good servants can contribute much to the well-being of the family. By the faithful discharge of their duties, they may be the means of preventing others from committing sin. Whereas on the other hand, untidy and idle servants create so much discord in the household that they are the fomenters of sin! I do not know of any person who can have so much influence for good as a godly maid who has the care of little children—one who, instead of scaring them with wicked threats or silly tales, talks to them discreetly concerning Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." I have known domestic servants who were earnest Christians, who have gone to live where there was no religion whatever, no family prayer and no Sabbath observance—and without ever intruding beyond their proper place, they have worked a blessed revolution in the house—and their masters and mistresses and fellow servants have been brought to Christ by their godly example! Let all Christian servants here endeavor to get the fulfillment of the promise of our text, "You shall be a blessing."

I might speak thus to you who have the duty and privilege of instructing the children in our schools, to you masters of large factories, to you who, as workmen, meet with great numbers of your fellow men—all of you ought to aim at realizing this promise, "You shall be a blessing." Dearly beloved in Christ, let me say to all of you—Do, by God's Grace, maintain a holiness of walk with God and then seek to be a blessing to others. Look at the six words before our text—"So will I save you, and you shall be a blessing." It is only as you yourselves are, in the fullest sense, *saved*—saved from falling into sin, saved from inward corruption, saved from error—it is only as you are conformed to the image of Christ that you can expect to be a blessing to others. Do, I pray you, as members of this Christian Church, always feel that you are to take your full share in being made a blessing to others! There are some who hold that blessing comes to men only through priests—that is what I hold! I believe that no blessing comes to men except through priests! First, through the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then through all who believe in Him, who are, as Peter says, "a holy priesthood" and "a royal priesthood," and whose song in Heaven shall be,

“Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

The priesthood of the Christian Church is common to all the saints! There is no other true priesthood but that of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot discharge any of your religious duties or relieve you of any of your responsibilities. My own are quite heavy enough for me to bear—I will seek, as God gives me Grace, to discharge them—but I cannot discharge the responsibilities of any other person in the world! You, having been personally redeemed by Christ, personally washed in His blood, personally saved by His Grace, are to render personal service to Him. All proxy-religion must be abhorrent to Christ, “who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” He did not seek to find someone else to save you, for He knew that no one else could do it! He tread the winepress alone and of the people there was none with Him. So, to your personal Redeemer render your personal service. Give liberally of your substance to help others to do their part of the work, but give yourself—spirit, soul and body—for these are claimed by Christ as “your reasonable service.”

IV. Now I must conclude by trying to show you that our TEXT FURNISHES US WITH MANY CONSOLATIONS. “You shall be a blessing.”

Some of you have to live in places where you are not comfortable. Perhaps you are not in a neighborhood that you like. Possibly in the very house where you live there may be others whose thoughts and feelings are very different from yours and, sometimes, you are grieved and perhaps perplexed because you have to live there. But if God put you there, “you shall be a blessing.” My dear Friend, Mr. Orsman of the Golden Lane Mission, has often told me that the results of his work will never be visible in Golden Lane because as soon as a man is converted, he begins to save, he becomes industrious, wears a better coat, seeks a better house, for he cannot live in that dirty room in which he once lived and he cannot bear the foul language of the court or alley—so, very properly and very naturally—he moves away! Unhappily there are always others coming in to keep the place as bad as ever. Now, when a Christian man is compelled to live in such a place as that, let him conclude that he has been put there that he may be a blessing. If that is your trying lot, my Brother, fight the devil where you are placed, on his own ground! It is not fair that you should have the pick of the spot where the great duel is to be fought. Fight the devil where he has a firm foothold and beat him by God’s Grace! I think if I were a gas lamp and had the choice of the place where I should be hung—and it was proposed to me that I should hang up somewhere in the West End where there is already abundance of light streaming from the fine shops—I don’t know that I would particularly care to be put there. But if there was a dark corner where thieves were in the habit of meeting and where much mischief might be done if it were not for the light of a lamp—I fancy I should ask to be hung up there where I should be of the most use! At any rate, if you are

placed, in the Providence of God, in a dark neighborhood, let this be your prayer, "O Lord, make me a blessing here!"

Perhaps, however, you are a member of an ungodly family. Now, you had no hand in that matter. You were not responsible for your birth and you cannot get out of that family into which you were born. Now, instead of saying, "I wish I had a Christian mother and that our house were ordered in God's fear," say, "God has called me, by His Grace. At present I am the only one saved, but He must mean me to be a blessing to my brothers, sisters and parents and, therefore, I am thankful that He has put me where I am needed. I will try to do everything that shall be kind to them—I will win their love if I can and I will also try to win them for Christ." I am really thankful when some of you come to join the Church and tell me that there is no other in the house who cares for the things of God—for I look upon your conversion as getting in the thin end of the wedge! If we get one who fears God inside the house, I hope we shall get more, for, blessed be God, good example is contagious as well as bad! God grant that since it is your unhappiness to have ungodly relatives, it may be your happiness to "be a blessing" to them!

It may be that you are persecuted, that you live in places where you are sneered at, where the Doctrines that are dearer than life to you, are regarded with contempt and Scriptural ordinances, in which you delight, are held up to constant ridicule. Do not altogether regret this, but say to yourself, "Perhaps I am put here in order that I may be a blessing to my persecutors." Do not imagine that the unlikeliest man to get a blessing out of you is the one who laughs most at you. I sometimes think that the infidels who shout most loudly have more faith than others and that because they are afraid they shall hear conscience speak, they make a great clamor to try to drown its voice! When a man bullies you, there is a great deal better opportunity for you to get at him than when he says, as so many do, "Oh, yes, Sir, it is all true"—and there the matter ends as far as they are concerned. But there is something in a man who will stand up to oppose you and you may yet be able to say a word for Christ that will be blessed to him. Why should we want to run away because men mock us? If they say, "Come and fight," let us go and fight—only with other weapons than theirs—with the weapons of holy gentleness giving a good reason for the hope that is within us with meekness and fear, for that is always the more powerful way of speaking! Do not, therefore, fear persecution, but rather thank God for it, and say, "I have to endure this that I may be a blessing to those who revile and abuse me."

Brothers and Sisters, I think our text furnishes *sweet consolation to any who have been engaged in very arduous service*. Have you a great deal to do for Christ—a great deal too much to do, it often seems to you? Are you incessantly occupied about the Lord's business? Then thank God for it, for He has said, "You shall be a blessing"—and the more you have to do for Him, the more blessing you are likely to be the means of conveying to others!

Or on the other hand, *are you passing through a very trying experience?* If so, you are being qualified for greater usefulness. Your dark experience will only teach you more that you will be able to teach to others concerning God and His dealings with His own. Believe that you will become a blessing to others by means of your trials and cheerfully bow your heads to overwhelming floods of sorrow in the confident assurance that you will thus be made a blessing to others—and so bring glory to God!

Yes, Beloved, and *we may even be content to die* if our last testimony shall be more useful than any that we have borne before! If God will enable us to glorify Him by being a blessing to others, we will be content. I hope we can say that we desire nothing on earth compared with this—to be blessed of God and to be made a blessing by God. We covet not earthly wealth or position, but we do covet the honor of being a blessing! Have an insatiable thirst for this honor, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ—to be a blessing to tens, to hundreds, to thousands, to the millions of this great city! Incessantly strive, by your private prayer, by your generous alms, by your kindly deeds, by your public testimony, to be a blessing and may God bless you more and more—you and your children—for His dear name's sake!

But, alas, there are many who cannot be a blessing to others, for they are not themselves saved. They are getting gray, but they are not saved! Death will soon call for them. Hell opens wide for them and they are not saved! May the Lord have mercy upon all of you who are not saved and may He, by His Grace, constrain you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and then to make the Scriptural profession of your faith, for HE said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." May God grant that you may all "be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation," for Jesus' sake! Amen.

[PUBLISHERS' NOTE—Mr. Spurgeon's Exposition of Zechariah 8 was an unusually long one, so it must appear with the next *short* Sermon that is published.] [It is in Sermon #3047, Volume 53, IF SO—WHAT THEN?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

—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.**

ONCE A CURSE BUT NOW A BLESSING NO. 543

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 6, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you and you shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.”
Zechariah 8:13.***

AS these words came from the lips of Zechariah, doubtless they referred to the seed of Abraham, including the two tribes of Judah and the ten tribes of Israel. They have already received a minor fulfillment. But their most glorious accomplishment is yet to come. The Jews have for many a generation *been cursed* by all people. For ages no one had a good word or a kind look for the Jew. In every nation they have been persecuted and hunted like beasts of prey. The followers of the fierce Mohammed have not been their only enemies, for the children of the Babylonian harlot have equally thirsted for their blood in our own country.

In the dark ages, it was accounted God's service to afflict the Israelites, and the day upon which the Church celebrated our Savior's passion was chosen for the public stoning of His own Brothers and Sisters if they ventured into the streets. To be a Jew was, in the estimation of that era, to be deserving of all scorn and cruelty, and of no pity or consideration. To what exactions, to what fines, to what imprisonments and tortures have not the sons of Jacob been subjected by the professed followers of the Messiah? It is perhaps the greatest of all modern miracles that there should be one Jew upon earth who is a Christian—for the treatment they have received from pretended Christians has been enough to make them hate the name of Jesus.

It has been not simply villainous, but diabolical. Devils in Hell could not be more cruel to their victims than professed Christians have been to the sons of Abraham. They have been a curse, indeed. The whole vocabulary of abuse from “*dog*,” down to “*devil*,” has been exhausted upon them. Among all nations they have been a hissing and a byword. But the day is coming, yes, it dawns already, when the whole world shall discern the true dignity of the chosen seed. And they shall seek their company because the Lord has blessed them. In that day when Israel shall look upon Him whom they have pierced and shall mourn for their sins, the Jew shall take his true rank among the nations as an elder brother and a prince.

The covenant made with Abraham, to bless all nations by his seed, is not revoked. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the chosen nation shall not be blotted out from the book of remembrance. The Lord has not cast away His people. He has never given their mother a bill of divorce. He has never put them away. In a little wrath He has hidden His face from them, but with great mercies will He gather them. The natural branches shall again be engrafted into the olive together with the wild olive grafts

from among the Gentiles. In the Jew, first and chiefly, shall Divine Grace triumph through the King of the Jews. O Time, fly with rapid wing and bring the auspicious day!

Another meaning has been given to the passage by some very eminent expositors, namely, that the Jews have been for ages *the model of a curse* to all people. As old Master Trapp says, they bear upon their backs the wheels of God's rod, or, as he puts it yet more strongly, like Cain, they carry upon their foreheads the mark of God's wrath. They have been a people scattered and peeled, not numbered among the nations, men of weary foot and haggard countenances. Their nation has been the football of Providence, and the butt of misfortune. They have been shipwrecked upon every sea, overturned by every storm—the victims of every calamity and the objects of every misery.

Everywhere have they been men evidently accursed of God and given up to His wrath. When men wanted a name to curse by, they said, "Let me be as accursed as the Jew." But the day is to come when they are to be quite as manifestly the blessed ones of God. Their conversion shall show how God favors them. Their gathering to their own land, the splendor of the reign of Messiah in their midst. All those latter-day glories which are dimly shadowed in the Book of the Revelation, and in the Book of the Vision of Daniel the Prophet—when all these shall come to pass—then the sons of men shall speak of the Jewish people as a royal priesthood and a peculiar people.

The seed of Abraham, God's Friend, are very dear to Him—the darlings of His bosom, the flock of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Oh, that the dark night would soon be over! Long has the Christian Church slept in forgetfulness of the Jew. Even faithful men have scarcely given a thought to Israel, and have left the Jew to perish as though his heart were too hard to be melted by Divine love. I trust that mistake has been discovered and that there are many now anxiously praying for the restoration of the glory unto Israel.

But too many are still indifferent where earnestness is needed. May the Lord in His infinite mercy first put it into His people's hearts to pray for Israel, and then to work in love and labor in faith. May He hasten in His own time the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And then shall the whole earth be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

We may work and we may toil, but till Israel is gathered, God's Glory cannot be universal, nor even widely spread. Until the Jew acknowledges Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the fullness of the times of restitution shall not have arrived. Make no tarrying, O our Lord! Come quickly and send as the herald of Your coming—Your own Brothers and Sisters who once despised You when You came to Your own and Your own received You not.

You can clearly understand the text now in its literal signification without another word of exposition—"As you have been a curse among all nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you and you shall be a blessing."

We feel ourselves perfectly justified in using the text in a broader sense. Our text teaches us that the *unconverted are a curse*. Secondly, that *when converted they become a blessing*. Thirdly, the text tells *the means by which the transformation is worked*—"I will save you." And it *closes with a word of encouragement* to those who desire salvation—"Fear not, but let your hands be strong."

I. UNCONVERTED MEN ARE A CURSE. This they are *positively* forever. Unconverted man, no matter what may be his moral character, *adds in his degree to the amount of evil in the world*—he adds another handful of leaven to leaven the whole lump, another breath of death-bearing wind to scatter the plague of sin among the sons of men. Every unrenewed heart casts another stone upon the heap of iniquity and assists the rising Babel of rebellion to lift its head more proudly. As I see the ungodly advancing one by one, I hear the Prince of Darkness cry, "Here comes another soldier to swell the ranks of evil, another lance for Satan and another sword for the powers of evil."

To the black banner, every man that is unconverted is a recruit. Let him do as he may and think as he will, he that is not with Christ is against Him. He that is not for the right is on the side of the wrong. How is the body corporate of humanity poisoned more and more as each man adds his grain of evil! How is the torrent swollen with another and another stream! A deluge of iniquity is but a collection of all the contributions from every fountain of the great deep. Every graceless spirit binds another millstone about the neck of the human race to sink it to the lowest Hell.

Every sinner is a positive mischief-maker in the world. He is a deadly upas tree—every feat distilling poison. It is impossible that it should be otherwise, for as a black and filthy fountain must send forth unclean streams, so by a law of nature, as long as man is himself evil, he must *do* evil. One sinner destroys much good, and whatever sort of sinner he may be, whether his sin is written on his forehead, or only carried concealed in his right hand, he infects the world with evil. The sinner is a curse, then, because he adds to the positive evil in the world.

He is yet more—he is a curse because *he helps to bring down the wrath of Heaven upon the world*. Another destroying angel to cry, "O Lord, how long before You smite iniquity and bathe Your sword in the blood of rebels?" Another voice to cry, "Awake! Awake! O sword of Justice! Smite the sinner and let him perish from the face of the earth." Doubtless every sin is a God-provoking thing. It stirs Him to jealousy. As the blood of Abel cried, "Vengeance," so does sin. It is a thorn in the side of justice, a stab at the heart of truth. God's great patience is expended at a tremendous rate by the sins of men. You unconverted Men! You make every day a draught upon the exchequer of long-suffering, and the day shall come when the golden sun shall all be expended and then woe unto the world, for then shall the last plagues be let loose and the last vials shall be poured out.

Even *when the ungodly man dies he has not finished his evil work*. His life may be over, but the moral death caused by his life still continues. As the tree that has borne evil fruit sends to the winds its seeds and these are buried in their appointed places. Where young saplings spring up to

become a forest of evil, so is it with the ungodly man—his words and his example, like seeds in the ground, germinate and bring forth the like in other men. Like produces like. His children in nature and spirit arise after him, and these prolong the echo of the dreadful curse which his life has pronounced upon the race.

He cannot stay that curse even if he would—it is given to the course of time as a feather to the wind and on it must go forever. Those saplings which sprang from him as from the parent tree will all grow into death-yielding trees, and these will scatter their seeds and so on, and on and on, as long as the human race lasts. No, even in eternity the victims of his sin lie in torment and blaspheme God world without end, so that his curse is an everlasting curse, and the evil which he does lives on when he himself sleeps with the clods of the valley. The ungodly man is everlastingly a positive curse.

But he is also a curse *negatively*. It is deplorable to think how much of good a man who knows not God keeps from this world. He cumber the ground in which he grows. He extracts nourishment from the ground and covers it so that it cannot yield nourishment to any other plant, and yet he, himself, brings forth no fruit. Is this your position, my Hearer, this morning? Are you a do-nothing? If you are, remember that the spot which you occupy might have been occupied by a man who would have glorified God and done much for the spread of true religion. You have much time upon your hands, but you kill it. If another had it, it would be occupied with visitation of the sick, teaching the ignorant, comforting the weary and other acts which would glorify the name of Jesus.

You have the time and it is ill-spent. You have *money*. You spend perhaps upon a feast for your own pleasure as much as might have sent a herald of the Cross to a foreign land. Many a man, if he had your means, would put clothes upon the backs of the naked and bread into the mouths of the hungry. In one respect money answers all things, but you make it answer to nothing except your own gratification. Ah, how much mischief you do in this way! You have influence. It may be you are a master with many servants, or placed in such a position that many wait upon you and your example is followed and your words are weighty. If another had your place, how would he lead a whole troop to Heaven! With what earnestness would he seek to bless those who dwell under his shadow.

But you, what do you do? You cumber the ground. These many years there has not been found upon you one single ripe fruit such as may be acceptable to the Lord of the Vineyard. Beware, beware lest He cut you down! Don't you see what evil you are doing to others? The minister is preaching to you this morning, and he has to do it often. If it were not for stray sheep such as you are, he would have more time to see after the lambs of the flock. If he had not to cry out after you and against your sins, he might be led into the deep things of God, to the comfort and edification of the Lord's chosen people.

While you are in this House you are spoiling the song—you are marring the prayer by the wandering and wantonness of your thoughts. If you should come into the midst of a company of God's people who were talking of Divine things, you would be like an iceberg chilling the atmosphere

about you. How many young Christians you have hindered in their zeal by your indifference? If you did nothing else but damage the good, stop up the stream of love, and quench the light of the Truth of God, you would have done enough to make them a curse among men and to provoke God to smite you with the curse that withers body and soul forever and ever.

This is true of *every unconverted man*. Many of you *moral men*, whose lives are admirable, have not your hearts right with God. What is the lesson that men learn from your conversation? Why, when the infidel wants to prove that there may be goodness apart from religion, he quotes *you* as an argument against the Word of God and against the necessity of a new heart and a right spirit. Have not many in your own position been hardened in their halt between two opinions by your example? Young people say, "There is Mrs. So-and-So and Mr. This-and-That, what good people they are and yet they have never given their hearts to God. "Surely," say they, "such people must know, and if there were anything in religion, they would certainly have followed in the right road and have put their trust in Christ."

The better you are, the more do I deplore that you should be upon the wrong side. If my country were at war, it would be very little comfort to me to know that my enemies were good soldiers. No, I had rather that they were bad ones. For there were then the more hope of overcoming them. The weight of your character makes it the more sad that it should be thrown into the scale of self-righteousness. I say the very excellence of your morals renders it a more serious crime that you should not take your stand with Christ, the lover of holiness. You do mischief, I am sure.

Possibly there is a measure of moral good effected by your example, but there is a more abundant spiritual *evil*, because many stop where you stop. Being affected by your example, they halt at your halting place, and as you will perish except you are born again, so will they. And the blood of their souls will lie at your door because your example was a curse to them.

If this is true of the moral unconverted man, how much more certainly is it of the *open follower of vice*. Shall I continue? No. I will scarcely so much as use my pencil to portray the mischief which the votary of vice brings upon others. How does the drunkard drown multitudes in his cups? How does the man of lust destroy and damn both the body and the soul of his victims? How does the man who leads a licentious life spread poison by his very eyes—like the basilisk, doing mischief by his glance? "His feet," we may truly say, "are swift to shed blood." His hands are full of drawn swords and flaming firebrands to destroy souls.

The profane swearer—what a pest he is! Young ears are bombarded with sin by him, and young hearts learn the crimes of old rebels. Ah, you are a curse, indeed! Better for someone to walk the streets with a deadly plague about him and to spread it in every house, than to have such as *you* are living in society, for you have the death plague and the damnation plague upon you! You are a walking malaria, a breather of pestilence—a myrmidon of Hell—a jackal to the infernal lion, the lackey and the slave of the Destroyer.

Perhaps there are a few such here. Therefore let us be brief upon that point. It is the same with the sinner who *makes ungodly men his associates*—he is a curse. You do not drink as they do, you say, nor go to their excess of riot, nor curse with their curses. But yet you herd with them. You make them your associates, and, if you want a little pleasure, you seek their acquaintance. Sir, you are a curse. You are a curse to these men. I will not say you make them sinful, but I must say you add to their comfort in their sin. They see such as you are with them and as association always hardens the sinner, they grow more confirmed in evil. Many a drinking club would break up if it were not for the two or three sensible men in it, and yet what is the effect of their morality?

Not so much to check the others as to keep the whole together and put a respectable face upon mischief. You who lie in the same bed with the wicked must take care when God smites the house that you do not perish in its overthrow. You that eat at their feasts, and drink of their cups, and laugh at their jokes, and revel in their vices, and take pleasure in their wantonness, mind when the Lord spreads His net to take these foul birds. He will take you in the same net and award you a portion with those that were His enemies.

Nor can we spare here *the men of thoroughly bad principles*. The men who pretend to doubt the existence of a God, who question the Inspiration of the Scripture, deny the Deity of Christ, or impugn the veracity of Gospel promises—all such men are great destroyers of good. They will always be on the face of the earth and we must never expect to see them rooted up until the Lord's coming. It is wonderful that in England they should be so miserably small a party. If again infidelity should be as prevalent as Christianity, I should not much marvel, for it so suits the natural heart of man. The wonder is that there is not more of it abroad.

But one infidel—O what a curse he is! In a workshop that one man of sharp shrewd sense will very soon make disciples! Like the Pharisees of old they compass sea and land to make one proselyte. Too often the Believer does not give that attention to the reading of Scripture, and to the finding up of arguments for his faith which the ungodly man will give in order to find arguments to shake the faith of others. I would that our members were more industrious, both in searching the Scriptures and in studying the evidences of their Inspiration and authenticity, that they might have their weapons ready to meet the attacks of infidels.

For these infidels—men of much thinking and shrewdness and sagacity and wit—placed in the midst of poor uneducated Christians are terrible as wolves in the midst of a flock of sheep, and much havoc may they do. Though they cannot turn one truly blood-bought child of God out of the flock, nor yet make one that is born again apostatize from the Truth of God, yet they bring much misery into the heart. And doubtless many who are undecided are led by them into decisions for Satan and go straight away from all hopefulness of being converted to God. Now of such an one we may say he is a curse, indeed.

But now I hear another say, "Well now, I do not come under the description of immoral, nor yet of those who spread infidel principles and practices." Ah, but still you may be a curse, if you have *an evil spirit to*

wards religion. There are some who say but little, but who hate the very name of Christ. Even if they hold their tongues, that shrug of the shoulder, that look, that cold, heartless reception which they give to the Truth of God must infallibly be observed by others. Children and those round about them cannot help detecting what they are, and who they are, and they will thus become very successful servants of the Prince of Darkness. O dear Friends, I fear that some of you know in your own conscience without any words of mine, that up to now your lives have been no blessing to your fellows, but rather, wherever you have gone, you have been a curse.

I shall conclude this point by noticing that *the unconverted man is a curse everywhere.* In *the family*, what a curse he is! His wife, perhaps, is a Christian—what a life he leads her! Does he strike her? Perhaps not. But his words wound her even more than blows would have done. What about the children? Why, they will go as the father goes—his crooked words they learn to speak, and his crooked actions they will learn to do. It is not likely, though by Divine Grace it is possible, that they should be better than he. If we were to put a black cross upon every house where there is a husband who is a curse to the household, how many streets in London might have the black cross half the way down? Are you an ungodly man—and does your life teem with iniquity? Then think that the black cross is there as you go home and say, “Yes. I am a curse to this house. I lead them away from God.”

He is a curse in *the workshop.* As soon as he goes to it, those who would be decent are led to the public house by him and to places where sin is accustomed to be allowed. Let him become what is *more respectable*, as we say, in life. But he is a curse even there. Make him a master and give him many servants—then how haughty and how domineering he will be if he meets a servant who is a professor of religion! His misspending of his Sundays will be known to all his working men and they are always willing enough to follow the example of their employers in doing evil.

Make him *wealthy*, he can indulge himself in all sorts of pleasures and his gold is spent in the service of Satan. Give him abilities—talents of thought and speech—he becomes a sort of sergeant-major in the ranks of Satan, a commander of others. Satan employs him as a decoy to bring others into the net. Now he goes abroad and is the call-bird of others, so that others, hearing his sweet notes, are lured into the fowler’s snare and are taken and destroyed. Put him on a throne and he curses an empire. Give him but a small village, over which he shall be the squire, and he is a curse to all the parish.

Let him become a *professor* and oh, this is the place where he can do the most of mischief. Clothe him with the garments of a Christian while his heart is rotten—and now, while pretending to be a disciple of Jesus—he will become more than ever a successful servant of Satan. Make him a *minister* and you have given him the worst possible position. In fact, the better the man’s place, the more evil can he do. Oh, to be a minister—to be thought to be sent of God to the people and then to be delivering falsehood! To be either by one’s life or one’s teaching contradicting the oracles of God! Of such a man we may well say his damnation is sure. But this is

not the worst of it, for, before he goes down to the pit himself, he drags as with a hundred ropes, multitudes of others down the dreadful steep.

II. But secondly, here is a gracious promise made that **THEY SHALL BE A BLESSING**. Dear Friends, the true Christian is a blessing *temporally* in the world. If there were no life to come, yet is a converted man a blessing—since *he arrests the judgments of God*. Sodom shall stand if there are ten righteous found in it. The world shall last as long as there is salt enough in it to keep it from putrefaction. The world shall not be given up to blackness forever, so long as there are a few lights still shining in it. As the conducting rod prevents the dwellings of men from being destroyed by lightning, so Believers in a State, or in a town, are its preservation from the avenging judgments of God.

Who will deny, again, that the Christian, the true Christian *promotes morality*—that his godly life settles the foundation of order? Where are the most revolutions? Where is the least of religion? Where has the guillotine fallen with its fatal drop? Where have heads rolled by hundreds in a basket? Where have streams of blood crimsoned the street? Where is there an empire, never safe except as the throne is supported by bayonets? Look across the Channel and you will see that the absence of religion is the absence of order in the State. It is England's Bible which is the keystone of England's institutions.

The flag of old England is nailed to the mast, not so much by her soldiers and sailors, as by the men who love her God and bring down the blessing upon her continually by prayer. Do you think that we should have had a famine in the north and a stoppage of the mills without riot if it had not been for the wide spread of religion among the working men? The blessed restraints of holiness and goodness have produced order and patience. Dear Friends, the Christian man is the true patriot. He is a blessing to his country, be he where he may.

Does not the Christian *aid in every good work*? He is no Christian if he does not. If there is an hospital, does he not delight as much to contribute towards the relief of sickness of the body as for the removal of disease of the soul? If education is needed by the lower classes, who shall be found to teach in the Sunday school and who will support institutions on the weekday more readily than Christian men? Anything which is pure and lovely and of good repute in this world, owes, if not its origin, yet its main support to the godliness of Believers. No one shall be able to estimate how much the presence of a good man in the State is a preventative as well as a cure. It prevents the breaking out or the more frightful forms of vice, or else drives it into seclusion and makes it hide its head for very shame. The Christian, I believe, is to a nation one of the greatest temporal blessings which God can send to it.

And as *for eternity*, truly a Christian is a blessing there. If his example shall lead men to seek after God—if his words shall teach the sinner his need of a Savior—shall point him to the Cross—shall show him the wounds—oh, if his prayers shall be heard and the Spirit of God shall descend and his family shall be converted and his kinsfolk shall be reclaimed, then eternity shall know the music of the blessing which he scattered among the sons of men! You cannot bless men forever, in any other

way than by yourself being a true follower of Jesus, and then seeking to bring them to a knowledge of the Truth of God.

Now, as I said of the ungodly, that every ungodly man is a curse, so will I venture to say that every Christian man is a blessing in the degree in which he is true to his Christianity. If he has been moral before, now that he becomes a Christian, how that tells upon men like he! How those who would have been undecided are moved to go forth! The force of his former character and the excellence and amiability of his deportment operate upon those who knew him. If he has been a drunkard and a swearer before, this will not hinder him from being a blessing now. His old companions hear of the great change. They enquire how it was worked. They go with him to the House of God and they, too, are brought to Christ.

Some of those who have brought more saints to God than others were once themselves the greatest of sinners. Let no one suppose that because his character has been up to now very vile, therefore, if converted, he would be of no use—sometimes he will even be of the *more* use. What would all your old mates say, when they saw you were a Christian? “There must be something in it,” say they, “if drunken William is saved.” What if the swearer should wash his mouth and should preach God’s Word! What if yonder voice should be heard at the Prayer Meeting, although once so loud in a brothel! Oh, would not men wonder, and would not there be many who would suddenly feel attracted to the Cross, as you have been, and say, “We will go with you, for we perceive that God has blessed you”?

Such a man, even if he has been an infidel, becomes a blessing now—sometimes most a blessing to those to whom he was most a curse. Now he refutes himself. Now his own example becomes the best answer to his former false teaching. Now his love to Jesus is observed and noticed—all those whom he taught to hate the Lord will help to adore His sacred Person. And if the man has been through and through of a bad spirit, though he has not openly spoken against the things of God, yet when converted, how serviceable he becomes! For even if he is almost silent and can say but little, yet, as the bad spirit oozed through him, so now the Spirit of God will shine through him!

There shall be a difference about his very face! And the manner of his walk and conversation shall be such that it will betray him. Out of the midst of him shall flow rivers of living water, whereof multitudes shall drink. No matter, O Christians, how poor you may be, or how ignorant you are, or how little influence you may have—you are and shall be a blessing, if God gives you a new heart and a right spirit.

The converted man is a blessing everywhere. He is a blessing *to his family*. Daily prayer, Bible reading, teaching of the children—all these make his house a little Paradise. When he goes to *the workshop*, if any learn vice, it is not from him. If there are any who despise Christ, it is not from his example. He has a good word for Jesus. Now he begins to lament and pray over the sins of his fellow men. He speaks of the Cross of Christ and perhaps he brings some of them to repentance and to a saving faith. You may put him anywhere with safety. Make a king of him—he rules his dominions in the fear of God. Give him a large estate and you will find his substance expended as it should be. Now the hungry shall have their por-

tion and the needy their share. The Church at home and missions abroad shall all be prospered by him.

Let him make a profession—he does not dishonor it. He puts golden chains about the neck of piety by the excellence of his deportment. You may put him into the pulpit with safety. With a new heart he can be trusted, even at the altars of God. His soul, having been renewed, there will be nothing in his example, or word, of which a Christian could complain. Now you may take him to Heaven itself, for even there he shall be a blessing and help to swell the song of, “Hallelujah unto Him that washed our robes and made them white in His blood.” I would to God we had a holy ambition to be more a blessing than we have been, for remember—if you have been converted and are not living consistently with your religion—then your life is not much of a blessing.

Oh, it is so sad, so sad, to my own soul when I see those who might be a blessing, by some weakness or folly throw away their golden opportunities. There are some of you—I cannot tell what good you might do in the world, but either through natural infirmity or sin, you are of little service. Do not, I pray you, destroy your own power to bless your fellow men! Do not so act in the family and in business and in the Church as to make yourself a little blessing, when you might have been a great one! Ask the Lord to fill you so full with His Grace that you may be like a great cloud of mercy, resting continually over the sons of men and pouring forth its gracious shower day by day.

III. The third point is HOW IS ALL THIS TO BE BROUGHT ABOUT? How is the man who was a curse to be made a blessing? Can he do it himself? Rests there a power in human will that by the magic of *its* might, men who were once a curse may be made a blessing? Ah no! This abides not in the creature, but with the Creator. So runs the text—“I will save you.” You that have been a curse, “I will save *you*.” Swearer, drunkard, whoremonger, whoever you may be, “I will save you, to show what Sovereign Grace can do.” “I will save you and make you a blessing.”

But you say, “How, then, may I be saved?” Salvation from sin is one, but yet it is a salvation from sin in two senses—from the *guilt* of it and from the *power* of it. Sinner, cursed of God and cursing others—all the sin that you have done can be blotted out. No matter though it is red like scarlet, it may be as wool. And though it is as crimson, God can make it whiter than snow. In a moment all your sins can pass away so that if they were sought for, they could not be found. Yes, though an inquisition were made to search them out, yet could they not be discovered. And this can be done by the blood, the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus the Substitute, the Son of God and yet the Son of Man, took the sins of all Believers upon Himself and suffered the punishment of all their sins—

**“He for the sins of all the elect
Has a complete atonement made.
And justice never can expect
That the same debt should twice be paid.”**

If you believe, that is, if you *trust* in Christ, all the sins you have ever done were laid upon Christ. Your believing is the sign and mark of this. And from now on you have no sin, your sin is gone. You are an accepted and pardoned man. No, more—you are justified. The righteousness of

Christ is yours. In the sight of God you stand accepted in the Beloved. And all this is to be had by the simple act of trusting. Whosoever you may be, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." But then you say, "But how can I be delivered from the *power* of sin? If all my past sins were forgiven, yet I might go back and do as before and so remain as vile as ever."

Yes, there is power in the Holy Spirit to make a new man of you. He can put into your heart the holy influences of Divine Grace so that though you naturally go towards evil, you shall, by supernatural influence, go towards the right. He shall give you that fiery motion, which, as the flame always ascends towards Heaven, shall make your heart ascend towards holiness. He shall subdue in you the powers of evil which now reign, shall keep your sins under your feet, and eventually cast them out forever and make you perfect before the Lord.

Remember, this is to be done *for* you, not *by* you. You cannot make yourself a new man. It is impossible for *you* to work regeneration. One look at Jesus will take away past sins and will kill the power of sin for the future. Sprinkle His blood upon the old serpent and it dies. Put the water which flowed with the blood from Christ and the foulness of nature only remains to be subdued and eventually to be cast out when the Believer shall be taken up in perfection to dwell before the Father's Throne. God can save you, whoever you may be, and whatever your past life may have been. No doings of your own, no prayers, no penances, no almsgivings, are required. Simply trust Jesus who died for you and you are saved, saved on the spot—saved forever.

IV. And then comes the last point. The text GIVES A WORD OR TWO OF ENCOURAGEMENT from this—"Let your hands be strong: fear not." Though you have been a curse until now, if you sincerely desire to be made a blessing, and if the Holy Spirit has made you willing to accept the perfect righteousness of Christ and to be washed in His most precious blood, then "fear not." Let not conscience make you fear. God will answer to your conscience. The blood of Christ shall purge it from dead works. Let not a sense of Divine Justice make you fear, Christ has satisfied Divine Justice and Justice is your friend. Let not the remembrance of past sins make you fear. They shall be cast into the depths of the sea—not one of them shall rise to accuse you.

Let not the thoughts of judgment make you fear. You shall have an Advocate at the Last Great Day to plead your cause. Fear not, but come, and welcome! Christ invites you by His wounds. The Father bids you come and trust His Only-Begotten Son. He earnestly entreats you to come unto Him and live. "Fear not," says He. And if doubts and fears stand at the door to keep you from coming, yet rush forward through them all, saying—"God has bid me fear not and, therefore, will I not fear, but boldly venture upon the finished work of Christ. And if I perish, I perish."

"Let your hands be strong," especially the hand with which you grasp the Savior. Lay hold upon Him, Sinner. O may the Spirit of God help you to lay hold upon Him now! "Let your hands be strong." Grasp Him. Lay hold on eternal life. As a sinking man lays hold upon the rope that is cast to him, so lay hold on Christ. It is now or never with you. If Christ saves

you not, you are damned forever. Grasp Him, then! He passes by. He may never pass this way again. This morning He comes in mercy to you to turn you, you Cursed One, into a blessing!

Grasp Him. Even as Jacob laid hold upon the angel, lay hold on Christ! And if He struggles with you and seems as though He would not bless you, say unto Him—

***“No, I must maintain my hold,
It is Your goodness makes me bold.
I can no denial take,
Pity me for Your love’s sake.”***

O for strong hands to grasp the Savior! Let your hands be strong to lay hold on His promises. They are such as these—“Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Whosoever comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.”

Lay hold on these. Take them before God and say to Him, “Can You lie? Can You be untrue? If You are true, keep this promise for me. Have You not said, ‘As you have been a curse, so I will make you a blessing’? I have been a curse—I admit it. I lament it. Make me a blessing, Lord. By the sufferings of Jesus—by the agony and bloody sweat—by His Cross and passion—by His precious death and burial—make me a blessing, Lord! You have but to speak the word and I, even I, shall repent. You have but to will it, and I shall behold Your face in Christ and believe in Him. Your Spirit is not to be resisted—send Him forth to raise my dead soul from the grave. Come and work in me! Turn the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove.”

Sinner, if you can believe that God will do it, He will do it. For anything you will believe of Him, however high and great, He can do and will do, for He will never let your faith be in excess of His power—His unbounded power! Trust in Him! Rest upon Him! God help you to do it and may these poor stammering words of mine, by their very weakness, be fitted for your conversion, because my Master’s Glory shall shine the better through my weakness! And His power to save shall be the more resplendent because of my feeble words! If it is so, I would sooner be dumb than speak with the tongues of men and angels, if He were not to be honored.

Father, glorify Jesus! Glorify Him now in bringing some who have been a curse, to the making of them a blessing, for His name’s sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0 . Ages Software, 1.800.297.4308

SAD FASTS CHANGED TO GLAD FEASTS NO. 2248

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 20, 1892.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1890.**

***“Thus says the Lord of Hosts; The fast of the fourth month,
and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh,
and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah
joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore
love the truth and peace.”
Zechariah 8:19.***

MY time for discourse upon this subject will be limited, as we shall gather around the Communion Table immediately afterwards. So in the former part of my sermon I shall give you an outline of what might be said upon the text if we had time to examine it fully. It will be just a crayon sketch without much light and shade. You will be able to think over the subject at your leisure and fill up the picture for yourselves!

We have, in the chapters we have read, a blessed message of peace to God's people in the day of their trouble. In the land of their captivity the Jews were in great perplexity. Their sad lament is on record—“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.” But their trouble led many of them to seek the Lord and He was found of them. Welcome is such misery which leads to such mercy! In the seventh chapter we are told that when they sent unto the house of God, to pray before the Lord and to say, “Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? *Then* came the Word of the Lord.” Jehovah has put their tears into His bottle and, in answer to their sighing, sent them a message of hope! That message has in it much that is very practical. It is a letter full of mercy, but it is directed to certain characters. God does not send indiscriminate mercy. If men go on in their sin, He sends them words of judgement. But when they turn from their wickedness and are renewed, by His Grace, in the spirit of their minds, then it is that words of comfort are spoken to them.

Reviewing the whole message which Zechariah was commissioned to deliver and which is summed up in our text, there are three things which stand out in clear prominence. The first is that *God calls for transformation of character* in the people He is going to bless. The second is that *He promises translation of condition* to those whose characters are thus

changed and beautiful. And, lastly, *He ordains transfiguration of ordinances* as the result of the new character and condition. The whole subject is exceedingly suggestive and well worthy of careful study when you reach your homes.

We must not lose sight of the fact that, primarily, this message is for Israel according to the flesh and contains a prophesy of their latter-day glory. God has not cast off His people whom He did foreknow and there are majestic words here which still await their fulfillment when the set time shall have come. The Lord “will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem” and make the place of His feet glorious in that day. But as “no prophesy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,” so the message to the Jews also bears a message for us! Let us seek to learn its lesson well.

I. My text reminds me—and the chapter before us emphasizes the fact—that when God means to bless His people, HE CALLS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER. The promise of the abiding Presence of the Lord God Almighty is always preceded by the call to separation and holiness. “The words which the Lord had cried by the former Prophets” made it very clear that only with the righteous nation would God dwell—and Zechariah delivers a similar message.

Very remarkable will be the transformation of character which God shall work. According to the text, *love of the Truth of God* is to be one of the main effects of the change. These people certainly did not set much value on the truth before—they were in love with every lie, with every false God and with every false prophet. But God would have them taste of His Covenant blessings and be set free from every false way. It is the only truth that can set men free, yet many there are, even today, who delight to be in bondage to error! How is it with you? Do you love the Truth of God, or can you put up with that which is not true, if it is only pleasant? Say, dear Heart, are you anxious after Truth—Truth in your head, Truth in your heart, Truth on your tongue, Truth in your life? If you are false and love falsehood, you are taken with a sore disease—and unless you are healed of the plague, you can never enter Heaven! You must be transformed and made true—and only the Spirit of Truth can effect the mighty change.

Another sign must follow—*love of peace*. The text also says, “Therefore love peace.” In some men it is a plain proof of conversion when they desire peace. Some are naturally very hot-tempered and soon boil over. These are the men of great force of character, or else of great shallowness—it is the small pot which is soon hot. Some are malicious. They can take enmity quietly and keep it in the refrigerator of their cold hearts for years! Such love is not peace—they are at war with all who have, in any degree, disappointed or displeased them. When the Grace of God takes away an angry, passionate, malicious disposition, it achieves a great wonder. But then *Grace*, itself, is a great wonder—and unless this change is worked in you who need it, you shall not see God, for you cannot enter Heaven to go

into a passion *there*. Depend upon it, unless you lose your bad temper, you will never be among the ranks of the glorified! It must be conquered and removed if you are to join the happy hosts on high. “They are without fault before the Throne of God”—and so must you be if you are to be numbered among that company.

Moreover, those whom God blesses have undergone a transformation as to their conduct with each other. *Righteous dealing* is another effect of the change. Notice the ninth verse of the seventh chapter—“Thus speaks the Lord of Hosts, saying, Execute true judgment.” This is, at all times, a necessary admonition, but never more necessary than now, when so many never dream of justice and goodness—in business and in private life many seem to have no care for righteousness. If the thing will pay, they will rob right and left—they will only be honest because there is an old saw that says, “Honesty is the best policy.” But he that is honest out of policy is the most dishonest man in the world! May God grant us Grace to do what is right at all costs! Christians, when the Grace of God reigns in their souls, would rather be the poorest of the poor than get rich by a single act contrary to uprightness. O beloved members of this Church, be upright in all your transactions, clear and straight in your dealings—for how shall you call yourselves the children of the righteous God if you make gain by unholy transactions?

Another point of transformation lies in the exercise of *compassion*. This comes out in that same ninth verse of the seventh chapter—“Show mercy and compassions, every man, to his brother.” A great mark of a changed heart is when we become tender, full of pity and kind. Some men have very little of the milk of human kindness about them. You may lay a case before them and they will wonder why you should come to them. And when you see how little they do, you wonder why you ever came to them! Many there are whose hearts are locked up in an iron safe and we cannot find the key! They have hidden the key—there is no getting at their hearts. One such said to a minister who preached a sermon, after which there was to be a collection, “You should preach to our hearts and then you would get some money.” The minister replied, “Yes, I think that is very likely, for that is where you keep your money.” The answer was a very good one. That is just where a great many persons carry their treasure—but when the Grace of God comes and renews the miser’s heart—he begins to be generous! He has pity on the poor and compassion for the fallen—he loves to bless those who are round about Him, and make them happy. It is a mark of wonderful transformation in the character of some men, when their heart begins to go a little outside their own ribs and they can feel for the sorrow of other men!

Notice, next, in the 10th verse of that same seventh chapter, that another mark of God’s people is *consideration for others*—“Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor.” How can he be a child of the all-bountiful Father who would make men work for wages that

scarcely keep body and soul together? How can he be a son of the God of Love who will defraud the poor woman whose fingers must go stitch, stitch, stitch, half through the night, before she can even get enough to give her relief from her hunger? God's children will have nothing to do with this kind of thing! Those who take delight in oppressing the poor and who make their gain thereby, will be, themselves, pinched in eternal poverty—they are little likely to enter the golden gates of Paradise! There is many a child of God who has lived here in the depths of poverty—and when he gets to Heaven, away from all the struggle and bitterness, is he to see the man who was his oppressor here below, coming into Glory to sit side by side with him? I think not!

Once more, where there is a work of Grace, it leads men to *brotherliness* of character. “And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart,” says the Lord in the 10th verse of this seventh chapter. And the same thing is repeated in the 17th verse of the eighth chapter. I would be sure that some women were converted if they left off imagining evil against others in their hearts. For there are some women—and there are some men, too, I am sorry to say—who cannot think of anybody without thinking evil of them. There are such dreadful persons about and, sometimes, we come across them to our dismay. They paint the very saints of God black and there is no getting away from their slander—no, let a man live the life of Enoch, yet would some of these people report evil against him! Slander is no sign of a saint—it is the brand of one who is under the dominion of the devil! “For all these are things that I hate, says the Lord.” God save us from them all!

Thus I have given you a brief outline of the transformation of Grace. They are great changes because *God* works them. When men come to Him and yield themselves up to His Divine Power, He takes away the heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh. He turns their nature to the very reverse of what it was before—then they follow after the Truth of God and peace—then they love righteousness and learn kindness through His good Spirit.

II. The second point to which I would draw your attention, with reference to the methods of God with His people, is that HE PROMISES TRANSMUTATIONS OF CONDITION to those men in whom are found the transformation of character. I have already read the eighth chapter to you—let us go through it, again, and pick out just a note or two of the joy and gladness which are here written in full score.

First, *jealousy is turned into communing love*. God represents Himself, in the second verse, as being very jealous about His people because He loved them so much. He was jealous for them with great fury. The people set up false gods in His own city, even in His own Temple, and God was angry with them and would not dwell with them. But when they repented and He had cleansed them by His mercy, He says, “I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.” What a change! God waits

not until, by long obedience, His people win Him back. He does not say that He will return when they *merit* His Presence. No, the word comes to us full of surprise and power, "I am returned." Instantly, on the repentance, God comes back! A jealous God fights against me. I fly to Christ. He is content. He comes and dwells with me, no longer full of fury, but full of tenderness and love! If any of you have had God fighting against you, in holy jealousy chasing out your sin, happy will you be if you yield yourselves to Christ at once! If you do, God will come quickly and make your hearts to be His abode. May many get that transformation at this good hour!

Next, *desolation is turned into population*. On account of sin, Jerusalem became desolate. "I scattered them with a whirlwind," says the Lord, "among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate." Zion sat like a widow. Nobody came up to her solemn feasts. But God returned to her and He says, in the fourth verse, "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." So that when God comes to bless His people, where there was nobody, there seems to be everybody! When Churches and congregations sin, God often admonishes them and brings them low. But when they return to their God, the old saints are seen there, again, and there are new-born Believers in plenty. God can soon change the estate of His people. It is the same with individual souls who have gone away from God, but afterwards repent and return to Him. Then the desolation of heart is forgotten in the joy of the multitude of sweet and holy thoughts and interests that crowd the heart and life! Old experiences revive and new life and joy are born where God comes near to us in Grace and power! What a wonderful change this is! May we all taste its bliss!

Another change of condition follows—*scattering is turned into gathering*. God goes on to say that as He scattered His people, so He will bring them together again from the east and from the west. This, as I have already said, has a first reference to the scattered Israel, but how true it also is of us! When the Lord leaves us, we are scattered like sheep without a shepherd in a cloudy and dark day. But when we turn to Him, His Word is sure. "I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." May we know, in our new experience, the truth of that promise, "For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you," and may it be to us according to His Word!

The next change is, that *poverty is turned into plenty*. Whereas they become poor and were half-starved with famine, God tells them that the city shall be prosperous—"The vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew." God often

changes men's circumstances when He changes their hearts. When He has been beating and bruising, if men will but yield to Him, He turns to them in love and plenty. May the Lord do this with any of us who have grieved Him and brought His rod upon us! There is no truer Word in the Book of God than this, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." With the Covenant blessings of Grace, God often bestows the common blessings of this life, even as it is written in the chapter before us, "I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things."

Farther on in the chapter, we are told of another change—*ill-will is turned into good-will*. Before the Lord graciously visited them, no man loved his neighbor. So we read in the 10th verse. But when God's Grace came and changed their character, then one city went to another and said, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also," and they went up to the House of the Lord, together. Oh, where the Grace of God comes, it makes men friends! Enemies they may have been before, but then they go and seek one another out and they say, "Come, old Friend, let us end all this. Give me your hand and let bygones be bygones." There is nothing like love and unity among the people until the Grace of God comes and conquers the natural ill-will which otherwise would have had dominion! May such a transmutation take place between any here who may be at variance—and may all bitterness and hatred, if such things exist—be put away!

Did you not notice, also, in the reading of this chapter, how these people had been a curse and how, by the Presence of God, *the curse is turned into a blessing*? "And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong." When a Believer dishonors God, one of the worst results of it is that he becomes a snare to the people round about him. The very heathen look upon him as a curse. Inconsistent professors are the greatest stumbling blocks to the spread of the cause of Christ! But when their character is changed by the abounding Grace of God, they become like overflowing springs, sending streams of blessing far and wide!

Moreover, in the day of blessing, their reproach is turned into honor. The nation had been despised. Nobody would honor a Jew, but when they honored God, then God would honor them and 10 men would take hold of the garments of a man that was a Jew, saying, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." A man of God would, then, become more precious than the gold of Ophir! Well, my Friends, when we return to God, God very soon has ways of making us honorable, so that we are of value among men! He makes use of us and men begin to perceive that we are not to be despised if God is with us and His blessing rests upon us.

Thus have I hurried over these two points because I want to dwell a little longer on the text, itself. It was necessary, however, to introduce it in this way.

III. Now we come to this fact which always accompanies God's Presence. HE ORDAINS TRANSMUTATIONS OF ORDINANCES. Four *fasts*, which had been kept by the Jews, were to be turned into *feasts* when the character of the men who observed them had changed and God had dealt graciously with them. Before this, their feasts had been farces—occasions of self-glorification and all manner of pride. Now, these days were to be festivals of gladness and times of drawing near to God, rejoicing in His good gift. In like manner, when a man becomes a Believer in Christ and is renewed, this principle operates—many a fast is turned into a feast—and many a sorrow and sadness into joy and gladness!

When the Communion Table shall be uncovered, you will see before you, in the emblems of *the death of our Lord*, what might have been the memory of a fast. The Lord of Life and Glory was nailed to the accursed tree. He died by the act of guilty men. We, by our sins, crucified the Son of God! We might have expected that, in remembrance of His *death*, we should have been called to a long, sad, rigorous fast. Do not many men think so even today? See how they observe Good Friday, a sad, sad day to many—yet our Lord has never enjoined our keeping such a day, or bid us to look back upon His death under such a melancholy aspect! Instead of that, having passed out from under the Old Covenant into the New, and resting in our risen Lord, who once was slain, we commemorate His death by a most joyous festival!

It came after the Passover, which was a feast of the Jews. But unlike that feast, which was kept by unleavened bread, *this* feast is brimful of joy and gladness! It is composed of bread and of wine, without a trace of bitter herbs, or anything that suggests sorrow and grief. The bread and the cup most fitly set forth the death of our Lord and Savior—and the mode of that death—even by the shedding of His blood. But as they stand before us, now, they evoke no tears! They suggest no sighs! The memorial of Christ's death is a festival, not a funeral! And we are to come to the table with gladsome hearts, yes, and go away from it with praises, for, "after supper they sang a hymn." At both ends it was Psalm singing. The great Hallel of the Jews commenced it and another Psalm, full of joy and gladness, out of the hallelujahs of the Palms, finished it. Oh, what has God worked! We crucified the Christ of God, but in that Crucifixion we have found our Ransom! With wicked hands He was slain by us, but His blessed Sacrifice has put all our sin away forever! Our hymn rightly asks—

***"It is finished.' Shall we raise
Songs of sorrow, or of praise?
Mourn to see the Savior die,
Or proclaim His victory?"***

But it justly answers—

***“Lamb of God! Your death has given
Pardon, peace and hope of Heaven—
‘It is finished!’ Let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise!”***

As the Lord’s Supper leads the way in that direction, I may say that every other fast of the Christian has been transfigured in the same manner. *The Sabbath* is, to many people, a very dreary day, but, to many of us, it is a fast which has been turned into a feast! I am often amused when I read the accounts that are given by some people of an English Sabbath. In all soberness it is set forth what we Puritans do on this first day of the week. We wake up in the morning and say to ourselves, “Another dreadfully miserable day has come around,” and then we go off to our places of worship where we sit with frightfully long faces and listen to terribly dismal sermons! We do not sing, or even smile! We howl out some ugly Psalm and make ourselves as unhappy as ever we can be! When we come home, we draw down the blinds to keep the sun out. We never go into the garden to admire the flowers!

Well, you know the rest of the story. I think we are descendants of the people who killed the cat on Monday because it caught mice on Sunday—at least, so I have heard! But if I had not read all this, I would not have known it! Often, when I see in the paper some description of myself, I say, “Well, people somehow seem to know me better than I know myself—I never thought anything of the kind—it has never entered my head. Yet here is it in black and white!” O beloved Friends! Our idea of the Lord’s-Day is altogether different from this hideous caricature of it! If I had to describe our Sabbaths, I would say that they are full of brightness, joy and delight! I Would tell of our singing with full hearts, of the happy prospect before us in that land—

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

I am sure we would not be likely to go to that heavenly country if our Sabbaths here were as dreary as some say they are! Why, here in this house, we have had our merriest times! Of old, when the prodigal came back, “they began to be merry,” and I have never heard that they have stopped! At any rate, I do not think that *we* have! We have rejoiced with the joy of harvest as we have heard of sinners saved and have known that we are saved, ourselves. I grant you that, before we knew the Lord, it did, sometimes, seem to our young minds rather a dull thing to read the Bible, hear sermons and to keep the Sabbaths. But now that we have come to Christ and He has saved us—now that we are His—the first day of the week, which was a fast, has become a feast, and we look with eager delight for the Sundays to come round, one after another! In fact, these Lord’s-Days are the beds of flowers in our gardens. The week-days are only the gravel paths that yield us little but weariness as we walk along them. Happy Sabbath! We hail your coming with delight, and sing—

“Welcome sweet day of rest,

***That saw the Lord arise!
Welcome to this reviving breast
And these rejoicing eyes!
The King Himself comes near
And feasts His saints today!
Here we may sit and see Him here,
And love, and praise, and pray!"***

So, you see, this is a second instance in which what might have been a fast is turned into a feast!

There is another thing that is, to some of us, a great feast, though formerly it was as full of weariness as a fast. It is *the hearing of the Doctrines of Grace*. I know some Brothers and Sisters who always sit very uneasily when I begin to preach the Doctrines of Grace. I am sorry that it is so and I hope that they will grow wiser. Still, all of us did not always like to hear about God's *electing* love and absolute Sovereignty—about the special redemption of Christ for His people—and about the union to Christ being an everlasting union, never to be broken. There was a time when we did not join very heartily in the lines—

***"Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever."***

But, oh, when your heart gets into full fellowship with God, if it is with you as it is with me, you will be glad to get on that string! Is there anything that gives us greater joy than to know our calling and election—and to make it sure—to know that the Father loved us as He loved Christ from before the foundation of the world and that He loves us with such a love that it can never end and can never change, but will continue when the sun burns black as a coal? It was because they heard these grand Doctrines that such crowds used to gather in the desert in France to hear the old Calvinistic preachers!

It was the hold these Truths of Grace had upon the minds and hearts of men that explains how it was that, under the Gospel oaks in England, vast numbers used to come hear plain and often illiterate men, preach the Gospel! They preached a Gospel that had something in it—and the people soon discover the real article when it is set before them. There is much that goes for Gospel, now, and if you could have a mile of it, you would not get an inch of consolation out of it, for there is nothing in it! But when your soul is heavy and when your heart is sad, there is nothing like the old faith to put cheer and life into you. How often have I read *Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty* through and through when I have been ill! When the heart begins to sink, if one gets a grip of the Sovereignty of God and the way of His Grace whereby He saves the unworthy and gets unto Himself glory by His faithfulness to His promises—what had been a fast becomes, to the child of God, a feast of fat things and royal cheer of a godly sort!

You will all agree with me in the next point. Sometimes *the day of affliction* becomes as a fast which has been turned into a feast. It is a trying thing to lose one's health and to be near to death or to lose one's wealth and wonder how the children will be fed. Or to have heavy tidings of dis-

aster come to you, day after day, in doleful succession. But if you can grasp the promise and know that, “All things work together for good to them that love God”—if you can see a Covenant God in all, then the fast turns into a feast—and you can say, “God is going to favor me again. He is only pruning the vine to make it bring forth better grapes. He is going to deal with me again after His own wise, loving and fatherly way of discipline.” You then hear the Lord saying to you—

“Then trust Me and fear not: your life is secure.

My wisdom is perfect, supreme is My power.

In love I correct you, your soul to refine,

To make you, at length, in My likeness to shine.”

I have met with some saints who have been happier in their sickness and in their poverty than ever they were in health and in wealth! I remember how one, who had been long afflicted and had got well, but had lost some of the brightness of the Lord’s Presence which he had enjoyed during his sickness, said, “Take me back to my bed! Let me be ill, again, for I was well when I was sick! I am afraid that I am getting sick, now that I am well.” It is often worth while being afflicted in order to experience the great loving kindness of God which He bestows so abundantly on us in the hour of trouble and perplexity. Yes, God turns our fasts into feasts, and we are glad in the midst of our sorrow! We can praise and bless His name for all that He does.

Once more—the solemn Truth of God of *the coming of the Lord* is a feast to us, though at first it was a fast. With very great delight we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will shortly come. He is even now in the act of coming. The passage that we read, “Surely, I come quickly,” would be better translated, “Surely, I am coming quickly.” He is on the road and will certainly appear, to the joy of His people and for the emancipation of the world! There are certain writers who say they know when He is coming—do not be plagued with them—they know no more about it than you do! “Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but My Father, only,” said the Lord Jesus. Perhaps the Lord may come sooner than any of us expect—before this “diet of worship” shall break up He may be here! On the other hand, He may not come for a thousand years, or 20,000 years!

The times and the seasons are with Him and it is not for us to pry behind the curtain. Those of our number who are unsaved may well dread His coming, for He will come to destroy them that obey not the Gospel. “Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord comes, for it is near at hand; a day of darkness, and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.” That day will be terror, not light, to you. When He comes, He shall judge the earth in righteousness—and woe unto His adversaries, for, “He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken into shivers.” You have grave need to keep the fast of the Second Advent, for to you it is *dies irae*, day of wrath and day of vengeance, day of dread and day of woe!

But if you become a Believer and, by Grace, are transformed as I described in the earlier part of this discourse, then it shall be a feast to you! Then you will look for His appearing as the day of your hope and will gladly say, “Yes, let Him come! Come Lord, nor let Your chariots wait! Come, Lord! Your Church entreats You to tarry no longer! Come, You absent love, You dear unknown, You fairest of ten thousand! Come to Your Church and make her glad!” To us the thought of the glorious Advent of Christ is no fast—it is a blessed feast! Our songs never rise higher than when we get on this strain. With what fervor we lift up our voices and sing—

**“Brothers, this Lord Jesus
Shall return again,
With His Father’s glory,
With His angel train!
For all wreaths of empire
Meet upon His brow,
And our hearts confess Him
King of glory now”!**

Last of all, to come still more closely home, *the approach of death* is, to most men, a dreadful fast. Not the Mohamman Ramadan can be more full of piteous grief than some men when they are obliged to think of death. If some of you were put into a room, tomorrow, and were compelled to stay there all day and think of your death, it would certainly be a very gloomy time to you. You *will* die, however—perhaps suddenly, perhaps by slow degrees. There will come a time when people will walk very gently round your bed—when they will wipe the death sweat from your brow—when they will lean over you to see whether you still breathe, or whether you have gone. Out of the 6,000 persons here, tonight, there are some, certainly, who will never see New Year’s Day. Usually there is someone who does not even see another Lord’s-Day! Almost every week we get an intimation that a hearer of the previous week has died before the next Sabbath.

Who among us will first be gone? Dare you think of it? O Beloved, when once you have peace with God and you know that you are going to behold His face, whom, though you have not seen, yet you love, then you can think of death without trembling! I think that there is nothing more delightful to the man who has full assurance of faith, than to be familiar with the grave, the resurrection morning, the white robe, the harp of gold, the palm and the endless song. The thought of death is more a feast to us than a fast, for, as Watts sings—

**“Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.”**

“Well, I shall soon be Home,” says one old saint. And she spoke of it as she used to speak, when a girl, of the holidays and of her going away from school! “I shall soon behold the King in His beauty,” says another. He

speaks of it as he might have spoken, when a young man, of his wedding day! Children of God cannot only read *Young's Night Thoughts* without feeling any chill of solemnities written there, but they can write in their diaries notes of expectation at the thought of being with Christ—and almost notes of *regret* that they have not passed away to Glory, but are lingering here in the land of shadows. “What?” said one, who had been long lying senseless, when he came back, again, to consciousness, “And am I still here? I had half hoped to have been in my heavenly Father’s home and palace above long before this and I am still here.” Truly, Beloved, the fast is turned into a feast when we reach this experience! We will not hesitate to say, “Come, Lord, take us to Yourself.” Oh for a sight of the King in His beauty!—

***“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.”***

I knew right well a beloved Brother in Christ with whom I was very familiar, who stood up, one Sabbath morning, and announced just that verse. I thought of him when I repeated it and I wondered whether it was quite as true to me as it was to him. He gave it out, and said—

***“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!”***

Then he stopped, there was a silence and, at last, one of the congregation ventured upstairs into the pulpit and found that the preacher was dead. His prayer was heard! He was gone to the place of God’s abode. Oh, happy they who die thus! The Lord grant that we may never pray against a sudden death! We may almost pray for it when once our soul is right with God. I can join John Newton and, instead of dreading the change, say—

***“Rather, my spirit would rejoice,
And long, and wish, to hear Your voice!
Glad when it bids me earth resign,
Secure of Heaven, if You are mine.”***

But is Christ yours? Has the fast been changed into a feast for you by faith in the crucified Savior? God help you to answer that question with a glad, hearty, “Yes!” Then may He make all your life “joy and gladness,” changing your fearful fasts into “cheerful feasts,” until, at last, all of us who believe in Christ and who love His appearing, shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb! Amen.

***Portions of Scripture Read before Sermon—Zechariah 7 and 8.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—181, 30.***

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

A CALL TO WORSHIP

NO. 1107

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 20, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also.”
Zechariah 8:21.*

THIS prophecy may relate to the Jews, literally, and it is referred to by their learned doctors as to the days of the Messiah. We believe, also, that it refers to the days of the Messiah and we look for times when again the Holy Land shall be fully inhabited and the people shall rejoice to meet together to worship the Lord their God. We do not see, however, that this prophecy has yet been accomplished, and we look for it to be fulfilled in the latter days. Spiritually it teaches just this, that when God returns to bless His Church there are certain signs and marks of His return. Just as the coming back of the sun when he advances north of the Equator and again cheers us with his warmth, is marked by the springing up of flowers and the singing of birds, so the return of God's Holy Spirit to bless His Church is marked by certain signs and tokens.

The text tells us what those signs and tokens are, but before I mention them, let me suggest that every Believer should pray that these cheering indications may be manifest in our midst—that in these, our days, the Lord may return unto His Jerusalem and be jealous for her with a great jealousy—that we may see glad seasons such as our fathers have told us of, which happened in their days and in the olden times before them. As far as shall lie in the ability of any one of us, may we help towards such revivals by our prayers, by our efforts and by our consistent obedience to the Gospel. And may the Lord visit us according to the desire of our hearts.

I. One of the first signs of God's Presence among a people is that **THEY TAKE GREAT INTEREST IN DIVINE WORSHIP.** “The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts.” It is clear from this that they no longer despise assemblies for worship and no longer count Divine service to be a weariness. On the contrary, they begin to value the means of Grace and desire to make good use of them. The first solemn assembly mentioned here is the Prayer Meeting and certainly one of the surest tokens of a visitation of God's Spirit to a community is their delighting to meet for prayer.

The first cry of the people mentioned in our text was, “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord.” It is no statement of mine, suggested by un-

reasonable zeal, but it is the result of long-continued observation when I assert that the condition of a Church may be very accurately gauged by its Prayer Meetings. If the spirit of prayer is not with the people, the minister may preach like an angel, but he cannot expect success. If there is not the spirit of prayer in a Church there may be wealth, there may be talent, there may be a measure of effort, there may be an extensive machinery, but the Lord is not there. It is a sure evidence of the Presence of God that men pray as the rising of the thermometer is an evidence of the increase of the temperature.

As the Nilometer measures the rising of the water in the Nile, and so foretells the amount of harvest in Egypt, so is the Prayer Meeting a "Graceometer," and from it we may judge of the amount of Divine working among a people. If God is near a Church it must pray. And if He is not there, one of the first tokens of His absence will be slothfulness in prayer. God's people, by their saying one to another, "Let us go speedily to pray," manifest that they have a sense of their needs—they feel that they need much, much that Nature cannot yield them—they feel their need of Divine Grace, their need of quickening, their need of God's help if sinners are to be converted. They feel their need of His help if even those who are saved are to be steadfast—their need of the Holy Spirit that they may grow in Grace and glorify God. He who never prays surely does not know his own needs and how can he be taught of the Lord at all? God's people are a people sensible of their needs and therefore the absence of a sense of poverty is a sad token.

Moreover, the love which God's people have for prayer shows their desire after heavenly things. Those who frequently meet together for importunate, wrestling prayer, practically show that they desire to see the Lord's Kingdom come. They are not so taken up with their own business that they cannot afford time to think of God's business. They are not so occupied with the world's pleasures that they take no pleasure in the things of God. Believers in a right state of heart value the prosperity of the Church and, seeing that it can only be promoted by God's own hand, they cry mightily unto the Lord of Hosts to stretch out His hand of mercy and to be favorable to His Church and cause.

Church members who never pray for the good of the Church have no love for it. If they do not plead for sinners they have no love for the Savior and how can *they* be truly converted persons? Such as habitually forsake the assembling of themselves together for prayer may well suspect the genuine character of their piety. I am not, of course, alluding to those who are debarred by circumstances, but I allude to those who, from frivolous excuses, absent themselves from the praying assemblies. How dwells the love of God in them? Are they not dead branches of the vine? May they not expect to be taken away before long? Earnest meetings for prayer, indeed, not only prove our sense of need and our desire for spiritual blessings, but they manifest most our faith in the living God, and our belief that He

hears prayer, for men will not continue in supplication if they do not believe that God hears them. Sensible men would soon cease their prayers if they were not convinced that there is an ear which hears their petitions. Who would persevere in a vain exercise?

Our united prayers prove that we know that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. We know that the Lord is able to work according to our desires and that He is willing to be entreated of us. I have never known a thirsty man by a well who would not use the bucket which was there ready to hand unless, indeed, he was of the opinion that the well was dry. I have never known a man who wanted wealth and had a good trade, who would not exercise his trade. And so I have never known a man who believed prayer to be really effectual and felt his great needs who did not engage in prayer.

It is an ill token to any community of Christians when prayer is at a low ebb, for it is clear evidence that they do not know their own needs, they are not anxious about spiritual things and neither do they believe that God will enrich them in answer to their petitions. Beloved, may we never, as a Church, deserve censure for neglecting prayer! Our meetings for prayer have excited general astonishment by their number, but they are not all they might be. I shall put it to the conscience of each one to say whether you are as prayerful as you should be. Did you ever hear of a Church member who had not attended a Prayer Meeting for a month? Do you know of Church members who never assemble with the Brethren so much as once in a quarter of a year? Do you know of any who have not been to a Prayer Meeting in this place for the last six months? Do you know such?

I will not say I know any such. I will do no more than hint that such people may exist. But if *you* know them will you give them my Christian love and say that nothing depresses the pastor's spirit like the absence of Church members from the public assemblies of prayer, and that if anything could make him strong in the Lord, and give him courage to go forward in the Lord's work, it would be if all of you were to make the prayer meeting your special delight? I shall be satisfied when I see our prayer meetings as crowded as the services for preaching. And it strikes me if ever we are fully baptized into God's Spirit, we shall arrive at that point. A vastly larger amount of prayer ought to be among us than at present and if the Lord visits us graciously He will set us praying without ceasing.

But next, these people also took an interest in meetings for instruction. I find that the Chaldee translates the second sentence, "Let us seek the doctrine of Jehovah of Hosts." The Lord's coming near to any people will be sure to excite in them a longing to hear the Word. God sends impulses of enquiry over men's minds and suddenly places of worship become crowded which were half empty before. Preachers, also, who were cold and dead become quickened and speak with earnestness and life. No doubt waves of religious movement pass over nations and peoples—and when

God comes to a people the crest of that wave will be seen in this form—that the kingdom of Heaven becomes an object of interest and men press unto it!

During the revival under John the Baptist, the people went in crowds into the wilderness to hear the strange preacher who bade them repent. The revival under the Apostles was marked by their everywhere preaching the Word and the people listening. This was the great token of the Reformation—meetings were held under Gospel Oaks, out upon the commons and away in lone houses—and in glens and woods men thronged to listen to the Word of God! The professionals of popery were forsaken for the simple preaching of the Truth of God! This also marked the last grand revival of religion in our own country under Whitfield and Wesley. The Word of the Lord was precious in those days. And whether the Gospel was preached among the colliers of Kingswood or the rabble of Kennington Common, tens of thousands were awakened and rejoiced in the joyful notes of Free Grace.

Men loved to hear the Word—they said to one another, “Let us seek the Lord.” It is said that Moorfields would be full of light on a dark winter’s morning at five o’clock when Mr. Whitfield was to preach because so many people would be finding their way to the rendezvous, each one carrying a lantern. And so also over there in Zoar Street, in Southwark, when Mr. John Bunyan was out of prison and was going to preach, a couple of thousand would be assembled at five o’clock in the morning to enjoy his honest testimony.

It is a token for good when people press to hear the Word. I think we have in a measure the first token—a love for prayer, but we need far more of it. As for the second token, namely, an earnest love for listening to the Word of God, we have that in abundance. See you not how the crowds rush in like a mighty torrent as soon as the doors are open? Putting the two together, it seems that both these forms of meeting were loved by the people because they sought salvation therein, or as the margin has it, they, “entreated the face of the Lord.” They came to pray with a view to be saved! They came to hear preaching with a view to Divine favor! They wanted reconciliation with God—they had wandered from Him, but now they sought Him! They wanted fellowship with God!

They had said to God, “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Your ways.” But now they said, “Reveal Yourself unto us, O God, as You do not unto the world.” They longed to promote God’s Glory, even as before they dishonored Him. Yes, when Prayer Meetings and Preaching Meetings shall be attended with this end and object—that we may get near to God and that we may glorify God—there shall be happy days, indeed, for us! Master Fox in his, “Acts and Monuments,” speaking of the time when the Reformation was breaking out, uses language something to this effect—“It was lovely to see their travels, earnest seeking, burning zeal, Bible reading, watching, sweet assemblies, resort of one neighbor to

another for conference and mutual confirmation.” And, he adds, “All which may make us now to blush for shame in these, our days, of free profession.”

We may take the good man’s hint and feel shame for neglected opportunities, cold devotions and disregard of the Word of God. Our fathers loved to meet for prayer and to hear the preaching of the Truth of God. And when they came together it was with an intensely earnest desire to obtain the Divine blessing. To get this they risked life and liberty, meeting, even, when fine and imprisonment, or perhaps the gallows might be their reward. O to see the like earnestness among ourselves as to the means of Grace! May the Lord Jesus send it to us by the working of His Holy Spirit.

II. Another sign of God’s visiting a people in mercy is that THEY STIR EACH OTHER UP TO ATTEND UPON THE MEANS OF GRACE, for “the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord.” That is to say, they did not merely ask one another to go if they casually met. They did not bring in the subject accidentally if they could do so readily in common conversation—but the inhabitants of one city went to another on purpose to exhort them! They made a journey about it. As men go to market, from town to town, so did these people try to open a market for Christ—and not only one messenger, but many of the inhabitants of one city went on purpose all the way to another city, with set design, to induce them to join in worship, saying, “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord.”

They put themselves out of the way to do it. They had such a desire that great numbers might come together to worship the Most High that they took much trouble to invite their neighbors. God will be with us, indeed, if each one of us shall be anxious to bring others to Jesus, and to that end shall try to bring them to hearken to the Word of God. Why were these men so earnest? The reply will be, they persuaded others to come to the meetings for worship out of love to God’s House, to God’s cause, and to God Himself. God’s House is honored and beautified when great numbers come together. The ways of Zion do mourn and languish when but few assemble for prayer. Christ has promised to be where two or three are met together in His name. Still, it is not helpful to comfortable fellowship for a mere handful to meet in a large house. We feel like sparrows alone on the housetop when such is the case.

A great space and only a sprinkling of people to occupy it is like a big barn with only one bundle of straw in it—the winds howl in and out of it very miserably. I am sure if any of you attend a place of worship where there are very few beside yourselves, you must feel unhappy. And if you do not, why surely your hearts cannot be in the right place. Warm hearts are not easily kept alive among empty pews. A coal must be very lively to burn alone, but many glowing coals laid together help to keep each other alight.

No one can doubt, moreover, that full houses give opportunity to the preacher to glorify God. It is hopeful work to throw the net where there are great shoals of fish. Where men are hearing, we may hope that God will be blessing and therefore earnest Christians love to see the aisles and seats crowded. Besides, God is glorified when great numbers come together with earnest minds to celebrate His worship. In early days, in the Jewish Church, the men of Israel did not come by twos and threes and meet together in scant numbers, but from all parts of Judea's land—north, south, east, and west—they came together in companies, singing through the glades of the forest, singing through the dells, and singing over the hills! And when they reached the city of Jerusalem in their hundreds of thousands, their praise was a great shout, like the voice of thunder and the smoke of their sacrifices rose up in clouds to Heaven.

Those were grand days! Does not David seem to relish the service of the Lord his God all the more because of the multitude that kept holy day? Therefore the saints love to see many come to pray and to listen to the Word of God because the multitude honors the house and God thus honors God Himself. O Brothers and Sisters, we think the cause is sadly declining when hearers are like the gleanings of the vintage, when service time comes and sees vacant seats by the score because professors shrink at the weather, or hunt up an excuse for staying at home, being too idle, too indifferent to cross the threshold of their houses unless some eloquent preacher or fresh comer shall attract them. But we reckon that God's cause prospers when the people come joyfully in their bands to listen to the Truth of God and God's Spirit applies it to their hearts with power, leading them to prayer and praise.

Moreover, Believers love to bring others to the House of God because they wish to do good to them. Did you ever notice how the little birds, when they find a heap of corn, begin to chatter and twitter as if they would call all the other birds to come and feast, also? Grace is generous and is never akin to churlish Nabal. Misers would rather keep all their wealth to themselves, but a man who is rich in faith feels his happiness increased when others have faith, too! As soon as we drink of the Water of Life, a sacred instinct within us bids us cry, "Come." "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." He knows not the Grace of God who has no desire that others should know it, also. You will assuredly long for the souls of others if God has saved your soul. Natural humanity, let alone our alliance to the Divine Nature, leads us to bid others come to Christ.

Besides, the love of company in the Christian makes him invite his neighbors to Gospel worship. Believers are like sheep in this among other things, namely, that they are gregarious. A man who loves to keep his religion to himself must surely be a stranger to the religion of Christ! Communion is one of the sweetest joys of the spirit. Fellowship with saints above will be one jewel of our everlasting crown and fellowship with saints below is one of the sweetest cordials of our mortal cares. "I went to the

House of God in company,” says David, as if it made the house so much the sweeter to go in company with others who went there. “I had gone with the multitude. I went with them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.” For the sake of communion we long to see many going upon the heavenly pilgrimage.

Observe in our text there does not appear to have been any minister or missionary employed to go from one city to another, and to say, “Let us go and pray,” but the inhabitants, themselves, undertook the duty of invitation and persuasion, and said, “Let us go and pray unto the Lord.” The people, themselves, attended to mutual provocation to love and to good works! How I wish they did so now! They did not wait for the exhortations of one specially set apart to be a prompter and an organizer. But their own hearts were so warm that they did it spontaneously among themselves! My Brothers and Sisters, may you thus be pastors to one another! There are far too many of you for me to look after personally, therefore I pray you stir one another up to every good word and work.

I believe that when a man stirs others up it is good for himself, for a man cannot, in common decency, be very cold, himself, who bids others be warm. He cannot, surely, unless he is an arrant hypocrite, be negligent of those duties which he bids others attend to! Beloved, I commit this charge to you, and then I have done with this point. This morning I ask you to visit one another and to say, “Come, let us not as a Church lose the Presence of God after nearly 20 years’ enjoyment of it. Let not our minister’s hands grow weak by our neglect of prayer. Let not the work of the Church flag through our indifference, but let us make a brotherly covenant that we will go speedily to pray before the Lord and seek the Lord of Hosts, that we may retain His Presence and have yet more of it, to the praise of the glory of His Grace.”

III. I must pass on to notice that it appears from our text that it is a sure mark of God’s visiting a people, when **THEY ARE URGENT TO ATTEND UPON THESE HOLY EXERCISES AT ONCE**. The text says, “Let us go *speedily* to pray,” by which is meant, I suppose, that when the time came to pray, they were punctual, they were not laggards. They did not come into the assembly late. They did not drop in, one by one, long after the service had begun—but they said, “Let us go speedily.” They looked up to their clocks and said, “How long will it take us to walk so as to be there at the commencement? Let us start five minutes before that time lest we should not be able to keep up the pace and should, by any means, reach the door after the first prayer.”

I wish late comers would remember David’s choice. You remember what part he wished to take in the House of God? He was willing to be a doorkeeper and that not because the doorkeeper has the most comfortable berth, for that is the hardest post a man can choose. But he knew that doorkeepers are the first in and the last out and so David wished to be first at the service and the last at the going away! How few would be of

David's mind! It has been said that Dissenters in years gone by placed the clock outside the Meeting House so that they might never enter late. But the modern Dissenters place the clock *inside*, that their preachers may not keep them too long! There is some truth in the remark, but it is not to our honor.

This was, however, a fault with our forefathers, for quaint old Herbert said—"O be drest, stay not for th' other pin: why you have lost a joy for it worth worlds." Let us mend our ways and say, one to another, in the language of the text, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord." Let us go with quick feet. If we go slowly to market, let us go quickly to Prayer Meeting. If we are slow on week days, let us go quickly on Sunday. Let us never keep Jesus Christ waiting and we shall do so if we are not on time, for He is sure to be punctual, even if only two or three are met together in His name. The expression, however, means more than this. "Let us go speedily" means, let us go *heartily*—do not let us crawl to prayer, but let us go to it as men who have something before them which attracts them.

When the angels serve God they never do it as though they were half asleep. They are all alive and burning like flames of fire. They have six wings and, I guarantee you, they use them all! When the Lord says, "Gabriel, go upon My bidding," he outstrips the lightning! O, to exhibit some such ardor and zest in the service of God! If we pray, let us pray as if we mean it! If we worship, let us worship with our hearts. "Let us go speedily," and may the Lord make our hearts to be like the chariots of Amminadib for swiftness and rapidity—glowing wheels and burning axles may God give to our spirits—that we may never let the world think we are indifferent to the love of Jesus. "Let us go speedily."

The words, "Let us go speedily," mean—let us go at once, or instantly. If any good thing has been neglected and we resolve to attend to it better, let us do it at once. Revivals of religion—when is the best time for them? Directly! When is the best time to repent of sin? Today! When is the best time for a cold heart to grow warm? Today! When is the season for a sluggish Christian to be industrious? Today! When is the period for a backslider to return? Today! When is the time for one who has crawled along the road to Heaven to mend his pace? Today! Is it not always today?

And, indeed, when should it be? "Tomorrow," you say. Ah, but you may never have it! And, when it comes, it will still be today. Tomorrow is only in the fool's almanac—it exists nowhere else. Today! Today, let us go speedily! I beseech the Church of God here to be yet more alive and at once to wake up. Time is flying—we cannot afford to lose it. The devil is wide awake, why should we be asleep? Error is stalking through the land, evil influences are abroad everywhere! Men are dying, Hell is filling, the grave is gorged and yet is insatiable—and the man of destruction is not yet satisfied. Shall we lie down in wicked satisfaction, yielding to base laziness? Awake, arise, you Christians! Now, even now, lest it be said of you, "Curse you Meroz, says the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants

thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

I know we are all apt to think that we live in the most important era of history and I admit that under certain aspects every day is a crisis, but I claim liberty to say that there never was a period in the world's history when Christian activity, and prayerfulness, and genuine revival were more needed than just now. Where is our nation? Is it not on the very verge of becoming, once again, a province of the Pope's dominion? Are not the modern Pharisees compassing sea and land to make proselytes? Does it not seem as if the people were gone mad upon their idols and were altogether fascinated by the charms of the Whore of Babylon, and drunken with her cup? Do you not see everywhere the old orthodox faith forsaken, and men occupying Christian pulpits who do not believe, but even *denounce* the doctrines which they have sworn to defend?

Might I not say of Christendom in England, that “her whole head is sick and her whole heart faint”? The daughter of Zion staggers in the street for weakness—there is none to help her among all her sons—all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper. Her Nazarites were purer than snow and their separation from the world was known of all men—but now they are defiled with worldliness until they are blacker than a coal! From the daughter of Zion her beauty is departed. O you that love her, let your hearts sound as a harp for her! O you that love her, weep day and night for her hypocrisy, for unless the Lord returns unto her the time of her sore distress draws near. Thus says the Lord, “Arise, cry out in the night season, pour out your hearts like water before the Lord, and then the Lord will return and be gracious to His inheritance.”

IV. For a moment I shall call your attention to another point. When God visits a people they will not only attend to prayer and preaching, and stir each other up to do so at once, but **THEY WILL HAVE A SPECIAL EYE TO GOD IN THESE DUTIES.** Observe, they shall say, “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts.” Alas, many go to religious meetings to be seen of men! I am afraid there is a great deal too much exhibition of dress in some quarters, and there certainly cannot be a greater abomination than to make the House of God a show room for our finery. Jesus might say, “Take these things away. It is written My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it an exhibition wherein to display yourselves.”

Some go to worship because it is the custom and it would not be respectable to stay away. “We must have a pew in Church, you know, or we should be remarked upon in society.” I am glad that people attend Divine worship for any reason, but mere custom is a poor motive and is no sign of Divine Grace. The people in the text did not say, “We will go that we may see our neighbors, and that our neighbors may see us.” No, they went to “pray before the Lord.” They did not assemble to seek a man. They

did not go to hear Mr. So-and-So preach. Of course they would sooner hear one who preached all the Gospel and preached it plainly, than another who preached half the Gospel and fired over their heads. But, still, they looked through the man to the man's Master and they did not think that the Master was tied up to any one man.

May we cultivate in our midst the desire to worship for God's sake, not for the preacher's sake, whoever he may be. I believe it is not wrong for a Christian man to feel that he is better fed by one minister than by another and therefore to be most glad when God's servant is in the pulpit. But if that feeling grows so that if he cannot hear his favorite preacher he will stay at home, it is most mischievous. I thank God that my Master has other preachers besides Paul. There is Apollos, there is Cephas, and beyond these I see a great company of them that publish the Good News. I will hear what God will speak through them. I would have you note, Beloved, how different is my text from that formal worship into which it is so easy to fall. "I have been to the Prayer Meeting. I have done my duty and I can go home satisfied. I have taken a seat at the Tabernacle and listened to two sermons on Sunday—I feel I have done my duty."

Oh, dear Hearer! That is a poor way of living! I need a great deal more than all that or I shall be wretched. At the Prayer Meeting I must see God, I must pour out my soul before Him! I must feel that the spirit of prayer has been there and that I have participated in it, otherwise what was the good of my being there? I must, when in the assembly on Sunday, find some blessing to my own soul! I must get another glimpse of the Savior! I must come to be somewhat more like Him! I must feel my sin rebuked, or my flagging Graces revived! I must feel that God has been blessing poor sinners and bringing them to Christ! I must feel, indeed, that I have come into contact with God, or else what is my Sunday worth, and what is my having been in the assembly worth? If God shall bless you, indeed, you will worship spiritually and you will count nothing to be true worship which is not of the spirit and of the heart and soul. May God quicken us all up to that point, and He shall have the praise.

V. The last thing is this—it is a blessed sign of God's visiting a people when EACH ONE OF THEM IS RESOLVED, PERSONALLY, THAT HE WILL, IN A SPIRITUAL MANNER, WAIT UPON GOD. Notice the last four words. "I will go also." "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also." That is the point—"I will go also." The Christian man should neither be content, when he goes to worship, to leave others behind, nor should he be content to drive others before him and stop behind himself. It is said of Julius Caesar that he owed his victories to the fact that he never said to his soldiers, "Go," but always said, "Let us go." That is the way to win. *Example* is mightier than precept!

We read of the Pharisees of old that they laid burdens on other men's shoulders, but they themselves did not touch them with one of their fingers—true Christians are not so. They say, "I will go also." Was not that

bravely spoken of poor old Latimer, when he was to be burnt with Ridley. Ridley was a younger and stronger man, and as he walked to the stake, old Latimer, with his quaintness about him to the last, cried to his Brother, Ridley, "Have after, as fast as my poor old legs can carry me." The dear old saint was marching to his burning as fast as he could—not at all loath to lay his aged body upon the altar for his Lord! That is the kind of man who makes others into men—the man who habitually says, "I will go also; even if I am called to be burned for Christ. Whatever is to be done or suffered, I will go also."

I would be ashamed to stand here and say to you, "Brothers and Sisters, pray. Brothers, preach. Brethren, labor," and then be an idler myself. And you, also, would be ashamed to say to others, "Let us pray. Let us be earnest," while you are not praying and not earnest yourselves. Example is the backbone of instruction! Be, yourself, what you would have others be and do, yourself, what you would have others do. "I will go also," because I need to pray as much as anybody else. I will go to hear the Word, for I need to hear it as well as others. I will go and wait upon God, for I need to see His face. I will cry to Him for a blessing, for I need a blessing. I will confess my sin before Him, for I am full of sin. I will ask mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, for I must have it or perish.

"I will go also." If nobody else will go, I will go. And if all the rest go I will go also. I do not want to pledge any of you this morning. I shall not, therefore, ask you to hold up your hands, but I should like to put it very personally to all the members of this Church. We have enjoyed the Presence and blessing of God for many years in a very remarkable manner and it is not taken from us. But I am jealous, I believe it is a godly jealousy and not unbelief—lest there should be among us a slackness in prayer and a lack of zeal for the Glory of God. I am fearful of a neglecting of the souls of our neighbors, and a ceasing to believe to the full in our mission and in the call of God to be, each one of us, in this world as Christ was, saviors of others.

My Brothers and Sisters, knit together as we are in Church fellowship and bound by common cords to one blessed Master, let each one say within himself, "I will go also." The Church shall be the subject of my prayer. The minister shall share in my petitions. The Sunday school shall not be forgotten. The College shall be remembered in supplication. The Orphanage shall have my heart's petitions. I will plead with God for the Evangelists. I will consider the congregation at the Tabernacle and pray that it may gently melt into the Church. I will pray for the strangers who fill the aisles and crowd the pews that God will bless them. Yes, I will say unto God this day, "My God, You have saved me, given me a part and lot among Your people and put me in Your garden where Your people grow and flourish. I will not be a barren tree, but abound in fruit, especially in prayer. If I cannot do anything else I can pray. If this is my one mite, I will put that into the treasury. I will put You in remembrance and plead with

You, and give You no rest until You establish Your cause and make it praise in the earth.”

I am not asking more of you than Jesus would ask, nor do I exact anything at your hands—you will cheerfully render that which is a tribute due to the infinite love of your Lord. Now, do not say, dear Brother, “I hope the Church will wake up.” Leave it alone and mind that *you* wake up yourself. Do not say, “I hope they will be stirred up this morning.” Never mind others! Stir up *yourself*. Begin to enquire, “Which Prayer Meeting shall I go to, for I mean to join the people of God and let them hear my voice, or at least have my presence. And if I cannot go to the Tabernacle I will drop in near my own house. And if there is no meeting there I will open my own house—the largest room of any cottage shall be used for a Prayer Meeting—or my parlor if I have one. I will have a share in the glorious work of attracting a blessing from the skies. I will send up my electric rod of prayer into the clouds of blessing to bring down the Divine force.”

Do it! Do it! Let each one say, “I will go also.” May God bless this Word to His people, and I am sure it will result in benediction to sinners. For, remember, you ungodly ones, that all this noise is about *you*. What we need the blessing of God for is that *you* may be saved! We cannot bear that you should remain as you are, unconverted! And I am asking God’s people to pray specially with an eye to your salvation. Shall *we* think about your souls and will *you* not think about them yourselves? Are we inclined to move Heaven and earth that you might be saved and will you sit still and perish? May the Lord awaken you to say, “If others are going to pray unto the Lord and seek His face, I will go also,” and the Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Zechariah 8.

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

THE LOWLY KING

NO. 1861

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 25, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you. He is just and having salvation, lowly, and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”
Zechariah 9:9.***

I DO not intend to expound the whole text at any length, but simply to dwell upon *the lowliness of Jesus*. Yet this much I may say—whenever God would have His people especially glad, it is always in Himself. If it is written, “Rejoice greatly,” then the reason is, “Behold, your King comes unto you!” Our chief source of rejoicing is the Presence of King Jesus in the midst of us! Whether it is His first or His Second Advent, His very shadow is delight. His footstep is music to our ears.

That delight springs much from the fact that He is ours. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. . .Behold, *your King* is coming to you.” Whatever He may be to others, He is your King, and to whomever He may or may not come, He comes *to you*. He comes for your deliverance, your honor, your consummated bliss. He keeps your company—He makes your house His palace, your love His solace, your nature His home. He who is your King by hereditary right, by His choice of you, by His redemption of you and by your willing choice of Him, is coming to you—therefore shout for joy!

The verse goes on to show why the Lord, our King, is such a source of gladness—“He is just and having salvation.” He blends righteousness and mercy—justice to the ungodly and favor to His saints. He has worked out the stern problem—how can God be just and yet save the sinful? He is just in His own personal Character, just as having borne the penalty of sin and just as cleared from the sin which He voluntarily took upon Himself. Having endured the terrible ordeal, He is saved and His people are saved in Him. He is to be saluted with hosannas, which signify, “Save, Lord,” for where He comes He brings victory and consequent salvation with Him! He routs the enemies of His people, breaks for them the serpent’s head and leads their captivity captive. We admire the justice which marks His reign and the salvation which attends His sway—and in both respects we cry—“Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!”

Moreover, it is written of Him that He is lowly, which cannot be said of many kings and princes of the earth. Nor would they care to have it said of them! Your King, O daughter of Jerusalem, loves to have His lowliness published by you with exceeding joy. His outward state betokens the humility and gentleness of His Character. He appears to be what He really

is—He conceals nothing from His chosen. In the height of His grandeur, He is not like the proud monarchs of earth. The patient donkey He prefers to the noble charger and He is more at home with the common people than with the great. In His grandest pageant, in His capital city, He was still consistent with His meek and lowly Character, for He came, “riding upon a donkey.” He rode through Jerusalem in state, but what lowliness marked the spectacle! It was an extemporized procession which owed nothing to Garter-king-at-arms, but everything to the spontaneous love of friends.

A donkey was brought, and its foal, and His disciples sat Him on it. Instead of courtiers in their robes, He was surrounded by common peasants and fishermen and children of the streets of Jerusalem—the humblest of men and the youngest of the race shouted His praises! Boughs of trees and garments of friends strewed the road instead of choice flowers and costly tapestries—it was the pomp of spontaneous love, not the stereotyped pageantry which power exacts of fear. With half an eye, everyone can see that this King is of another sort from common princes and His dignity of another kind from that which tramples on the poor.

According to the narrative, as well as the prophecy, there would seem to have been two beasts in the procession. I conceive that our Lord rode on the foal, for it was essential that He should mount a beast which had never been used before. God is not a sharer with men—that which is consecrated to His peculiar service must not have been, before, devoted to lower uses. Jesus rides a colt where no man ever sat. But why was the mother there? Did not Jesus say of both donkey and foal, “Loose them, and bring them unto Me”? This appears to me to be a token of His tenderness—He would not needlessly sever the mother from her foal. I like to see a farmer’s kindness when he allows the foal to follow when the mare is plowing or laboring—and I admire the same thoughtfulness in our Lord. He cares for cattle, yes, even for a donkey and her foal. He would not even cause a poor beast a needless pang by taking away its young! And so, in that procession, the beast of the field took its part joyfully, in token of a better age in which all creatures shall be delivered from bondage and shall share the blessings of His unsuffering reign.

Our Lord herein taught His disciples to cultivate delicacy, not only towards each other, but towards the whole creation. I like to see in Christian people a reverence towards life, a tenderness towards all God’s creatures. There is much of deep truth in those lines of, “The Ancient Mariner”—

***“He prays best who loves best
All things both great and small.”***

Under the old Law, this tenderness was inculcated by those precepts which forbade the taking of the mother bird with her young and the boiling of a kid in its mother’s milk. Why were these things forbidden? There would seem to be no harm in either of these practices, but God would have His people tender-hearted, sensitive and delicate in their handling of all things. A Christian should have nothing of the savage about him, but everything that is considerate and kind. Our Lord rode through the streets of Jerusalem with a donkey and the foal of the donkey—for He is lowly in

heart and gentle to all. His is no mission of crushing power and selfish aggrandizement—He comes to bless all things that are and to make the world, once more, a Paradise where none shall be oppressed. Blessed Savior, when we think of the sufferings of Your creatures, both men and beasts, we pray You to hasten Your Second Advent and begin your gentle reign!

Now, this riding of Christ upon a donkey is remarkable if you remember that no pretender to be a Prophet, or a Divine Messenger has imitated it. Ask the Jew whether he expects the Messiah to ride thus through the streets of Jerusalem! He will probably answer, “No.” If he does not, you may ask him the further question, whether there has appeared in his nation anyone who, professing to be the Messiah, has, at any time, come to the daughter of Jerusalem “riding upon a colt, the foal of a donkey.” It is rather singular that no false Messiah has copied this lowly style of the Son of David! When Sapor, the great Persian, jested with a Jew about his Messiah riding upon a donkey, he said to him, “I will send Him one of my horses,” to which the Rabbi replied, “You cannot send Him a horse that will be good enough, for that donkey is to be of a hundred colors.” By that idle tradition, the Rabbi showed that he had not caught the idea of the Prophet at all, since he could not believe in Messiah’s lowliness displayed by His riding upon a common donkey.

The rabbinical mind must necessarily make simplicity mysterious and turn lowliness into another form of pomp. The very pith of the matter is that our Lord gave Himself no grand airs, but was natural, unaffected and free from all vain-glory. His greatest pomp went no further than riding through Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of a donkey. The Muslim turns round with a sneer and says to the Christian, “Your Master was the rider on a donkey—our Mohammed was the rider on a camel and the camel is, by far, the superior beast.” Just so, and that is where the Muslim fails to grasp the prophetic thought—he looks for strength and honor—but Jesus triumphs by weakness and lowliness! How little real glory is to be found in the grandeur and display which princes of this world affect! There is far more true glory in condescension than in display.

Our Lord’s riding on the foal of a donkey was meant to show us how lowly our Savior is and what tenderness there is in that lowliness. When He is proclaimed King in His great Father’s capital and rides in triumph through the streets, He sits upon no prancing charger, such as warriors choose for their triumphs—no, He sits upon a borrowed donkey, whose mother walks by its side! His poverty was seen, for of all the cattle on a thousand hills, He owned not one and yet we see His more than royal wealth, for He did but say, “The Lord has need of them,” and straightway their owner yielded them up. No forced contributions supply the revenue of this Prince—His people are willing in the day of His power. He is your King, O Zion! Shout to think that you have such a Lord! Where the scepter is love and the crown is lowliness, the homage should be peculiarly bright with rejoicing. None shall groan beneath such a sway, but the people shall willingly offer themselves. They shall find their liberty in His service, their rest in obedience to Him, their honor in His Glory!

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, you may forget the hosannas of that Day of Palms, for I beg you to confine your thoughts to the consideration of the lowliness of our Divine Lord and Master. “Behold, your King comes unto you. . . lowly, and riding on a donkey.” Let us think for a few minutes upon *the displays of the lowliness* of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then upon the causes of that lowliness and, thirdly, upon certain lessons to be learned from that lowliness.

I. First, then, let us think of THE DISPLAYS OF LOWLINESS MADE BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. You do not need me to remind you how devoutly we worship Him as God over all, blessed forever. Yet while on earth He *veiled* His Godhead and *laid bare* His lowliness! His sojourn here below was full of the truest greatness, but it was a grandeur, not of loftiness, but of lowliness; not of glory, but of humiliation! Our Lord was never more glorious in the deepest sense than in His humiliation. Because of it, “He shall be exalted, and extolled, and shall be very high.”

First, think of the lowliness of Christ in even *undertaking the salvation of guilty men*. Man without sin, as God first made him, is certainly a noble creature. It is written, “You have made him a little lower than the angels.” But, as a sinner, man is a base and dishonorable being only worthy to be destroyed! In that character, he has no claims to be regarded by God at all. If it had pleased the Divine Supremacy to blot this rebel race from existence, God might readily have repaired the loss by the creation of superior beings! And it was lowliness of the most tender kind which led our Lord, who took not up angels when they fell, to take up the seed of Abraham.

If it were possible for some tall archangel to espouse the cause of ants upon their hill in yonder forest, it would be a wondrous stoop. Yet it would be *nothing* compared with the condescension of the eternal God in bowing from His lofty Throne to redeem and sanctify the sons of men! We are frail creatures at the best—born yesterday, we die today. We are as green leaves in the forest for a while and then our autumn comes and we fade and the wind carries us away. For such short-lived things the Lord of Glory came to this sin-shadowed globe! Were He not of a lowly mind, He had never found His delights with the sons of men, nor would He have thought upon the woes of poor and needy ones.

Herein, in the next place, He showed His lowliness—that *He actually assumed our nature*. I cannot tell that story, it is too wonderful! A free Spirit voluntarily encases itself in human clay! A pure Spirit willingly becomes a partaker of flesh and blood! This is marvelous lowliness! The Strong is compassed with infirmity; the Happy assumes capacity for suffering; the infinitely Holy becomes one of a race notorious for its iniquity! This is a triumph of lowliness! The great God, the Infinite of Ages, unites Himself with a human body! He is born into our infancy; He grows up into our youth; He toils through our manhood; He accomplishes a life like our own! This is a miracle of lowliness! I think the angels still gaze into these things and wonder at the Word made flesh!

It is particularly said of our Incarnate Lord that He was “seen of angels” and that leads us to believe that angels watched Him with intense curiosity and ever-growing interest—wondering what it could possibly mean that

He, who made and ruled the heavens, should be born of a woman and made under the Law! They wondered that He should eat and drink, and sleep and sigh and suffer like the creatures of His hands—and should, indeed, be such as they were! Surely they talk of it now with hushed voices and astonished hearts—and will so talk of it throughout the ages. Made lower than His angels are, His angels must feel a solemn awe at such a Divine descent of love! This lowliness was such as only *God* could display—let us worship, in the Person of our Lord, a condescending Love as unique as the Person who exhibited it.

Furthermore, when our Lord found Himself below, in the fashion of man, He manifested His true lowliness by *carrying out to fulfill the part of a servant*. He had taken upon Himself the form of a servant by becoming Man, but it was no matter of form with Him. He became *actually* obedient! Having put on the livery of service, He executed the lowest office. Never servant in a king's kitchen did menial work so thoroughly as He. In His great house there are vessels to honor and to dishonor and He selected to be used for the lowest offices—He made Himself of no reputation; He became a servant of servants—all they that saw Him laughed Him to scorn! “He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” If anybody was needed to talk with a fallen woman, He was soon seen sitting on the well. If anyone was needed to win a publican, He was speedily at the house of Zaccheus. If any man must be slandered as having a devil and being mad, He is ready to bear the worst reproach! He could truthfully say, “You call Me, Master, and Lord: and you say well; for so I am,” yet He, their Master and Lord, had washed their feet and proved that He was meek and lowly of heart!

Brothers and Sisters, it is a wonderful thing that the Lord of All should have become the Servant of all—it is so wonderful that many have lost their way in thinking of it. They have been unable to grasp the idea of Godhead combined with servitude, Majesty united with obedience. Indeed, it is only by faith that we can realize that He that built all things yet became so poor a thing as Mary's Son, so sad a Being as the Man of Sorrows, so lowly a Person as the “despised and rejected of men.” Yet so it was and herein He showed the truth of His own statement, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” He wore the yoke, Himself and, therefore, can experimentally say, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me. . .and you shall find rest unto your souls.” This is He who breaks not the bruised reed and quenches not the smoking flax! This is He who “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” His life was one long proof of meekness and lowliness—and in nothing did He fail! He exhorts us to conquer by the same persevering methods, for He has proved that gentleness and meekness will prevail.

Still, let me keep you thinking upon the lowliness of your Lord when I bid you remember His life-long poverty. He does not advise His disciples voluntarily to espouse poverty unless it is for His sake and then they do well. Times have been and may be again, when Believers must forsake all things for His cause. But in His day, some of His disciples ministered Him of their substance and, therefore, had substance. He did not command these to renounce that substance and become poor, though I doubt not

that, when persecution came, many of them gladly did so for His sake. Not to all did He put the test, "Sell all that you have," but it was necessary to His own personal work that He should become poor, that His people might be made rich. And this He cheerfully endured. He was laid in a borrowed cradle in the stable where He was born. He dwelt in His life-work in borrowed houses and lived upon the charity of His followers. And when He rested, it was in a borrowed bed, for though the foxes had holes, He had nowhere to lay His head.

He preached from a borrowed boat and when He fell asleep and died, He was buried in a borrowed tomb, for He had no foot of land for a possession. He endured poverty as if He were born to the manner, for He was quite at home among the poor and lowly, receiving sinners and eating with them. Truly, a dignity surrounded Him far more real than that which has been conceived to hedge a king and yet, in His poverty He never seemed uneasy and the society of the poor and unlearned never grieved Him. He was with the poorest as one of them and they knew it and, therefore, they loved to gather about Him. He was so sweetly and tenderly their associate that the common people heard Him gladly.

Remember that He might have left that poverty at any moment. He that could turn water into wine might have quaffed full many a delicious draught had He so willed. He that could multiply bread and fish needed never to have hungered. A word from Him might have created palaces more wonderful than the dreams of Aladdin and wealth greater than the abundance of Solomon, for nothing was impossible for Him! If He had willed to make Himself the object of His own life, He could have surrounded Himself with every luxury but, instead thereof, "though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich." In this He magnified His lowliness.

But I think I see more of His lowliness at times in *His associates* than in anything else because men may be very poor and yet they may be very proud. I think I have seen it sadly so. I have known men without a penny with which to bless themselves, as full of caste feeling as the wealthiest peer! They are working men, it may be, but they think themselves superior persons of remarkable gifts and eminent respectability. We are a little overdone with superior persons just now. I come across them almost everywhere in this department and in that and, of course, I look up to them with such respect as I can. But sometimes a little more reverence is asked of us than we can conveniently bestow. In this age we have to be careful not to trench upon the dignity of certain persons and yet He who was, in all respects, superior to us all, never played the superior person once in all His life! He sat on a well and talked to a woman—and His disciples, we read, marveled that He spoke to *a woman*.

It is not to "*the women*," as we get it in our Authorized Version, but the Revised Version puts it more correctly, "they marveled that He was speaking with *a woman*." They thought that such a One as He should not speak to any woman, for they were tinctured with the exclusiveness of the period. I do not suppose that it occurred to our Lord that He was doing anything remarkable in speaking to a woman, for He was born of woman and He never disowned the tender ties which come of such a birth. To some

men it would be a great come-down to speak familiarly to anyone if he did not keep a carriage. Even in our churches the silly caste feeling will intrude and Brothers and Sisters in Christ hardly think a poor saint to be their equal! Our Lord had no pride of manner about Him, for His lowliness was in His *heart*. We read that the *publicans and sinners* gathered round Him—even women of ill-fame listened with tearful eyes to His teaching!

Oh, no, we never mention them, of course! We call them, “outcasts,” and treat them as off casts—yet Jesus had a kind word for them. What a congregation He often had, of those whom the Pharisees abhorred! Yet He never said to one of them, “Be gone!” His rule was to welcome all, saying, “Him that comes to Me, will I in no wise cast out.” Those publicans were certainly very mean characters—they collected a hateful tax for the foreigner and squeezed out an extra portion for themselves, but the Savior never said to a single publican, “Be gone!” Quite the contrary, He gave the publican an honorable place in His parable—He made one of them an Apostle—and He went to abide in the house of another who received Him joyfully! He did not merely speak a good word to these degraded persons, but He actually sat at table with them as a Friend. “Horrible, was it not?” So the Pharisees thought. “Glorious,” say we, as we reverence that Divine Humility which scorned nothing that lived and especially nothing in the form of man or woman! “This Man receives sinners,” was said in disdain! Let it be thundered out in a hymn as glorious as the song of the seraphim who continually cry, “Holy, holy, holy!” Never was purity more pure than when its incarnation bowed to become “a Friend of publicans and sinners.”

He did what was still more amazing—He received *little children*. Now, I can see some reason for talking with grown-up men and women, even if they are debased and depraved, but as for those boys and girls, what can be done with *them*? When they heard the children crying, “Hosanna” in the Temple, the Pharisees demanded of Him, “Do You hear what these say?” As much as to say, “These boys and girls—are these Your admirers? Do You find Your followers among children?” He had a lowly answer for them, but it was one which silenced them. These hosannas came of our blessed Lord having said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.” He accepted children as the pattern of the kind of people who enter His Kingdom—He Himself was called God’s Holy Child Jesus and He was at home with children because of His perfect guilelessness and gentleness. Proud men seldom care for children, nor children for them—but our Lord, in His true lowliness of heart, loved children and they loved Him.

I wish we had a longer time in which to set out all the lovely lowliness of our adorable Christ, but I must only gather a few ears where I would have preferred to have reaped sheaves. Our Lord’s *patient bearing under accusations* that were so foul and false, was another proof of His lowliness. “I hear,” says a man, “that a calumny has been whispered against me, and I will drag it to light. I will have it out, let it cost what it may. Who dares breathe upon my character? He shall feel the law and know that he cannot defame me with impunity.” Some professing Christians appear to lose their balance when misrepresented—the lamb roars like a lion and

the ox eats flesh like the leopard! Churches have been torn and families ruined to avenge a hasty word! Is not that spirit the opposite of the mind of our blessed Master? They said He was a drunk and a wine-bibber—the charge must have grieved Him, but He did not become angry and threaten His accusers. It was most important that His Character should be cleared. He smiled to Himself as He thought, “I will not contradict the accusation, for everybody knows that it is not true.” They said that He had a devil and He did condescend to answer *that* and confounded all His accusers by making them see the absurdity of the charge, for if the devil was in Jesus fighting against the devil, then the devil must have become divided against himself and his kingdom would soon come to an end!

Towards the end of our Lord’s life, His enemies gathered up their charges and flung them in set form before Pilate’s judgement seat, but He answered them never a word—“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before her shearer, so opened He not His mouth.” In silence He maintained His lowliness! Oh, if He, who could speak as never man spoke, had spoken—if He had defended Himself with His own irresistible oratory—with such a subject as Himself to speak upon, He might have made them all go out of the judgment hall, as once He had scattered them when His client was a woman taken in adultery! He might have turned the crowd against their rulers, had He chosen, or divided their counsels by setting Pharisees against Sadducees! But He sought not Himself. He was content to ask, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” “For which of those works do you stone Me?” And when He came to His end, He had no harsher word for them than, “Father, forgive them!”

To crown all, you know how our Well-Beloved *died*. He laid down His life for us—dearest pledge of lowliness! The decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem was no famous death in battle amid the roar of cannon and the blast of trumpet, shaking Heaven and earth with tidings of victory! His was no death amid the tears of a nation who prepare for their beloved Prince a more than royal mourning. No, He dies with malefactors! He dies at the common gallows! He dies amid a crowd of scoffers where felons cast contempt upon Him as He hangs between them! Hear how the ribald throng challenge His Divine Sonship and says, “If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross!” The bearing of such disgrace and the endurance of such scorn was the utmost proof of a lowliness of spirit which we humbly admire and feebly imitate—but which we can never equal.

II. I shall but occupy you one or two minutes while I try to explain THE CAUSE OF THIS LOWLINESS.

His supreme lowliness of Character grew out of *the actual lowliness of His heart*. He never aimed at humility, nor labored after it—it was natural to Him. Of all sickening things, the pride that mimics humility is the most loathsome! Not a particle of that nauseous vice was found in our Lord. He never puts on an air, nor strikes an attitude, nor plays the humble part. But He *is* meek and lowly and all can see it. He is never other than He seems to be and He always is and seems to be the meekest of mankind. His inmost heart was seen and seen to be all lowliness.

Why was He so? I conceive that He was so lowly because *He was so great*. A little man feels the necessity of magnifying himself and, therefore, becomes proud. Pride is essentially meanness. It is the little man that cannot afford to be little. Some of us are too low to be lowly, too mean to be meek. True greatness is always unconscious and never seeks to make a display. It magnifies a man when he can sink himself for the good of others. No one knew how to descend so gracefully as our Lord, for His great mind knew well the ways of self-denial. A man who is greatly rich is not ashamed to be seen in well-worn clothes in those same places where the pretentious bankrupt would not venture except in his newest attire. He who has a small estate puts a diamond ring upon his finger and holds it so that it sparkles in the light—to let all people see that he is a man worth something! But your eminent men of wealth scorn such display. Truly great men are humble. I have often heard it said of men of large substance, “He is singularly unassuming! You would never *dream* that he is a man of property.” So, too, of men of genius have we heard it said, “He gave himself no airs; he was as modest and friendly as the least of us.” Just so, and that very much accounts for his high standing. He that is somebody to others is nobody to himself. He who was more than all, even our Lord Jesus Christ, was, therefore, for that very reason, lowly of heart.

He was lowly, next, because *He was so loving*. Mothers are frequently proud of their children, but, I think, they are seldom, if ever, proud to their children. No, if they love them, they do not think that it is any condescension to kiss them, or wash them, or carry them in their bosom. I never heard of a father who thought that he was very humble-minded because he allowed his boy to climb upon his knees and hold on with his arms about his neck. Those whom we love, we elevate to an equality with ourselves or, rather, we go down to them. Love is a charming leveler! Jesus had so much love that He could not be anything but lowly towards His little ones. You never yet heard even a blasphemer impute pride to God! Though our blood has chilled when we have heard the High and Mighty One arraigned for this and that by arrogant tongues, yet we have not known profanity to run in that line. It would be too absurd to impute pride either to God, or to His Ever-Blessed Son, Jesus Christ. The reason for this evident freedom from pride is the fact that “God is Love.” The fullness of Divine Love blinds the eyes which look in distrust upon it. God is patient, for He is loving—Christ is lowly of heart because His heart is made of love.

Moreover, once more, our blessed Master was *so absorbed in His great objective* that He was necessarily lowly. The man who is driving at a great objective has no time for the affectations of self-adulation. He has no time in which to think of how he appears to others. He does not stand at the glass to arrange his beauties—the idea would be too absurd! He cannot be too particular about how he puts that poetic word, or how he mouths that polished sentence—his only desire is to deliver his message and to impress men with the matter in hand. Earnestness carries the speaker beyond the orator’s rules of self-display. His rhetoric is melted down by his enthusiasm. A great orator can readily be made to appear ridiculous by the comic critic who coolly looks down from the gallery upon him—but

what does he care? His theme so absorbs him that he has forgotten all elegance of attitude and gesture—and only cares to make his point.

He would make himself a fool 10,000 times deep if he could but win his case and bless his country thereby. He cares for nothing but his subject and his aim. So is it pre-eminently with our Lord—He pursues His course careless of man's esteem. He burns His way, His zeal eats Him up! He is straitened till His work is accomplished and, therefore, He has no thought about the maintaining of His dignity. His greatness and His intense devotion forbid anything approximating to pride and, by force of nature, He is meek and lowly in heart. Because He has a great objective to achieve and that objective has absorbed His whole Self—He must walk in all lowliness of mind. Blessed Master, teach us this way of lowliness! Fire us with an ambition for Your Glory which shall shut out every thought of pride!

III. What are the LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS LOWLINESS of our Lord?

The lessons are, first, Brothers and Sisters, *let us be lowly*. Did I hear one say, "Well, I will try to be lowly"? You cannot do it in that way. We must not *try* to act the lowly part—we must *be* lowly—and then we shall naturally act in a humble manner. It is astonishing how much of pride there is in the most modest. Of course I do not mean in those who say that they are *perfect*. No, I leave them to their own vainglory. But in us poor, imperfect creatures, what a deal of pride there is! How we condemn pride! We feel that it would be well if all were as humble as we are! We boast that we detest boasting! We flatter ourselves that we hate flattery! When we are told that we are amazingly free from pride, we feel as proud as Lucifer, himself, at the consciousness that the compliment is right well deserved! We are so experienced, so solid, so discerning, so free from self-confidence that we are the first to be caught in the net of self-satisfaction! Brethren, we must pray God to make us humble! If we become lowliest of the lowly, it will not be much of a condescension on our part—we shall only come down to the point which we ought never to have left. Down in the dust is the fit place for such poor mortals as we are! What *right* have we to be anything else *but* meek and lowly?

Alas, we can be very proud in many ways! Let me give you a case or two in point. Yonder is one that is called to suffer and he rebels against it. Listen to his complaint—"Why should I be called to endure such great trials? What have I done that I am thus tried?" Do you not, at once, detect the great, "I"? Very different is this from the lowly prayer, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

"But, then, persons have spoken evil of me! I do not deserve to be treated thus." Clearly it is especially wrong for any one to speak amiss of such an excellent being as *you* are! There lies the grievance. Because you are so good, it is horrible wickedness to malign *you*. You reply, "But, really, it was so malicious and the charge was so absurd and unreasonable." Just so. People ought to be peculiarly careful not to hurt *your* feelings, for you are so deserving and praiseworthy. Is not self-esteem the spring of half our sorrow? We are so wonderfully good in our own judgment that we claim the box seat of the coach—and the chief seat in the synagogue. If we were really lowly of heart, we would say, "I have been

treated very badly, but when I think of how my Lord was treated, I cannot dream of complaining. This severe critic cannot see my excellences but I do not wonder, for I cannot see them, myself. He has been finding fault with me and his charges were not true but, if he had known me better, he might have found more fault with me and have been nearer the truth. If I do not deserve censure in this way, I do in another and so I will cheerfully bear what is measured out to me. Yes, if it is in no sense my due, I will give my back to the smiters, as my Master did." Oh, that the Lord would make us meek and lowly in heart—and we would submit to wrong rather than resist evil!

"But surely," cries one, "you do not want me to associate with sinners?" No, dear Friend, I do not want such a good person as *you* are to go near them at all! I could not so degrade your honorable self. Moreover, if you *did* go near them, you would aggravate them by your self-opinionated goodness. If your perfections are not quite so full-blown as usual, I would, however, suggest that you might do sinners good by kindly speaking to them—and that to gather up your skirts in fear and trembling lest you should be defiled by their presence is not the most excellent way. When you are afraid lest the wind should blow from a sinful person towards your nobility, you act the *fool*, if not the *hypocrite*—perhaps both! Why, you would have been in Hell, yourself, if it had not been for Sovereign Grace! You, fine ladies and prime gentlemen, you would have been as surely cast away as the vilest of mankind if it had not been for Infinite Compassion! It ill becomes us to boast, since we have enough sins of our own to plunge us in despair were it not for the love of the lowly Savior who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. O Lord, stamp out our pride and make us lowly in heart!

Lastly, *let us learn to say to the despondent and timorous, words of cheer*. Since the Lord Jesus Christ is so meek and lowly—poor, trembling, guilty one, you may come to Him! You may come to Him now! I was sitting, the other night, among some excellent friends, who, I suppose, were none of them rich and some of them poor. I am sure it never entered into my head to think how much money they owned, for I felt myself very much at home with them until one of them remarked, "You do not mind mixing with us poor folk?" Then I felt quite ashamed for myself that they should think it necessary to make such a remark. I was so much one with them that I felt honored by having fellowship with them in the things of God—and it troubled me that they should think I was doing anything remarkable in conversing with them.

Dear Friends, do not think harshly of any of us who are ministers of Christ! But you *will* think harshly of us if you conceive that we think it a coming down to associate with any of you! We are in heart and soul your Brothers—bone of your bone—your truest friends whether you are rich or poor. We desire your good, for we are your servants for Christ's sake! Above all, do not think harshly of our Lord and Master by supposing that it will be a strange thing for Him to come to your house, or to your heart! It is His habit to forgive the guilty and renew the sinful. Come to Him at once and He will accept you now! Jesus is exceedingly approachable. He is not hedged about with guards to keep off the poor or the sinful. Your

room may be very humble—what does He care about that? He will come and hear your prayer. Many a time Jesus has had no room to pray in, but—

***“Cold mountains, and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”***

Do you complain that you cannot arrange your words correctly? What is that to Him? He looks more at the sincerity of your *heart* than at the grammar of your language! Let your heart talk to Him without words and He will understand you. Do you complain with shamed face that you are such a sinner? You are not the first sinner that Jesus has met with, nor will you be the last. You are heavy-laden with sin—but He knows more about the weight of sin than you do. That terrible load of guilt worries you—but it pressed Him down even more terribly when it brought Him into the dust of death. It makes you weep to think of sin—but it caused Him to sweat great drops of blood. You feel that you cannot live under so crushing a burden! He did not live under it, but gave up the ghost in agony! Do not crucify your Lord afresh by suspecting that He is proud and will, therefore, pass you by. Do not insult Him by dreaming that He will reject you for your insignificance or unworthiness!

Come, and welcome, to Him who will delight to bless you! Come to Him at once, without further question or hesitation! Come just as you are! Fall at His pierced feet and trust the merit of His blood—and the good Lord will accept you on the spot, for He has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” God bless you by leading you all to love this lowly and loving Lord! Even at this present moment I pray that you may take that step which will secure our meeting in Heaven to adore eternally our King, so meek and lowly, who will then dwell in the midst of us and lead us to living fountains of water!

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 11.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—878, 765, 384.***

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

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST'S COVENANT

NO. 3240

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1911.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 12, 1863.**

***“As for you, also, by the blood of your Covenant I have sent
forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”
Zechariah 9:11.***

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this same subject are #277, Volume 5—THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT and #1186, Volume 20—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon Verses 11 and 12 are #2839, Volume 49—“PRISONERS OF HOPE” and #2883, Volume 50—PRISONERS DELIVERED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THE LORD is here speaking to His ancient people, Israel. That nation had always been preserved, although other nations had been destroyed—and the reason was that God had entered into a Covenant with Abraham on their behalf. Circumcision was the sign and seal of the Covenant, so that God could truly speak of “the blood of your Covenant.” The Jews have never ceased to be a nation, though they have been scattered, peeled and delivered over into the hand of their adversaries because of their sins. They may enjoy various rights and privileges in the different countries where they sojourn for a while, but they cannot be absorbed into the nationalities by which they are surrounded. They must always be a separate and distinct people—but the day shall yet come when the branches of the olive tree, which have been so long cut off, shall be grafted in again. Then shall they, as a nation, again behold the Messiah, the true and only King of the Jews—and their fullness shall be the fullness of the Gentiles, also!

All Believers have some share in that Covenant made with Abraham, for he is the father of the faithful. We who believe in Jesus are of the seed of Abraham, not according to the flesh, but according to the promise, and we are pressed by a Covenant which like that made with Abraham, is signed and sealed with blood even “the blood of the Everlasting Covenant.” We, too, are saved and kept as a separate and distinct people, not because of any natural goodness in us, or because of our superiority over others, but solely and entirely because the Lord has made an Eternal Covenant concerning us, which is “ordered in all things and sure,” because Jesus Christ is, Himself, the Surety on our behalf that its guarantees and pledges shall all be carried into effect.

I. So, applying our text to the Covenant people of God in all ages, we have first to consider THEIR NATURAL AND YET PRIVILEGED CONDI-

TION. By nature they are like prisoners in a pit wherein is no water, but by Grace they are in Covenant relationship to God!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *when we were in our natural state, we were like prisoners.* A prisoner is one who has lost his liberty—and that was our condition before Jesus met with us and set us free. We were “carnal, sold under sin,” in bondage to our own lusts and held captive by the devil at his will. No doubt we boasted of our free will, but our will, itself, was enslaved with all the rest of our powers. There is no greater mockery than to call a sinner a free man. Show me a convict toiling in the chain gang and call him a free man if you will! Point out to me the galley slave chained to the oar and smarting under the taskmaster’s lash whenever he pauses to draw a breath—and call *him* a free man if you will—but never call a *sinner* a free man, even in his will, as long as he is the slave of his own corruptions! In our natural state we wore chains, not upon our limbs, but upon our hearts—fettters that bound us and kept us from God, from rest, from peace, from holiness—from anything like freedom of heart and conscience and will! The iron entered into our soul and there is no other slavery as terrible as that. As there is no freedom like the freedom of the spirit, so is there no slavery that is at all comparable to the bondage of the heart!

A prisoner is also one who feels that he cannot escape from his prison—and that is how we felt. We began to have longings after better things. A heavenly Visitor came to us and dropped a new and strange thought into our minds—and we began to pant after something higher and nobler than this poor world could give us—but we could not reach it, for we were prisoners. We could not escape from the cruel grip of our captor and it became quite clear to us that we could never be delivered from the house of bondage by any power of our own. Do you not remember, my Brothers and Sisters, when you used to sorrowfully say—

***“I would but cannot pray
I would but can’t repent”—***

and when you could use Paul’s words as your own and sadly cry, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not?” You were still a prisoner, yet you were beginning to be one of the “prisoners of hope.”

That is a strange kind of prison that is mentioned in the text—“the pit wherein is no water.” In the East, pits were frequently used as prisons. When a tyrant king wished to keep anyone in safe custody and also in ignominy and shame, and sorrow, he would have him cast into one of these waterless pits where the poor prisoner would be beyond human sight or hearing—and with no possible hope of deliverance from his doleful dungeon. Such was our sad state by nature, and well do we remember our first efforts to obtain release! We were in dense darkness and we felt all round the walls of our prison to try to find a door, or window, or ladder by which we might escape, but all in vain. We tried to look up, but we seemed to have been thrust, like Paul and Silas, into some inner prison where no ray of light could penetrate. The fact that there was “no water” in our prison-pit made our agonies all the more terrible! Those of you

who have passed through that state of deep conviction of sin know that in such circumstances there is no comfort for the present and no hope for the future—as to the past, there is nothing to look back upon but sin—and as to the future, there is nothing “but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” To a sinner in that condition, there seems nothing within but a heart as hard as stone, nothing beneath but a gapping Hell and nothing around but thick darkness. How dreary and dreadful is the state of man by nature—and how painfully conscious he is of his true condition when the Holy Spirit reveals it to him! Then is he, indeed, like a prisoner in a “pit wherein is no water.”

This is the actual state, by nature, of all the elect—they are prisoners, just as other men are—and they are in as dark and dismal a pit and they have as little comfort in it as the very worst of mankind have. *Yet, by Divine Grace, they are in an altogether different condition from that of others,* for they are in Covenant with God though they are not yet aware of that blessed and comforting Truth! God's election of His people took place long before their creation. Those whom He has chosen unto eternal life were given to Christ in the Covenant of Grace, in that eternity of which we can form so slight a conception. And when they were born into this world, though they were born in sin and grew up to be the children of disobedience—enemies to God by wicked works—yet the Covenant made with Christ on their behalf remained unbroken all the while!

“Well,” says someone, “that is strange.” Yes, it is strange, but it is true. We must never forget that we were under a Covenant of Works long before we were born. Adam stood as our federal head and representative in that Covenant. You, my Sister, never put out your hand to pluck the forbidden fruit—and you and I, my Brother, never partook of it, yet we all have to share the consequences of Adam's transgression because he was our Covenant head. Do you object to that and say that it was unjust to visit upon us the sin of another? If you do, then you must equally object to the Gospel plan of salvation by the righteousness and death of Another, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the one great federal Head and Representative of all who believe in Him! He took the place of the countless myriads of His elect who had been given to Him by His Father, and died on Calvary's Cross in their place, although great numbers of them had not then been born and, consequently, could not have any virtue or merit of their own! Through His substitutionary Sacrifice, they were even then “accepted in the Beloved” and, in the fullness of time, they become Believers in Him and so enter consciously into the enjoyment of the Covenant privileges which had been conferred upon them from eternity! The Covenant is not made with them when they believe in Jesus—it was made on their behalf by the Father and the Son in the eternal council chamber long before the daystar knew its place or planets ran their round!

See, then, the twofold condition of the chosen—they are like prisoners in a pit wherein is no water, yet is there an eternal Covenant concerning them which guarantees that they shall be brought out of the bondage of

their sins and shall be set at liberty forever! Does someone here say, "I trust that such a blessed Covenant as that has been made on my behalf"? Dear Brother or Sister, if you have a sincere longing to be a sharer in the blessings of the Covenant of Grace, methinks that is a proof that you have an interest in it already! And if you will, at this moment, put your soul's trust in that precious blood that is their sign and seal of the Covenant, then you may rest assured that Grace has inscribed your name from all eternity in God's eternal book!

II. Now let us turn to the second part of our subject which is THE MEANS OF THE DELIVERANCE OF THESE COVENANTED ONES—AND THE EVIDENCES OF THEIR DELIVERANCE.

The text says, "*By the blood of your Covenant* I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." I think this means, first, that *the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the essential matter of the Covenant*. In order to make the conditions of the Eternal Covenant effective for His people, it was necessary that Christ should be obedient unto death and that His blood should be shed for many for the remission of their sins. When, by faith, I look upon the blood of Jesus—whether I see it streaming down in the bloody sweat of Gethsemane or flowing in the crimson rivulets at Gabbatha or in the sacred streams of Golgotha, I see in that precious blood of Christ the essential matter of the Covenant, and I sing, with sadness on His account, but with rejoicing on my own—

**"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His sin-atonement blood!
By Divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God!"**

Yes, O blessed Jesus, You have fulfilled on our behalf Your part of the Eternal Covenant! You have met all the demands of Infinite Justice even to the uttermost farthing! Your Father justly requires perfect obedience to His holy Law and You have rendered it in Your pure and spotless life. The offended Majesty of that Law demands adequate punishment for man's multiplied violations of its just requirements—and Your one Infinite Sacrifice has fully paid the penalty, so that Divine Justice is completely satisfied and the dishonored Law is magnified and glorified. Thus it is that God can "be just and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus," for in the Person, life and death of Christ, their Covenant Head and Representative, all claims upon Believers have been discharged forever!

Further, *the blood of Jesus is also the Seal of the Covenant*. Speaking after the manner of men, until the blood of Jesus had been shed, the Covenant was not signed, sealed and ratified. It was like a will that could only become valid by the death of the testator. It is true that there was such perfect unity of heart between the Father and the Son, and such mutual foreknowledge that the Covenant would be ratified in due time—that multitudes of the chosen ones were welcomed to Heaven in anticipation of the redemption which would actually be accomplished by Christ upon the Cross. But when Jesus took upon Himself the likeness of men and in our human nature suffered and died upon the accursed tree, He did, as it were, write His name in crimson characters upon the Eternal Covenant and thus sealed it with His blood. It is because the blood of Je-

us is the Seal of this Covenant that it has such power to bless us and is the means of lifting us up out of the prison-pit wherein is no water. Let me put it thus to some of you who have long been under conviction of sin. You have been trying in your poor way to keep the Law of God, but you have utterly failed to do so. You know that there are many precious promises in God's Word, but you get no comfort from them. Why is that? You feel that you are like a prisoner in a pit—and that you are shut away from the Presence of the thrice-holy God—and that His awful attribute of Justice bars your way like the flaming sword at the gate of Paradise, so that you cannot come near to Him. Then you listen to the Gospel, of which the sum and substance is this—that Jesus Christ has fully atoned for the sins of all His people, that He has suffered everything that they deserved to suffer and that God has accepted His substitutionary Sacrifice as a sufficient Atonement for all who believe in Him. As soon as you trust Him, you are lifted up out of the prison-pit, your feet are set upon a rock and a mug of grateful praise is put into your mouth! You are not afraid of the sword of Divine Justice now—no, you go and stand beneath the flashing blade and trust to it to defend you against all your adversaries! You rightly say, "As Jesus suffered in my place, Justice demands that I should go free! He has discharged all my liabilities. The Law has no longer any terror to me." So you see, Beloved, how the blood of Christ's Covenant brings the poor, trembling, despairing soul up out of that dread prison "wherein is no water."

Now I want, dear Friends, to ask you all to answer honestly one or two questions that I am about to put to you. The first is—Do you know what it means to be delivered from that pit by the blood of Christ's Covenant? Perhaps I ought first of all to ask—Do you know what it means to be a prisoner in that pit wherein is no water? Have you ever moaned and groaned under the weight of your sin? Have you ever smarted under the lash of that ten-thonged whip of the Law? Has your conscience, itself, been sufficiently awakened as to condemn you? Have you ever been brought to such a state of self-despair that you could see nothing but death and damnation written upon everything that pertains to you? Was your comeliness withered, your strength dried up and your pride humbled so that you had to sit in sackcloth and ashes and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" as the leper of old had to warn others to keep away from him? If not, I fear that you have never proved the power of the blood of the Covenant, for he who has never been humbled has never been exalted!

I feel sure that some of us here can answer, "Oh, yes! We remember well when we were humbled so that we felt ourselves to be less than nothing and vanity—and we realized that, by nature, we were totally ruined and undone—and blessed be God, we also recollect the time when a Power infinitely above our own, drew us up out of the pit in which we were imprisoned." But, my dear Hearers, have you also been conscious of the working of this Almighty Power? Have you felt a mysterious influence, which you could not comprehend, drawing you out of your natural state and giving you new thoughts, new desires, new hopes, new joy and

also new pains? Certainly you have never been delivered from this waterless prison by any power less than the Divine, so if God's hand has not yet been stretched out on your behalf, you are still in the pit! Or, as Peter said to Simon the sorcerer, you are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

Is there anyone here who is in that pit, yet who earnestly longs to escape from it? Is your soul yearning to be delivered, not only from the consequences of sin, but from the sin, itself? Are you panting after reconciliation with God and acceptance in the Beloved? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Then you are already among those whom the Savior calls blessed and to whom He has given that gracious promise, "they shall be filled." Such longings as these grow not in Nature's soul—they are the product of Divine Grace. Therefore, be very thankful for them, for they are at least hopeful indications of the Holy Spirit's working within you! And you may rest assured that where He has begun a good work, He will continue it until He brings it to perfection. He will never lift you part of the way out of the pit and then let you fall back again into the prison—He will bring you right out, even as the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt with a high hand and a stretched-out arm!

If you have been delivered, I feel sure that you will prize your deliverance. I would give little for what you call your grace if you would not willingly part with all else that you have rather than part with that! A slave who has been set free will value his liberty beyond all price. The man who can talk lightly of being free, never knew what bondage meant. I fear that none of us think highly enough of what the Lord has done for us. We get to worrying ourselves because He has not done more for us, because we are not yet perfect—how much better it would be if we would praise and bless Him for all that He has done for us! Remember that you are a free man even though some links of your chain are still clinging to you. Thank God that the chain is broken and that the last links shall soon be snapped—and you shall be perfectly delivered from the badge of bondage! Therefore be of good courage, prize your deliverance and praise Him who has done such great things for you!

Surely, too, if you have been drawn out of this pit wherein is no water, you will love your Deliverer and you will desire above everything else to live to Him and to labor for Him all your life!

I hope you can truthfully say to your Lord—

***"Have You a lamb in all Your flock
I would disdain to feed?
Have You a foe, before whose face
I fear Your cause to plead?
You know I love You, dearest Lord,
But oh, I love to soar
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,
And learn to love You more."***

I trust that you have dedicated yourself wholly to your Lord—perhaps not in writing, yet just as truly as if you had set your signature to such a covenant as some have felt moved to leave upon record. If you have resolved thus in your heart, you can say with me at the moment, "Lord Je-

sus, I am Yours—body, soul and spirit—wholly Yours, only Yours, always Yours. You have bought me for Yourself, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with Your own most precious blood and, therefore, You shall have me with all my powers, all my possessions, all my possibilities in life and in death, in time and in eternity! I give all up to You absolutely without reserve, that You may do with me whatever You please and whatever will bring most Glory to Your holy name. I fear there is much dross still remaining in me—in all the gold You have given me in Your wondrous Grace. If it seems good in Your sight, put me into the hottest furnace, but O Lord, do take away all the dross and then fashion me into a vessel meet for Your own use!” The man who can truthfully talk thus to the Lord Jesus is in the Covenant! And by the blood of the Covenant he has been brought forth out of the prison wherein is no water!

Perhaps you are afraid to say as much as this, lest it should seem to be presumption on your part. Well then, possibly you can say, “I dare not talk as some do about their attainments in spiritual things, but I do trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. My sole reliance is upon His perfect righteousness and His one great Sacrifice for all.” Then, my Brother or my Sister, you are among those who have built upon the Rock and you shall be preserved in the greatest storm that can ever beat upon you! You are no longer a prisoner in the pit wherein is no water! Faith in Jesus is not the heritage of the slaves of sin and Satan—it is the portion of those who are free men and free women in Christ Jesus—and if He has made you free, you are free, indeed, and you can never be enslaved again! You are at liberty to walk wherever you will on all the holy land which is the purchase possession of the children of the King! Every promise that He has given to His chosen people is a promise to you, so take full advantage of all your privileges as a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! You are now His and you shall be His when this world is on fire and when all things that are of time and sense shall perish in the last great conflagration! You shall be His amid the pomp and terrors of that tremendous day and you shall be His amidst the splendor and Glory of eternity!

If any here are still prisoners in the pit wherein is no water, may the Lord even now bring them forth by the blood of His Covenant, that they may share with all the chosen ones, all the blessings of that Covenant now and to all eternity! And too Him shall be the praise and the Glory forever and ever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ZECHARIAH 9; 10.**

As we read these ancient prophecies, we will not only notice how exactly they have been fulfilled, but we will also try to learn the lesson that they are intended to teach us.

Zechariah 9:1-4. *The burden of the Word of the LORD against the land of Hadrach and Damascus, its resting place (for the eyes of men and all*

the tribes of Israel, are on the LORD). Also against Hamath which borders on it. And also Tyrus and Sidon, though they are very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and He will destroy her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire. Alexander the Great besieged Tyre and utterly overthrew it. The citizens thought that their "strong hold" was impregnable, but they had at last to surrender to the mighty monarch whose attacks they had so long resisted. All the mercenaries whom they could procure with their heaped-up silver and gold could not avert the doom which the Lord had foretold and which, through the instrumentality of Alexander, He accomplished—"The Lord will cast her out, and He will destroy her power in the sea."

5-8. *Ashkelon shall see it, and fear, Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remains, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. And I will encamp about My house because of the army, because of him that passes by and because of him that returns: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with My eyes. When Phoenicia had fallen into the hands of the conqueror, there was no power able to avert the overthrow of Philistia. And Jerusalem would also have come beneath his sway had not the Lord miraculously interposed for its preservation. Alexander was restrained by a power which perhaps he did not understand, but which he could not resist, so he passed by the holy city of which the Temple of the Lord was the glory in the midst. They who are Divinely protected are in absolute safety even in the most perilous times. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it and is safe."*

9. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass. You know how exactly this prophecy was fulfilled in our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem—when the multitudes welcomed Him with hosannas—probably the same crowds that soon hoarsely shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"*

10. *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea, even to sea, and from the River even to the ends of the earth. He shall yet be acclaimed as the universal Monarch, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," for, "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."*

11, 12. *As for you, also, by the blood of your Covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you. This "stronghold" is very different from that of Tyre, which failed her in her hour of need. It is, indeed, that of which the*

Prophet Nahum wrote—"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows them that trust in Him."

13. *For I have bent Judah, My bow, fitted the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you as the sword of a mighty man.* Note well that it is the Lord who is doing all these notable deeds—bending Judah like a bow, fitting Ephraim to the bow as the archer presses his arrow to the string, and raising up the despised sons of Zion so that they may be able to overcome the proud sons of Greece! "The sword of a mighty man" owes its strength to the hand that wields it, and the sons of Zion are only mighty when the Lord holds them in His almighty hands and uses them as seems good in His sight.

14. *And the LORD shall be seen over them, and His arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the South.* Then how safe must the Lord's people be! And what terror must spread among their enemies!

15. *The LORD of Hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour and subdue with slingstones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.* There seems to be a hint here of the strange scene that was witnessed in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, when the unbelieving mockers said of the Spirit-filled disciples, "There men are full of new wine," but Peter repudiated the slander and declared that the wonder which the people could not comprehend was really the fulfillment of the ancient Prophecy, "It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh."

16. *And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land.* See how many metaphors the Prophet was Inspired to use in a single verse in describing the Lord's chosen ones—"as the flock of His people; as the stones of a crown...as an ensign upon His land." No human language can fully set forth all that their Lord thinks of them—and all that they are in His esteem!

17. *For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.*

Zechariah 10:1. *Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, grass in the fields for everyone.* The atheistic philosopher of the present day laughs at such a verse as this and sneeringly asks, "What possible connection can there be between men and women praying to God and the showers of rain which fall upon the earth? Why," he says "according to the laws of Nature, showers fall at such-and-such seasons and if the atmosphere should not happen to be in such-and-such a state, all the praying in the world cannot produce a single drop of rain!" But faith can clearly see where reason is blind—and the prayer of faith moves the arm of God and the arm of God controls what the philosopher calls the "laws of Nature," and so the rain descends. Let us learn from this precept and

promise, the power of believing prayer! Prayer has the key of Nature as well as the key of Heaven hanging at her belt! Observe also, that when we have received one mercy from the Lord, we are to go on to pray for another. These people must have had “the former rain,” yet they were to ask for “the latter rain,” also! And if you, dear Friends, have had “the former rain” of conversion, go on to ask the Lord for “the latter rain” of sanctification. If, in our Church fellowship, we have had “the former rain” of gracious additions to our numbers, we must ask for “the latter rain” by praying that God would continue thus to bless us. When we cease to pray for blessings, God has already ceased to bless us—but when our souls pour out floods of prayer, God is certain to pour out floods of mercy.

2. *For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain.* Observe the readiness of man to forsake the great fountain of Living Waters and to make unto himself broken cisterns which can hold no water! Notice, too, that some sort of comfort may, for a time, be derived from a false trust, but it is “comfort in vain.” As a dream yields no comfort when a man wakes up and finds himself to not be rich—as he had vainly dreamed that he was—but miserably poor, so all confidence in the flesh, all reliance upon anything except the almighty arm of God, even if it should yield us temporary hope and consolation, will only make our grief the greater when its utter failure is discovered!

2. *Therefore the people wend their way as a flock, they were troubled because there was no shepherd.* The sheep that belong to Christ's flock will never find any true shepherd except He who is “the Good Shepherd.” If, for a time, they should so lose their spiritual wits as to follow strangers—which, indeed, is not a natural thing for them to do, for “a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers”—they will meet with a thousand troubles because they have no shepherd.

3. *My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds.* Whenever people are afflicted with unfaithful ministers, when God comes to visit these people, He will not only punish the ministers, but the religious leaders, the false professors in those churches, the he-goats who led the flock astray! Oh, what a plague and a curse will an unfaithful minister be found to have been at the Last Day! A well which only yields bitter water like that of Marah, merely mocks a temporary thirst. But a minister who does not preach the Gospel and who does not live the Gospel, mocks the soul's eternal thirst! Whatever I may be, God grant that I may never be an unfaithful preacher of His Word! Surely, if there is an innermost Hell, a place where the soul's feet shall be made more fast in the stocks of the Pit than anywhere else, it shall be reserved for the man who, professing to be an instructor of the ignorant and a leader of the flock, taught them lies and led them out of the Way! May the Lord save us from shepherds against whom His anger must be kindled!

3. *For the LORD of Hosts has visited His flock the house of Judah, and has made them as His royal horse in the battle.* As an expert horseman

skillfully controls his steed and turns it according to his pleasure in the day of battle, and makes it obey himself, alone, so does the Lord rein in and direct His Church, so that she becomes like a “royal horse in the battle.”

4. *Out of Him came forth the corner, out of Him the nail, out of Him the battle bow, out of Him every oppressor together.* Let us learn from this verse that everything comes from the Lord of Hosts, the God of Providence, as well as of Divine Grace. Those statesmen who are the cornerstones of the great building of State, must come from Him. Those Christian men and women of experience who seem to be as the cornerstones of our spiritual building must come from Him. Those who are as nails, upon whom weaker Christians seem to hang, come from Him. And whoever is, in the day of battle, like God's bow, must also come from Him, for apart from the Lord there is no strength, nor power, nor wit nor wisdom among all His people. We must learn, then, to lift up our eyes unto God and look to Him for all that we need whether it is political, social, or religious needs that are to be supplied—all must come from Him.

5. *And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.* The Jewish infantry often turned to flight the Syrian cavalry, and I may fitly compare the Apostles of old to humble fighters upon foot, while heathen and other philosophers were like mighty men on horseback! Yet they were turned back by the apparently weaker warriors of the Cross—and it is still so. We can well afford to give our adversaries every advantage that they can ask—let them have State patronage, let them have worldly dignity, let them have learning, let them have wealth—yet, in the name of God will we vanquish them, for the Truth of God is mightier than all the wisdom of man and the weakness of God is stronger than the greatest strength of man!

6. *And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back, for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off, for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them.* [See Sermon #2588, Volume 44—PERFECT RESTORATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] See, Beloved, how the Everlasting Covenant is the great foundation of everything for the saints. “I am Jehovah their God,” says He. The Lord has taken His people to be His own forever and, therefore, though He may seem temporarily to reject them, yet permanently and everlastingly He will hold them fast and acknowledge them as His people.

7. *And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yes, their children shall see it and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.* Get a firm hold of this promise, Believers, and plead it! Are you dull and heavy, desponding and sad? Then plead this promise, “Their heart shall rejoice in the Lord.”

8. *I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.* The word, “hiss,” is supposed

by some to be an allusion to the Eastern custom of men who managed bees making a sound like hissing in order to gather them into the hive. Others, however, translate the word, "piping," as the shepherd pipes to his flock and they gather round him. In the words, "I will gather them, for I have redeemed them," we see that particular redemption is the groundwork of effectual calling those whom Jesus Christ has bought with His precious blood, the Holy Spirit will call by power out from the rest of mankind.

9-11. *And I will sow them among the people and they shall remember Me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria, and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction.* In the restoration of Israel, there is to be an even greater triumph than that which was achieved at the Red Sea.

11. *And shall smite the wave in the sea, and all the deeps of the River shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart away.* For the Glory of God in the deliverance of His people is sure to be attended by another form of Glory in the destruction of His enemies! Christ is a sweet Savior unto God both in them that are saved and in them that perish.

12. *And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in His name, says the LORD.*

—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.**

“PRISONERS OF HOPE”

NO. 2839

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 12, 1903.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1877.**

***“As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth
your prisoner out of the pit wherein is no water.
Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today
do I declare that I will render double unto you.”
Zechariah 9:11, 12***

THIS passage unquestionably has to do with our Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation. We are not at all in doubt about this matter, for the connection is exceedingly clear. If you begin to read at the 9th verse, you will see that we have, from that place on to our text, much prophetic information concerning our Lord and His Kingdom. We read, first, something about His own manner of triumph and His way of conducting Himself in His Kingdom—“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” We know that the Prophet speaks not thus of any man save of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the King who put aside the pomp and pageantry in which Eastern monarchs delighted and, instead of riding upon a horse, He mounts a lowly ass. If He must ride in procession through the streets of Jerusalem, it shall be in that meek and humble guise. The King of the Kingdom of Grace is not high and lofty, haughty or proud, but condescends to men of low estate.

The Pharisees and scribes murmured, “This Man receives sinners, and eats with them,” and it was quite true. He is a King, and of a right royal nature, but His Kingdom is not that of pomp and show, of force and oppression. He is just and righteous, but He is also lowly, gentle and kind. The little children flocked around Him while He was here below and, now, the meek and lowly ones of mankind delight to serve Him. How glad I am that I can say to any of you who have not yet yielded yourselves up to Him that you need not fear to become the subjects of Jesus, the Son of God, for He is so gentle a King that it shall always be for your profit and pleasure, and never to your real loss or sorrow, to bow down before His gracious scepter! We have not to set before you a Pharaoh or a Nebuchadnezzar. Jesus of Nazareth is a King of quite another kind. Therefore, “kiss the Son, lest He be angry.” Bow before Him and let Him be your only Lord and King. You see, then, that this 9th verse refers to our Lord Je-

sus and tells us something concerning His personal and official Character.

The next verse goes on to describe the weapons by which He wins His victories. Or, rather, it tells us what they are not. Not by carnal weapons will Christ ever force His way among the sons of men, for He says, "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off." Mohammed may conquer by the sword, but Christ conquers by the sword which comes out of His mouth, that is, the Word of the Lord! His empire is one of love, not of force and oppression. He subdues men, but He does it by His own gentleness and kindness, never by breaking them in pieces and destroying them upon a gory battlefield. Let others cement an empire with blood if they will, but Jesus does not do so. "He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth. He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in the fire."

The same verse reveals to us more concerning the nature of Christ's Kingdom—"He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." There have been universal monarchies in the past, but there shall never be another till Christ shall come again. Four times has God foiled those who have attempted to assume the sovereignty of the world, but, in due time, there shall come One who shall reign over all mankind. He is not of earthly mold, though He is, indeed, the Son of Man. He is descended from no line of modern princes and bears no imperial name among the sons of men, yet He is the Prince of the house of David and His name is the Son of God. He shall break all other kingdoms and empires in pieces, snapping the swords of the mightiest warriors, gathering scepters beneath His arm in sheaves, and casting all earthly crowns beneath His feet, for He alone is King of kings and Lord of lords!—

***"Kings shall fall down before Him
And gold and incense bring.
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing—
For He shall have dominion
Over river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar."***

Thus I have shown you that this passage, in its proper connection, relates to the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation, so now we will consider its special teaching.

In our text, we have three things. The first is, *a Divine deliverance*. "As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Secondly, we have *a Divine invitation*. "Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." And, thirdly, *a Divine promise*. "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you."

I. So, first, we are to think of A DIVINE DELIVERANCE.

This must be a matter of personal experience and, therefore, I should like that everyone whom I am now addressing would say to himself or

herself, “Do I know anything about this Divine Deliverance in my own heart and life? If I do not, I have grave cause to fear as to my condition in the sight of God. But if I do, let me be full of praise to God for this great mercy—that I have a share in this Divine Deliverance—‘As for these also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.’”

Do all of you, dear Friends, know anything about the pit wherein is no water? Were you ever conscious of being in it? Regarding it as a state of spiritual distress, do you understand what it means to be in such a *comfortless condition*? It was a common custom, in the past, to put prisoners into deep pits which had been dug in the earth. The sides were usually steep and perpendicular—and the prisoner who was dropped down into such a pit must remain there without any hope of escape. According to our text, there was no water there and, apparently, no food of any kind. The objective of the captors was to leave the prisoner there to be forgotten as a dead man out of mind. Have you ever, in your experience, realized anything like that?

There was a time, with some of us, when we suddenly woke up to find that all our fancied goodness had vanished, that all our hopes had perished and that we, ourselves, were in the comfortless condition of men in a pit without even a single drop of water to mitigate our burning thirst! Well do I remember that period in my own history, when I looked upon my past life which I had thought was proper enough, and saw it to be all stained and spoiled by sin! I could get no comfort from the recollection of my past attention to religious exercises. I had been very diligent, indeed, in attending the means of Grace and also in private devotion, but these cups of water had all become empty. I could not find one single drop in them that could cheer me, for I discovered that as my heart was not right with God, all my prayers had been quite unavailing! And that when I had gone up to the House of God, since my heart was not in the services, God had not accepted me, but had said to me, “Who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts?” I tried what good resolutions would do, but I gained no comfort from them, for I failed to keep them! I tried what attempts at improving myself in various ways would lead to, but, alas, the more I strived to make myself better, the more I discovered some fresh evil within my heart which I had not previously seen, so that I could say with the poet—

**“The more I strived against its power,
I sinned and stumbled but the more.”**

If I sought after water in my comfortless condition, I only found myself to be more intensely eaten up with thirst! Do you know what all this means? You need to know it, for this is the condition into which God usually brings His children before He reveals Himself to them!

The condition of being shut up in a pit wherein is no water is not only comfortless, but *it is also hopeless*. How can such a prisoner escape? He looks up out of the pit and sees, far above him, a little circle of light, but he knows that it is impossible for him to climb up there. Perhaps he attempts it, but, if so, he falls back and injures himself—and there must he

lie, out of sight and out of hearing, at the bottom of that deep pit—with none to help him and quite unable to help himself. Such is the condition into which an awakened conscience brings a man. He sees himself to be lost through his sin and he discovers that the Law of God is so intensely severe—though not unduly so—and the Justice of God is so stern, though not too stern—that he cannot possibly hope for any help from them in his efforts to escape out of the pit in which he lies fallen as a helpless, hopeless prisoner!

Nor is that all. A man in such a pit as that is not only comfortless and hopeless, but *he is also in a fatal condition*. Without water, at the bottom of a deep pit, he must die. Sooner or later—and he almost wishes it might be sooner—he must expire. Life itself becomes a burden to him! I have known a soul—I say not that it is so with all to the same degree—but I have known a soul feel within itself as if the pangs of Hell had already begun! It feels itself so utterly condemned, even by its own judgment, and so certain to be condemned by the righteous judgment of God, that it writes itself down as already among the condemned and gives itself up as completely lost! Many of God’s children have known this experience to the fullest possible extent—and all of them have been, in some measure, brought into the pit wherein is no water!

But concerning those who have believed in Jesus, our text is true, and God can say, “I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”

Are you out of the pit, my Brother or Sister? Then it is certain that you came out of it, not by your own energy and strength, but because *the Lord delivered you!* Divine Power and nothing but Divine Power can deliver a poor law-condemned conscience from the bondage under which it groans! Let a man once know his real state by nature, as he is in the sight of God—let him see how the curse of death is written upon all his efforts and hopes, and then let him come out into light and liberty, and he will say, “The Lord has done it all! The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad!”

There is this further comfort that *if He has set us free, we are free indeed*. It is only God who can deliver a conscience in bondage—and when it is delivered by Him, it need not be afraid of being dragged back to prison anymore. If a criminal breaks out of his cell and is found at any time by the officers of the law, he may be arrested and taken back to prison. But if the sovereign of the realm has set him free, he is not afraid of all the policemen in the world! He walks about the streets as a man who has a right to his liberty because of the authority which has granted it to him. Now, Believer, God has brought you up out of all your trouble because of your sin. He has delivered you from all sense of guilt concerning it and as He has done it, you are not afraid that it has been done unjustly and you are, therefore, not afraid that you will be re-committed to prison and be once more held “in durance vile.” The Lord has delivered you, so you are delivered forever! Who can curse those whom God has blessed? Who can condemn those whom God has justified? Who can again enchain the soul that God, Himself, has set free?

But *how has He done this great work?* This is one of the principal clauses of our text—“As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” The people of God are set free from their bondage by the blood of the Covenant! The blood of Jesus Christ has sealed, ratified and fulfilled the Covenant of Grace to all who believe in Him. It was on this wise—we had sinned and we were, therefore, put into the pit of condemnation. In order to our release, Jesus came forward and put Himself into our place—became our Substitute and promised that He would pay blood for blood for all that was due from us to God. Glory be to His holy name, He paid it all! In the bloody sweat of Gethsemane—in His bleeding hands and feet and side—in the agony of His soul even unto death—He paid all that was due on account of His people’s sins and now, the debt being discharged, the prisoners are set free! “By the blood of your covenant,” said God, who has a right to say it, “I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”

Beloved Friends, I trust that you will never be weary of listening to the Doctrine of Substitution! If you ever are, it will be all the more necessary that you keep on hearing it until you cease to be weary of it. That Doctrine is the very core and essence of the Gospel. To attempt to cloud it, or to keep it in the background is, I am persuaded, the reason why so many ministries are not blessed to the conversion of souls and give no comfort to those who are in distress of heart on account of sin. Let this stand, once and for all, as our declaration of what the Gospel teaches, that God “has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” “With His stripes we are healed.” They laid upon His back many cruel stripes which we deserved to receive and into His heart they thrust the sword which otherwise must have been thrust into our heart. If any man is freed from a guilty conscience and from the dread of Hell by any means apart from the blood of Jesus Christ, I pity him from my very soul. He had better go back to his prison, again, and never come out of it until this key is used to unlock the door—the *substitutionary* Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ! In the last dread hour of death, when conscience looks at sin as it really is and no longer is blinded, nothing can bring it peace but the blood of the Lamb! Nothing can give the soul repose, when it is about to meet its God, except the knowledge that Christ was made a curse for us that we might be blessed in Him.

No prisoners are set free except by the blood of Jesus and, Beloved, as the blood of the Covenant is Godward—the means of our coming out of the pit wherein is no water—so it is the knowledge of Christ as suffering in our place that sets the captive free. Are any of you in great heaviness because of your sin? Are you obliged to confess that your lives have been such that you could always weep over them? Is your sleep often disturbed at night by reason of the conviction that your years have been spent in vanity and transgression? Are you asking for mercy? Are you seeking rest? My dear Friend, there is no Doctrine that will ever give you true rest except the Doctrine of the Cross of Jesus Christ! Listen to it

whenever you can. Seek out those preachers who preach most about the precious blood of Jesus. Read most those books which tell of Jesus as the great Atonement for human guilt. Study diligently the writings of the four Evangelists and, especially, those parts of the narrative which describe the death and Resurrection of our dear Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Sit down at the foot of the Cross in contemplation and never move away from it till from the Cross the Light of God comes streaming into your darkened spirit, so that you will be able to say, “I see it now! The Son of God suffered that I might not suffer! He was made the Victim that I might go free! Justice was magnified in Him that mercy might be magnified in me!” You will never be delivered in any other way.

I hope I am not addressing any who will remain for a long time in the pit wherein is no water. I did so myself, but I blame myself, now, for having done so. I must also somewhat blame the preachers whom I heard because they did not make plainer to me the Truth of God that all that was needed was already done and that I had only to accept it as having been done for me. Liberty was provided for me—I had but to trust in Jesus and I would at once be free. Dear Heart, if you are lying in Giant Despair’s castle, if you have been beaten with his crab tree club till every bone in your body is sore and your heart is ready to break, this is the key which will open every lock in Doubting Castle if you can but use it—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”—even we guilty sinners who have so much sin to be cleansed from! Believing in this Truth, trusting in Jesus, we are “accepted in the Beloved.” How gloriously God has brought some of us forth! We are not now in the pit wherein is no water. We are forever set at liberty and our heart leaps at the very sound of Jesus’ name! Now is our peace like a river and our soul is exceedingly glad because of the loving kindness of the Lord.

II. I shall not be able to dwell long upon the second head of my discourse, which is A DIVINE INVITATION GIVEN.

Those who were prisoners in the pit wherein is no water were prisoners without hope, yet God has set them free. But sometimes they get into prison, again—they ought not to do so, but they do. Even after Giant Despair is slain, the pilgrims’ troubles are not all over and, sometimes, saved men and women get into a despondent state. Then comes this gracious invitation, “Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” Do you catch the thought that is intended to be conveyed by these words? You have been taken out of the pit and there, close beside you, is the Castle of Refuge. So, the moment you are drawn up out of the pit, run to the castle for shelter. The parallel to this experience is to be found in the 40th Psalm where David says that the Lord had brought him up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set his feet upon a rock and established his goings. And now that you are delivered from your prison pit, you are to go and dwell in the fortress, the high tower which the Lord has so graciously prepared for you!

The promises of God in Christ Jesus are the stronghold to which all believing men ought to turn in every time of trouble! And *Jesus Christ, Himself, is still more their Stronghold in every hour of need.* Sheltered in

Him, you are, indeed, surrounded with protecting walls and bulwarks, for who is he that can successfully assail the man who is shielded and guarded by the great atoning Sacrifice of Christ? Yet you will often feel as if you were still in danger. When you feel so, turn directly to the Stronghold. Do you doubt whether you are saved? Then run to Christ at once and so destroy the doubt! Do you mourn your slackness in prayer and does the devil tell you that you cannot be a Christian, or you would not feel as you do? Then run to Christ! Has there been, during this day, some slip in language, or has there even been some sin in overt act? Then run to Christ—turn to the Stronghold! Does darkness veil your Lord’s face from you? Do you see no bright promise gleaming out of the gloom? Does God, Himself, seem as if He had ceased to be gracious unto you and to have shut up the heart of His compassion towards you? Then run to Jesus—turn you to the Stronghold! Never try to fight your own battle with Satan, but run to Christ at once! Be willing to be called a coward rather than attempt to stand in your own strength! Let this be the proof of your bravery, that you flee to Christ, your Stronghold. “The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.” You do not call the conies cowardly because they run among the rocks to find shelter. They know where their stronghold lies and they resort to it in all times of danger.

So, again I say to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, never try to combat sin and Satan by yourselves, but always flee away to Christ! Inside that Stronghold, the most powerful guns of the enemy will not be able to injure you. But if you leave the shelter of your Master’s protecting Atonement and come out into the plain to contend against your adversary in your own strength, you will be in imminent peril of being destroyed! Therefore, in the words of my text, I say to you, “Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.”

I must not enlarge upon this point, but I do want all my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and especially all who are coming to the Communion Table, to go afresh to Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior. You were delivered from the pit years ago. You know that you were, though, perhaps, you have a little question about it at times. But at the present moment you are very dull and heavy—possibly the weather has helped to make you feel like that. It is very unsafe to judge our state by our feelings—they are poor, uncertain tests at the best—and they may greatly mislead us if we trust to them. Let us, rather, go all together to the Cross whereon our Lord did hang and let us still go on with Him as we began at the first. Let each one of us cry unto Him, with Dr. Watts—

***“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall!
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All.”***

Come along, my Brother, you have been a child of God for 50 years, but still keep on coming to Jesus, even as Peter writes, “To whom coming”—perpetually coming—“as unto a living stone, disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God, and precious.” You know how Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, wanted those around him to sing to him “one of the

babies' hymns," for he wanted to have the babies' faith, that is, a child-like faith, implicitly trusting in Him. They who have gone the furthest in the Divine Life yet do well to walk in Christ just as they received Him at the first. This is my own desire—I, nothing—Christ everything! I, guilty, Christ my righteousness in whom my sin is all blotted out! I in myself condemned, but in Christ absolved and accepted! Come along, all of you who have met with little but failure! You who are at your best and you who are at your worst—you who are rejoicing and you who are sorrowing—you who are strong, and you who are weak! All together, let us come to the fountain filled with blood and let us again prove that it still cleanses us from all sin!

III. Our last words are to be concerning THE DIVINE PROMISE with which our text ends—"Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." I want you to plead this promise in prayer. If you do so and God fulfils it in your experience, you will then understand it better than you could with any explanation of mine.

First, if you who have been delivered from the pit wherein is no water, continually turn to Christ, *you shall have twice as much joy as ever you had sorrow*. The grief that we had before we found Christ was a very mountain of sorrow, but how has it been with you since you came to Jesus? Speak for yourselves, Brothers and Sisters! Let your own hearts say how it has been with you. Have you not, after all, had twice as much joy as you have had sorrow? I know that it has been so with me—my heart was full, almost to bursting, when it was full of sorrow—but when I found Christ, it seemed to be not only full of joy, but to be plunged into an ocean of bliss! Oh, the unspeakable delight of the soul that has found peace in Jesus after having been long in bondage to sin and Satan! I think I have told you before that I heard Dr. Alexander Fletcher once say when he was preaching that, on one occasion, passing down the Old Bailey, he saw two boys, or young men, jumping, and leaping, and standing on their heads and going through all sort of antics on the pavement. He said to them, "Whatever are you doing?" But they only clapped their hands and danced more joyously than before. So he said, "Boys, what has happened to you that you are so happy?" Then one of them replied, "If you had been locked up for three months inside that prison, you would jump for joy when you came out." "A very natural expression," said the good old man, and bade them jump away as long as they liked!

Yes, and when a soul has once been delivered from the pit wherein is no water, it has a foretaste of the joy of Heaven! The possession of Christ is, indeed, not only double bliss, for all its sin, but much more than double! I have known saved souls, when newly converted, act so that their neighbors have thought that they were out of their minds and have said, "What ails them?" Their mouths have been filled with laughter and their tongue with singing, and they have said, "The Lord has done great things for us, for which we are glad." And, poor sin-sick Heart, if you can believe in Jesus, He will give you double joy for all the sorrow that you have been feeling for these last weeks, or months, or even years! "Ah,"

you say, “if He would do that, it would be, indeed, joyous for me.” And joyous it shall be!

More than that, *God gives His servants the double of all that they expect.* When we come to our Lord, it is as it was when the queen of Sheba came to Solomon. She said that the half had not been told her and if you raise your expectations to the highest point that you can reach, you who come to Christ will find them far exceeded in the blessed realization! He is, indeed, a precious Christ to all who believe in Him—but He is a hundred times more precious than you can ever imagine! You think that it must be a delightful thing to be saved and so it is, but it is ten thousand times more delightful than you suppose! You have read the Scriptures and have prized the blessings of Grace of which you have read there—but you have not prized them at anything like their proper value! There shall be double rendered unto you who are the people of God who have known the most of Divine Love and have for years sat at your Master’s feet. As yet you know not the half of what He will reveal to you in His own time and way! Only have patience and keep your souls upon Him while pressing forward in the heavenly race. The land has been full of silver mercy, but it shall yet be full of golden mercy! You have gone through green pastures and by still waters, but there are fatter pastures and deeper streams on ahead! The fullness of joy is not yet revealed to you—press on and you shall discover it and delight in it!

Oh, what double joy shall come to us when we reach the land Beulah and when we come to the brink of the river that has no bridge across it, where the angels are hovering and waiting to welcome the spirits of the redeemed! When you dip your feet in Jordan’s chilly flood, you shall begin to hear the sonnets of the immortals! Your spirit shall be already, while yet it lingers there, partaking in the bliss that is yet to be revealed and then, when you have crossed that narrow stream, and the last sigh is over, how great will be the double that God shall render unto you! I cannot tell you much about it, but in that land you shall need no candle, neither light of the sun—the Lamb shall be the light, for the Lord God shall give you light and you shall reign with Him forever and ever!

What a contrast between where we began and where we are to leave off—the pit without water and the bliss without alloy! What is the bridge that spans the great gulf between them and carries us over into the Glory Lands? It is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ! It the blood of the Everlasting Covenant! So believe in it, trust your souls NOW on Jesus and then rest assured that we will meet on the other side of Jordan, in the land of the hereafter where the Lord shall manifest Himself unto us and fill us with ineffable delight forever and ever! God grant it, for His name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 103.**

Verses 1, 2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His*

benefits. Three times the Psalmist says, “Bless, bless, bless.” Come, my Heart, wake up, awake every faculty, but especially my memory—“Forget not all His benefits.” Here is a list of some of them—as we read each one, let our hearts say, “Bless the Lord for that.”

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* Hallelujah, bless the Lord for that! He who has felt the weight of his sin will leap for joy at the thought of the forgiveness of all his iniquities.

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* He has restored some of us from the bed of sickness and extreme pain and He is even now healing our spiritual diseases. Sometimes it may be that He gives the bitter medicine, but it is thus that “He heals all your diseases.” The process of sanctification is a healing process to the soul, so bless the Lord for it.

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* Can you ever praise God enough for your redemption from a doom so great as to be the destruction of every hope and of everything worth having? “Who redeems your life from destruction.”

4. *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* There is about your head, even now, a halo of love, invisible to all but the eyes of Grace and gratitude—a bright, shining crown of loving kindness and tender mercies. Have I not often told you that kindness is the gold of the crown, but that *loving* kindness is the velvet to line the crown to make it sit softly on the brow? Mercies—these are the jewels, but the tenderness of the mercies is the ermine that makes the crown such that it cannot truly be said, “Uneasy lies the head that wears this crown.” No, but happy, happy, happy are all they who are thus crowned! Bless the Lord if you are among them.

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.* There is an inward satisfaction that God gives to His people. They are not satisfied with themselves, but they are satisfied *from* themselves, from that “well of water” which springs up within them “unto life eternal.” What a mercy it is to be so satisfied as to get young again, to feel your spiritual youth coming back to you—to be young in heart even if you are old in body. “Your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Let me again pause here and say, “Let us bless the Lord for this.” Do not let one of these mercies be passed over as if they made up a dry and uninteresting list like the lots in an auctioneer’s catalog, but let us bedew every one of these lines with a tear of heartfelt thankfulness!

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Bless His name for this. In every age He has broken the oppressor’s rod. For a while, His people may be made to smart, but, by-and-by, He hears their cries and He avenges their wrongs.

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* Bless Him for this. He does not hide Himself from His people, so that they do not know “His ways” and “His acts.” Revelation is a constant source of thanksgiving to those who understand it through the teaching of the Spirit who inspired it. God might never have spoken to us, or we might not have lived in a world wherein God had deigned to reveal His

will. But that is not the case—“He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.”

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* Surely, dear Friends, we can all bless God for this Truth, for, if He had been quick to be angry, where would we have been? If His mercy has been scanty, we should long ago have been destroyed, but He is “slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”

9. *He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.* Are you, just now, hearing the stern voice of His chiding? Does His anger, like a black cloud, seem to rest upon you and hide His reconciled face from you? Then, bless the Lord that “He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever” against His own chosen ones!

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Bless the Lord for that. Sweep your hand over the harp strings so as to fetch the sweetest music from them. How true it is of me and of you, “He has not dealt with us after our sins!”

11. *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Immeasurable mercy, illimitable Grace, blessed be His holy name!

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* Here again I cannot tell how much we ought to bless Him. It is not merely pardon of a temporary character that is given to us, but our sin is carried right away into a land of forgetfulness, so that it will never come back again to us. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies.”

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* Let us praise Him for His tender pity over our weakness, His forbearance with our infirmity and waywardness.

14. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.* Some people do not remember that—they try to work us as if we were made of iron. But the Lord is full of pity. He knows that we are nothing but a mass of animated dust which the wind can soon carry away.

15, 16. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.* In a very little time, unless Christ should first come in His Glory, this is what will happen to all of us. A breath of fever-bearing wind, or some other disease borne on the wings of the wind will sweep over us and the strongest of us will wither in an hour.

17. *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.* Oh, bless Him for that! He does not die! He does not change! He does not fail any who trust Him!

17, 18. *And His righteousness unto children’s children: to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.* Let us bless God for His love to our sons and our daughters. Some of us have great joy in our children. I pray that all of you may have the same joy—that you may see that the Lord, who is your God, is also the God of your descendants, as the God of Abraham was the God of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of Joseph, and of Ephraim and Manasseh, from generation to

generation. Grace does not run in the blood, but it often runs side by side with it. It is often the way with God, when He has blessed the father, to bless the son for the father’s sake. So you who are yourselves Believers may pray with great confidence for your sons and daughters. Bless the Lord for this!

19. *The LORD has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom rules over all.* For this, also, we bless Him. If there was any part of the world that He did not rule over. If there were any circumstances which He could not control. If there were any events which happened without His permission. If He were not King everywhere, this would be an intolerable world to live in! But now we bless Him because “His Kingdom rules over all.”

20. *Bless the LORD, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.* David calls in the angels to help him to praise the Lord—he wants to do it well, but feels that he is weak and feeble, so he calls in the best of help. We also sing—

**“Angels, assist our mighty joys,
Strike all your harps of gold!
But when you raise your highest notes,
His love can ne’er be told.”**

21. *Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure.* All who wait upon Him, whether angels or men, or the lower creatures, are called upon to glorify His great name—and they do!

22. *Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.* Do you notice that there is not a single petition in the whole of this Psalm? It is all praise! And herein it is like Heaven, where they cease to pray, but where they praise God without ceasing! We cannot rise to that height here, but let us both praise and pray when we can.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—103 (VERSION 2), 136
(SONG 1), 691.**

—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.**

PRISONERS DELIVERED

NO. 2883

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 12, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON, LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 2, 1876.**

***“As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.”
Zechariah 9:11, 12.***

THIS text primarily relates to Israel—to the Jews—and there can be no doubt whatever that there are great blessings in store for God's ancient people. *Although blindness in part has happened unto Israel, yet, in due time, we know from the Word of God that the seed of Abraham will recognize our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as the long-promised Messiah. When that happy day comes, the Lord will give to the whole world times of amazing blessing.* The fullness of the Gentiles also will then be experienced. Then, too, shall come the latter-day glory of Jerusalem and all nations shall rejoice with her.

You notice that the text begins with the words, “As for you also,” which might be translated so as to run parallel with that pathetic exclamation of our Savior when He wept over Jerusalem and said, “If you had known, *even you*, at least in this, your day, the things which belong unto your peace: but now they are hid from your eyes.” The Hebrew of our text might be rendered, “As for you, *even you*,” and the meaning of the expression is, “There is some very special blessing for you, O Jerusalem! It is not for the heathen, but, as for you, O Zion—you seed of Abraham according to the flesh—there is something special in store for you.” I think we ought to pray for the Jews more often than we do, and to look more hopefully upon the Jews than we usually do—and not to speak of them as an unbelieving race. The fact is, they have been, in some respects, too believing, for they have blindly clung to the old faith of their fathers instead of going on to know the Lord Jesus Christ. When they do accept Him, that firm adherence which they have shown to the traditions of their sires will make them grandly strong in faith in the only true Messiah. I suppose, however, that we have no Jews with us here, so it is no use, just now, for me to address them. But I may use the text as a message to ourselves. While I do so, may the Holy Spirit bless it to us all! When we read in the Scriptures concerning Israel, we may fairly translate it to mean, spiritually, the Church of God, for, as all who believe are the children of believing Abraham, so all who have been born-again, by the

power of the Holy Spirit, belong to the chosen Seed and may be rightly called, "Israel." In this spiritual sense, how sweetly has our text been fulfilled in the experience of many of us who are the true Israel of God, though Abraham is ignorant of us and Sarah acknowledge us not!

What a wonderful history "the Church of the living God" has had! She has been, so Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." I have sometimes seen, in Scotland, what they call vitrified forts which have, evidently, passed through the fire to such an extent that the whole of the wall has become vitrified into one firmly united mass—and the Church of God seems to me to have been like those vitrified forts, for the fire has been concentrated upon her seven times hotter than anywhere else. Yet to this day the Church of Christ still firmly stands! The Truth of God is still to the front and the name of Jesus is still—

***"High over all,
In Hell, or earth, or sky
Angels and men before it fall—
And devils fear and fly."***

So shall it be even to the end!

The 48th Psalm reminds us of the glory of the ancient "city of the great King," and of the terror that fell upon her adversaries—"For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled and hastened away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail." So shall it be with the present race of skeptics and rejecters of Christ! Hundreds of generations of skeptics have come and gone like the sere leaves of autumn. They were fresh and green for a little while and then they professed to be a shade to the Church with their philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world—but not after Christ. And before long they withered, fell and rotted into the soil from which they sprang. Yet still the Truth of God abides and "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," still stands fast, awaiting the grand consummation when the topstone shall be placed upon the glorious temple amid shouts of "Grace, Grace unto it."

Looking into this passage, we notice, first, that *there are some prisoners mentioned and they are said to be in a terrible plight*. Then, in the second place, *there is an emancipation spoken of and the cause of that emancipation is mentioned*.

I. First, THERE ARE SOME PRISONERS MENTIONED AND THEY ARE SAID TO BE IN A TERRIBLE PLIGHT. We need not look long to find those prisoners, for some of them are here in our midst—and there are others here who were once imprisoned thus—but they have been set free.

These prisoners are said to be *in a pit*. It was a common custom and still is, in the East, not to go to the expense of building prisons, but to make use of dry wells—and the authorities were not always very particular in seeing that they were dry. They just let the prisoner down by a rope, which they pulled up, leaving him in what was, usually, a very secure prison, indeed. No trouble was taken to fit up a proper cell. No

money was expended upon ventilation, or anything of the kind. The pit was usually deep and dark—and a great stone was rolled over the mouth of it—and there the prisoner was left, in solitary confinement, often to die of hunger and thirst. If anyone thought or cared to bring him bread and water, it was well for him, but, in many cases, the prisoners were forgotten and nobody ever heard of them anymore. In fact, they were buried alive—and that was, spiritually, our condition when we were in the pit where there is no water.

I look back, 20 years or so, ago, and see myself, as I then was, in that horrible pit—consciously in that pit. We were all there by nature, but we did not know it. But, at the time I am recalling, I *did* know it. The Lord had opened my eyes and led me to see that I was in a deep, waterless pit by reason of the original sin in the fall of Adam. I saw that I was cast down into a deep pit from which I could not get out by my own exertions—with a nature averse to everything that was good—with a will that was strong for evil, but impotent for good—with a judgment that was out of gear—a taste that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—a heart that had turned aside unto idols—with everything about me as wrong as wrong could be! I distinctly remember that I did not trouble so much about the original sin through the Fall as I did about my own actual sins and transgressions. Oh, those dreadful walls of guilt that rose up all around me! Dense was the darkness in which I was enveloped and the few gleams of light that ever pierced that darkness only made me see more clearly the huge black walls of my old sins—my youthful sins, not forgotten to this day, but remembered with deep regret—sins of thought, sins of imagination, sins of word, such sins as I was capable of committing at that period of my life. Well do I remember that pit of actual sin. Perhaps some of you are in it at this moment. It is a horrible pit for anyone to be in and it is peculiarly so to some men. If a man has lived for many years in sin, but only in his later life—perhaps when verging on old age—has begun to get enough of the Light of God to show him what he really is in God's sight, it is an awful thing for him to wake up and find himself in the pit of condemnation as the result of both original and actual sin!

There was a man, once, who lay asleep and, as he slept, he dreamt that he was in a gorgeous palace with marble halls and gold and gems in the utmost profusion. But, as a matter of fact, he was all the while asleep in a loathsome hole where everything was polluted and foul. When he awoke, the gilded walls had all gone and the marble halls had all vanished—and, realizing where he was, the fleeting pleasure of his dream was changed to the abiding misery of the actual facts of his sorrowful experience! Possibly I am addressing some who have just awakened out of their life's dream and have discovered where they are—where they are by nature and where they are by practice, too—down, down, down in a deep pit where there is no water! For, be it known to you that whenever a man finds himself lost by nature, and by practice, too, he very soon finds that he is also lost by the just condemnation of God—for the thrice-holy Jeho-

vah cannot look upon a polluted heart without abhorrence! It is not possible for Him to see sin without being angry. Some people, in these degenerate days, have invented for themselves a god who equally loves all men whatever their characters may be—who looks upon loathsome imaginations and filthy thoughts with an altogether indifferent eye—and still goes on to bless, let men do what they may. But such a god as that is not the God revealed to us in this old-fashioned Book! Nor is he my father's God, nor mine, nor yours! Indeed, he is like the idols that are no gods at all! No, where there is sin, justice demands that there should be condemnation—and it also requires that there should be punishment as well. So this is the dreadful thing about our condition by nature—that when we were held in the bonds of sin, we were also condemned and lay in the condemned cell, only awaiting the hour of execution. That was our condition, *spiritually*—like prisoners in a pit.

We are also told, in our text, *there was no water*. Now, generally, in a pit, you do find some water—it drops from the clouds, if it comes from nowhere else. When Jeremiah was let down, with cords, into the dungeon of Malchiah, we read that, “in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sank in the mire.” It is only natural that in deep holes sunk in the earth, the water should stand in a pool at the bottom. But this pit, of which our text speaks, has all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of an ordinary pit. It is called, as though with an emphasis, “*the pit where there is no water*”—and there are some ungodly men who are in just such a pit as that. There are others who are up to their armpits in water—very muddy stuff it is—I should not like to drink it, yet they seem able to quench their thirst with it. They are the men who take pleasure in sin and enjoy iniquity!

But Brothers and Sisters, when God means to save a man, He makes him realize that he is in a pit in which there is no water. When a man has reached that point, all “the pleasures of sin” have vanished. He finds that he cannot any longer be pleased with that which once used to afford him great delight. Some of you know what this strange experience means—that the very things you used to crave have become most loathsome to you. Your soul lusted after them and you said, in your youth, “If I could only have these things, I would be the happiest mortal on the earth.” Well, you have had your fill of them and you do not want any more! You are sick of them, as one may eat honey till he loathes the very sight of it. I have heard of a poor flower girl in the streets of London who used to sell violets all day long, taking home at night those she had left. Having them always about her, she said that she hated the smell of violets—and God can make men hate the smell of their sweetest sins and flee from them with disgust! He can turn their sweet wine into the most sour vinegar so that they will be as glad to get away from it as they once were fond of running to it!

When a soul is in this condition, in the pit where there is no water, it often happens that even the lawful comforts of earth lose their usual comforting force. Well do I recollect the time when I was in this waterless

pit. It mattered very little to me what I ate or drank. It made but a slight difference to me whether it was day or night, for, by day I dreaded the wrath of God. And if I fell asleep at night, I dreamt of it and wondered, when I awoke, that I was not already in Hell. Even those youthful games and those lawful amusements into which, as a lad, I entered, lost all charm for me. If you have read John Bunyan's "*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*," you know that at the time when he was under conviction of sin, nothing comforted him at all. There seemed to him to be no brightness in the sky, no flowers on the earth, and no melody in the sweetest songs of the birds. Well, if it is so with any of you, dear Friends—if you are in a pit where there is no water—none whatever—I hope my text applies to you and that you belong to the special class of prisoners to whom the Lord thus speaks—"As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit."

The Lord is speaking of those who secretly belong to the Covenant race of Israel, His own chosen and redeemed ones. Though you know it not as yet, your name is recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. Though His love has not, as yet, been fully made known to you, He has ordained you unto everlasting life and, therefore, though you are at present in the pit, you cannot die there and you cannot always lie there. Though you are at present without water, you shall never perish of thirst. You may be brought to dire distress, but you shall then prove that man's extremity is God's opportunity. As the Lord lives, who chose you by His Grace long before He made the heavens and the earth, He will bring you, as His prisoners, out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, set your feet upon a rock and establish your goings!

That is the first thing mentioned in the text—prisoners in a very terrible plight.

II. Secondly, THE TEXT SPEAKS ABOUT EMANCIPATION. AND THE CAUSE OF THAT EMANCIPATION IS MENTIONED—"By the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit."

Delivered from that horrible pit! How did they get out? The text tells us that *God sent them out of it*. Oh, that awful pit of natural depravity—that dreadful pit of actual sin—that fearful pit of just damnation! Nobody ever yet came out of that pit except by Divine Power—nor need anybody ever wish to escape by his own power, for if he did so escape, he might be dragged back again into the dungeon. If a prisoner is released by the king himself, who will dare to re-arrest him? If the Lord, Himself, delivers us, where is the power that can put us back into the pit? It is Jehovah who says, "I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit where there is no water." Some of us recollect the time when the Lord did thus send us forth. None but He could have done it, but He did it—and did it thoroughly! He snapped every fetter that was upon us, lifted us right up out of the abyss and fully and forever emancipated us—all glory to His ever-blessed name!

Then our text tells us *how God did it*—"By the blood of your covenant." Oh, what a grand way of deliverance this is! Do you know what

this expression, “by the blood of your covenant,” means? There was a Covenant between God and His chosen people, made of old, before the day star had first cast his bright beams into the darkness. To make that Covenant sure, God’s only-begotten and well-beloved Son had agreed with His Father that He would ratify it with His own blood. And, in due time, He came to this earth and fulfilled that Covenant by offering up Himself as the God-appointed Victim in the place of guilty men. Now, Brothers and Sisters, it is by that blood of the Everlasting Covenant, offered in our place, that we were set free from the bondage of sin! I heard, the other day, that some wise man had said that if a preacher wanted to be popular—by which I suppose he meant to draw many to hear the Gospel—He must preach blood, and fire, and smoke! I do not know what the smoke has to do with it but I do know that there is nothing that has such power as the precious blood of Christ which cleanses from all sin, and that, next to the blood of Jesus, there is nothing that has such power as the blessed fire which comes down from Heaven, touches the preacher’s lips and makes him speak with fervor and enthusiasm of that precious blood!

There is no man, either living or dead, who was ever sent forth out of the pit of soul-despair except by the blood of the covenant. I can assure you of one thing—the man who can do without the atoning Sacrifice of Christ has never known what true conviction of sin is. Men and women who received their “religion” by natural descent, or who jumped into it in the excitement of a revival meeting, may, perhaps, be content to do without the blood, but, if the Lord has put you into the pit where there is no water and brought you up out of it, you know that there was no deliverance for you until God, in human flesh, made Atonement for your sin by His blood. And, to this hour, if ever you are disturbed and doubtful concerning your true position in God’s sight, you always come back to the blood of the Everlasting Covenant offered upon Calvary’s Cross! And you sing—

***“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more.”***

If, Sirs, you take away the atoning Sacrifice, you make that blessed Book to be a mere husk from which the kernel has been withdrawn. If you take away expiation by the precious blood of Jesus, you tear away the sinner’s only ground of hope! Indeed, his only hope—and you leave us, of all men, most miserable. I know that when I understood that Jesus Christ bore, in my place, all that I deserved to bear of the wrath of God—and that His death had made the Law of God honorable, so that the Lord Jehovah could pardon me without doing an injustice to the rest of mankind and without suffering the honor and glory of His righteous rule to be tarnished—I grasped it at once. It seemed to me to be far better than the balm of Gilead to my wounds when the great Physician laid His pierced hand upon me and the blood of His Covenant cleansed me from all guilt. And I pray that many others here may have the same expe-

rience. Of one thing I am sure—if you really grasp this Truth of God, you will never let it go—you never can let it go! This precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, will be to you, your hope, your rest, your joy, the seal of your Covenant with God and the cause of your walking at liberty forever, for if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed!

I should like to have said more upon this blessed theme, but time fails me, so I must only say, in passing—“Let every Christian remember that if once he knows the power of the blood of Jesus, there is a Covenant existing between him and his God, and he can say with David, “He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” Believer, between your soul and the Maker of Heaven and earth there is a compact which can never be broken! Though earth’s huge pillars bow and break, this Covenant stands forever sure. You being in Christ and Christ being in you, you shall be saved, world without end, for God has declared it and His truth stands fast forever!

III. Thirdly, our text contains A RECOMMENDATION TO THOSE WHO ONCE WERE PRISONERS—“Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” I thought, dear Friends, that you were pulled up out of the pit—*have you been made prisoners again?* If it is so, it is very sad, but you can never be imprisoned as you were before. Perhaps you have not been living as carefully as you ought. Or, for some other reason your faith has become weak and so you have fallen into the pit again. But you are not now in prison as you were before, for now you believe you will get out again. No, better than that, you are *sure* that you will. Albeit that sometimes Giant Despair tells you that you will die in the dungeons of Doubting Castle, you know that you have a key called, “Promise,” in your bosom—and though you have not used it as you should have done, you have the firm conviction that it will open any lock that old tyrant has made—and you hope, some day, to employ it to such good purpose that you will again be free! But, Sirs, you had no business to get into that pit again. When the Lord once set you free, you should have taken good care not to go back again into bondage.

It is a great mercy that you can never go back to such bondage as you once experienced. You are prisoners, it is true, but *you are “prisoners of hope.”* Therefore, take the good advice of the text—“Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” That same Lord Jesus Christ, who, by His precious blood, once set you free, is still a refuge from every storm and every enemy. And if you are wise, you will cry to Him to deliver you this very hour! I address myself to every Brother and every Sister in Christ who has, in any sense, and to any degree, become a prisoner again. My dear Friend, the Lord delivered you, years ago, did He not? Do you not recollect, with intense gratitude, what He did for you then? Well, He can deliver you again at this very moment! You remember how joyfully you sang—

***“He took my feet from the miry clay,
And set me upon the King’s Highway”?***

Well, He can do the same thing, again, and do it now. Go to Him at once! You do not need a better Deliverer than the Lord who is “mighty to save,” do you? And as He was able to deliver you when you were so far gone as you used to be, He can surely deliver you now. You say that you are so foolish and so insensible that you cannot make yourself enjoy the means of Grace as you once did. It seems to you that as you get older you get more insensible. Well, but, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you are not spiritually dead, are you? And yet, when you were really dead in trespasses and sins, Christ quickened you! Then, surely He can bring you out of this state of torpor and restore you from this strange swoon into which your soul has fallen. Return to Jesus now, just as you came to Him at the first! If you cannot come to Him as a saint, come as a sinner!

Oh, the many hundreds of times that I have done that! And I expect to do it many more times before I get to Heaven. “What?” someone asks, “do *you* have to do that Mr. Spurgeon?” Oh, yes, that I do! The devil says to me, sometimes, “you are no child of God.” It is no use to begin arguing with him about that matter! The best way to answer him is to say, “Well, Satan, if I am not a child of God, I soon will be, for I will receive Christ as my Savior and that will make me God’s child.” “Then,” says the devil, “you talk about your faith, but you have no faith to talk about.” “Very well,” I reply, “if I have not any, I soon will have some, for I will begin to believe in Jesus now.” Then he says, “Your Christian experience, as you call it, is all a delusion.” Well, I never argue with him about that, but I say, “Suppose it is a delusion, it is still true that ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ and He has promised to save all who trust in Him. So, here and now, I do trust Him and I am saved.” Satan is a very old lawyer. He has been in the profession for many centuries and he knows how to raise all manner of quibbles and difficulties—and he can argue and reason in a very crafty fashion. So your best plan is not to answer him at all, except to say, “I have put my case into the hands of my great Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have anything to say, you must say it to Him.”

That is my earnest advice and it is the advice of the text, too, to all Christians who have, in any sense, come into bondage again—“Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” If you do that, you shall soon come once more into light and liberty and joy and peace!

IV. The last thing in our text is A DOUBLE BLESSING PROMISED—“Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” If you turn to Christ, you shall get a double blessing! What does this part of the text mean?

Well, it means that *God has such abundant Grace to give that He will not only give you what you really need, but He will give you twice as much as that!* All the flowers in God’s spiritual garden bloom double. There never was any mercy of His which had not many other mercies wrapped up in it. Every one of them contains far more blessing than we thought it did. Now, dear Brother, dear Sister—can you open your mouth wide and ask from God some great thing? If you do so, you shall receive from God

twice as much as you asked for! Do you feel a great need within your soul—a need that is truly dreadful? It craves so much that it seems to be like the two daughters of the horseleech, crying, “Give, give!” Well, God will give you so much that you shall have enough to satisfy that craving twice over! Have you had some very great trouble? Then believe in the Lord and you shall have double as much joy! Have you had deep depression of spirit? You shall have double as much of holy exultation and delight! Has the Lord laid His rod very heavily upon you and made you sorely smart? Then He will give you two kisses to every blow! Has He made you drink out of the bitter cup? Then He will bring you a double draught of the spiced wine of the juice of His pomegranate, two cups of that heavenly nectar for every cup of quassia that you have had! He will make you consolations to abound and super-abound far above all your tribulations!

“Well,” you say, “I am expecting something very great from the Lord.” I am glad of it, but you will receive twice as much! The Queen of Sheba expected a great deal when she went to see Solomon, yet she had to say, “The half was not told me.” So shall you find it with God. I read in the Scriptures that God is Love, but His love to me has been a thousand times better than I ever expected it would be! I thought that when I came to trust under the shadow of His wings, that I should have mercy and Grace and peace—but I never dreamt how much mercy, Grace and peace I would have! And, Brothers and Sisters, I believe it is better than before and that there is something brighter and sweeter than anything I have ever known yet to come! And it shall be the same with you. The Lord will go on to double your blessings and give you yet more and more, according to that blessed text, “Of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace”—Grace upon Grace.

I especially beg you to notice that *this is a present promise*—“Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” Then why should you not get some of this double joy this very moment? I know that you said, as you were coming to this service, “I do not think I ought to stay for the Communion—I do not feel fit to go to the Table of the Lord. I seem to be as lifeless as a log. If I go and sit there, it will merely be to eat the bread and to drink the wine, but not to enjoy real fellowship with the Lord.” Ah, my Brother, my Sister, if that is true concerning you, it is to you that the text says, “Return to the stronghold.” Turn to Christ as you did at the first and then it may be that your fellowship with Him will be sweeter than even that which you enjoyed when first you came to His Table! It is the Lord who says, “Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” Plead the promise in silent prayer right now—if you do so in faith, I shall be surprised if you do not get a double blessing from the Lord very speedily.

Finally, note *how true the promise is*. When God says, “Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you,” who among us dares to doubt His declaration? I have sometimes heard people say, when they have needed to be believed, “I declare to you that it is so.” And you know that

the law of the land now allows those of us who object to the taking of an oath, to make an affirmation and to say, "I do solemnly declare that such-and-such is the fact." And, in that fashion, God says, "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." Well, then, take Him at His word and "turn you to the stronghold." While you are sitting here, trust the Lord to give you the double blessing that He has promised! If you do that, you may, each one, say, as you go home, "Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.' I had no idea, when I went into the House of Prayer, that I could be so changed. I was singing, no, I mean, howling or growling—as I went up the steps—

"Dear Lord, and shall I always lie

At this poor dying rate?

My love so faint, so cold to You

And Yours to me so great?'

yet, when I came out, I was able to sing, and almost to shout—

"If ever I loved You, my Jesus, it is now."

God grant that this may be the happy experience of many of you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ZECHARIAH 9.

Verse 1. *The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach. Or Syria.*

1, 2. *And Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD. And Hamath also shall border thereby. Tyrus. That is, Tyre.*

2-4. *And Zidon, though it is very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver and the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out and He will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.* This prophecy was literally fulfilled. Tyre was attacked by Alexander the Great and after withstanding a long siege, was destroyed by him. The strength of the city lay in the fact that it was built right out into the sea and that it was protected by a vast, massive hole. Also, as a great trading center, it possessed enormous wealth and so was able to hire mercenary soldiers. But all its power and its wealth could not preserve it from destruction! And although we read of Tyre in the New Testament, it is now only a place for the drying of the nets of a few poor fishermen, even as Ezekiel foretold that it would be (26:14). When God foretells destruction, it always comes. But, blessed be His holy name, when He promises blessing, that comes just as surely!

5. *Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.* When Alexander invaded the country, the Philistines expected that he would be hindered by the Tyrians, but, when Tyre fell, the Philistines were easily conquered. That shows you the meaning of the prophecy and how literally it was fulfilled.

6. *And a bastard. Or, stranger.*

6, 7. *Shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth.* That is, the prey that he had caught—"I will snatch it out of his mouth."

7. *And his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remains, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.* There is no doubt that after the days of Alexander, many Philistines became proselytes to the faith of the Jews and were absorbed into the Jewish nation, so that an Ekronite became like an Israelite—and this is a symbol of what God is doing all over the world! He takes men who are strangers and foreigners to the citizenship of Zion and puts them among His people, and treats the Ekronite as a Jerusalemite. Blessed be His name for this great act of Sovereign Grace.

8. *And I will encamp about My house because of the army, because of him that passes by, and because of him that returns: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with My eyes.* And so it was. Alexander went to Jerusalem, after destroying Tyre, but he did not attack the city. There was a strange restraint resting upon him which prevented him from touching the house of the living God. I need not repeat the well-known story of how he was met by the high priest whom he recognized as the man whom he had seen in a dream, and so, though he smote Tyre and Philistia, he allowed the people of God to go free. But, after that time, something better happened. That great event is marked off by a new paragraph in our Bible—and well it may be.

9. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you.* Not Alexander the Great, but, "your King." "Your King comes unto you."

9. *He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.* What a beautiful and faithful description of our Lord Jesus Christ! We wonder that Israel cannot see the Messiah here. Had this verse been written *after* the coming of Christ, it could not more accurately have described the blessed Person and Character of our Lord Jesus. His very riding into Jerusalem upon an ass, with her colt trotting by her side, is most plainly foretold here.

10. *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.* This is our glorious King—the King whose conquests are not achieved by horses, chariots and battle-bows, but by the more powerful panoply of the Truth of God and love! Blessed are all who dwell beneath the rule of such a King as He is!

11, 12. *As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.* Christ has come to set the prisoners free and to be the stronghold of His people. Therefore turn to Him and all manner of precious blessings shall be yours.

13. *For I have bent Judah for Me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you as the sword of a mighty man.* This is a truly wonderful passage, setting forth how God is going to use His people as the weapons by which He will conquer the world. He will bend Judah and make her into a bow, and take Ephraim, and make her into an arrow—and then he will shoot His strangely-fashioned shaft against His adversaries and ours! What does this mean but that He is going to use those of us who are His own saved ones, that He may conquer the world by us? And what a blessed battle this is! “Your sons O Zion against your sons, O Greece”—the simple Believer against the cultured man of reason without faith—the humble truster in the Lord Jesus Christ against the man who proudly boasts of his own learning and eloquence! How will this battle end? We know which side will win, for “the Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

14. *And the Lord shall be seen over them.* As He has in the midst of His people of old.

14. *And His arrows shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.* Here you have a foresight of Pentecost and the grand era which succeeded the outpouring of the Spirit. Oh, that we might once again prove what God’s Almighty Spirit can do!

15. *The LORD of Hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.* You remember that the mockers said, on the day of Pentecost, “These men are full of new wine.” They were not, as Peter plainly declared, “these are not drunken, as you suppose.” Neither does this prophesy mean that they would be so, but that the Spirit of God should fall so copiously upon them as to fill them, like bowls brimming over with precious liquid, or like the corners of the altar drenched for Elijah’s sacrifice. It is a grand thing when Believers in Christ are thus filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God and Divine energy—they are the men who will win the battle for the cause of God and His Truth.

16, 17. *And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land. For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.*

—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.**

FREEDOM THROUGH CHRIST'S BLOOD

NO. 3106

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 2, 1874.

“As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have set forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.”
Zechariah 9:11, 12.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text, is #2839, Volume 49—
“PRISONERS OF HOPE”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at
<http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THIS morning, [See Sermon #1186, Volume 20—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.], I tried to show that in consequence of the blood of the Covenant having been shed and the Covenant having so been fulfilled, Jesus Christ was brought back out of the prison of the grave, set at liberty and exalted to indescribable Glory in the highest Heaven. I then showed that Jesus Christ is the Representative of all His people—that when He was set free, they were virtually set free, and that when He returned into Glory, He went there as their Representative, taking possession of the heavenly places in their name, so that, in due time, where He is, there they may also be. I had not time, this morning, to make a fitting application of our subject. But happily for us, here stands another text, an older one, and yet most suitable to come after the other, so I will use it now.

Jesus Christ has been delivered from the bondage of the grave and I have to remind you, first, that *there are other prisoners who have been set free through the blood of the Covenant*. Secondly, that *there are other persons yet to be set free through the blood of the Covenant*. And then I shall close with a few words *in honor of the secret reason of their liberation—the blood of the Covenant*.

I. First, then, dear Friends, we have to notice that **THERE ARE SOME PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN ALREADY SET FREE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.**

This leads us to consider *where they were prisoners and to what they were prisoners*. We are told, in the text, that they were in “the pit.” That is where all God’s people were once. You know that, in the East, they did not always take the trouble to build prisons—an empty well, or a place where they had been accustomed to hide their corn, or an underground, unused reservoir would serve for a prison. The poor prisoner was let down by ropes and the mouth of the pit or well was covered with a big stone—and there he was left to die. Generally the place was noisome and foul, a living grave rather than anything else. The position of a poor

captive, sitting down on a stone at the bottom of a deep, dirty pit, is a very apt picture of the state of man by nature. When he is really awakened to a sense of his true position, he finds that this is the very image of where he is. He is put in that prison by the Law of God. He feels that he has broken the Law and that the Law must punish him. Conscience builds huge walls harder than granite around him—and when he tries to find a way of escape, there is none that he can discover. He realizes that the Judge of all the earth must abhor iniquity and must punish sin. In addition to that, sin has put him in that prison, for, though he has mourned over his sin since he was even partly awakened, yet he cannot cease from sin any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots! Like the big stone over the mouth of the well, his tendency to sin and his corruptions shut him in. He cannot lift that stone—he is a prisoner to his own evil desires and depraved heart and, at the same time, a prisoner lawfully detained, under a warrant from the High Court of Heaven by the officers of Divine Justice.

Many of you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, can recollect the time when you were in that pit. I remember being in it for years and, oh, what a happy day it was for me when I was lifted right up out of it! It is a horrible place, that pit of conviction of sin. Nothing can be more horrible, out of Hell, than to have an awakened conscience, but not to have a reconciled God—to see sin, yet not to see the Savior—to behold the deadly disease in all its loathsomeness, but not to trust the Good Physician and so to have no hope of ever being healed of our malady! Of all the miseries that can be endured in this life, this is one of the greatest.

This poor prisoner, shut up in a pit out of which he could not escape, could find no comfort. The text says it was a pit in which there was no water. I saw the Mamertine Dungeon, which might very well be likened to a pit—the entrance to the first vault is through a narrow hole, then another narrow hole from the bottom of that vault into the second one. But in the floor of the lower dungeon, in which Paul is said to have been confined, there is a spring which continually bubbles up—and I drank of the water—as cold and fresh and clear as any I ever drank. There was at least one source of comfort there, for, in the stifling heat of that horrible dungeon, there was some water. But when we were shut up in the pit by our own sin and by Divine Justice, there was no water there. Do you remember when you tried to drink at the cistern of human ceremonies and found that it was filled with brine which increased your thirst instead of slaking it? You sought next to drink of what you thought was the water of your self-righteousness—but you were like a pilgrim on the desert sands who sees the deceptive mirage—limpid streams and crystal fountains before his eyes, but when he presses forward to drink of them, he finds nothing there but the burning sand! Some of us were duped and deluded, for a while, with the vain hope of accomplishing our own salvation, but it all turned to nothing and we were still in the pit wherein was no water. Oh, what numerous devil's agents there are about trying to cheat poor souls who are in this pit with the notion that they can

supply them with water in the pit and that they can remain there—that they can continue unforgiven and unrenewed—and still enjoy true comfort! But that is an idle tale! No, more—it is a fatal delusion! There might as well be found water in Hell as true comfort for a soul that realizes its guilt and fears the thunders of the wrath of God, yet is not reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Apart from that Living Water which Jesus came to bring, such a soul is truly in “the pit wherein is no water.”

And, dear Friends, there was a still worse point about our bondage. It was a thoroughly hopeless one, for we were not merely shut up in that pit for a short time, but we were shut up there to die! When a man is cast into a deep pit and the mouth of it is covered over with a stone—and his captors give him neither food nor water—he knows at once what that harsh treatment means. If they meant him to live, they would at least put him down with a crust of bread and a pitcher of water. But we were in a pit wherein was no water and we felt that there was nothing before us but “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” I have known what it is to wake in the morning and wonder that I was not in Hell, and to go to my bed at night afraid to fall asleep lest I should sleep myself into eternity! When a man is in such a state as that, he feels that life is hardly worth living, and he could almost say with Job, “My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life.”

This is the position into which many who are the true children of God are brought—they are not all tried alike, for all are not made equally sensitive of sin and to some, faith comes much sooner than to others. But there are many persons who were thus shut up, but concerning whom the text now says, “By the blood of your covenant, I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” Notice that expression, “I have sent forth your prisoners.” That is the blessing—*we who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are in prison no longer*. We are trusting in the blood of the Covenant and, therefore, there are no fetters upon us now, no stone walls, or prison bars, or terrors of conscience, or convictions of sin to frighten us now, for the Lord has said, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” There are thousands in this Tabernacle who were once in this prison, but they are out of it, now, and they can say, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We are out of this pit by right. We did not break out of prison contrary to the Law of God—we have the right to be out because the debts for which we were imprisoned, are all paid—a full Atonement has been offered for the sins for which we were put in prison! There has been a complete expiation made, wide as the sin of all the Lord's people, and as vast as the demands of infinite and inflexible Justice. Every child of God is *justly* as well as *graciously* saved! It would be an eternal injustice if any soul for whom the Savior stood as a Substitute could die by the sword of Divine Justice. But that can never be—

***“Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,***

And then again at mine.”

No, my blessed Savior—

***“Complete Atonement You have made,
And to the utmost farthing paid,
Whatever Your people owed—
Nor can His wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Your righteousness,
And sprinkled with Your blood.”***

But, dear Friends, we are free by might, as well as by right, for that same Jesus who bought our liberty for us, has secured it to us. Those grim prison walls He has thrown down by His own pierced hands. Those black shades of darkness that surrounded us, He has chased away by His own glorious manifestation as our Sun of Righteousness! It is the Lord, the Liberator, who has set His people free! Therefore, if you are among them, rend the heavens with your joyful shouts, you liberated ones! By the blood of the Covenant you are set free by the almighty “Breaker” who has come to break down your prison walls and to make you “free indeed.”

And, Beloved, we are now free forever, for the Lord says—“I have sent forth your prisoners.” And when God sends us forth out of prison, who can send us back? When He says, “Let there be light,” who can create darkness? When He says to me, “Be free,” who can chain me up again? Let all the hosts of Hell surround me—as the Philistines surrounded poor blind Samson—my soul shall say with David, “They compassed me about; yes, they compassed me about; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.” When Christ makes a man free, it is not with a temporary liberty, to last for a month, or a year—but Christ’s emancipated slaves can never be enslaved again! Redeemed by His precious blood, the Redemption is not temporary, but eternal!

And, blessed be God, that freedom is freedom indeed! If you know what it is to be a Christian to the fullest, believing the true Gospel, not clouding its beauty, not putting upon yourself the old yoke of bondage, not mixing Judaism with Christianity, not bringing in human ordinances to make you the cramped and fettered slave of man—if you are the Lord’s free men, then you are “free indeed!” “O Lord,” said David, “truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds.” He who loves holiness and walks in the fear of the Lord all the daylong is the only true free man! He is the free man whom God’s Grace makes free—all others are slaves! No earthly power can bring real freedom to the soul—it is Grace and Grace, alone, that brings it by the blood of the Covenant! And where that freedom comes, no form of bondage can make a man a slave. He may be owned by some cruel master and whipped to his work, but his soul is free! He may be shut up in a damp, dark dungeon, but he can sing there, as others have done before him—

***“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.”***

I cannot further enlarge upon this tempting theme, but I want every true child of God, everyone who has been set free by the great Liberator, to act and live like Christ’s free man—not to go about fawning and

crouching like a slave who dreads his master's lash, but to walk uprightly, in both senses of that word, as a free man should, in the Presence of the Lord who has bought His servant's freedom at the incalculable cost of His own most precious blood. May the Lord graciously grant to you "access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God!"

II. Secondly, and briefly, THERE ARE OTHER PERSONS WHO SHALL YET BE SET FREE THOUGH THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT. Some of them are, I fully believe, going to be set free tonight! This is the favored hour in which the Lord is going to save them and set them free forever! They did not know this when they came in here, but the Lord had designs of love towards them in moving them, by His Spirit, to enter this House of Prayer an hour or so ago.

To those who are going to be set free I have to say this. By nature, you are in the state that I have been describing, though perhaps you are hardly aware of it. *You are prisoners in the pit without water.* If unrenewed in heart, you are in a state of alienation from God and of spiritual danger, destitution and misery! But, dear Souls, though this is the case with all of you who have not been born-again, there is this cheering Truth of God—though you are prisoners, you are "*prisoners of hope.*" Wherever the Gospel is preached, there is hope for sinners and whoever hears it may take heart of hope. I am not now speaking merely about outwardly moral people, but I am speaking of any who have strayed in here and who have sinned grossly—drunkards, swearers, harlots—the very worst and lowest of persons. You are prisoners to your sins, but you are prisoners of hope, for you are within reach of One who sets free from sin! The Lord Jesus Christ, whom we preach to you, saves His people from their sins! And I pray that He may come to you, in all the plenitude of His liberating power and set you free from your sins this very hour!

Though you are in this prison, *there is a Divine command given to you*—"Turn you to the stronghold." If you would obtain liberty from your sin, both in its guilt and in its power, you must look to Jesus, who is the Stronghold to which captive sinners are to turn! "Oh," you say, "this pit is truly horrible." I know it is, but the Lord Jesus Christ has come to roll away the stone from the mouth of it and, looking down to you, He says, "Turn you to Me, your only Stronghold. There is hope for you, you prisoners of hope, if you will but turn unto Me." "But," you say, "we have looked all around, but we have found no consolation. No man cares for our souls." There is One in Heaven who cares for your souls and who, because He does, has come to tell you that there is hope for the worst, the most hardened, the most despairing of you all! He bids you escape for your life and look not behind you, nor tarry in all the plain, but press on till you reach the Stronghold where you will be safe even when the wrath of God pursues you! "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Whoever turns to Him shall live, whoever he or she may be!

“But I am so feeble,” says someone. Then turn away from your feebleness to His strength. “But I am so sinful,” says another. Then turn away from your sinfulness to His blood—the blood of the Covenant which washes black sinners whiter than driven snow! You are not to turn to yourself, nor to a human priest, nor to your own works, nor even to your prayers or your tears—all these are full of sin and worthless to give you acceptance in God’s sight. But the Lord Jesus Christ is Divine—so look to Him and to what He has done—and especially to His great atoning Sacrifice upon the Cross, for if you trust to that by a sincere and humble faith, you will certainly be saved!

This declaration of hope in the Gospel is for the present moment. What says the Lord concerning it? “Even *today* do I declare that I will render double unto you.” You are getting very old, but “even today” mercy is declared to you! You have been, perhaps, wasting the former part of this Sabbath, but “even today” is mercy declared to you. It is seldom that you go to a place of worship, but you are here tonight—and “even today” is mercy proclaimed to you! You had so provoked God that you thought He had cast you away. Well, you have probably gone to the full length of your tether, but “even today” does God proclaim that there is still hope for you—that hope which He has laid up in Jesus on whom He has laid all necessary help for you!

And what is it that He tells you today? Why, that *He will render double to you!* Do notice that. He will render double to you. You have committed great sin, but He will give you double mercy to wash out that double sin. But your heart is doubly hard—then He will give you a double portion of His Holy Spirit to soften it! But you feel a double tendency to sin—then He will doubly write His Law on the new heart that He will give you! But you are so desponding. Then He will give you double comfort. But you say that you feel so weak in prayer. Then He will give you double strength. But your faith is so feeble. Then He will give you double Grace to increase it. O Soul, if God says that He will give you all that you need, that ought to satisfy you! But when He says that He will give you double—double for all your sins—what wondrous Grace is that! If you put down a sin, God puts down two mercies. Put down another sin and He puts down two more mercies. “Ah,” you say, “but I can keep on putting down sins forever, they are so many!” And my Lord can put down mercies forever and ever for, however many your sins may be, they can be counted—but His mercies are innumerable! I know that your sins can be counted, for they are all written in a book, but God’s mercies cannot be written in a book—they are altogether countless. His mercy is immeasurably greater than your sin. David laid hold of that great Truth of God when he prayed, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” I tell you, Sinners, if you are lost, it will not be for lack of mercy! If your sins destroy you, it will not be because the blood of the Covenant has not power to wash away your sins. If you perish, it will not be because Jesus Christ is not able to save you. Why will it be, then? It will be because you have not believed on the Lord

Jesus Christ, for “he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

I do pray the Lord that you may have reason enough and Grace enough given you to know that your eternal interests depend upon your believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. You have not to go and spin a righteousness which you are so fond of doing, but to come and take the spotless robe that Christ has woven. You have not to bring the money for your own ransom, though you would like to do that, but you are to take the liberty which has been bought by Christ's precious blood and which is freely presented to every believing sinner, “for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” We who have escaped from the noisome pit, would, if we could, tempt you to also escape—we long that you may share the blessed liberty that we enjoy! Dear children, will you not follow your father and mother into Gospel liberty? Dear husbands, do you not desire to experience the holy joy that throbs in your wives' bosom? Good wives, do you not wish to have your husbands' Christ to be your own Christ? Brothers, would you like your sisters to be without you in Heaven? Will you not share with them in the blessings of eternal life? Oh, that we might all together come to Christ right now! For after all, whatever God has done for us, saints are still sinners, so we will come down to your level and each one, taking the hand of some poor fellow sinner who has never come to Christ, we will try to come together, now, and look up to Him. There is the Cross of Calvary and there is the Savior who hung there. O You blessed Jesus, we have no hope but in You! And these poor souls whom we have brought along with us, Lord, help them to look to You just now, even as we ourselves looked to You long ago! Clear their eyes even more than ours are cleared and may they, as they look unto You, find that—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One”—

life for them, life for them just now, life from the death of sin, life from condemnation, life to be had at once, by a glance at Your wounds and by simple faith in You! You wear the thorn-crown and it seems to us as if all Your thoughts were hedged about with thorns that they might be fixed on sinners. And Your hands are fastened wide open, as if You would never close them again, but hold them always open to welcome poor sinners! And Your feet are fastened as if You would always graciously receive all who come to bow before You. Yes, and Your dear heart was opened by the soldier's spear as if to make a way for guilty souls into Your inmost affection. Jesus, by Your Grace we come to You! Spirit of the living God, draw this whole houseful of sinners and saints and enable each one of us to say—

***“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains!
I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me,
That on the Cross He shed His blood***

From sin to set me free.

III. My last words—and they shall be very few—are to be IN HONOR OF THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.

To you who have believed in Jesus and who are now coming to His table, let me say—As we come to the Communion, let us think of the blood of the Covenant. If we are free men and women in Christ Jesus, it is because the blood of Jesus ratified the Covenant of our liberty. It is *because God saw the blood and delivered us*. Let me remind you of that beautiful verse in the Book of Exodus, from which I have preached more than once. [See Sermon #228, Volume 5—THE BLOOD and #1251, Volume 21—THE SACRED LOVE-TOKEN—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The blood of the paschal lamb, as you know, was to be sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts of the houses of all the children of Israel. And what did God say about it? Did He say, “When you stand outside your house and look up at the blood I will save you”? No, He did not say that, but, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” It is *God’s sight of the blood of Christ* which, at bottom, is the reason for the salvation of the redeemed! How I rejoice to think that although my faith-sight of the blood gives me peace, still, if that eye of mine ever gets dim, it does not imperil my salvation, for God’s eye is not dim and it is always fixed on the blood of His Son! In sacred contemplation the Father surveys the Sacrifice of His Son with supreme satisfaction—and as He sees the blood, He spares us for His Son’s sake!

But, then, dear Friends, the blood of the Covenant is also to be extolled *because it is our sight of it that brings us peace*. When we realize that Jesus died for us, there is peace in our soul. I do not know whether you are like me in this respect, but there are times when I, as it were, take the fact of my eternal safety for granted. But there comes a severe sickness, or deep depression of spirit. There comes a time when death has to be looked in the face and the sense of past sin rises vividly before me—and then it is a blessed thing to stand once more at the foot of the Cross and to look up to Jesus hanging there, and to say—

***“My faith does lay her hand
On that dear head of Yours,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.”***

And as I meditate upon that theme, despondency goes, pain is forgotten and I say, “Yes, yes, yes! I am safe! I am saved by the precious blood of Jesus! I do love Him and I would fall down at His dear feet and weep with mingled repentance and gratitude—repentance because I have sinned—gratitude because I have such a gracious Savior to put my sin away.” Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us praise the blood because God sees it—and praise the blood because we also see it by faith!

Praise the blood, too, *because when we really trust in it, it gives us liberty*. If you get away from the blood of the Covenant, you get into slavery. But keep close to that and you are at liberty. In prayer, mind that you plead the blood, for that is the way to get the “double” spoken of in the text. The double blessing comes by the blood of the Covenant. If you need more Grace, plead the blood for it. There is one talisman that

will open every vault in the treasury of God—the blood of the Covenant! You cannot be denied if you plead the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ! Knock at Heaven's gate with the crimson token in your hand and as surely as God loves Jesus Christ—and He loves Him more than all of us put together love Him—He will honor His Son's great Sacrifice and He will say to you, "According to your desire and your faith, so be it unto you." There are some preachers who cannot or do not preach about the blood of Jesus Christ—I have one thing to say to you concerning those—*Never go to hear them! Never listen to them!* A ministry that has not the blood in it, is lifeless, "for the blood is the life thereof"—and a dead ministry is no good to anybody! Leave out the atoning Sacrifice and it would be better for the people that the places in which a Christless, bloodless Gospel is preached, should be all burnt to the ground, for the atoning Sacrifice is the soul and life and marrow of Christianity! Rest in that and you are saved! But get away from that and you have wandered where peace and life and safety can never come! God Almighty bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 2:14-43.**

Verse 14. *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you and listen to my words.* A great crowd had gathered in the street and the Apostles, under Divine Inspiration, addressed them in different tongues. Peter, as the leader, coming prominently to the front—"Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice." They were 12 witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, for they had seen Him after He had risen and had eaten with Him. They constituted a jury of 12 honest and true men. And Peter, as their foreman, "standing up with the eleven," gave their verdict!

15. *For these are not drunk, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.* At nine o'clock in the morning, it was not to be supposed that they had become drunk.

16-18. *But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days My Spirit; and they shall prophesy.* Every member of the Christian community would be anointed by the Holy Spirit. The blessing would not simply be given to one here and another there, but there would be a wonderful outpouring that should fall upon the whole multitude of Believers.

19-21. *And I will show wonders in Heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before that great and notable day of the coming of the Lord: and it shall come to pass, that*

whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is a wonderful connection in which to find such a promise as this—a darkened sun, a blood-red moon—yet “whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” When the worst comes to the worst, prayer will still be heard and faith will lead to salvation! O matchless Grace of God! Is there not someone here who will call upon God’s name, now, before that evil day comes in all its fullness? “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Oh, that everyone of you would lay hold of that promise! It is said that drowning men will catch at a straw. This is no straw, but a gloriously strong life buoy! Only get into it and it will float you to Glory!

22. *You men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know.* Note that Peter does not begin with the Deity of Christ. He will get to that soon. But, like a wise speaker, he commences with points upon which they were all agreed, or which they could not deny. He therefore calls Christ “a Man approved of God,” and he reminds them of the “miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him” in their midst. They knew that God had thus attested His mission, so he appealed to them for confirmation. “As you yourselves also know.”

23. *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.* There is a wonderful blending in this verse of the predestination of God and yet the responsibility of man. I suppose our finite faculties cannot yet discern where these two things meet, but faith, in the absence of every other power, believes them both! The predestination of God does not alter the moral quality of the acts of wicked men. Man acts freely, as freely as if there were no Divine predestination—yet the free agency of man does not affect the foreknowledge and predestination of God.

24. *Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be held of it.* It was possible for Him to die, but it was not possible for Him to be held in the bonds of death!

25. *For David*—Speaking of Christ in the Psalm which, at first sight, might seem to refer to David, himself, but which was even by the Rabbis believed to also refer to the Messiah, and which we know did, indeed, refer to the Messiah!

26-27. *Speaks concerning Him, I foresaw the lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because You will not leave my soul in Hell—Hades, the world of separate spirits.*

27. *Neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.* David was speaking of Someone who, though He should die, would never in His body feel the natural effect of death, namely decay.

28, 29. *You have made known to me the ways of life; You shall make me full of joy with Your Countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely*

speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Peter craves liberty to speak with freedom and then he very shrewdly gives to David the high title of Patriarch, which is not generally given to him, so as to win their attention and approval—"Let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day." And therefore he did not speak about himself in the words Peter was quoting!

30-32. *Therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.* Peter points to the eleven around him. There they stood, steadfast in the midst of the surging crowd, assenting to the bold declaration of their leader.

33-35. *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this which you now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he says himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit You at My right hand until I make Your foes Your footstool.* See how he builds up his argument with clear and cogent reasoning?

36. *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* How those men must have started when he came to that which was the finale of his address, the point at which he had aimed all along!

37. *Now when they heard this, they were picked in their heart.* The pointed Truth of God had gone home to their heart and they were wounded by it.

37. *And said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?* These may have been the same people who mockingly said, "These men are full of new wine." They began badly, but they ended well. I hope none of you have come here to mock. But if you have done so, and then go out pricked in your heart by the Truth of God you have heard, it would be better than coming in an attentive frame of mind and then going out unimpressed as so many do. God prevent it!

38. *Then Peter said unto them, Repent.* "Change your mind entirely. Be sorry for what you have done. Repudiate what you have done by a holy repentance of it. 'Repent'—

38. *And be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.* Peter urged them to repent and bade them confess their faith by being baptized in God's appointed way.

38. *And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* "You shall be sharers in this wonderful manifestation which has so astounded you."

39. *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* What promise did Peter mean? Why that promise in the 21st verse, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." That promise is also given to you,

my Hearers, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even in the most distant heathen land, for the “*whoever*” in the promise applies to everyone who “shall call on the name of the Lord.” Do not, therefore, shut yourselves out, or try to shut others out, but believe the promise—call upon God and you shall be saved!

40. *And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.* Peter first bore witness to the Truth of God and then pleaded with his hearers to receive his testimony. All true ministers will both “testify and exhort.” Some are always exhorting—they cry, “Believe, believe”—but they do not tell their hearers what is to be believed. Others are always testifying. They preach good doctrine, but they do not like to exhort sinners to repent and believe the Gospel. Each of these is a one-legged ministry! We must have two legs to our ministry and, like Peter, “testify and exhort saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” “Come out from those who crucified Christ! Quit the generation that is guilty of the blood of the Son of God! Put your repentance between you and them! Put your public Baptism between you and them—avow that you belong not to them, but to Him whom they crucified, and whom God has exalted!”

41. *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.* They not only believed what he said, but they were glad to believe it, acknowledging that they had greatly sinned. And they rejoiced that there was a promise which covered even their sin—“Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Then, having repented and believed, they were baptized upon profession of their faith, according to the true Scriptural order.

42. *And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* They believed the doctrine that was taught by the Apostles and they had fellowship with them and with all other Christians with whom they were associated. They did not try to go to Heaven by some underground railway without confessing Christ, but having confessed their faith in Christ, they further manifested their devotion to Him “in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” I do not know how many Prayer Meetings they had—they must have kept on praying, praising and preaching pretty well all day long.

43. *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles.*

—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.**